

University of Hawai'i at Mānoa
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September 11, 1964

(Sent)

Dear Roshi Sama:

Now I have been back from Japan a month; perhaps things are settled enough for you to give some opinion about the situation and some advice about the future. I regret all the trouble I have caused you by my excitable nature, and I hope that I have learned something so that I can be more restrained in the future. I am asking Itsuko San to visit you to get your opinion and advice, so that you will not have to take the time to write things in detail.

As you may imagine, the matter has been a real koan for me, even though I have tried to put it out of my mind. I regret, more than I can say, my weakness in going to Ryutakuji instead of remaining at an inn and consulting with you privately. All the trouble Tai San caused Anne, all the disruption he caused with our old-timers, his departure without notice and the rest of it could have been avoided if we somehow could have persuaded him to return to Japan and have you consult with him about the accusation. This was my original plan, and it was weak of me not to insist on it.

Dr. Smith's letter, [redacted]'s attitude now that she knows we have the full story, our recollection of many incidents which meant nothing at the time but now form a pattern,-- all these leave no question in our minds about Tai San's full responsibility in the two cases. Our basic concern is for Tai San's future, for Koko An and Diamond Sangha's future, and for the future of the American Dharma. We have had an emotional prejudice against Tai San for his immaturity and his misplaced overconfidence, but we and he have been very close, and we have strong feelings of direct responsibility and worry about him. If he continues to deny everything, I wonder how he can develop as a Zen monk and as a human. Surely this is a denial of part of himself. Yuse was redeemed because he confessed.

Tai San has apparently stored almost all of his books with someone here, leaving just a few with us to give to the University library. He has arranged to have his mail forwarded by the post office to Mr. Ikenaga's temple, and Mr. Ikenaga is just holding it for him. I have no idea what his plans are. In response to questions from members, I only say that Tai San's plans on his New York tour are indefinite, and we are not sure when he will return.

When Tai San's plans are set and he notifies us that he will transfer to another group, or that he will return to Japan, then I will notify the Immigration authorities here that our sponsorship is terminated. I will do this to clarify his situation with Immigration, and to clear the way for our sponsoring a new monk, if one is forthcoming. I do not know whether or not the changes here will affect Yasutani Roshi's plans, and I am anxious on this point. I have written to Yasutani Roshi renewing our invitation to him for next June, but he has not replied.

We have learned many lessons from this experience. Perhaps the most important lesson relates to the difficulty of communication between me as an American and you as a Japanese, in spite of our intimate friendship for fourteen years. I think perhaps there are still points which I assume you understand, and you don't; while there may be things you suppose I know, which I don't. For example, I wonder if you understand the basis of my acceptance of the doctors' opinions in this matter. It is not merely "the American custom to believe in doctors." The accusation made by the doctors against Tai San is very rare, really unheard of in its rarity. These are, moreover, not ordinary doctors, but psychiatrists, including a director of psychiatric training. They have had many years of special training beyond the Doctor of Medicine degree. Of course they knew that they cannot believe the words of a disturbed woman without careful investigation. They know very well that in such cases they must research with extreme caution and weigh all evidence, and even then, they hardly ever make an outright judgement. You may be sure that they are 100% confident that they have the facts when they set anything down on paper, as Dr. Smith did.

In addition to communication, and the revelation of my own weakness which I mentioned at the beginning of this letter, there is the problem of our status as laymen. You will recall my story about Tai San and his very first outburst against us. I had criticized some Jodo priests for their bad judgement in showing a sadistic movie to children at a Bodhi Day program. At the dinner table, he suddenly shouted, "You do not understand my mind! I am a monk, and you are only laymen!" We were stunned by such a childish outburst, and could not understand what he meant for a long time, and only now understand it fully. He meant that we, as laymen, should shut up and not criticize the Buddhist priesthood, no matter how much in error they were. In the present case, he is very angry with me, so angry that he says he does not trust himself to see me for fear he will do violence to me. He says the reason he is angry is that I was unmanly and told him a lie about my trip, saying I was going to California when actually I intended to go to Japan. He instructed Ikenaga San to tell me that he could never forgive me for such a base action. I presume he told the same thing to our old-timers, Allysen Preston, Martha Kent, and Concha Hughes, none of whom have come to meetings since, though two of them are officers of our organization. This is his reaction. I can only understand it by presuming that, by lying to him, I violated my place as a layman who should be loyal to his priest, no matter what happens. Of course, I am normally loyal, but I am not capable of loyalty in extreme cases of this kind, nor is any other American unless he is Catholic or enchanted. Basically, we are loyal to the man, not to the koromo.

Of course, lying is no good, and I do not ordinarily indulge in the practice (Anne says I am "painfully truthful!"), but in this case I wanted no hint of my purpose to get Tai San excited. I think you understand this.

We are absolutely silent about the incident, except to the doctors and to Ikenaga San, who heard the whole story from Tai San from his point of view, even the names of the girls! The doctors and nurses are, so far as I know, completely silent also. Our first responsibility is to the two girls, particularly to [REDACTED], who is very dependent on us. We face a difficult problem in telling her that Tai San will not return. Anne hinted that it might be "some time" before he came back, and [REDACTED] was visibly disturbed by this. We have therefore written to her doctor at the hospital requesting advice on how to inform her. A conference is being arranged for next week. [REDACTED] is very perceptive, and she is sure to blame herself heavily for Tai San's departure, and if the news that he is not coming back is not conveyed properly, the experience of shock could be a serious thing in her condition. She is still hospitalized, and probably will be for several more months. However, at present, we see a definite [REDACTED]

We are continuing our meetings, and expect to do so in the future. We would welcome a new monk, in addition to Yasutani Roshi and Satomi San. We will do our very best to work harmoniously, and to change, as we would hope our monks would also change. We must reach a synthesis of these two extremes of Japan and America. We would hope that our monks would have an ordinary capacity for Sangha organization, that they would discourage competition and favoritism, that they would feel on the same level as their lay friends, and that they will encourage students to take root in one place.

We would be most grateful for your comments and advice. Please give your opinions freely to Itsuko San; she is entirely discreet. She will then write to us. Thank you very much, Roshi, for all the time and concern you have devoted to this important affair.

Love from us both,

P.S. Recently we had a guest for one week, Margaret Conway, referred to Koko An by Phillips and Stunkhard. However, she felt too uprooted away from her fiancé, and returned to Philadelphia. Zazen is best where one feels at home. Dick Harvey will return to Hawaii soon, and bring his brother, his brother's wife and baby girl. Probably the young family of three will live in Tai San's cottage.

P.P.S. I wonder what became of Lois Engleman. When I saw her at Koku-seiji with Itsuko San and Seiko San, I suggested that it might be best if she found some place to live, like in Sawaji or at the Kojirin at Engakuji, and commute to a temple for daily zazen and sesshin. However, Seiko San writes me that Kapleau and Gen San at Engakuji have told her that if she is sincere, she must live in a monastery or a nunnery. They urged her to apply to live at Kannonji.

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