

ZEN NOTES



On the Buddha's Nirvana Day, February 15th, it is our custom to read from the accounts of his death, for to Buddhists such occasions have more than a commemorative significance. This year, as we have just learned of the death of a famous modern Buddhist teacher, it seems especially appropriate to note this event at this time.

THE VENERABLE HSU-YUN PASSES AWAY

Bodhedrum, Vol. 8, No. I, 2503, B. E.

HONGKONG... The Buddhist church received on Oct. 17th, 1959, a telegram from Ven. Kuan-chang, a disciple of Ven. Hsu-yun, saying that Ven. Hsu-yun, abbot of the Chen-ju Temple, Yung-hsiou County, Kangsi Province, passed away on the 13th of the 9th lunar month in his temple on Yun-chu Mountain. He instructed his followers to discipline themselves diligently with sila, samadhi and prajna, to respect and love each other and to forget about the body for the course of Dharma.

Ven. Hsu-yun, the 120-year-old Thera also named Ku-yien or Te-ching, was born in the Hsiao family of Hsiang-hsiang County, Hunan Province on the 30th of the 7th lunar month, the 26th year of Tao-kuang, Ching Dynasty. He was shaved by Ven. Miao-lien at Ku-san, Fu-chow, Fu-chien Province. Disciplining himself with Dhutan practice, he visited many famous virtuous monks in different temples. After awakening, he dwelled on Chung-nan Mountain for a time. In the 29th year of Kuanghsu, Ching Dynasty, he came out and preached the Buddhist Dharma in southwestern China. Then he went to the southern Asian nations for collecting funds for repairing the Chi-chu Temple. When he was in Thailand, he got into deep intent contemplation for nine days which caused the Siamese King much surprise. In the early period of the Chinese Republic, he preached in Southeastern China where he demonstrated many miracles. He directed the rebuilding of the Bodhimandala of the Sixth Patriarch in the 29th year of the Chinese Republic, when he was 98 years old. Before the fall of the Mainland, the old monk went to Hongkong, where he refused the petition of his disciples for staying there longer. He said that he had to go back to the Mainland and that since there were thousands of monks and nuns in lack of direction, he would not mind risking his own life. After he was captured by the Communists at Yuen-men Temple, he was mistreated and almost died many times. As a result, he saved the Buddhist Wisdom-life and finally settled on the Yun-chu Mountain, where a Bodhimandala was built up in a few years.

(please turn to last page)

Back in 1956 we began receiving from Mr. Charles Luk, of Hongkong, typed translations of various Chinese works of interest to Zen students. A taste of a fascinating autobiographical work, Master Han-Shan's *JOURNEY TO THE DREAM-LAND*, was offered our readers in *ZEN NOTES*, Vol. IV, No. 3, March, 1957. Particularly interesting were a series of fourteen lectures given during two weeks of intensive meditation practice, along with an autobiography of his then living Dhyana teacher, the Venerable Hsu Yun. Excerpts from these same talks, we noted last month, were translated and published by Chen-chi Chang, in his *PRACTICE OF ZEN*. We hear from Mr. Luk that his translation of the entire work will be published soon. We who are unable to read the Chinese without help feel the keenest appreciation of Mr. Luk's long efforts to make us the beneficiaries of his labor. As the Chinese emphases in methods of religious practice differ in many details from the Japanese--although both, we must suppose, stem from common roots--we as students have many delights of comparison and contrast in store when we peruse such works.

As some of our contemporaries have had the privilege to meet and practice with the Venerable Hsu Yun, his words and advice seem particularly close, and we feel with his disciples upon their loss of such an inspiring master. We have also had recounted to us, from a variety of sources, many of the fabulous stories clustering about the already legendary proportions of this modern Buddhist personality. No doubt many more such stories will be added as time goes by. Reading the accounts of his life and hearing such stories we cannot but be reminded of the more than life-size figures of the patriarchs of the past on whom we depend for the transmission of the lamp. By diminishing the barrier of space (in modern times 10,000 miles is only days away though in the time of the Sixth Patriarch it was an endless distance) and by observing the life of a modern patriarch diminishing the barrier of time, we feel it easier to grasp the proffered hands and see the trackless path.

The last chapter of Hsu Yun's life is now completed. We present to you its epilogue in the form of a notice recently received from Mr. Luk, also known as Upasaka Lu K'uan-Yu. Transliterations of Chinese names in this issue are those variously used in Free China. The last phrase in the first paragraph of the first news dispatch was written "for the course of dharmal" Its meaning is still not clear to us. The notes are Mr. Luk's.

OBITUARY
THE VENERABLE HSU YUN
1839 - - 1959

We have learned with great sorrow of the passing away of Venerable Hsu Yun, the eminent master and Dharma-successor of all the five Zen sects of China at the Chen Ju monastery on the Yun Ch'u mountain at Kiangsi, China, in his one hundred and first Dharma-year at the ripe age of one hundred and twenty.

The late Venerable Hsu Yun was regarded as the Right-dharma-eye of the present generation and his death has been a great loss to the cause of Buddhism in this period of its termination. A descendant of Emperor Liang Wu Ti and son of a family of mandarins, he fled from his home at the age of nineteen to enter a monastery and live in a grotto, after his father and uncle had chosen as wives for him two girls of nobility to continue the lineage of the two brothers' families. He converted to Buddhism his two nominal mates who later entered nunneries where they practised the Dharma with great success.

The master made extensive travels in China, Tibet, India, Ceylon, Burma, Thailand and Malaya and passed his whole life to convert people and rebuild many ancient monasteries in ruins throughout China. He encountered many difficulties and hardships including dangers, persecutions and poisoning in his lifetime. The number of his disciples is uncountable and many of them are now living in the South Seas and in foreign lands including Europe and America.

A few weeks before his death, as his disciples in Hongkong heard that he was unwell, four Bhiksunis went to China to see him. The master foretold his approaching departure from this world and urged them not to wait for his end but to return to their place to continue their Bodhisattva-works. They brought him a very small quantity of Californian oranges and some tins of powdered milk as permitted by the Chinese customs because for many years he was unable to take solid food but lived on rice gruel and fruit juice. He recovered from his illness and they left the mountain with the hope that he would live many more years.

Before the master passed away on the 13th of October at 1:45 p.m., he chanted the following gatha:

Taking pity on ants a shrimp jumps not into water.¹
 For the benefit of watery beings my body is to be
 thrown into the river.
 My hope is that these beings accepting this offer-
 ing of my body
 Will attain Bodhi and labour for salvation.
 I urge my Dharma-friends
 Not to indulge in sadness.
 Birth and death from karma come
 Like the silkworm spinning its cocoon.
 Endless desires and illusions
 Hinder by causing joy and sorrow.
 If you would from this misery escape,
 Exert yourselves in your self-cultivation.
 Your union with the uncreate
 Will make you understand self-nature.
 Cut off both love and hate
 To escape from dangerous Samsara.
 Observe discipline, meditation and wisdom
 To hold the four correct thoughts firm.²
 Vow to achieve the perfect understanding
 That the illusory body is like dew and lightning.
 Experience and realise the absolute reality
 Wherein myriads of things are one.
 The joy and sorrow of union and separation
 Follow causes like bubbles in the water.

He added: "After my death and the cremation of my
 body, please mix my ashes with sugar, flour and oil and
 make nine³ balls and throw them into the river for of-
 fering to living beings in the water. This is my vow and
 I, Hsu Yun, as your debtor, now do express my boundless
 thanks for your execution of it on my behalf."

In the middle of November, two upasikas left Hongkong
 for the China mainland to receive the master's relics for
 veneration on this island. They have brought back relics
 which are transparent as crystals and of the size of pea-
 nuts, together with his staff and chopsticks. Memorial ser-
 vices have been held all over Hongkong and sutras are still
 being recited daily by some local Buddhist societies.

*1 During the past several years, the master was suffer-
 ing from ill-health, like a shrimp bitten by ants but he
 stayed on to do his best to convert living beings. For
 this reason, he did not return to his self-nature, symbol-
 ized by water.*

*2 Discipline, meditation and wisdom--Sila, Samadhi and
 Prajna. The four correct thoughts of (1) impurity of
 body, (2) suffering from sensation, (3) impermanence of
 mind, and (4) egoless phenomenal.*

3 Nine balls for the nine realms of existence.



Dear Everyone:

LATE this autumn I received a book from America, *The Practice of Zen*, by Chang Chen-chi. The New Year holidays have provided me with the time to read it carefully, and now I want to write you about it. The members of the New York Institute who know Professor Chang personally have perhaps already read the book. And undoubtedly it has been for some time on the shelves of those who make a point of getting everything on Zen in English as soon as it appears. Therefore my mentioning *The Practice of Zen* may not be news to some of the readers of these letters. But to those who do not as yet know the book, I should like to recommend it, though with some reservations.

The fact that we have in *The Practice of Zen* the first full-length book on Zen in English by a Chinese student of Chinese Buddhism, in itself makes Professor Chang's work of special interest to us. The views he has presented seem, in large part, to be Chinese views, though his main purpose appears to be rather to correct some of the prevalent misconceptions about Zen widely current in the West. I am in complete agreement with Professor Chang that such correction is necessary.

Those who have any interest in Zen, even a superficial one, should read with care all of Chapter I, "The Nature of Zen." Especially important are the remarks (p. 31) on the long preliminary practice necessary for what appears on the surface to be "instantaneous enlightenment," and on the need for long practice after the first satori has been experienced in order that deeper and deeper insight into "the essence of mind" may be attained. Also, the clear distinction Chinese Ch'an followers make, according to Professor Chang, between "satori" and the "final perfect Enlightenment of Buddhahood" (pp. 120-121) is most interesting. I have never heard this distinction stated in Japanese Zen, but believe it to be valid as well as rationally satisfying.

Though Zen practice has been well covered by Professor Chang in Chapter II, we find little or nothing westerners can put to practical use. In speaking about the Tsao Tung (J. Sōtō) approach (p. 45), he says: "If, in the beginning, the student can be properly guided by a good teacher, this approach is not too difficult to practice"; and (p. 47) "the best way to learn this meditation is to train under a competent Zen master." In regard to the Lin Chi (J. Rinzai) practice, he says (p. 44), "in practicing by means of the koan exercise, one must constantly rely on a competent Zen master from the beginning to the end". I believe Professor Chang would have

been on sounder ground had he stated unequivocally that actual Zen practice in neither school can or should be undertaken except under the guidance of a qualified master. It is probably true that, once he has had basic instruction, the Tsao Tung student can do with less guidance than can the Lin Chi student, who must have it continuously, as Professor Chang has correctly said. But all that the would-be practitioner of either school can do when a Zen master is not available is to learn how to sit, how to breathe, and how to concentrate his mind, always provided, however, that he has to instruct him some one who has already had some degree of training. These preliminary practices are not, of course, Zen practice itself in either school, but they are primary requisites for all students of both before they can begin actual practice as such.

I should like to take issue with two of Professor Chang's objections to koan practice in the Lin Chi school (p.44). Through experience I do not agree that it is "too difficult and uncongenial for the modern mind." Koan practice is indeed not a practice for the crowd. It has never been. But for one who feels it worthwhile to devote himself to this practice, though difficult, it is not "too difficult," and, rather than being uncongenial, it becomes the most fascinating study one can engage in. I suggest that the reader note again the author's remarks on p.31: "One should always remember also that the majority of Zen students in the Orient are monks who have devoted their lives to the work of Zen." The western Zen enthusiast should also read what has been said on pages 31 and 32 in a slightly different context. To seek enlightenment is to seek the ultimate in human experience. This most precious treasure is not to be attained easily, however intensely one may desire it. It is indeed "earned with tears and sweat, through many years of practice and hard work," if in the end it is earned at all.

Nor can I agree with the other objection, namely "that it (koan practice) tends to create a constant strain on the mind, which will not relieve, but only intensify the deadly mental tensions which many people suffer in this atomic age." I admit that in the beginning of koan study the student is under strain. Strain or tension of the particular kind experienced is, however, a necessary phase in the early stages of practice in both schools. But the tension experienced in these early stages is of an entirely different nature than that which brings on modern-day neuroses. In fact, Zen practice often relieves these where they exist, though I think no greater mistake can be made than to consider serious Zen study as a mental therapeutic. Nor is koan study a kind of "shock" treatment, as several writers have made it out to be. Such a statement in itself clearly reveals that they themselves have never studied a koan under a Zen master and are therefore utterly unqualified to describe such study or pass judgement upon it.

Professor Chang has indeed given us many examples of koans. In most cases the translation of them is adequate enough for the general reader, but even he should beware of the interpretations. The interpretations given in the section entitled "The Four Distinctions of Rin-zai" are particularly debatable. If a student wants to be misled about koans, there is no better way than to read interpretations of them, no matter whose.

The distinction the author makes (p.48f) between the *kung-an* (J. *kōan*) and the *hua-tou* (J. *watō*) is interesting. We can hardly accept as valid his definition of *hua-tou* as "the ends of the situation" for *tou* is a common suffix without meaning in T'ang-Sung colloquial Chinese words, and certainly nothing more than that here. But that there is a critical word or point in every koan I have found to be true through experience, though I have not heard it spoken of before. This is the main reason why koans should not be translated--at least for the use of students engaged in koan practice--except by one who has studied the koan under a Zen master. In the original Chinese the critical point can be found by the student, albeit with difficulty. But if it is not known to the translator, this critical point may be lost in translation, even though the translation be satisfactory from the literary or grammatical standpoint.

All but a few pages in this chapter on Zen practice are devoted to translations of discourses and autobiographies of Zen masters. These contain valuable material for Zen students. Unfortunately Professor Chang does not indicate the sources upon which he has drawn--except in one instance--nor does he give the full names or dates for the masters. These latter are particularly important in order to identify the master and place him as to his school and period. For the benefit of those who might like to know more on these points and to compare some of the present translations with those Dr. Suzuki has given us of the same texts, the following information may be of use:

Discourses:

- 1 - Hsu Yun (modern); *Hsu-yun yu-lu*
- 2 - Tsung Kao (Ta-hui Tsung-kao, 1089-1163); his letters the probable source.
- 3 - Po Shan (*idem* Wu-i Yuan-lai, 1575-1630); from *Po-shan Ho-shang ts'an-ch'an ching-yu*. This work abstracted in Suzuki, *Essays II*, (1st ed.) pp. 113-115.
- 4 - Han Shan (Han-shan Te-ch'ing, 1546-1623); from *Han-shan ta-shih meng-yu ch'uan-chi*.

Autobiographies:

- 1 - Han Shan (ch.53 and 54 of the above).
- 2 - Wu Men (Hsiang-shan Wu-men Ts'ung, fl. early 14th cent.); from *Ch'an-kuan ts'e-chin*. Entire excerpt in Suzuki, *ibid.* pp.96-98
- 3 - Hsueh Yen (Hsueh-yen Tsu-ch'in, d. 1287); from *Ch'an-kuan ts'e*

- chin. Entire excerpt in Suzuki, *ibid.* pp. 90-93.
 4 - Meng Shan (Meng-shan Te-i, fl.ca. 1265); from *Ch'an-kuan ts'echin*. Entire excerpt in Suzuki *ibid.* pp. 86-90.
 5 - Kao Feng (Kao-feng Yuan-miao, 1238-1295); source?

Those studying koans under a Zen master should note the emphasis placed by all these masters upon the "doubt-sensation" in the early stages of practice.

In Chapter III, "The Four Problems of Zen Buddhism," Professor Chang agrees with Dr. Hu Shih that Zen can be understood (cf. Hu Shih, "Ch'an (Zen) Buddhism in China," *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. III, No. 1, (1953), pp. 3-24). However, Dr. Chang goes farther than the eminent Chinese historian by suggesting (p. 116) that "it is possible that the mistake in presenting Zen made by some authors lies in their failure to distinguish between 'to understand' and 'to realize'". To differentiate between "understanding" and "realizing" is of vital importance in Zen. But it is equally important for a writer or speaker to indicate clearly what he means when he uses the word "Zen." In my opinion this word is far too loosely used in current writings on the subject of Zen Buddhism. When by the term "Zen" we mean its history, doctrines, methods, literature, terminology, then we may say Zen can be understood. We may even go so far as to say that to a certain degree many koans can be understood. But when by the word "Zen" we mean the pivot, the central experience Zen is concerned with, or "the essence of mind," to use Professor Chang's expression, then this must be realized. So, too, must the deeper levels of the koans. This confusion does not seem to exist in Chinese and Japanese Zen literature, and its appearance in western writings on Zen seems to me to be due primarily to carelessness in the translation of terms and secondarily to carelessness in usage.

Chapter IV, "Buddha and Meditation," might well have been omitted. As it stands it seems to have little relation to the main theme of the book, and the various meditation practices described, since they belong to other schools than Zen, only serve to confuse the reader, particularly one who may have hoped to find in the book a method he could himself follow.

As may be inferred from what has been said above, it is in the matter of careful scholarship that we find Professor Chang the weakest. The bibliography as it stands is useless. Upper and lower case letters and hyphens have been erratically and often contradictorily employed. Some mistakes can be laid to printers' errors. Others, those which occur consistently, such as *kung-en* for *kung-an*, *i-chin* for *i-ching*, *ts'en-ch'an* for *ts'an-ch'an*, to note a few, cannot be so excused. The name I Shan should be Wei-shan or Kuei-shan; Fa Yan should be Fa-yen. This latter master was not the Fifth Patriarch of the Lin-chi school (cf. p. 174, n. 39), but in the third generation of the Yang-ch'i line of that school. His full name, Wu-tsu Fa-yen, derived from the name of the mountain where he lived. Five centuries earlier this mountain, Huang-mei Shan, had been the home of Hung-tsu, fifth patriarch of Zen, and for that reason was often called Wu-tsu Shan or "The Fifth Patriarch's Mountain." The dates of the Sixth Patriarch's two disciples have been interchanged (p. 42). Huai-jang's should be ?-775; Hsing-ssu's ?-740. The Southern Sung reign title given as Chin Din (p. 109) is correctly Ching-ting. Also, I can find no precedent for romanizing the Sanskrit word *samsāra* as *sangsara*.

In conclusion, however, we must agree with Professor Chang when he says (p. 137) that "to understand Zen one must examine it from all its different angles. One must study it historically, psychologically, and philosophically, as well as within its literary, yogic, and spiritual frames of reference." Professor Chang has helped us toward that end.

Carl F. Suzuki



(continued from the first page)

Now, the Ven. Hsu-yun has passed away. How will the Wisdom-life on the Mainland turn out to be from now on? We worry about it very much.

TAICHUNG.. When the members of the Ling-shan Temple heard that Ven. Hsu-yun entered nirvana quietly on the 13th of the 9th lunar month, they carried out a sutta-reciting ceremony immediately, hoping that he will take birth in the Inner Court of the Tusita so that he may transmigrate back to this world again.

BUDDHISM TODAY, No. 33, Jan. 2503, B. E., Taipei, Taiwan

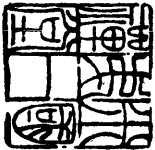
HONGKONG... Rev. Sheu Yuen, the famous Dhyana Teacher who died on October 13th in Jin Yue Monastery of Kiangsi had his funeral ceremony held last month. After the burning ceremony of this old famous reverend a large number of precious relics were found among the ash. The relics arrived safely here on November 18th. About the relics themselves, they are as big as lily seeds, transparent, shiny and bright. They are like crystal balls and pearls of different colors. According to the report of local Buddhists who saw these relics, they said that they had never seen such excellent relics before. In short these relics are rather unique and precious. They cannot be found anywhere in the world. Anybody who knelt to these relics would certainly redeem his own sins. A pagoda for Rev. Sheu Yuen's relics will be built by his hall in Hongkong soon.

SOKEI-AN SAYS As a ceremony of human life, the dying moment is of great significance. Confucius said: "When a bird is dying, it cries. It is beautiful. When a man is dying, he speaks. It is beautiful." Observing the dying moment in both bird and man he sees beauty. The great man does this. The small man does not pay attention. He does not take off his hat even if his friend dies on the battlefield.

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

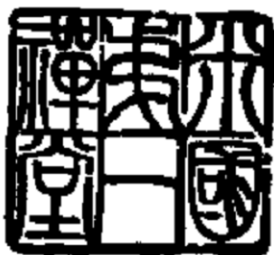
zen notes
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Vol. VII, No. 2, Feb. 1960
Mary Farkas, Editor
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**Founded in 1930 by
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