

# ZEN NOTES



## SOKEI-AN SAYS

**THE NEW YEAR** On the day which begins the year we feel with joy that our life has been renewed. Having finished the past year, now when we are about to walk into the fate of the new year, once again we meditate on the foundation of our life.

We feel we must begin our life anew from the foundation, as when you clean the house you take the carpet up from the floor and dust. One who is without religion does not know this way of cleaning, but when we have true religion we always come back to the practice of taking refuge in Dharmakaya, in Reality. Holding no thought in our mind, we confront Dharmakaya and take refuge in it. Indeed, once you have realized Reality, every moment of your life, whatever you do, is based on this bottomless truth.

We call Buddha Tathagata. "Gata," a Sanskrit word, to us means "to go and to come," "coming and going." "Tatha" means "thus." The Buddha, who went from and came back again to sentient life is the best example of the Buddhist way. He left his home when he was thirty years old and came back to teach mankind. We say "he went and came" but in this going and coming the turning point is the important thing, that is, his attaining enlightenment under the Bodhi tree. Without this, his going and coming back would have no significance.

When he went he left his home and abandoned all desire to take what I call the "King's" way. That is, he gave up any idea of becoming a political leader or war lord or proprietor of a productive establishment. Absolutely alone, he vanished from the world of desire and attained Buddhahood.

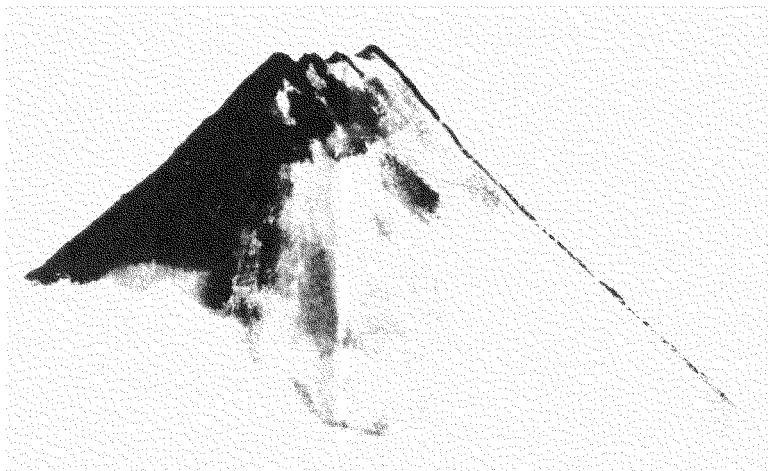
It is very clear to anyone that when a man becomes an ascetic or a monk and takes refuge in an aloof attitude such as the Buddha's, transcending the intentional and desirous struggle of existence, he is living the religious life. This ascetic way of life has little relationship to that which lay persons in the home take. But today, especially in the West, socially and economically, the distinction between the man of religion and the layman is not very sharp. The clergy wear the robe, it is true, but their way of life is not too different from that of the man in the home, so really this old mode of asceticism has ceased.

Of course we are living in an age when materialism is in the ascendance. Man's hand has lost its art. Hand and fingers have become like the hoof of a horse. The mind fails to possess the power of individual thinking. In the morning our newspaper does our thinking for us. No individual psychology exists in human society. All psychology

is created by the newspaper. The brain of the human being has given up the faculty of individuality. It has returned to a group consciousness like that of the salmon in the ocean. This is the menace of materialistic civilization. This period must pass quickly or the intellect of the human being will perish in a few centuries. This period began one or two hundred years ago; it may exist two or three hundred years more.

As people today so rarely think of living the life of the ascetic, we do not often encounter a man who comes back to human life from Reality. But if there is such a man, what attitude he should take after having confronted Reality is a great problem. Perhaps he says: "I will still take a spiritual attitude, not a materialistic attitude?" But what does he mean by not taking a materialistic attitude? Shall he take the attitude of fire, the attitude of water, the attitude of air? If we ask him, perhaps he answers: "I shall enter into everything without discrimination of form or quality. My mind will enter into that bowl, into this lamp, into everything. My mind will enter the body of man, of woman, of a banker, of a statesman, of a dictator, regardless. I shall enter everything, as heat enters or pervades everything. Heat enters stone, brick, iron, air, water; it pervades in multifold directions at once. Nothing can prevent the pervasion of heat into everything, and it burns everything and annihilates all existence. It annihilates even water, turns it into steam...vapor..."

A man who takes this attitude makes his slogan: "Might makes right." He says: "To accomplish my aim I do not hesitate to take all means. I shall kill, steal, commit adultery, lie, but I will attain the goal." In effect, he licenses himself to commit crime. Many religious teachers even after attaining enlightenment fall into this pitfall. Many countries, too. Some country may say: "I proclaim my own religion. God does not mind my annihilating all those people. Certainly I am cultivating the land for both countries...I am fulfilling God's purpose." Well, I am not now discussing whether it is God's purpose or not,



MANY deep meanings are thought to be in the name of Fuji, the sacred mountain of Japan, whose summit consists of two peaks that are one--one peak that reaches to heaven, its shape that of a fan upside down. Its ancient meaning, some scholars say, was "fire." Its silhouette is one of the traditional symbols associated with the New Year.

Those who mount Fuji-san do so in ten stages. From the first to the third stage in my youth you could go up by horse. From the third to the fifth you would go on foot, singing a song. From the fifth to the eighth stage you don't know how to go. Bending back, you see the peak straight above your head. Sometimes you meet a thunderstorm, sometimes you are carried away by a strong wind. Stones roll down upon you and smoke bursts out from under your feet. You feel the mountain shaking, palpitating. From the eighth stage to the top you are in desperation. Of course I am not speaking of Fuji mountain only, but of the hard struggle of this life, the way of meditation.

On top of Mt. Fuji there is the huge crater of the volcano. Today there is no smoke, just steam, for it has not been active for more than two hundred years.

Leaving the summit to return to the foot on the Subarashii road, you don't descend by walking; you sit on a straw cushion and slide, for the lava left one straight sand path down. To go up takes about six hours; to come down two. When you reach the foot you will see your straw pillow is thin as paper.

what I am pointing out is that such countries take the attitude of heat--to enter everything and turn it to their own purpose.

There is another attitude. According to the Eastern way of thinking, "water" signifies the discriminating attitude. Water washes away the sand so only the gold remains. When a man attains enlightenment, attains the infinite spiritual body, realizing he must come back to human life, he says: "Well, now I am spiritual, I am soul, I am Reality, I am Wisdom. Life in California is too easy for me. I shall go to New England to farm. Showering sweat, I shall grow cucumbers. I shall go into the human body, I shall go into the world, but I shall discriminate. This is a woman, go away. This is someone who tells lies, go away. This is a military man, go away." One by one they go and after a while there is nothing left. This is not taking the right attitude to return to human life either.

The true attitude of the Buddhist is to get into everything. Embody yourself in it and make yourself out of it. When you enter water you must become water. When you enter food you must become food. When you take wine, you must become wine. When you take wine, thinking, "It is a sin, but I like it" that is not the way. When you take wine, you must become wine. Make real unity out of it. When you, a young woman, talk to an old woman, do not take a distasteful young woman's attitude. You and the old woman are one. Just say: "Grandmother, how do you feel?" I, a man, speak to a woman, and she, a woman, speaks to a banker, and he, a banker, speaks to me, a monk, and I, a monk, speak to a cat. When I speak to my cat I do not speak my language, I speak the cat's language. This is the real attitude of the Buddhist to daily life. Transform yourself according to the circumstances which you undergo. Change the quality of the thing without destroying the form of it. Without analyzing existence, turn it into essential existence. Without unraveling complexity, understand its Reality. In this way, without changing your daily life, you can attain enlightenment.

*Reconstructed by ENEN*

THERE are many references to animals and their attributes in Buddhism. The Zen zoo, particularly, houses breeds unmatched in fact or fable. As time-space permits, we shall hope to improve your acquaintance with them. Examining an interesting new quarterly in English "devoted to the Hongwanji tradition of Shin Buddhism" sent us by its editor, Mr. Karl Eidmann, with whom we had the pleasure of several informative and enjoyable talks in Kyoto, we noted the quotation from which comes its title, THE LION'S ROAR, "Always among the masses will I preach the Law with a Lion's roar!" With it, we inaugurate our consideration of the Roar.

This gives us an excuse to present to you what we believe is the most delightful exposition of the art of roaring we have ever read. It was probably written in the 16th century by an Englishman, William Shakespeare. We hope you like it.

*The scene is that in which the players are discussing what parts they are to play, in A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM*

**Snug** Have you the lion's part written? pray you, if it be, give it me, for I am slow of study.

**Quince** You may do it extempore, for it is nothing but roaring.

**Bottom** Let me play the lion too: I will roar, that I will do any man's heart good to hear me; I will roar, that I will make the duke say 'Let him roar again, let him roar again.'

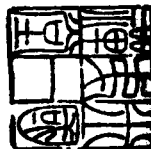
**Quince** An you should do it too terribly, you would fright the duchess and the ladies, that they would shriek; and that were enough to hang us all.

**All** That would hang us, every mother's son.

**Bottom** I grant you, friends, if that you should fright the ladies out of their wits, they would have no more discretion but to hang us: but I will aggravate my voice so that I will roar you as gently as any sucking dove; I will roar you an 'twere any nightingale.

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