

ZEN NOTES



SOKEI - AN SAYS

CONSIDER THE MIND OF AN INFANT The Buddha founded his religion upon samadhi. His object of meditation was his own mind. He did not meditate upon any external object, upon thoughts, or words, or ideas. He meditated simply upon mind--mind from which had been extracted every thought, every image, every concept. He paid no attention either to the outside or to the inside; he meditated upon his own mind. Perhaps we should say mind meditated upon itself, for, in true Buddhist meditation, mind by itself is the meditator and at the same time the object of the meditator's meditation.

I think the meaning of "his own mind" is not very clear to Western people. Western people think that mind, to be mind, must have something in it; if it has nothing in it, it is not mind. But consider the mind of an infant: he doesn't know the words papa or mama, he doesn't know his own existence, he doesn't know the outside world; nevertheless he has his own mind, pure and empty. We can discover that mind in this world through meditation. The attainment of this pure and empty mind is true samadhi. And this is Buddhism.

The Buddha practiced meditation for six years and succeeded in attaining this pure and empty mind. He did not call it God, or Mind either. He did not call it by any name. For him, Buddhism was very simple and very pure. Buddhism is like a piece of stone, or the head of a turnip. It is pure mind. If you prefer to call it soul, Buddhism is pure soul. Our teacher used to say to us when we practiced meditation: "Don't close your eyes; you will be bothered by your own thoughts. Don't keep your eyes open; you will be bothered by outside things. Keep your eyes partly closed and meditate upon your own soul." This is Buddhism.

From a lecture November 23, 1940

WHEN YOU WERE IN YOUR MOTHER'S BOSOM

In the beginning when you were in your mother's bosom you did not exist to yourself. Until you were two or three years old you did not know light, darkness, front or back. But you cannot deny that you were existing, for even though you were entirely unknown to your own consciousness you were moving, crying, eating, sleeping. You didn't exist to your own consciousness because it wasn't awakened. If something bothered you, you would cry "Wa-a-a!" but you would not know anything about it.

From a lecture April 4, 1936

A VISIT TO HEISAN (*concluded*) Walter returned from Heisan with quite a tale to tell. I should make him tell it to you, but I know he will never get down to doing so, so I shall try to describe what he told me.

It was decided that Walter would sleep in a kind of guest-house lower down the mountain next to a goma-do, a building for the goma-ceremony like that performed at Koya-san, and which I have discovered is also a practice in present-day Tendai. Walter was free to do zazen as much and whenever he wanted in the goma-do. He would come up to the room in which we had been received for his meals. The guest-house proved perfect for Walter's purpose. It was perched on the very edge of a deep ravine. At the bottom was a rushing mountain stream which could not be seen for the depth and the heavy trees. The goma-do had in it a fine statue of Fudo, and the usual goma-ceremony altar. Tatami around the edges of the room provided a place for Walter to sit.

The priest who had received us, the university man, was what is known in Tendai as an *Ajariya*, or teacher of young priests. Taking part with him was the priest of the temple, a man of about his own age, called Kanshu-ji San, after the temple. A younger man, Kimura by name, who lived in the same house with Walter, was a university graduate.

The *Ajariya* himself was going through a long and severe Tendai practice. What else he did we do not know, but the practice explained to Walter was that of walking up and down and around Heisan for 1000 times. This practice begins toward the end of March, continues uninterruptedly rain or shine, snow or summer heat, and ends in mid-October. It is cumulative, taking about five years to complete the 1000 times, and is never less than 100 times. Kanshu-ji San was also undergoing a discipline which entailed walking around the mountain, though not on such a long route, for several hundred times. Kimura San walked a little, but was concentrating mainly on chanting and mudra practices, like those of Shingon, before the Fudo image in the goma-do.

The first evening Walter had supper with everyone in the reception room, then went down to the goma-do and sat until about ten o'clock. The next morning he got up at three and went into the hall again. He realized that Kimura San had got up before him, but what he was doing Walter did not know. At breakfast that morning the older priest was not present, but Kimura San and Kanshu-ji San were, together with four young high-school students who were living in the temple and going to school down at Sakamoto every day. The tall man who had met us at the gate was a kind of menial monk. An old woman who had lived on the mountain for thirty years and who cooked the temple food, completed the group. The boys went off to school, taking *bentos* (lunches) prepared in the great smoky kitchen, much more primitive than that at the Rinzai sodo. Then Walter went back to his meditation until eleven, when they assembled again for dinner.

This time the *Ajariya* was present and explained something of their

practice. It seems he got up at 1 a.m. every morning, put on his white cotton robe, his white leggings and straw sandals, set his straw hat shaped like a rolled-up lotus leaf on his head, then hung several bags on cords from his shoulders, donned a white rakusa, and took up a folding wooden fan and a heavy rosary of wooden beads. Thus adorned and carrying a lantern, he started on his morning walk. He walked around the entire mountain and returned to the temple just in time for the 11 a.m. meal, a total of ten hours without stopping. Kanshu-ji San's practice got him up at the same hour and caused him to dress himself as did the other priest, but he carried an electric torch rather than the lantern and, as his walk was over a shorter route, was back at 6 a.m. for breakfast. Kimura San's walk was a very short one. During the walk they practiced meditation and stopped before the sites of long-destroyed or deserted temples--at one time there were more than 3,000 temples on Heisan--to recite a verse of sutra and to perform a few mudras.

Naturally Walter asked if he could take part in one of these walks. The Ajariya said that his was too long, but Kanshu-ji San agreed to take Walter the next morning. So Walter was waked up at one o'clock in the morning, given a small box of cold rice and pickles to eat, then a pair of straw sandals which he strapped to his feet over his tabi, and a flashlight. Together they started out with the older priest, but after a bit he branched off on a path other than theirs and they did not see him again. The night was misty and the steep mountain path slippery at first. Walter says they started off at a certain pace, something like a lope, and did not vary it for the entire trip. Their way lay in most cases off the regular paths, though those are bad enough and narrow enough, goodness knows. Sometimes they skirted the edges of cliffs, sometimes they went over beds of pine needles through seemingly impenetrable forest; another time they were on the top of the mountain, the very top, a narrow ridge, like a razor's edge, with only the sky visible above their heads and on each side only darkness. From time to time Kanshu-ji San would stop, chant a few words, rub his rosary and do a few mudras, then be on his way at the same lope again. At first Walter thought he could never stand it, running downhill regardless of the steepness of the slope, running uphill at the same pace regardless of the incline. But after a bit he got into the rhythm of it all, and before he knew it they were back at the temple again, and it was six o'clock. They had covered 8 *ri* (about 16 miles)--so Kanshu-ji San told Walter--and had stopped at more than 200 holy places.

Naturally Walter begged to go the next night again. They were most agreeable. At one o'clock it was raining quite hard, so he and Kanshu-ji San both put on the straw raincoats that you see Japanese peasants wear and went off. This time Walter said he just put his mind in his stomach and "let'er go." It was one of the most thrilling experiences he has ever had. They seemed simply to fly over the ground, never really touch-

ing it with their feet. They sailed somewhere between heaven and earth, with no sense of effort and not the least fatigue.

That afternoon Walter had to come back. He looked like a million dollars, full of life and energy and too excited almost to speak. Of course they asked him to come back when he can stay longer.

RUTH FULLER SASAKI

COMINGS AND GOINGS June 2 the Institute will be honored by the presence of Asahina Sogen, Roshi and Kancho of Engaku-ji, Kamakura, who has been invited by the U.S. State Department with a group of about fifty other eminent Japanese for a tour of the country, lecturing on Japanese subjects as they go. We were fortunate to be included in the Abbot's crowded schedule and look forward impatiently to this memorable occasion.

Along or about June 15 Dr. Daisetz Suzuki leaves New York for a three-month's stay in Europe. The latter part of August will be spent at the annual Ascona Conference in Switzerland. In September Dr. Suzuki will stop off in New York for a few days before taking off for Japan. After three months there he returns to New York for his February seminar at Columbia University.

Modern
Form

山
水

CHINESE CHARACTERS

"Mountains and Water", the Chinese designation for "Landscape", are the favored subjects of the golden age of Chinese painting. To the T'ang period (7th to 10th century) painters these were the most ancient forms of earth. By them might be suggested the majesty of Nature in which the figures of men appeared as the tiniest elements in a universal harmony.

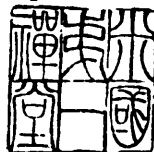
Ancient
Form



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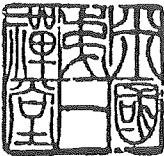
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