

ZEN NOTES



To gain courage for our painful practice, we students endlessly compare notes, for we find glimpses caught in mirrors can sometimes outleap years of formal study. In this issue we bring you notes of two places and several persons.

THE PRACTICE OF CHIHKUAN

You have asked me to say something about the practice of Chihkuan, (Shikan) meditation. The task is very difficult for me from three points of view: first, it is impossible for me to describe the absoluteness, the Nirvana or the perfectness of enlightenment which is beyond worldly expression; second, anyhow the description of practice, though careful, is distorted from the reality; third, my English writing was so badly trained that it cannot express what is in my mind clearly. But to my mind the introduction of the practice in Taiwan to fellow Buddhists in the States is a very valuable task and I must try my best.

Since my duty is to talk upon the practice I leave alone the theory of the Goal which is the same as that of your Zen Sect but with a different viewpoint and a different method of presentation. The practice of Chihkuan which is a mind Karma performed upon the Alaya Vijnana gradually is different from your Zen practice which has no performance, no influence and no result, but throws away all attachments and waits for the sudden appearance of the true nature or Buddha Mind. Though the methods are different they lead to a common goal of deliverance. I think I need not describe the detailed performance to save time and I only state the important principle of the method. At first we make our minds very tranquil and concentrate and then we meditate on the truth of the worldly law of causation and the impermanence and unreality of phenomena. Those seem to be real but are really unreal. We consider and feel them as though real for the instant only. This wrong conception makes us cling to worldly events. After we have meditated on these we try to throw away wrong thought and wrong attachment. We feel that upon the stopping of worldly grasping we reach a state of mind
(please turn to the last page)

CALIFORNIA STYLE As for Paul Reps, I feature him herein because I feel rather guilty for having judged him wrongly. Some years back, the soil of America was graced by the feet of a famous Japanese dancer, a star in what Reps called "The No Dance." I received an invitation to witness the Madam's artistry. The invitation read: "There will be no refreshments served--but please bring pillow. Paul Reps." The friends with whom I lived (very strict Christians) wondered at such a strange invitation: to see a No Dance and "Please bring pillow." But I knew the guests would all be seated on the floor around the dancers. I brought my friends with me; and the entire gathering numbered nearly one hundred.

During the evening--and on several occasions, in fact, Reps proved himself to be Mr. Zen--at least I thought so. For instance, one of the guests turned out to be the composer of a soulful piece of music. Having a recording at hand, the hostess requested Reps to play it. No sooner had the music started its melodious sounds than the hostess began to explain the music, the meaning of the sounds, the soft and low, the high and sharp. Reps came over and shut the machine off, took up the record and replaced it in the record cabinet. Astounded, the hostess exclaimed: "Why did you stop the music?" With timely nonchalance, Reps replied: "I thought you wanted to hear it." He followed this with: "Bring out the dancer and.." In spite of the hostess' efforts to be heard for a while at least, Reps, being a positive Positive, easily won over Negation and it was decided that the next on the program would be the No Dance. However, the hostess insisted that Mr. Nyogen Senzaki first explain to the guests all about the No Dance. Reps interrupted with: "The best explanation of anything is to see it!" "But," replied the hostess, "as Mr. Senzaki is here to introduce this famous Japanese dancer, I want him to explain her dancing."

"If I were introducing a dancer," said Reps, "I'd simply bring her out and let her dance." But the hostess won out and Senzaki was brought to the center of the circled group where he began to explain the No Dance. After he had talked about ten or fifteen minutes, a man sitting near me turned to his companion and whispered: "This fellow may be a Zen teacher, but the talk he is giving is anything but Zen." "What do you mean?" asked his friend. "Too long, too long--too LONG!"

At this point a guest, a middle-aged man, near Senzaki, lay over to one side, stiffened out, and died. Naturally, this stopped Senzaki's explanation of the No Dance. Not only that, but now Senzaki was on his knees examining the man's eyes, now rubbing his hands, now sitting in the Buddha posture and resting the man's head in his lap.

Reps was all excited. He seemed to have lost his Zen. "Let's cut out the smoking, folks," he asked. "Let's give our friend some air. Mill around, you people--take a walk--send for a doctor, call an ambulance somebody..."

ZEN--A METHOD OF RELIGIOUS AWAKENING

The last installment of a talk given by Ruth F. Sasaki before a group of students of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, Mass., on November 25th 1958.

THOUGH you have now heard something about Zen and Zen practice, undoubtedly you still wonder why, through the centuries, people have continued to pursue this curious study. What can they hope to get through all this effort? The classic Zen answer, and the Buddhist answer as well, is "Nothing."

I don't profess to know clearly what is causing so many Americans and Europeans to interest themselves in Zen today. In fact I should like to have someone tell me. I know they are said to be unable to have faith in traditional religious doctrines, to find in scientific materialism poor nourishment for their spirits, to feel that modern life, with its multitude of machines, is an exhausting and unrewarding way of life for them as human beings. And, of course, there are always the few who don't like to conform and who seem to think that perhaps in Zen they will find justification for their own personal interpretations of freedom.

I have indicated to you why I began to study Zen. Certainly, however, many persons in the past and in Japan today, have been driven to this practice by a consuming urge to discover the answers to such difficult and profound questions as: What is the nature of man and of the universe? What is life? What is death? I don't know if you will find satisfactory answers to these problems through Zen or not. Certainly you will not unless, through your Zen practice, through seeing into your own deepest mind, you attain intuitive insight into the *THIS* within which all the answers lie.

To the three basic questions that men have always asked, Who am I? Where am I? Why am I? strange as it may seem the answers have been spelled out in the writings of the Zen masters and in the Buddhist scriptures as well.

To the question, "Who am I?" the answer is "Buddha."

To the question, "Where am I?" the answer is, "In Nirvana."

To the question, "Why am I?" the answer is, "For no purpose."

The realization of these answers is left to you to attain.

In the course of studying and practicing Zen for a long, long time and in the course of realizing for oneself the

answers to these questions, the small personal self gradually dissolves and one knows no self but the Great Self, no personal will, only the Great Will. One comes to understand the true meaning of the term *wu-wei*, or in Japanese *mui*, 'non-action,' for one knows that, as a separate individual, there is nothing further to do. One does not cease to act, but one's actions rise spontaneously out of the eternal flow of the activity of *THIS*, with which one is not only in accord but *IS*.

The man of Zen is clearly aware that he is abiding and will eternally abide in *THIS AS IT IS*, that the world in which he is living his everyday life is indeed *THIS* in its myriads of manifestations, forever changing, forever transforming, but forever *THIS*. In the words of the sutra: "Nirvana is none other than Samsara; Samsara is none other than Nirvana."---- END.

Dear Everyone:

I AM sorry limitations of space have necessitated this talk being spread out over three and a half installments. Though I tried to cut it, in the end there seemed to be no part that might not be informative to some one. My intention has been to clarify a few of the points about Zen on which I have found considerable confusion among western people interested in it.

That confusions should arise is quite understandable when we consider how relatively new to the West Zen Buddhism is. For a great religion to move from one culture to another takes many years and involves many elements. Not the least important of these latter is for men in the culture to which the religion is moving to understand how men in the other culture think and from what standpoint they view life and the universe about them. More than one generation is necessary for this. It was something like four hundred years after the introduction of Buddhism to China and after hundreds of Buddhist texts had been translated and even retranslated, before Chinese thinkers began really to grasp the Indian Buddhist view. It was only in the thirteenth century that Rinzai Zen was firmly established in Japan, though the first Zen teachers had arrived there as early as the beginning of the ninth century and the country can be said to have been Buddhist for two hundred years before that. So we in America must not be too impatient if, in our lifetime, the total of Zen literature is not translated into English and Zen masters are not residing in our major

cities.

Actually it will be just sixty-six years ago this summer since the first Rinzai Zen master set foot on American soil. From him personally as well as from his coming all Rinzai Zen activity in the western world may correctly be said to stem. That man was Shaku Soyen, Chief Abbot and Roshi of the Rinzai Zen temple, Engaku-ji, in Kamakura, Japan.

In the year 1893, a congress of the religions of the world was held in Chicago, Illinois, in connection with the World Columbian Exposition. This was the first time, I believe, that representatives of the outstanding non-Christian faiths had ever been invited to meet together in fellowship with those from the various Christian churches and denominations. To this congress, among others, came two outstanding Asiatics, Swami Vivekananda from India and Shaku Soyen Roshi from Japan. Swami Vivekananda's importance for the Vedanta movement in the West is too well known to need further comment. Shaku Soyen's place in the history of western Rinzai Zen perhaps should be recalled.

In setting out on his journey to America, Shaku Soyen had defied the strong opposition of his ultra-conservative fellow clerics and lay disciples. At the Congress he made a deep impression upon his fellow members through his vigorous addresses and his forceful personality. When he returned to Japan he had set a precedent that at least some Japanese Zennists were to feel called to follow.

In 1905, at the invitation of American friends, Shaku Soyen returned to America to lecture in San Francisco and several other cities. At that time he brought with him as his interpreter, one of his sanzen students, a former high-school teacher of English, Daisetz Suzuki. The young Suzuki did not go back to Japan with his master, but remained in America for fourteen years in the home of Dr. Paul Carus, as that eminent philosopher's secretary, teacher of Chinese language, literature, and thought, as well as literary collaborator. Everyone knows the key role Dr. Suzuki, now eighty-eight, has played in the spreading of Zen in the West during the intervening years.

During his stay that year in San Francisco, Shaku Soyen was joined by another of his sanzen students, Nyogen Senzaki, who had followed his master from Japan. Senzaki San did not continue on with his master, but remained in San Francisco. His devoted work for Zen on the West Coast ceased only with his death in the early summer of last year.

In 1906 Shaku Sokatsu, the eldest Dharma-heir of Shaku Soyen, arrived in

San Francisco with ten disciples and the intention of establishing a Zen community there. After four years of struggle, the project was abandoned. Shaku Sokatsu returned to Japan with all but one of his disciples. That one was Sasaki Shigetsu, later to become Sokei-an Roshi and the founder of our First Zen Institute of America.

My own introduction to Rinzai Zen came through the kindness of Dr. Suzuki, and though my practice was begun under Nanshinken Roshi of Nanzen-ji in Kyoto, who had the benevolence to take me as a student when other roshis refused, it was resumed after his death under Sokei-an Roshi. After Sokei-an's death in 1945, I was able to return to Japan and continue sanzen with Goto Zuigan Roshi, Shaku Sokatsu's eldest Dharma-heir and the disciple who had acted as English interpreter for the group accompanying their master to San Francisco in 1906. So, with Sokei-an's other American disciples and those of Goto Roshi, I may consider myself a great grandchild of that pioneer of roshis Shaku Soyen.

Asahina Roshi, who travelled in America some three or four years ago, is, of course, the present Chief Abbot and Roshi of Engaku-ji, formerly Shaku Soyen's temple in Kamakura. Nakagawa Soyen Roshi, who came to Los Angeles last summer, though not in the teaching line of Shaku Soyen, came at the invitation of Nyogen Senzaki's group.

Long prior to the war the sect of Soto Zen opened temples in America, but since the primary purpose of these was to serve the religious needs of Japanese adherents, no special efforts were put forth to make the tenets of this Zen sect known to western people. In recent years, however, several high ranking Soto priests have visited America and Europe and a number of Soto Zen groups have been formed.

And now Miura Isshu Roshi is about to come to our Institute in New York. He is an heir in the second generation of my own first master Nanshinken Roshi. Through him I earnestly hope that more Americans may undertake the remarkable method of religious awakening provided by Rinzai Zen and reach deeper and deeper realization of the Buddha-truth.

To Shaku Soyen, in gratitude, Nine Bows.

Ereju

We shall leave this scene as is--save to say that the man who passed was Mr. K, a Hollywood newspaper man, the father of a cinema star, and that the No Dance turned out just as the title implied. (Shame on me, I accused Senzaki of talking the man to death.)

Feeling sorry for Reps because of the happening (as he seemed terribly distressed for having to disappoint nearly a hundred guests), I called him via phone the next day and congratulated him on the wonderful success of the "No Dance" Party. "What do you mean?" he asked. "That was A.K. that died..." "That died?" I interrupted in question. "He didn't die!" I affirmed. "He was the only dancer there last night. He stole the show. For *he* truly danced the *No Dance*. Recall the words of Gibran," I continued, "'And when the grave shall claim your limbs, then shall you truly dance!' Also," I reminded him, "if you recall, Senzaki's last words were 'and so it is with the No Dance--but there is a dance that is danced without feet--where the dance goes on and on--and where joy is not confined.' And at this very moment Mr. K. Nirvana'd or passed through."

Our telephone conversation ended with Reps saying, "You give me an idea: write me these thoughts in a letter. It may be that the party wasn't a flop after all..."

And so I composed what I considered a very good letter and sent it to Reps. But he neither answered it or gave me any recognition or merit.

Some time later, when I was visiting Senzaki, mention of the "No Dance Party" was made. "As soon as I attempted to lift his head and place it on my knee, I knew he had passed on." Senzaki told me. "It was rather an unfortunate thing..." I was in transit of saying, when Senzaki interrupted with, "What a glorious way to go. Surrounded by relatives and loving friends, your head resting in the lap of an old monk; a wonderful atmosphere, meditative Zen students, vased flowers about, and..." But here I broke in with, "Yes, I wrote Reps quite a letter about it, but he never answered it. It was not a long letter," I went on to say, "but the best of that kind I ever wrote..."

"Did you write it?" Senzaki asked. Then, as though he were looking far, far into The Infinite, he said: "Bodhidharma never wanted recognition for *anything*." But I was passing judgment on Reps' indifference and said: "The letter--regardless of the author--was worthy of some notice."

"Yes!" answered Senzaki, "I had that feeling while *I* was reading it."

"Oh! he let *you* read it? was my reaction.

"Yes," Senzaki concluded, "Reps had over a hundred copies printed and sent a copy to each of the guests who had attended the No Dance Party."

(I believe it was Buddha Miroku that said, "Judge not that ye be not judged; for with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged.) MO-RIN

which is beyond the law of phenomena and is a state of endless tranquillity, bliss, permanence and freedom. This kind of meditation influences the subconscious mind and lifts it up without acknowledgement to our brains. During our daily living we try to consider the everchanging outside world in the same way and to face varying facts with the same attitude of true understanding. By and by our Karma increases and our submind elevates and one day our worldly grasping is wholly loosened and we behold a new infinite life. Before we reach the Goal we can also feel that greed and hatred get lighter gradually and life grows happier and easier during our treading the noble way.

I am a young student among the Chihkuan practitioners and hope to receive valuable teachings from the Zen masters on your side for improvement. Any one who is interested in the above please contact me directly.

Wishing you will spread the light of Buddha all over the New Continent. May all beings be well and happy.

Your student in the Dharma,
H. Y. Li

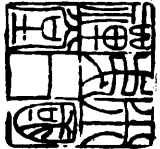
For another letter from Mr. Li on Taiwan Buddhism, see ZN Vol. IV, No. 3

SOOTHILL'S Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms defines *Chihkuan* as follows. "When the physical organism is at rest it is called *chih*, when the mind is seeing clearly it is called *kuan*. The term and form of meditation is specially connected with its chief exponent, the founder of the T'ien-t'ai school, which school is styled *Chih-kuan-tsung*, its chief object being concentration of the mind by special methods for the purpose of clear insight into truth, and to be rid of illusion."

Published monthly by
THE FIRST ZEN INSTITUTE OF AMERICA, INC.
156 Waverly Place, New York 14, New York

Non-Profit Org.
U. S. Postage
PAID
New York, N. Y.
Permit No. 528

zen notes
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Zen Institute of America, Inc.



Vol. VI, No. 3, Mar. 1959
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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