

ZEN NOTES

SOKEI-AN SAYS

I thought I would never repeat the same subject in a lecture but I have a desire that someone shall carry on this teaching after my death. In order to show you in what way I have been thinking of Buddhism and in what attitude I have been carrying on this teaching I must repeat the same subject again and again until you thoroughly understand the important pivots of my way of thinking. In Japan a Zen Master does not give this kind of lecture because there are many books written which students can read to gather their knowledge of Buddhism. But in this Western Hemisphere I cannot recommend any book which is translated into English by your scholars. Of course there are some translations which were not mistranslated from the original texts, but they always omit the most important pivots which must be emphasized in that translation in order to understand what is meant. I shall leave three or four Sutras translated by my own hand and besides that I shall tell you what way I am thinking about Buddhism and this will be material on which you can rely to promulgate this teaching. Of course when I open my mouth to speak about popular Buddhism, perhaps the words which I use to explain will not be at all in the nature of popular Buddhism, though I shall try to make it as plain as possible. It is, however, very difficult to grasp the pivots of Buddhism.

PIVOT: *that upon which something turns or depends; the central, cardinal or social factor, member, part, etc.*

The Chinese character signifying "pivot" here written by Miura Roshi will in future serve to identify articles concerning important pivots of Sokei-an's way of thinking.

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One day Chikan Zenji of Kyogen was mowing down the weeds around a ruined temple. When he threw away a bit of broken tile it clattered against a bamboo tree. All of a sudden he was enlightened. Whereat he extolled his attainment in this poem.

Upon the clatter of a broken tile
All I had learned was at once forgotten.
Amending my nature is needless;
Pursuing the tasks of everyday life
I walk along the ancient path.
I am not disheartened in the mindless void.
Wheresoever I go I leave no footprint,
For I am not within color or sound.
Enlightened ones everywhere have said,
Such as this is the Attainment.

Katto shu

SOKEI-AN SAYS This is a koan. Chikan Zenji made this poem to express his enlightenment. How to express your enlightenment is the point on which you must meditate to solve this koan.

It is perhaps strange to hear that when Chikan Zenji dropped a tile and it made a clatter, upon the sound he was enlightened. But of course this enlightenment did not come to him all of a sudden. It was preparing in his mind a long, long time. This casual incident--the clatter of a tile against a bamboo tree--gave his mind a shock and his enlightenment at that moment burst forth, as a fruit drops from a branch when one shakes a tree. Or, one might say, his mind was smoking a long, long time. The shock made it catch fire, so he "all of a sudden" realized what enlightenment is.

We are always talking about enlightenment, but to know what is enlightenment is something else. When I was a novice, I too was always thinking about enlightenment. I would read somewhere that someone was enlightened, or that enlightenment burst out in his mind. Somewhere even I remember reading "enlightenment thundered in his mind." But what was enlightenment? Today perhaps I would say it means "to realize the reality of true existence." Of course there are many kinds and degrees of realization. For instance, you left your pocketbook at home when you went to the restaurant. You order your food and begin to eat. Then all of a sudden you realize that you left your pocketbook at home. This, too, is some kind of realization, isn't it? Or, you are thinking about the reality of yourself and suddenly: "Oh, this is the reality of myself!" In that moment the realization will be experienced as enlightenment. But there is no flash of lightning through the mind. It is no such thing as that.

In the case of Chikan Zenji there are some lines which tell of the cause of his "sudden" enlightenment.

Chikan Zenji of Kyogen was a native of Ching Chou. He abhorred the layman's life and left his home. Being very honest in his desire to attain the Dharma, he directed his steps toward Wei-shan in T'an Chou and went to live with the monks there.

Having noticed that he was capable of being a vessel of the Dharma, and hoping that his wisdom would be kindled and intensified, the Osho Yu one day said to him:

"I am not questioning you about your everyday learning or about your knowledge of the scriptures. Answer me, however, in a word: What was the reality of yourself when you were still in your mother's bosom and were ignorant of any direction, east or west? I wish to give you my seal as a token of the genuineness of your attainment."

Kan was disconcerted and could not answer a word.

So you will understand, I shall comment in detail on these lines.

Chikan Zenji of Kyogen in T'an Chou

Kyogen was the name of a temple. T'an Chou is the name of the place. This was in the period of the T'ang Dynasty, the last part of the 7th century. T'an Chou was in Northern China, perhaps 150 miles north of Hangchow.

He abhorred the layman's life and left his home

He disliked the squabbles between brothers and sisters, the disharmonies between wife and husband, the struggles between friends--the usual human troubles. Therefore he left home.

Being very earnest in his desire to attain the Dharma, he directed his steps toward Wei-shan

Directed his steps means that he decided to go to Wei-shan. Wei-shan is the name of the mountain on which was the temple of Osho Yu, a famous Zen Master. This temple was in T'an Chou. I don't know how the Chinese call this today, but it was west of the mountains. Here was the T'an Chou Lake, very beautiful, very big; the entire state of Illinois would fit into that lake.

On the western shore of the lake was a beautiful, fat mountain. "Fat mountain" sounds strange, but the usual Chinese mountain is just a skeleton of stones with very few trees. This mountain had much earth on it and many flourishing trees. And the Osho of Wei-shan was a fat monk--very kind--and his mind was as big as the ocean. There are many types of monk, some are very severe, but this Wei-shan was very kind.

And he went to live with the monks

In the Orient one does not immediately make a conversation with the Master. First one must stay some months with the monks.

Osho Yu, having noticed that he was capable of being a vessel of the Dharma

That is, that he could be a vessel of Buddhism, that he had a natural talent to be a monk

And hoping that his wisdom would be kindled and intensified, one day said to him: "I am not questioning you about your everyday learning or about your knowledge of the scriptures

I am not questioning you about your school education or what you have studied or are doing here, or about monk's orders, or what not...

Answer me, however, in a word: What was the reality of yourself when you were still in your mother's bosom and were ignorant of any direction, east or west?

This is a very profound question. For everyone it is the same. I was in my mother's womb, but at that time I did not know that I was there. And I was a boy, one year old, two years old, three years old, but I did not know that I was an infant.

Now let us think about this. Before I was an infant, before I was in my mother's womb, what was I then? I was somewhere, otherwise I could not be here now, but we think that we have no memory of that period. Everyone passes through this period but no one knows anything about it--it is very queer, isn't it? We all talk about Nirvana, but it is just talk; we do not realize it.

Osho Yu said: "I wish to give you my seal as a token of the genuineness of your attainment."

In Zen the teacher makes his successor. A disciple must be authorized as the heir of his Master in order to become a Master himself. In such a way we authorize our disciples' genuineness of enlightenment from generation to generation. In Buddhism, in our Zen sect especially, no one can call himself a Master without his teacher's recognition. To get this recognition we have to stay in the temple a long, long time. Only an honest and persistent student is ever recognized by the Master. I entered the monastery at twenty, and when my teacher said, "Go where you like and speak about Buddhism," I was forty-seven years old.

Kan was disconcerted and could not answer a word.

As the first koan, the first problem, we ask our students: "Before father and mother, what were you--what was your reality?" It is very hard to make an answer to a Zen question like this. If you say: "I was Oneness," the Master will answer: "There was no such thing before father and mother." "Well, I was in Nirvana," you may say. And the Master will say, "In, out, no such thing. You are only talking about it, you don't realize it."

This Kan, standing before the Master, tried to make an answer, in fact he gave several answers to the Master and the Master denied those answers, just as I ring my bell when you answer!

Finally Kan said: "Please, Osho, you tell me the answer. I cannot make any answer. Please, you tell me."

Osho Yu said: "If I tell you the answer, it is my answer. The answer must be found by you, be your own answer. My telling you will not give you any help for your enlightenment."

Kan left the room of the Master and retreated into his own cell. And then, it is told, he opened this book, opened that book, and searched every-

of the state of Dharmakaya was erroneous, please teach me." Fu Jōza was certainly a very humble monk to ask this in front of an audience of a hundred people. "Very well, Jōza," the Zen monk told him. "If you really wish to understand the state of Dharmakaya, you must give up this teaching and go somewhere and practice your meditation for three months. You will surely come to Dharmakaya."

It is true you cannot see this Dharmakaya. And you cannot understand it through my lecture. You must prove it, by yourself, through your own meditation.

A NOTE ON SOKEI-AN'S HANDLING OF BUDDHIST TECHNICAL TERMS We prefer not to elaborate on the translation of terms as well-known as those used in this and similar pivot articles, believing that the reader can better "sense" their use by Sokei-an in relation to Buddhism and Zen if he avoids the quibbling necessarily involved in attempting to arrive at the best translations or definitions. It was not Sokei-an's habit to present such material in a scholarly or scientific way, but rather to speak his thoughts in whatever words at the moment came to transmit his own realization.

The story of Fu Jōza recounted by Sokei-an appears in Engo's commentary on the koan stated in Case 99 in *Hekigan-roku*. The temple in which Fu Jōza was preaching was in Yōshū (Chinese: the Kuang-hsiao-ssu in Yang-chou). Yang-chou is present Nanking. Fu Jōza later became the heir of the Zen Master Seppō Gison (822-908). Fu's own dates are unknown.

ZENRIN RUIISHU 10



*Take mitsu ni shite samatagezu ryūsui no
suguru koto o
Yama takō shite anī saen ya hakuun no tobu
koto o*

The thickness of the bamboos
Does not hinder the flowing stream in its
course.
How can the height of the mountains
Stay the white clouds in their flight?

竹密不妨流水過
山高豈礙白雲飛

Published monthly by

THE FIRST ZEN INSTITUTE OF AMERICA, INC.
156 Waverly Place, New York 14, New York
RETURN POSTAGE GUARANTEED

Zen Notes

Copyright 1956 by the First
Zen Institute of America, Inc.



Vol. III, No. 9, Sept.
1 Year \$1.00
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Founded in 1930 by Sokei-an Sasaki	First Zen Institute of America 113 E30 Street New York, New York 10016 (212)-686-2520 www.firstzen.org
	
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