

ZEN NOTES



SOKEI - AN SAYS

VASUBANDHU'S BUDDHISM

The famous Buddhist Vasubandhu lived about one thousand years after the Buddha's death. He was a teacher of the Abhidharma, that is, Buddhist philosophy. He wrote the *Abhidharmakośa-śāstra*, a book on Buddhist philosophy. The Sanskrit text of this still exists, and there is also a Chinese version. It is a famous work.

Vasubandhu wrote about Buddhism in his own particular way, dividing the subject-matter into chapters and giving to each chapter a title. When you read these chapter headings you can understand the nature of Buddhism, what kind of religion, or science, or philosophy, Buddhism is.

Even in meditation the Buddhist analyzes his mind-activities. Buddhists do not work on the analysis of mind-matter, but upon the analysis of mind-activity. Dreams, for instance, are mind-matter; words and all images in the mind are mind-matter. Eddington called these "mind-stuff." It is mind-stuff that your psychologist analyzes. Of course he calls it present-conscious state, or sub-conscious state, or un-conscious state, but mostly it is mind-matter he handles. The Buddhist, however, seeks to eradicate mind-stuff. That is the practice of Buddhism: to annihilate all mind-stuff and meditate upon pure mind. Well, you go home, you meditate, and in a few minutes: "I lent Mr. Jones twenty-five cents five years ago, but he hasn't paid me yet... my breakfast was good, but I have forgotten the name of the restaurant..." You must eradicate all that mind-stuff. You try it; it is impossible. You think you will never succeed. But practice it, and a year later you will see--you will find your mind empty, not stupid, but more clear.

Vasubandhu gave the following analysis of the mind.

FIRST: He made a scientific study of the "Gates of Mind"--the eyes, the ears, and the other sense organs.

SECOND: He studied the "outside", and analyzed it in the old way, as the Chinese analyze it, into the four great elements--earth, water, fire, air--and subdivided them.

THIRD: He analyzed his own consciousness or soul, dividing it into many layers or strata.

FOURTH: He analyzed action--conscious and unconscious action; action which has to do with desire, and action which has nothing to do with desire; karma created by your own mind, and karma which has nothing to do with your mind; karma which has to do with your morality, and karma which has nothing to do with your morality.

FIFTH: He studied "sleeping" mind, deluded mind.

SIXTH: He studied awakened mind.

SEVENTH: He studied emancipated mind.

EIGHTH: Finally he defined the state of Nirvana.

This was Vasubandhu's Buddhism, of course, but it indicates the nature of this religion which is called Buddhism.

The foundation of Buddhism is meditation. When you meditate, keep your eyes open. Your mind activity ceases, the outside becomes monotonous, just one outside. You see the outside through the medium of your mind. When your mind is purified, the outside ceases to exist; you come into the world of pure mind, of soul only. Your footsteps near the great cosmic mind, and you enter. Do not be afraid. You will not lose your physical body, but you will be annihilated from this existence. And you will come back here and look at your physical body and realize that this body is not your own, this soul is not your own. It is the first step of realization in Buddhism when you experience this in meditation.

From a lecture November 23, 1940

WHEN I WAS A CHILD I attempted to make daily notes of my dreams. I kept a notebook and pencil near my pillow and tried to scribble them down. Then I would go off to sleep again. My mother always said: "What are you doing? Stop that nonsense and go to sleep. Don't be bothered by your dreams." It usually happened that when I had carefully arranged my notebook and pencil and gone to bed, either I didn't dream anything or I didn't awake. If I had made no arrangements, I would be sure to dream, but by the time I had awakened, jumped from my bed, searched around for the notebook and pencil and finally found them, I had forgotten what I dreamed, I had lost my dream. This training was the beginning of my meditation. Finally I trained myself to memorize my dreams so exactly that I couldn't note all the details down in my book. I would have had to write ten or fifteen pages every day. My poet friend laughed at me: "Most of it is your imagination, your own creation. You have lost the boundary line between your dreams and your imagination. Stop this nonsense!" I realized that it was so. But I still use that training. Today, when I have been somewhere and come back home I can sit down and, supporting my chin with my elbow, evoke exactly what I have seen and heard just as it happened--the hot-dogs, the maple trees, everything--I can recall everything clearly.

ANYONE WITH YAMA-BUSHI TENDENCIES

A message from a California member of special interest to those seeking jobs which leave time for study and zazen.

It occurs to me that some of the Institute members might be interested in fire-watching next summer. My knowledge is limited to lookouts in the Pacific Northwest; but I have worked all through Oregon and Washington, and spent two summers on lookouts, as well as doing trail-building and forest-fire fighting other years and I can recommend a lookout as an excellent place for anyone with *yama-bushi* tendencies and some physical and mental toughness. At the moment I'm working as a logger; it pays twice the Forest Service scale, but is harder work of course.

There are 500 lookouts in the Northwest, manned from the 1st of July to mid-September. They are usually located at or above timberline, on rock pinnacles. In this area, the ruggedness of the terrain makes it unnecessary to build towers, but rather a 12x12 house with windows all around, equipped with a 2-way radio, stove, bed, and axes and saws. One reports to the District in which he has been hired about the 28th of June; a week is spent in lookout and fire-fighting school. Another week may be spent waiting for snow to melt some in the high country, working on trails.

They pack the lookout in to his station--groceries, radio equipment and about 6 head of stock--and leave him. No one else will be around for two months. Water is usually gotten by melting snow. It often gets bitterly cold, and may snow occasional flurries at stations above 6000 feet; one checks in by radio twice a day, and talks with other lookouts. There is vast leisure. The hardest work is chopping and packing firewood (alpine trees are very tough to split) from timberline to the station. The greatest excitement is the not infrequent lightning storm which may hit even the highly protected house. There are lakes, meadows, flowers, cliffs, glaciers, many bear and deer, and clouds both below and above you. I found an excellent period for zazen between sunrise 4:30 a.m. and the radio check-in at 8 a.m.

One must be able to pack a 50-lb. load and walk 10-15 miles a day for this work, for you may be expected to go out and fight a fire. But as a rule you can schedule 8 hours of study a day. It is magnificently beautiful in the high cascades.

In 1952 and 1953 I was in the Skagit District of the Mt. Baker Forest; my 1952 lookout-- "Crater Mountain"--was 8000 feet high, and 28 miles from the roadhead. The last 500 feet were perpendicular rock cliffs, up which supplies were hauled on a cable-car winch rig. But most lookouts are easily reached by trail, and unless one has a real fear of heights, not too precipitous.

Anyone interested in trying it next summer can write me and I'll give addresses where to apply and what to bring--pay is about \$230 a month. (They do hire women as lookouts rarely).

GARY SNYDER

山伏 Japanese, *yama-bushi*, the mountaineer priests, "those who sleep among mountains", according to Masaharu Anesaki, "were mostly married and lived among the people, but they had to make periodical disciplinary pilgrimages to the mountains. They also conducted young men at the time of adolescence to sacred mountains and initiated them into mysteries."

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ZENRIN KUSHU

*Mono no hirin ni taetaru wa nashi.
Ware o shite ikan ga toka shimen?*

There is nothing to compare it with.
How then can I explain it?

Kansen

A REMINDER: In case you are planning to give that special person a holiday gift subscription to ZEN NOTES (1 year 1.00) you might like to begin it with the illustrated December issue devoted to that fabulously bearded personage who has become the Far Eastern equivalent of Santa Claus--Bodhidharma. And please don't forget, the continuance of ZEN NOTES is entirely dependent on the pleasure and generosity of its subscribers. Your contribution toward ZEN NOTES' second year, beginning January 1955, will, therefore, be joyfully welcomed. Perhaps you will be pleased to know that the Library of Congress of the United States has asked us for a bound copy of 1954.

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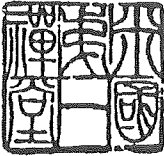
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