

# ZEN NOTES



*During the visit of Miura Isshu Roshi those who have made their decision for Buddhism will be admitted to the universal communion of Buddhists by the repetition in his presence of the formula of the three refuges instituted by Sakyamuni Buddha two thousand five hundred years ago. As a mantra, the recitation of this formula serves also to open our regular services. This recitation is made as it would be in the Buddha's presence. Sokei-an's description of the meaning of this formula as here noted was recorded by Edna Kenton January 15, 1939.*

## THE THREE TREASURES

The first of the three treasures in which the Buddhist takes refuge is Buddha; the second is Dharma; the third is Sangha. During the life of the historical Buddha, "Buddha" was of course Sakyamuni Buddha, Dharma was his teaching, Sangha was his community; but with the passing of time the meaning of the three refuges of the Buddhist has gradually extended and developed.

**BUDDHA** For a long, long time after Sakyamuni Buddha's death, the followers of Buddhism were in confusion as to how to conceive of Buddha and struggled hard to come to a decision as to what Buddha is. This period covered the first four hundred years of Buddhist theory. We call it the quasi-Mahayana period.

To speak about the conception of Buddha today, using the name Buddha, is very difficult. We know that the Buddha lived about two thousand five hundred years ago. Yet what is Buddha now? We may say that Buddha is in Nirvana, or that he is in a human form--as some believe through reincarnation. We also say that Buddha is just a doctrine; or that Buddha is Reality, intangible to us from our deluded standpoint. And we say that Buddha is actual Being, though in the form of man. So, as you see, "What is Buddha?" is a profound problem. Buddhist scholars in the past made their own definitions of "What is Buddha?" and on these definitions were founded their particular schools.

In the Buddha's own time, when men could see him, there was no problem. Buddha was the Buddha, the teacher of the Sanghas--the groups of Buddhist adherents. After his death, however, these Sanghas lost the leader whom they called the Buddha. They had the Buddha's Dharma, his

teaching, and the Buddha's Sangha, his community of followers; but they had lost the main principle of their religion, the main object to which to pay their allegiance. Then a struggle began: The Buddha's teachings cannot be Buddha; a man cannot be Buddha. *What* is Buddha? To decide the argument five hundred monks gathered together and debated the question: "What is Buddha *now*?" Five hundred volumes contain this debate. According to the decision rendered, the body of the Buddha was not Buddha, the thoughts of the Buddha were not Buddha; Buddha was that which is the original nature of all sentient beings and which has *knowledge*. Therefore, after the Buddha's death there was still Buddha--the original nature which is the original knowledge of all human beings. And this Buddha is in the state of Nirvana; Nirvana is the domain in which Buddha resides. This appears to be a very complicated theory, but when you think carefully, it is very simple. In one word, the state of Nirvana is the state of Buddha. Thus we know *where* Buddha is--our knowledge proves this; and we can prove *what* he is--how he reveals himself to us in color, sound, etc. It is very mysterious to speak so about the Buddha who died two thousand five hundred years ago: today we see him, touch him with our hand--very mysterious!--but when you understand these mysterious words clearly, you are with Buddha.

Buddha, originally, was the god of the Sakyas, an aboriginal tribe which inhabited India before the coming of the Aryans. "Buddha" then was the name given to their god, the omniscient god, the god of wisdom. The Sanskrit *bodhi*, "wisdom," "knowledge," "to know," comes from the same root, as does the English word "forebode." Through Bodhi, the power of knowing, this wisdom, I know my own existence. In insentient beings this consciousness is in a state of dormancy, but to sentient beings awareness of their own existence is intrinsic.

The term "Buddha" thus, as you see, embraces Sakyamuni Buddha and all past and future Buddhas. This Buddha is omniscient, omnipresent and omnipotent. Transfigured, this Buddha appears before us as a person, a man. That Buddha appears before

南無歸依佛

南無歸依法

南無歸依僧

me, that I speak to Buddha and that Buddha speaks to me is the so-called mystical part of Buddhism. It is the particular attitude taken by the Zen School of Buddhism.

DHARMA What is Dharma? Dharma is the teaching

法

But Dharma is not only the teaching, it is that which appears before us in nature, the universe, and mind. All law is Dharma. When I say, "I take refuge in Dharma" this Dharma is not limited to that which was spoken to us by the Buddha. Today it includes all.

SANGHA In the Buddha's time the "Sangha" was

僧

small and limited. Buddha's Sangha was made up of monks, nuns, young monks, young nuns, young girls, young boys, and lay-followers, both men and women. But to speak in detail about Sangha is a very big problem.

In Buddhism there are two kinds of commandments, Sila and Vinaya. Sila belongs to the sphere of Dharma; Vinaya is the rule of the Sangha, and includes the law of the country and of its citizens, criminal law, all law. Of course the monks' commandments are limited to the monks' life, and there are also commandments for laymen; but in the broadest sense, Sangha, Buddha's community, includes all sentient beings.

Sangha is the center of active life, embraced in one love. According to the Buddha, love has two meanings; worldly love and love in the Dharma. Love in the Dharma means faith. Love which is compassion or sympathy is love on earth, or love in the home. But this love which is faith is a very interesting subject I shall speak about in more detail another time. In Sangha every one will become one body in faith, in love.

I think I have explained the three treasures.

Traditional ways of explaining the popular technical terms of Buddhism (such as the Three Treasures, in Sanskrit *Ratnatraya*, or, sometimes, *Tiratna*) have been in use from ancient days. According to the view of Buddhist scholars these technical terms were not invented by the Buddha himself but began to be formed gradually about the time of King Asoka, two hundred years after the Buddha's death. During the reign of King Kanishka of Northern India, in the second century A. D., they were slowly completed. After the transmission of Buddhism to China, Chinese Buddhists invented many terms, also, but these are not so well known as the Sanskrit.

WHOM DO WE CALL BUDDHISTS?--An Excerpt from the message of the President of the Sixth Great Buddhist Council at the Inaugural Session of the World Fellowship of Buddhists Conference, Dec. 1, 1954. Buddhists are those who follow the teaching and the advice of the Buddha, who willingly and clearly express *Buddham Saranam Gacchami*, I take refuge in the Buddha; *Dhammam Saranam Gacchami*, I take refuge in the Dhamma; *Sangham Saranam Gacchami*, I take refuge in the Sangha. Anyone who, be he of any race or country, recites and observes this is regarded as a follower of the Buddha. I enjoin all that this teaching be accepted with complete confidence and that they will strictly observe the *Tisaranam* (Three Refuges) and the precepts of virtue, and that they will radiate loving kindness widely that the blessings of the Buddha Dhamma will pervade the world to give it peace and prosperity.

The Buddha has preached that the great fires of *Lobha* (Greed), *Dosa* (Anger) and *Moha* (Delusion) are burning furiously and will ever threaten to consume the world. These world fires not being ordinary fires cannot be extinguished by ordinary means. Only the waters of *Dana* (Charity), *Sila* (Precepts) and *Bhavana* (Meditation) poured over them can succeed to extinguish them.

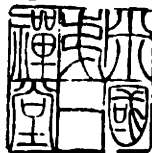
Accordingly, I enjoin the followers of the Buddha's Dhamma who are wisely aspiring to the greatest Peace, *Nibbana*, to practise the virtues of giving, learning, listening and adoring the Buddha-Dhamma, to observe *Sila* which directs all good deeds and words, and to meditate on *Metta* (Loving Kindness) to maintain loving kindness amongst the peoples.

This, my venerable monks, upasakas and upasikas, is my loving and earnest advice.

THE DESIGNER OF ZEN NOTES, SOL LIDA, has requested that the calligraphy of Miura Roahi, brushed especially for this issue, be handled as a piece of art rather than merely the Chinese writing of the formula of the three refuges, which it also is. We have therefore left the surrounding areas free of translation. To read the three columns of characters in Japanese, begin at the upper righthand corner and proceed downward, then leftward column by column; each character, with the exception of "Butsu" (which the reader can easily identify from the Page One character under the heading "Buddha") represents one syllable.

JAPANESE READING: *Namu kie Butsu, namu kie Ho, namu kie So.*

ENGLISH READING: I take refuge in Buddha, I take refuge in Dharma, I take refuge in Sangha.



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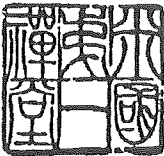
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