



BOOK REVIEW

Each Moment Is the Universe: Zen and the Way of Being

Dainin Katagiri, Shambhala, 2007

Review by Zen Master Wu Kwang

This is a wonderful collection of talks given by the late Katagiri Roshi (1928-1990) at various times during the last twenty years of his life.

Katagiri Roshi came to the United States in 1963 to help with a Soto Zen temple in Los Angeles. Later, he joined Shunryu Suzuki Roshi at the San Francisco Zen Center where he taught until the latter's death in 1971. Katagiri then founded a center in Minneapolis at which he remained for the rest of his life.

The style in many of the chapters, especially the shorter ones, in this book bear some similarity to *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind* albeit with a more intellectual/philosophical bent—but not so much of one to be off-putting to Zen practitioners. He makes it a point to always bring the subject under discussion back to the concrete issues of Zen meditation and everyday practice.

Andrea Martin, the editor and student of Katagiri, served periodically as his attendant and secretary from 1978 onward. She writes about her difficulty in transcribing these talks, "To coax from these talks the structure required by the printed page, I reorganized them and made them more concise." In fact, she confesses that in some instances the talks were taken apart and combined with others, but she was at great pains to preserve his manner of speaking and vocabulary, "always listening to hear his voice through the words." Although I never heard him speak, I believe that she has succeeded admirably.

The theme that runs through the various sections of this book is the real nature of time and what Zen Master Seung Sahn sometimes called "moment world" or "moment mind." The first of the five parts looks at time itself and the fundamental nature of impermanence. Part Two relates these subjects to the first two Noble Truths: Suffering is inherent in human life and there is a cause of suffering. Part Three connects with the Third Noble Truth: There is freedom from suffering. Katagiri, in Zen style, relates freedom to perceiving the moment. It is notable that a statement used on occasion by Zen Master Seung Sahn appears in this section, "Moment is the interaction of time and space." Katagiri Roshi says, "At that precise point—the intersection of time and space, which is called right now, right here—all sentient beings come together into the moment and a vast world comes up; past, present, future, earth, trees, plants, moons, and suns.... That is called interdependent co-origination. Life is always the pivot of nothingness; it is always right now, right here the eternal moment of the real present."

Part Four is influenced by the Fourth Noble Truth: The path of action in which freedom relieves suffering. The Roshi puts emphasis on fully devoting oneself to whatever activity one is involved in. He connects this Truth with the notion of time, "Time has no solid form—time is activity itself." The practice suggested here is at one with Zen Master Seung Sahn's teaching, "Just do it!"

Part Five concerns itself with karma and emphasizes a positive view of life and hope for the future. Katagiri Roshi says:

Freedom from causation means oneness of cause and effect.

When you act with wholeheartedness, cause and effect are absorbed into your activity.

Freedom from causation is emptiness. Anytime, anywhere, you can be free from your karmic life, because your karma life is going on in Buddha's world. That is the reality of one step.

To live your life freely, in peace and harmony, all you have to do is wholeheartedly take care of one step in every moment. In that moment you reach the other shore, because one step is not separate from life.

One of the great benefits contained in this book is that, in the longer chapters, which are commentaries of sections from Dogen Zenji's *Shobo-genzo* such as "Being Time," Katagiri Roshi explicates some of Dogen's idiosyncratic language. This is a blessing in itself!

About prayer and devotion in Zen practice Katagiri Roshi has this to say:

Silence is full devotion—your self-centered life is thrown away to wholeness. A whole life is characterized by commitment in love, wisdom and prayer. Prayer is not something directed from a particular subject to a particular object with the expectation of a particular result. Prayer is egolessness supported by deep love for all beings—a profound aspiration extended to all lives. It is the very basic, very deep energy of life. We must take best care of this energy and extend ourselves fully and deeply toward it.

Good book, well worth reading! ☸