

# ZEN NOTES

## THE JAPANESE ZEN MASTER HAKUIN EKAKU

By RUTH FULLER SASAKI



HAKUIN Ekaku Zenji was born on January 19, 1686, in Hara, a village on the Tōkaidō, lying between Mount Fuji and the seashore. His family name was Sugiyama and his given name Iwajirō. At fifteen he became a monk and received the Buddhist name of Ekaku. He seems to have adopted the name Hakuin in 1718, and it is by this name that he is most popularly known.

Though physically of small stature and rather odd appearance, Hakuin Oshō had an extraordinarily keen and forceful mind, boundless energy, and unusual organizing ability. These characteristics, combined with his broad and fervent Zen study, made him the greatest figure Japanese Rinzai Zen has ever known.

As a young man he was brash and egotistical. In his twenty-fourth year he attained his first satori while meditating on the koan "Mu." Convinced that his understanding of Zen was complete, though his teacher did not agree with him, Hakuin Oshō left the monastery and went from Zen master to Zen master, trying to get his view sanctioned. A year later, unsuccessful and somewhat humbled, he met Shōju Rōjin, a powerful master who completely defeated him and destroyed his intellectual pride. Under this teacher's severe discipline Hakuin Oshō remained for eight months, finally attaining profound understanding and becoming his teacher's heir.

Thereafter, he again travelled from one teacher to another but with a far different purpose. The period was one of deep decline for Rinzai Zen. The Zen masters of the time, heirs of various lines of Zen teaching that had come into Japan in the previous 500 years, clung to and taught only the koans the patriarchs of their own lines of transmission had brought with them from China. Hakuin Oshō carefully sought out these teachers. He studied under each the particular koans that master had and made them his own. Thus he became the repository of the total koan treasure of Rinzai Zen in Japan. Later he made use of all these koans in his own teaching, organizing and classifying them into a kind of loose progressive system for study, and transmitting them to his disciples.

In 1712 Hakuin Oshō gave his first *teishō* (lecture on a Zen text) at Shōin-ji, a small and dilapidated temple in his native vil-

(please turn to page four)

## SONG OF ZAZEN

Sentient beings are intrinsically Buddha.  
It is just as it is with ice and water;  
Apart from water there is no ice,  
Apart from sentient beings there is no Buddha.  
They do not know how near at hand He is.  
How vain their seeking in far distant places!  
They are like one who cries, "I thirst!"  
Whilst standing in the midst of water;  
Or like the child of a rich household  
Who goes astray in some poor village.  
The cause of their endlessly traversing the Six Ways  
Is the dark road of their own ignorance.  
Treading one dark pathway, then another,  
When can they ever leave Samsara!

O the Samadhi of the Mahayana,  
There are no words with which to praise it!  
Alms-giving, commandments, and the other Paramitas,  
Praying to Buddha, repentance, and religious practice,  
These and good deeds countless in variety,  
All are embraced within it.  
Even he who achieves the merit of but one sitting  
Wipes out his immeasurable accumulation of trans-  
gressions.

Where can he find the Evil ways?  
Indeed the Pure Land is not far away.  
When graciously this truth vouchsafes  
To touch his ear but once,  
He who offers praise and adoration  
Will thereby gain illimitable blessings.

How much the more, then, if you turn and enter in it  
And directly prove your own true nature!  
Your own true nature being no-nature,  
Already is far removed from wanton words.  
The gate of the oneness of cause and effect opens,  
The non-dual, non-triple road lies straight ahead.  
The formless form now being your form,  
Going or returning you go not elsewhere.  
The thoughtless thought now being your thought,  
Singing and dancing are the voice of the Law.  
How vast and unobstructed the empty sky of Samadhi!  
How perfect and bright the moon of the Four Wisdoms!  
At this moment what is there more for you to seek  
With Nirvana itself manifest before you?  
This very place, this is the Lotus Land,  
This very body, this is Buddha.

## ZAZEN WASAN

Shujō honrai hotoke nari.  
 Mizu to kōri no gotoku nite;  
 Mizu o hanarete kōri naku,  
 Shujō no hoka ni hotoke nashi.  
 Shujō chikaki o shirazu shite  
 Tōku motomuru hakanasa yo!  
 Tatoeba mizu no naka ni ite  
 Katsu o sakebu ga gotoku nari.  
 Chōja no ie no kō to narite  
 Hinri<sup>ni</sup> mayou ni koto narazu.  
 Rokushu rinne no innen wa  
 Onore ga guchi no yamiji nari.  
 Yamiji ni yamiji o fumisoete  
 Itsu ka shōji o hanaru beki!

Sore makaen no zenjō wa  
 Shōtan suru ni amari ari!  
 Fuseyajikai no sho haramitsu,  
 Nembutsu sange shugyō tō,  
 Sono shina ōki shozengyō,  
 Mina kono naka ni ki suru nari,  
 Ichiza no kō o<sub>nc</sub> nasu hito mo  
 Tsumishi muryō tsumi horobu.  
 Akushu izuku ni arinu beki?  
 Jōdo sunawachi tōkarazu.  
 Katajikenaku mo kono nori o  
 Hitotabi mimi ni fururu toki,  
 Santan zuiki suru hito wa  
 Fuku o uru koto kagiri nashi.

Iwan-ya mizukara ekō shite  
 Jiki ni jishō o shō sureba.  
 Jishō sunawachi mushō nite,  
 Sude ni keron o hanare tari.  
 Inga ichinyo no mon hirake  
 Muni musan no michi naoshi.  
 Musō no sō o sō to shite,  
 Yuku mo kaeru mo yoso narazu.  
 Munen no nen o nen to shite,  
 Utau mo mau mo nori no koe.  
 Zammai muge no sora hiroku!  
 Shichi emmyō no tsuki saen!  
 Kono toki nani oka motomu beki  
 Jakumetsu genzen suru yue ni?  
 Tōsho sunawachi renegeku,  
 Kono mi sunawachi hotoke nari.

衆生本來佛なり  
水と氷へ如くにて  
水を離れて氷なく  
衆生へ外に佛なし  
衆生近きと知らずして  
遠く求むりはかならず  
譬へば水の中に居て  
渴を叫ぶが如くなり  
長者へ家へ子とばりて  
貧里に迷ふに異ならず  
六趣輪廻へ因縁は  
己が愚癡の闇路なり  
闇路に闇路を踏み添て  
いつか生死と離るへき  
夫れ摩訶衍へ禪定は  
稱歎するに餘りあり  
布施や持戒諸波羅蜜  
念佛懺悔修行等  
其の品多き諸善行  
皆此の中に歸するなり  
一坐の功と成す人  
積々し無量罪はらふ

惡趣何處に有るや  
淨土即ち遠からず  
辱なく此の法を  
一念に觸る時  
讚歎隨喜する人は  
福を得ること限ら  
況へ自ら廻向して  
直に自性を證するは  
自性即ち無性にて  
已に戲論を離れたり  
因果一如の門開け  
無二無三の道直  
無相の相と相とし  
行歸り餘所なく  
無念の念と念として  
歌ふの舞ふ法聲  
三昧無礙の空しく  
四智圓明の月さへ  
此時何と云ふ  
寂滅現前する故に  
當處即ち蓮華國  
此身即ち佛なり

lage of Hara. In later years he restored Shōin-ji and made it his home temple. Today it is a place of pilgrimage for all Zen students.

Hakuin Osho's real career began in 1718. From then on he travelled ceaselessly over the country, preaching and teaching. His brush was as agile as his tongue. He has left us commentaries on many Zen texts, innumerable original works, essays, and poems, and a voluminous collection of letters. As a painter and calligrapher he was equally prolific, and his work in these fields is greatly admired and treasured today. All his productions bear the stamp of his energetic yet comprehensive and penetrating mind. Though sometimes rough in execution, they exhibit a power and vigor that refuses to be impeded by petty details.

In the building and restoring of temples Hakuin Oshō was likewise active. The beautiful mountain monastery of Ryūtaku-ji near Mishima was constructed under his direction. Its present Rōshi is Nakagawa Sōyen, who has several times visited Nyogen Senzaki's Zen group in Los Angeles.

Countless Zen monks felt the blows from Hakuin Oshō's stick. Among his numerous Dharma-heirs were Tōrei Enji, famous as a literary stylist and calligrapher, and Gasan Jitō, from whose two heirs, Takujū Kosen and Inzan Ien, flow the two streams of present-day Rinzai Zen.

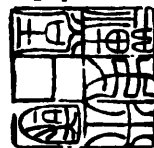
On January 18, 1769, at the age of 83, having previously arranged all his affairs in anticipation of his death, Hakuin Oshō died quietly in his sleep.

*Zazen Wasan* or "Song of Zazen" is Hakuin Oshō's best known and best loved poem. It is traditionally recited at the end of the zazen period preceding the *teishō* given to laymen by a Zen master, and on many other occasions as well.

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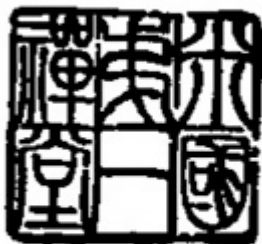
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