

ZEN NOTES



Under the heading below will appear in future what Sokei-an's students were able to grasp of his retelling of some of the classics of Buddhism; no more than this remains of countless never-to-be-forgotten evenings. These articles, we must caution, are not to be taken as translations or scholarly comment, for, to the delight of his listeners, many of whom had no knowledge of the originals, Sokei-an hesitated not a moment to delete the dull and repetitious, nor to add telling details, mimicking bits of imagined dialogue, and his own interpretations of what might have reposed between as well as in the lines of the originals. Some classics thus used appear, indeed, in more than one version, having proved particularly flexible. The purist, it must be stated, therefore, might quite correctly find fault with Sokei-an's revivifying of the ancient teachings, but his audiences never. Emphases vary, too, with the differing interests of the note-takers, who did not dream their scribblings would prove the only links between Sokei-an and his posterity. Inevitable omissions and errors are to be anticipated and forgiven them. Sokei-an's own view he expressed thus: "I wish to talk about my faith in a very disheveled attitude, just as a cat vomits the breath from its mouth in yawning..."

the zen

ON THE AGAMAS

SARIPUTRA AND THE NOISY MONKS

The garden of amra trees, in the village of Sakya, was one of the Buddha's favorite gardens, and Sariputra and Maudgalyayana and other giant disciples each had their own communities of monks, and occasionally they all came together in one place to pass the summer with the Buddha. According to tradition the monks living with the Buddha were quiet, but those living with Sariputra and Maudgalyayana were noisy.

the place where he passed the rainy season every year with his monks. In those days the Buddha had his community of five hundred

One day while he was sojourning in the Amra Garden with his monks, awaiting the coming summer, the Buddha heard the noise made by a crowd of monks who were talking and shouting as they slowly approached. He said to Ananda: "Hear that noise; it is as if someone were cutting



the trees. Go, Ananda, and see who they are."

Ananda went, and found out that they were Sariputra's disciples and that Sariputra himself was with them. He came back and told the Buddha what he had seen. The Buddha said, "Go back and tell Sariputra to go somewhere else. I do not like to hear such noisy and disorderly monks." Accordingly, Ananda went outside the village, met Sariputra, and gave him the message.

Sariputra had come there from distant parts, with his community of five hundred, at the Buddha's command; nevertheless, he and his monks retraced their steps slowly until, after about two miles, they encountered another crowd of five hundred monks--the community led by Maudgalyayana. Sariputra told Maudgalyayana what the Buddha had said, whereupon Maudgalyayana and his disciples were placed in a similar dilemma: whether to go on to the Amra Garden, as the Buddha had originally commanded, or to return to their home hundreds of miles away.


The people of Sakya Village found out the trouble, and they came to the Buddha and said: "Please let them in; they will be quiet when they meet you. There are many new monks who have never seen the Buddha; if they do not see you, they may lose their faith--as the young rice that has no water will dry up and die--as the calf without a mother will never grow. We pray you, take Sariputra and Maudgalyayana and their monks into this garden and keep them through the summer. We are already preparing for them." The Buddha, hearing their request and the metaphor of the calf and of the rice, reconsidered; finally he decided to let them in and to meet all the new and old disciples of Sariputra and Maudgalyayana.

Sariputra came before the Buddha, knelt down on his right knee, clasped the Buddha's foot and pressed it to his brow, then retired to his seat. The Buddha said to Sariputra, "How did you feel when I ordered you to go away and not bring these noisy monks here?" Sariputra answered: "In order to maintain your quietude here I led them away, and I thought how much I, too, should like to remain in silent solitude, away from these noisy monks."

Maudgalyayana also came forward and paid homage to his Buddha, then retired several feet and took his place beside Sariputra. The Buddha asked him the same question, to which Maudgalyayana replied: "Because it was your order, I felt that I must go away; but I was puzzling what to do, for I thought, 'If I take them away, how can I keep these monks with me? Without the Tathagata how can I keep hold of this community?--And if I go on alone, scattering these monks, how can I maintain the teaching of the Law?'"

The Buddha said, "Very well, Maudgalyayana, your answer is good; but I am not pleased by that of Sariputra."

There is more after this, but the important point has been made here. Sometimes the significance of these primitive sutras is not always readily apparent, of course, and when the monks would read them there seemed often to be no explanation of their meaning. At that point the teacher would ask: "What is the reason behind the telling of these simple sto-

ries?" I could ask the same question of you: can you understand the significance of this story?--can you see that the important point is in the different answers made by the two disciples? Sariputra took the Hinayana attitude, whereas Maudgalyayana's answer was Mahayana in spirit.

Someone asked me how to cut away the weeds that grow in the mind, and I answered: keeping the weeds with the ground, you will find the ground of the mind. To remain quiet, to maintain the ground of the mind without weeds--this was the Hinayana attitude expressed by Sariputra; whereas Maudgalyayana felt that without weeds and trees the ground had not much meaning. If you want to see ground which has no weeds or trees, go to the Gobi Desert; there you will see oceans of sand--a vast, empty ground where nothing is growing. There is no noise, no life on it. If you try to make the ground of your mind like that--without trees or weeds--your life will become nothing but sleep. The earth gives life to the weeds and trees and nourishes them and makes them bear flowers and fruit, then takes them back again to earth. The weeds and trees nourish the earth in turn, so that the earth is enriched. Do not make of your life nothing but sleep; use your mind--make weeds and trees grow out of it, and they will nourish the ground of your mind. By using your mind you enrich its soil; by not using it you make it like the Gobi Desert. Retiring from all entanglement, remaining in silent solitude on a mountain top--this is the way of Hinayana Buddhism. Do not follow this way, but use the ground of your mind; fertilize and give life to the things that will grow out of that ground.

When you meet a Zen monk, the first impression you have of him is that there is something there which is hard, like the ground. He does not speak much, but when you push there is something *there*. When you associate with him he does not chatter compliments, but is always a friend. He has ground. Occasionally you meet someone who is like a beautiful flower, but has no ground. In one of the scriptures a disciple points out to the Buddha the beauty of certain beings and asks: "Who are they? Are they men or devas, human beings or demons?" The Buddha answered: "Whatever they are, they amount to little more than phantoms: if they are demons, they are powerless to do evil: if they are women, they are unable to bear children."

We meet many women of this sort, and men too--men who have nothing of the father in them, or of a real man. Some religion, too, is beautiful like poetry or music, but it has no root, no ground.

The ground, then, is very important; without something growing above it, however, the ground is not enough. Someone asked a Zen monk, "How is your mind put to use if you only meditate?" The monk answered: "My mind will make one beautiful apple tree while yours is making miles of bushes. Pulling the weeds and branches together, I will make a hut; dispersing them, it may be that I will find the original mountain."

If I give you the koan, "Where were you before your father and mother?" you may try to annihilate everything and go back to that point, but such an answer is not the true one. *Reconstructed by KIMO MARTIN*

APROPOS OF BODHIDHARMA Paul (Saladin) Reys, irrepressible poet (for his latest, see GENTRY Magazine, Winter Issue) and translator (with Nyogen Senzaki) of *THE GATELESS GATE* and *TEN BULLS*, without which in his pocket no Zen student can long bear to be, (some members have gone so far as to copy the former by hand as it is regrettably out of print) writes: December ZEN NOTES asks the reader to get busy and say his way of saying rolly polly. This is indeed fresh and challenging for people who call themselves Buddhists. We all know Buddhists usually are the most abberated cranks. It should be *bud-ists*.

Rolled over, 7 times!
Roll up, 8!
Wait -

He really rolled, instead of getting knocked down.
Yes he rolled but he rolled up. How flexible!
Then on top of this he uttered a word that sounded like Gate! or Wait! and what is he, me, waiting for?
Whatever it is in this infinite universe of light,
We are ready to roll!
How about rolling with me today?

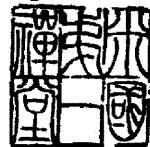


NEW WINE A private list we are compiling of masters of the art of pouring new wine into old bottles (or is it vice versa?) begins: Buddha, Dante, Jesus, Mohammed, Shakespeare... HINAYANA-MAHAYANA. The word Mahayana, first coined to characterize evolving Buddhism, more frequently is used by Sokei-an to signify an attitude or stage of practice. The conservative Buddhists of Southeast Asia, sometimes loosely referred to as Hinayanists, are, more properly, Theravadins. *When man awakes in his agony to the idea of enlightenment, he begins to attain this enlightenment, and finally he will accept this enlightenment. This process of practice we call Hinayana. Then, with the enlightenment he comes back to his own world and, in accordance with his occupation, works for enlightenment--to enlighten his friends, his children, his father and mother--with patience, love and courage. This process of Buddhism is called Mahayana (Sokei-an).* AGAMAS For a descriptive note on the Agamas, see CY (CAT'S YAWN) page 4.

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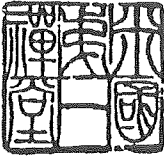
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