

ZEN NOTES



Some of our readers undoubtedly noticed a prophetic line carefully planted in February ZEN NOTES: "And we begin something from this day." On the occasion of our twenty-fifth anniversary celebration we of course spent some time reviewing our historic past, then drank a standing toast in a bottle of "Temple Orange Wine" brought to us as a souvenir of her Florida vacation by Edna Severin, and cut our gigantic lotus-decorated cake, a gift of Sakiko Farago, in anticipation of the history of our next twenty-five years about to be made.

On April 18, 1955, the zazenkaï will journey to Newark Airport to meet Mrs. Ruth Sasaki and Miura Isshu Roshi, Zen Master of Koon-ji, near Tokyo, here for a long-awaited visit of approximately six weeks. Though our younger members, some of whom have been sitting for ten years, have had instruction in zazen, this will be their first introduction to sanzen. Ten years of preparation for this moment, so seeming-long a time only yesterday, today we know is pitifully short. We are now cramming (how can you cram zazen?). Our Japanese language-training records are revolving overtime, committees meet daily to arrange ways and means, we hum like a hive. Ready we are not, but our eagerness, it may truly be said, knows no bounds.

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ON THE AGAMAS

One day while the Buddha was sojourning in Jeta's Garden he addressed the following words to his disciples: "Bhikkhus, as Bud-the Five Afflictions, regarding this One Thing you will attain the Four Grounds."

This is a very short sutra; just these few words are written. However, from other sutras we can gather what is meant by the One Thing, the Five Afflictions and the Four Grounds.

When you examine your own efforts toward attainment, you will usually discover two kinds of debility: one of these occurs in meditation, when your mind gets out of control. We call this "leakage." Perhaps, as a beginner, you use a mantra when you are meditating; while you

dhists, you must regard One Thing always. To regard this One Thing, you must clear away the Five Afflictions. After clearing away

the Five Afflictions, regarding this One Thing you will attain the

Four Grounds."



are repeating this mantra, something comes up to distract you... all kinds of thoughts stray through the mind, as water leaks from a wooden vessel. This happens because your mind is not yet concentrated, not yet essentialized--not quite crystallized into the absolute Essential Mind. The mind oozes mud like a sieve; you keep much impure matter there. You must drive all this unnecessary mind matter out of the essential part of the mind--the center of awareness. If you do not repeat a mantra you have even less control, and the mind may carry you away. Finally you will find the Essential Mind, however, and from that center no mind-ooze will leak forth. The mind is like raw iron; in sanzen you put it into the fire and beat it, and finally you discover real steel. When you look into the other's eye you will see whether his mind is still raw iron or whether he has found the Essential Mind.

The other debility has to do with actions. It is called "doing." If, in your action, you and Nature make complete contact, so that you cannot draw any distinction between yourself and Nature, then you are not doing anything. When a farmer sows his seed in the ground in early spring, it grows, but the farmer is not doing anything. Getting up in the morning and going to bed at night, you are not doing anything; but when you are sleepy and you try to keep awake by taking strong coffee, then you are doing something. When you are hungry, you eat; but if you eat when you are not hungry, then you are doing something. When you *do* something--in this sense of the word--then you are not entirely a Buddhist; you are a true Buddhist only when you are not doing anything. For from this kind of "doing" there are always bad results.

The "One Thing" the sutra tells you to regard is the main principle of Buddhism. From morning to evening you must regard this "One Thing." As you regard this One Thing you must always bear in mind whether there is "leakage" or "no-leakage" and "doing" or "no-doing". When you use your mind you must ask yourself: Is this a vital function of Nature, or am I doing it? Carefully observing from these two double points of view you will reach the gate of Nirvana. And from the gate of Nirvana, you will arrive at understanding. As you look into the sky, suddenly you will see the dark gap of the heavens revealed before you. Thus observing the leaking or non-leaking of the mind, and the artificiality or naturalness of your actions you do not need to read anything or practice anything. It is essential only to regard the One Thing from morning to evening. All commandments are founded upon "doing-non-doing"; all meditation is founded upon "leakage-non-leakage." There is no other Buddhism.

To arrive at this point, however, you must first clear away the Five Afflictions.

The first affliction is *body-view*. You think your body exists separately, apart from the rest of the world. But it exists only because the

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N I R V A N A

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Sears away the husks and chaff
And the dust, blinding;
And always the calm, cleansed eye
Sees but one thing everywhere.

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 four great elements exist--water, earth, air, and fire. The air will dissolve the flesh away, and the bones will turn to powder. As a separate thing this body does not exist; neither do the aggregates of mind elements exist. But because you believe that your body exists separately, you feel that it belongs to you, and so you have the idea of possession.

The second affliction originates in the first: because you think your body exists separately, you believe that after death the form of your body will continue to exist. You make pictures of heaven and hell, you have an image of yourself there, in human shape--you call it your astral self, perhaps--possessing eyes, ears, hands, etc. Either this or you go to the opposite extreme and say that there is nothing after death--no energy, no thought, no vibration, no record of the deeds of this life;--all is wiped out.

The third affliction is that one thinks there is no system of causality, in this life or after death; one sees no parallel result of one's actions:--doing good, one may possibly expect bad results; doing evil, one may expect to be rewarded for such action.

These three are not such terrible afflictions--there is still hope; but the fourth and fifth afflictions leave none.

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The fourth is: never thinking for oneself, but always taking someone else's thoughts to act upon. And the fifth is clinging to a literal interpretation of the commandments. The monks of ancient India were required, for example, to dwell out-of-doors under the trees. Now India is a warm country and the commandment

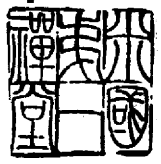
can be observed literally there, but how could one keep it if one lived in Alaska?... Therefore, one cannot follow such commandments literally, but must look for the principle behind each of them and apply it accordingly. One must find one's own commandments.

These Five Afflictions, then, must be cleared up; when they have been eliminated, then, by regarding the One Thing, you will find the Four Grounds. The first of these is *desire*, the desire to enter samadhi. One is always exhorted to annihilate desire, but this desire will bring you to samadhi. You work hard all day, then you go to bed and examine your mind to see whether or not it leaks; if it leaks, you must ask why, and how is the leaking to be eliminated? You cannot answer these questions by logic or philosophy; only actual practice by the mind can bring you to samadhi, and it is desire that will lead you to make the effort. So, the first ground is *desire*; the second is *samadhi*; the third, *dhyana*, and from *dhyana*, you will arrive at the fourth, *observation*.

"Clear away the Five Afflictions and regard the One Thing, and so obtain the Four Grounds." For any sentient being these teachings are enough for one lifetime.

Reconstructed by KIMO MARTIN

zen notes
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Vol. 2, No. 3 March
 One Year 1.00
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ZENRIN KUSHU

*Masa ni omoeri koshushaku to
 Sara ni shakushuko aran to wa.*

I am aware that the barbarian
 Has a red beard,
 But a red-bearded barbarian
 Taxes my credulity.

Mumonkan, 2

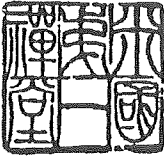
ON TRANSLATING
 CHINESE POEMS

Lindley Hubbell, regrets that translation, even though accurate, just does not bring poems alive into English. One reason for this is that poems written in characters are pictures as well as words. Ever try to "explain" a New Yorker cartoon? You can describe what is Hallowe'en, what the men from Mars are thought to look like, the attitude of American women to children, and so on, and when you're all through the response is a dim "I see." But this intellectual "I see" has little in common with the instantaneous reaction to a complex experience which occurs somewhere in the depths and shimmers through to the surface in the form of a chuckle. LIFE, in the current issue, giving its "view" of Zen, has this to say. "(Perception of the truth, followers of Zen believe) is not to be achieved by logical explanations or readings of the scriptures but by an intuitive revelation, somewhat similar, on a spiritual plane, to the laugh that spontaneously occurs when one has suddenly seen the point of a joke." Though somewhat feeble, to say the least, in conveying any idea of the Zen experience of satori, this statement might serve us well in characterizing one's reaction to a Chinese character poem. Dwight Wardell, Puzzler's League President, identifies a further possible loss. This poem, for instance, he tells us, has something of the nature of a rebus. As any reader can plainly see, the last three characters of each of the two lines are the same, but in a different order, "beard" occupying the central position in both lines, while "red" and "barbarian" are reversed. When your eye does not grasp this simultaneously with your comprehension of the meaning, your total perception of the poem is obviously dulled. Solution: Take up the study of Chinese characters!

Published monthly by
 THE FIRST ZEN INSTITUTE OF AMERICA, INC.
 156 WAVERLY PLACE, NEW YORK 14, N.Y.

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