

ZEN NOTES



SOKEI - AN SAYS

REPOSE OF MIND

From an Informal Talk

You must understand one thing in Buddhism; there is no mystery in authentic Dharma. Some people misunderstand Buddhism. They think any one who studies Buddhism will acquire supernatural power, not knowing the real meaning of "supernatural." Especially in America today everyone wishes to have some power. They have enough power materially, therefore they wish to have some mental power. Their idea is to see through the wall, or to hear some voice the ordinary ear cannot hear. They are not trying to find repose of mind; their endless desire is to grasp something supernatural. I don't know what they would do with it if they had it. They are like children who wish to go to the circus--it is the childish element in their minds. Others think they will find in Buddhism the power to cure illness. They think Buddhism is a kind of hospital. But you must know that Buddhism is to bring repose to your mind. When you come to religion you must relinquish your desire to possess power, material or spiritual. You must cultivate your immobile mind. Religion is simply for your soul. That is all. Religion is not for anything but the repose of your mind.

Religion is not knowledge by which you can make money or your living, which you can use for some purpose. No one expects a religious teacher to save money for some use. Religious teachers are always on the verge of poverty. Their life is given to them by their followers. If they have no followers, they must accept death. If they are afraid of death, they cannot be religious teachers. And of course religious laymen mustn't expect to make money out of religion. It is more likely that they must spend their money for religion's sake.

When you come to religion you are coming back to the home of your soul. When you come back home you take a rest. You do not engage in any activity. This rest is the final goal of religion. To have this repose of mind, certainly you must gather knowledge of religion, but religion doesn't belong to knowledge--it belongs purely to the soul. It is like water; the reality of water is to be water--that is all. Of course living beings drink water and prolong their lives; they

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A MESSAGE FROM FRANCE

As befitting this auspicious year of our Buddha Jayanti Vesak was celebrated publicly on an international scale hitherto unprecedented on the Continent.

The "Amis du Bouddhisme" rented the large and beautiful hall in the Maison Internationale in the Cité Universitaire of Paris.

A golden Buddharupa, on its lotus pedestal some six feet high, dominated the whole stage framed in an arch of coloured lights and surrounded by a mass of white and golden flowers.

Seated on the right of the statue was the Ven. W. Rahula of Vidyalankara-pirivena representing the Sangha. He later in the evening made a memorable speech.

Near the Bhikkhu were seated Mr. W.L.B. Mendis in charge of the legation of Ceylon and U Ba Yi Secretary of the Burmese Legation who represented his country. Opposite the Bhikkhu sat the three Ambassadors from Thailand, India and Japan.

General H.E. Chai Prathipasen was in the chair and gave the opening address of welcome, after an offering of flowers had been made by the graceful Mrs. Mendis.

The Sirdar H.S. Malik, Ambassador of India, spoke of the important celebrations his Government has organized in honour of the Buddha and the festivities that will take place from now until next Vesak. He said that although professing Buddhists in India are not numerous the Dhamma of the Buddha has penetrated and moulded Hindu thought and ways of life. It is fitting that the Indian Government has chosen the Buddhist emblem of the Emperor Asoka as national emblem.

The following address was given by Mr. W.L.B. Mendis who spoke ably on the history of Ceylon as associated with the history of Buddhism in his country.

U Ba Yi representing his Embassy in Paris then spoke of the numerous Buddhist activities in Burma which we have often reported during the last year.

The next speaker was Prof. Paul Mus of the College de France who first read a sympathetic message from Prof. Filliozat (Head of the French Institute in Pondichery, India) absent for Vesak festivities in Ceylon. Prof. Paul Mus (eminent and erudite Orientalist) showed a human and living appreciation of the spiritual force of the Buddha Dhamma.

Representing U.N.E.S.C.O. Dr. Schneider (Cultural Department Chief in Paris) was no less appreciative of the beneficial influence of Buddhism in the present as in the past.

Among our other distinguished official guests were the chiefs of the delegations from Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, and the representative of the French Foreign Affairs Cultural Department.

Numerous Indian, Thais and Vietnamese students were in our International audience, although the majority was French. The community of Kalmucks was also represented, as was China. The same spirit of the Buddha Jayanti animated all of us.

After the President of "les Amis du Bouddhisme," Miss Lounsbery, had expressed our gratitude, two appropriate films were shown. The first had been especially sent from Ceylon at the urgent request of Mr. W.L.B. Mendis and these photos of Lanka's religious sites were wonderfully clear and impressive. The second film lent by the Indian Embassy was of Buddhist sites in the native land of the Buddha.

To Mme. La Fuente, Hon. Sec. of the "Amis du Bouddhisme" great appreciation was expressed by the distinguished diplomats and audience for the efficient organization of this historical reunion.

This evening not only proved that Buddhism is now attracting a larger and larger public, where until lately Buddhist studies were confined to academic circles, but that the ethical and philosophical teachings, as they become known, are admired also by more and more followers of other Faiths who now acknowledge Buddhism's civilizing and cultural influence and its healing hope for humanity.

After the public Vesak Eve Festival the Bhavana Sala of the "Amis du Bouddhisme" was visited on Vesak day by many Buddhists who came singly, or in groups, to do puja and meditate in silence. At the end of the day the Ven. Rahula gave the Precepts and chanted Gathas after a brief exposition of the Dhamma.

Unspectacular as it was this event is most significant of Buddhist religious fervour in Paris.

G. Constant Lounsbery

Pres. of "les Amis du Bouddhisme"

A MESSAGE FROM GERMANY

In the heart of Europe, in the city of Berlin, Germany, there exists a Zen Buddhist Mission of the Rinzaishu. It probably is the only of its kind in all of Europe. Now with the beginning of the year 2500 of the Buddhist era it has, following the conclusion of its preparatory work, reopened its activities.

Through its efforts it aims to foster the understanding of Zenshu, and more specifically of Rinzaishu. Among the means used to this end are the translation of Zen texts, as well as making them accessible to those interested. These comprise mainly translations of traditional works by the masters Huang Po, Wei Lang (Hui Neng), Ekai, etc.; problems posed by the *Mumonkan* and the *Hekigan roku*. Basic material used by the Mission consists of the traditional teachings of the revered Rinzai, greatest among the masters in China and founder of the Rinzai Sect, as well as the Instructions given by the revered S. Ohasama, pupil of the revered Sokatsu Shaku, 42nd Patriarch after Rinzai.

A small group of seriously interested people meet in the Mission for zazen. The Mission has at its disposal an excellent, selected library, where one can find works on Zen, on Ikebana (Flower Arrangement), Cha-no-yu (Tea Ceremony) and others, partly in the German language and partly in Japanese. The Mission has made contacts with Japanese circles. It refrains from publicizing itself to the outside. Its only aim is to be around, to provide a place where friends of Zen and of the Rinzaishu may meet and make the necessary contacts. The Mission is headed by a young German, who speaks Chinese.

For the future it is planned to bring a Zen master from Japan. At what time this plan may be realized cannot be told as yet, although certain personages from Japan have already taken a favorable interest in this undertaking. In the meantime those interested are advised in their search for suitable reading matter, which may range from the earliest available texts to the writings of modern experts on Zen such as Daisetz Suzuki. In this manner and in silence work which is not always easy but rather important is being done by people who have taken the vows:

*Sentient beings are numberless.
I take a vow to enlighten them all.*

*Worldly desires are endless.
I take a vow to uproot them all.*

*The gates of Dharma are manifold.
I take a vow to enter them all.*

*The goal of Wisdom is ever beyond.
I take a vow to attain it.*

Berlin, in June 1956

WANG-TSING-LUNG

THE FESTIVAL IN COMMEMORATION OF THE BIRTH, ENLIGHTENMENT, AND MAHAPARI-NIRVANA OF BUDDHA observed in many Buddhist lands fell this year on the 24th of May. Commencing on the 23rd of May, 1956, and concluding at the full moon of May, 1957, this 2500th Anniversary of Buddha and Buddhism will be celebrated on an unprecedented scale. No doubt our readers have read of the observations in the lands historical to Buddhism as they have been much publicized. But it was not alone in Buddhist countries that this event was noted. In many non-Buddhist countries and by many others than Buddhists its significance was also marked. In New York we received an unusual number of queries from the press this spring. All asked: "What makes you think the interest in Buddhism is growing?" The messages printed here are typical of many underlining its worldwide quickening of recent years.

In Japan and among Zennists the Birth of Buddha is celebrated April 8th, the Enlightenment December 8th, and the Mahaparinirvana February 15th. "Les Amis du Bouddhisme" are among many groups with whom we exchange publications. Of the group in Germany we heard from a touring friend. The Ohasama mentioned in the message from the leader of this group was a Dharma-brother of Sokei-an. For more details of Ohasama and Sokatsu Shaku, see ZN Vol. I, No. 10.

build factories and dam it, using the power to produce something. But water is not made for that. They are exploiting it, using it for their own purpose, but water is just water. And religion is just religion; religion does not exist for any purpose. Religion is the place where you are born; religion is the place where you die; religion is the place where you are living. It is nothing else. There is no other element in it. To have a purpose in looking for religion, therefore, is wrong.

You must remember that to be religious you must accept your present condition. If you are poor, you must accept that. If you wish to be rich, you must accept that also, and endeavor to be rich.

Of course we study religion. But before we begin to study we have faith in that religion. I studied Zen, but before I began to study Zen I had faith in Zen. Faith is the mother of religion. Without faith there is no religion. We study religion with eager mind, with soul, with warm heart, with deep thought, and with brave courage. Sometimes, people study something in a very queer way. For instance, someone is studying Sanskrit and his attitude in studying Sanskrit is like that of a baker baking a cake. It is just for his business. When an artist studies art he has love for it. He must have heart in it. So often those who study mathematics, philosophy, logic, study just as a business. I cannot understand that attitude. When you study religion you must not study in such a way! These days students go to a theological college and become ministers, just like bakers baking cake. I cannot see how anyone can do that. How can their hearts be so cold?

My religion is plain and simple and quiet. Zen is the religion of quietude. Zen is not a complicated religion at all. It is plain. Well, why does it become complicated? Because you think Zen is some kind of theory or knowledge, some kind of philosophy, and you think you can do something with it. No, Zen is just: I am sitting here and you are listening to my speech there. This is Zen.

All effort of religion is to find repose of mind. Repose of mind is not easy to attain. Of course you must do something with your physical body--make pilgrimages, go from one country to another, visiting teachers, read and study the sutras--to find the conclusion, but the conclusion is the repose of your mind.

You must grasp the foundation that is your own mind, not universal mind, not the teacher's mind, not Buddha's mind, but your mind. It is yours. And then you must stay there. That is what makes religion.

ZEN NOTES, we think you will be interested to know, is now finding an audience in the following places in addition to many of the United States of America: Australia, Austria, Burma, Cambodia, Canada, Ceylon, Denmark, England, France, Germany, Hawaii, Holland, India, Japan, Lebanon, Mauritius Island, Malay States, Switzerland, and Thailand.

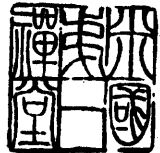
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