

ZEN NOTES



Once when the Buddha was sojourning in the quiet meditation grove of Saketa some nuns put a question to him. "O Lokanatha, we pray you to elucidate for us what fruit and what merit there will be from meditating in the Samadhi of Formless Mind, in the emancipation which is neither emergence nor submergence and in the emancipation in which one lives fully in that wherein he is living?"

The Buddha replied: "O nuns, if you meditate in the Samadhi of Formless Mind, in the emancipation which is neither emergence nor submergence, and in the emancipation in which one lives fully in that wherein he is living, there will be the fruit of Wisdom and the merit of Wisdom."

SOKEI-AN SAYS

FORMLESS MIND is the usual attitude of the Buddhist mind. The Buddhist does not cherish any form--thoughts--in the mind when he doesn't need to. It is our attitude. Untrained mind is like an alarm clock--tock, tock--with thoughts going on always from morning to evening. The man with an untrained mind has hardly any time to see anything he is so busy with his thoughts. He doesn't know whether the day is clear or rainy. He goes home through Central Park, but his mind is so busy he doesn't notice that the moon is full. He doesn't even see the beautiful moon. He pursues mind and mind pursues him. This is not the attitude of a Buddhist. The Buddhist knows that the mind is like the body; it needs rest. When we have used our body from morning to evening we give it a rest. Mind also needs rest, so we cultivate the habit of resting our mind.

Mind is full of thoughts which have form. Form means thoughts, thoughts which have shape--notions about love, about fame, about money, about squabbles with friends, about philosophy. It is our bad habit to keep this unenlightened mind, to be unable to release or emancipate ourselves from it. It is also our bad habit to think everything with Reason. Naturally the conclusion is not Real. After all, Reason is only Reason, not Reality. Formless Mind means Mind which has no thoughts. All thoughts are annihilated. Samadhi is concentration.

The question the nuns asked the Buddha is the same question many of you ask me: "What is the merit of meditating in the Samadhi of Formless Mind?" You wish to know about things, so you read books and think, but what is the merit, you ask, in resting with no thoughts in the brain? Will you not just go back to stupidity, to the primitive? What is the merit of going back to primal mind, Formless Mind?

Everyone asks this question. Those who take a material view of the original state of mind think it is dead, empty, like a sheet of paper, or stone or brick. They think if mind is not in the state of activity it goes back to the insentient state. Our view is different. We believe mind goes back to original dynamic power. It is like the relationship between waves and the ocean. The everyday active work of mind is analogous to the waves. When we rest, taking the Samadhi of Formless Mind, Mind is like the bottomless ocean. All potentiality is there. It is the state of omnipotence. It has religious meaning as well as psychological. If you doubt this, try it.

But it is difficult to attain, this Formless Mind. Closing your eyes, you think you have attained it, perhaps, then you find you are only in the midst of your thoughts, not in the real state of Formless Mind at all. To reach that state you need training and many years of endeavor in philosophy so you do not make any mistake. Of course many people think they are in Emptiness when they are merely thinking the *term* Emptiness. It is difficult to attain this Formless Mind. If you are not studying with an authentic teacher you run the risk of falling into pseudo-Emptiness.

Formless Mind means you are not staying in fixed mind. Mind is always fluctuating: it does not reside in one place. It is in the true sense "formless." Mind passes like a mirage, like images before a mirror. Knowing it is ephemeral, you do not cherish it. When you do not cherish it, you are in the ground of Formless Mind.

Dilettantes of Buddhism think to cover the eyes, the ears, the mouth, like the three carved monkeys, is to be in Formless Mind. Their view is erroneous. It is dead Buddhism, not real Buddhism. It ruins the country, it ruins the people, it ruins the people's souls.

Now think about the words "emergence and submergence." Emergence from what and submergence into what? What is the Buddhistic sense of these two words?

To illustrate, we think of our mind as a tree. It has roots, a trunk, boughs, branches and leaves. Our consciousness is exactly like a tree. A tree is in the form of a crystallization. The universe is in the form of a crystallization. Everything in nature has this form of crystallization. A tree takes many forms according to the sun, the weather, the wind which blows, and the manners of other trees standing near it, its environment. But its real Nature is to show its own crystallization.

The human mind is exactly like the tree. According to Buddhism, there are five stages to human mind. The bottom, or root, is called vijñana. Vi-

jnana is subdivided into three parts, deepest or amala-vijnana; adana-vijnana, and alaya-vijnana, everlasting-consciousness, the consciousness of the consciousnesses, or call it mother-consciousness. It is rootless. That means we cannot find the depths of this consciousness by meditation. It is fathomless.

Samskara, the unconscious or semi-conscious activities of mind, is like the trunk of the tree.

This present consciousness reflects not only what comes in from the outside through our five senses, but also the thoughts which take place inside the mind are reflected upon it. In the five skandhas, this is called samjna.

Then the trunk of consciousness comes to the joint of the branches-- vedana, sense-perception. It is not, however, yet subdivided into its five branches.

Subdivided into branches, we have the five sense-perceptions with the five organs of sense-perception. This consciousness reacts to the outside and creates many sensations on the vedana. If we meet a strong vibration of ether, for instance, our eye perceives blue light. If we meet a slow vibration, our vedana perceives red.

Thus our consciousness creates phenomena. This is "emergence." Emergence is thought of as from the bottom of consciousness to the outside. "Submergence" is from the outside consciousness to the deepest consciousness, from the material to alaya-consciousness.

When we explain consciousness we must use some such illustration, as one explains the tones in music--do, re, mi, fa, sol, la, si--in an abstract sense. Of course you cannot play music by abstract analysis. In Buddhism it is the same. You explain by using terms such as the five consecutive stages of consciousness, the five skandhas. But in meditation you attain emancipation from both emergence and submergence. You will become free of the scales and your consciousness will become your own. Until then your consciousness is merely "packaged" in the terms known as Buddhism. You must destroy all those terms of Buddhism. Come back to your Self and meditate upon it.

Well, if your purpose is just to come back to your usual mind, why must you study, why must you practice meditation for many years? What is the merit, what is the fruit of it? This was what the nuns were wondering about. I, too, wondered about this question when I was practicing meditation, struggling so many hours in fear and agony. Then one day I decided: "I don't care if I don't come back. I will just stay here and meditate." Well, when I did come back of course I found myself in just the same place, in this world where we are living now. We don't need more than this.

But Buddhism teaches that you must live fully where you are living. You must live fully where you are. I studied Buddhism until I was forty-five years old. I came into the monastery when I was twenty-one. Now I am fifty-eight. Nothing has changed. Earth did not go up to heaven and

heaven did not come down to earth. I did not attain the state of a demi-god. I am still a human being. So what is the merit of practicing Buddhism? Buddhism is like a toothache; when it is gone nothing is different. Then why did I spend so much money at the dentist's?

The Buddha replied: "O nuns, if you meditate in the Samadhi of Formless Mind, in the emancipation which is neither emergence nor submergence, and in the emancipation in which one lives fully in that wherein he is living, there will be the fruit of Wisdom and the merit of Wisdom."

This is the Buddha's conclusion. Through many practices to and fro, back and forth, through the scales of consciousness, we attain Wisdom. This is the fruit of the practice of Buddhism. Our consciousness developed from the consciousness of the other types of sentient beings. They have been living many million years in the world, but they have not attained Wisdom. What is it that makes human beings different from animals? It is Wisdom, Self-awareness. Self-awareness is the pivot of Buddhism. We are not living in unconsciousness; we are living consciously. We are not living at the mercy of Nature; we realize Nature within us and use it consciously. Wisdom is Nature. Nature is Wisdom. This Wisdom is the pivot of Buddhism. We do everything with it. There is no other Wisdom in human life. Wisdom is the pivot of human life.

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BABY TALK

When Robin, aged one and a half, had tasted her first piece of smoked boeuf, she was asked: "Did you like it?" No answer. "Didn't you like it?" No answer. Then a dimpled finger pointed and she said: "More, more."

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