

# ZEN NOTES



## SOKEI-AN SAYS

### DHARMA OR MAN

Buddhism is a unique religion--especially my sect of Zen, which is unique even among the many sects of Buddhism--for it does not teach us to beg a god for his protection, but to think carefully and decide what to do in the course of our lives.

One thing especially bothers us. It is this: What is the main principle of man's life? According to our individual natures, we each think differently. Someone says: "Man is the principle of life." This means that *the person* is the pivot of human life. Another says: "*Service to all mankind* is the pivot of human life." One who thinks that the person is the pivot of human life lives life as his own; he lives his own life. The other thinks: "My service to my fellow men is the first thing. I will sacrifice myself and render my service to them." Of course, in the end, these two viewpoints must be reduced to one view. But in the course of our life, many times we puzzle about which way to decide. I puzzled a long time about how to decide: "Should I die for my own sake, or for my mission?" The decision we make gives us entirely different viewpoints on the course of human life.

"Shall I die for my own love or shall I die for my country?" If the man is an artist, art is first: "I will die for art!" If he is a soldier, he will think: "I will sacrifice all--love, wife, children, father, mother, I will die for my country!" If you are an American, you swear you will die for the Stars and Stripes. Thus soldiers go into the battlefield and sacrifice everything. In ancient days there was a pottery-maker who threw everything into his furnace. Finally he threw even his house into the furnace to feed the fire. (In another version, his wife had to be included in the pottery. *Editor*) His neighbors thought him crazy, and rushed into his workshop and carried him out. Fortunately everything in the furnace had been baked, and the pottery-maker invented a wonderful pottery.

But some will think: "Oh no, that is not the true conclusion of human life. I don't care for anything but *the person*, myself and the one I love. For that I live!" Some soldier will say: "No, I will not go to war, even though I go to jail. I stay for the wife who loves me. I cannot die and disappoint her." If this man were an artist, he would say, "No, I won't sell all these jewels and books and precious possessions to open my exhibit. I will use these precious things for my love."

When I am puzzled I go back to my own religion: "What shall I do?" In Buddhism there are two principles which are the most precious among all the teachings. One is Dharma, the other is Man. The Man in Buddhism is Shakyamuni Buddha; also *the person* himself, his heart. Dharma is the teaching handed down from the Buddha.

(Please turn to the last page)

WHEN the Buddha was meditating in the woods for six years--it is described in the scriptures as if during that time the Buddha did not go anywhere, as if he were sitting upon soft weeds, eating greens and rice once a day and meditating continuously. But studying other sources of other sects we find many references to the Buddha: he was begging food through many villages; was many times standing under the eaves of a rich cowherd. This cowherd had three daughters; they were the Buddha's admirers, and when he needed to nourish himself, he stood at the door of this farmer's house.

After six years of toil he realized that his way of attaining enlightenment was an erroneous one. Torturing the physical body, retreating into the inner mind, closing the eyes and separating oneself from the outside, the traditional measures for attaining enlightenment, he came to believe, could not lead any one to true knowledge. From this decision of the Buddha we can observe that his state of attainment was an advance from superstition to the true view of truth. From long meditation, analyzing his sense-perceptions and his many states of consciousness, the Buddha realized that "inside and outside" are relative existences, and that rejecting the outer to attain the inner is erroneous. By accepting the outside he thought he could find the true state of consciousness. Accepting the outside means also accepting the physical body--to take food, lie down, sleep, not to lie on sharp pins or needles, not to soak in water all day, not to stare at the sun twelve hours until one can see no color, which the ascetics thought was the Arupa World of No-color. He came to think that our five senses are only a development of our consciousness; that this actual existence is nothing but Reality itself.

Western philosophers usually think that Reality is noumenon, directly opposed to phenomenon. But the Buddha thought that observing outside and inside is Reality; that when a human being sees Reality in two phases, noumenon and phenomenon, it has nothing to do with Reality.

When the Buddha came to this conclusion, he accepted this life. He came out of the woods to the Nairanjana River and took a bath. From the fatigue of his long meditation he fainted in the water. One of the cowherd's daughters found him there and dragged him up to the shore. She gave him food and the Buddha accepted it. It was buttermilk. When I came to America, I was asked about this many times by Western scholars. This is to be accepted literally. It was buttermilk he was offered, nothing else.

When the Buddha left home, he associated with five ascetics. When they saw him accept buttermilk, food which came from an animal's body, from the maiden's hand, they thought he had given up his Vow. "Well," they said, "he has changed his point of view and has accepted ordinary life." So they left him.

The Buddha returned alone to his own part of the woods, and began to meditate from his new viewpoint. Up to that day he had meditated with

BUDDHISM 1937 closed eyes; from that day he meditated with his eyes half open  
Two and took food normally. He was keeping a balance between phys-  
ical and mental life, and it was so he attained the highest en-  
lightenment.

When the Buddha was about to leave home to attain enlightenment, there was a period of great temptation. One thing the Buddha must decide. This was told by him later. He left home at thirty years of age, was enlightened at about thirty-six years. When he was about sixty-five years old he told this tale. To say that the Buddha attained early, at twenty-four years of age, and that he left home at eighteen, is erroneous. Some of the scriptures make him a young boy--try to make him as pure as possible. His struggle was: should he become a layman or an ascetic. The Buddha expressed this later as the Two Ways, the Saint's Way and the King's Way.

To follow the King's Way, you must violate all the commandments. To rule you must do this; all evil must be accepted. To be Caesar, Napoleon, Alexander the Great, Kaiser Wilhelm, you must do this. This is one way of human life.

And the other way is to give up everything, all desires, and endeavor to attain the highest enlightenment.

To live in this world we must decide which way to go. "Which way" is your own option, but you must understand this. Naturally, to the monk poverty is wealth, and to the layman his wealth is his poverty. So some young boy will say: "No more boss!" and give up and become a monk. And another will say, "I will conquer and pursue." Today, in the religious world and the layman's world, these two ways are really mixed up. Of course in the end of consciousness the King will help the Saint's Way and the Saint will help the King's Way, positive and negative will help each other. Once again, just before the Buddha attained the highest enlightenment, the choice was presented. The beautiful daughters of Mara came and danced before him, to tempt him. And demons came with swords: "Surrender, Buddha, your way is wrong!" The Buddha's mind was wiggling. But he touched the ground with his hand and chose the Saint's Way.

After the Buddha's enlightenment, he thought he would give his teaching to the five ascetics meditating under the trees in the Deer Garden. They saw him coming from a distance. "Oh, he's coming to teach us the religion of the world. We shall not listen!" And as they talked, their mouths became tight and their lips discolored.

Indeed the Buddha was changed; he was no longer tortured or troubled. His sense-organs were calm and soft; he was full of compassion; he smiled as he approached to give his first sermon. For the King's power with the sword is nothing to the Buddha's power with Emptiness.

For the analysis of sense-perception, see also ZN Vol. VII, No. 5.

For the relativity of "inside and outside," see also ZN Vol. IV, No. 12.

For the Arupa World of No-color, see also ZN Vol. VI, No. 6.

This article was reconstructed by Enen.

Dear Everyone:

(Continued from the October Letter)

THE second major problem is that of the language in which Chinese Zen literature is written. It is highly colloquial, containing numerous idioms and slang expressions, and a grammatical structure that varies from literary Chinese. Those texts which have not undergone editing in later periods remain in the original T'ang and Sung colloquial in which they were first written. Unfortunately, the study of the Chinese language of these periods has not advanced to the point where there are as yet adequate reference works either in Japanese or western languages. *Kambun* readings for Zen texts follow traditional lines; they retain peculiar Zen readings and at the same time follow quite closely the rules for *kambun* readings of classical Chinese texts. But these rules, when applied to colloquial Chinese, often result in extremely forced readings, as well as mistaken readings when characters have a different meaning in the colloquial from that which they have in the classical language. Thus, in standard *kambun* readings, a large number of errors have been perpetuated by an initial misunderstanding of the original Chinese. For example *ōze* 魔是, rendered as *kore ni ōjite*, is a colloquial term, meaning *subete* or *oyoso*, and might best be translated this way into Japanese; the compound *gendo* 言道 simply means *iu*, to speak, in T'ang colloquial, and has nothing to do with *dō*, the Way or Tao. Numerous examples of a similar nature might be cited. Thus, the available *kambun* texts are scarcely sufficient to serve as an aid to accurate translation. They are frequently grammatically incorrect; however, in their incorrectness we have not one, but two, problems. In the course of the centuries these texts, including the grammatically-speaking, incorrect interpretations have been perpetuated. Here again, grammatical inaccuracy may not affect the text when it is used as a means of teaching; at times, in order to make a point in Zen, it is convenient. Thus, inaccuracies are very often deliberately perpetuated. In the *Rinzai roku* there is a well-known passage, *Hokke Buttō o zadan su* 法华佛头坐断, which traditionally has been interpreted as 'to sit down on the heads of the Sambhogakāya and Nirmanakāya Buddhas and annihilate them.' This, to the Zen man, is a

very important and meaningful interpretation. But the specialist in Chinese language will not necessarily agree. The *za* of *zadan* is most likely a homophone for *za* 坐 meaning to cut-off. The expression *zadan*, using the *za* meaning to sit is not found outside of Zen literature. The *tō* here is most likely merely a suffix with no particular meaning, so that there are no heads either to sit down upon or to cut off. Thus the passage means merely to cut off the Sambhogakāya and Nirmānakayā Buddhas, or better to cut off thoughts of them. But *zadan* appears very early in Zen literature, and it is difficult and perhaps impossible to determine which interpretation is actually correct.

Another serious problem in translation is that very frequently in Zen, a word or passage may have a good as well as a bad meaning. In the *Rinzai roku*, for example, the term *zenchishiki* 善知識, a good teacher, is as often used as a term of contempt as it is in a good sense. Again, to call someone a 'blind old fool' may possibly be a compliment. Commentaries very often vary in their interpretation of the meaning in which a certain term or passage is to be taken. As a result, the translators are often at a loss when rendering the term into English, as the English will necessarily differ if a passage is laudatory or derogatory in sense. Therefore, the translator can readily blunder if he at all times takes the Chinese literally.

Still another difficulty is that of quotations. Zen works abound in quotations from the sutras and earlier Zen literature; sometimes quotations are indicated as such, but the source is seldom given. Often, however, they are incorporated into the body of the text in such a way that they are difficult to recog-

nize, and very often the quotation varies to some degree from the original. To catch these quotations and to note where they differ from the original, requires a thorough knowledge of the literature, as well as a knowledge of the structure of Chinese poetry.

One last point in this respect may be mentioned. A large number of Zen texts were not written directly by the Zen master, but consist of his sermons and sayings recorded by his disciples. Perhaps a large number of the textual inconsistencies and ambiguities may be attributed to the varying degrees of skill and attentiveness of the recorders of the texts.

The third major problem in translating a Zen text is the selection of a suitable English form. The texts are generally in the colloquial; the stories and conversations frequently employ highly vulgar language. Thus, an English style appropriate to the language of the original, is called for. However, this has certain drawbacks, not necessarily immediate in nature. Colloquial English changes so rapidly that the translation may in a few years seem much more dated than it would had it been rendered in a more pedestrian form. Again American and English colloquial differ greatly, and in addition, a too highly colloquial translation might prove difficult for those whose native tongue is not English. Nevertheless, by not translating colloquial Chinese into colloquial English, much of the flavor of the original is lost, and considerable circumlocution is required to obtain an accurate rendition. Thus, despite its inevitable shortcomings, a colloquial rendition would seem most fitting.

There is frequently in translation of Zen materials a tendency to provide an

interpretive version. Statements are often brief and laconic in the original and one is tempted in translation to insert words and sometimes phrases to render them more explicit. Yet to do so would require a thorough conversance with Zen, and then the interpretations would apply only to one particular school of Zen. Therefore, it would seem better to retain the vagueness of the original in the translation, clarifying where possible in footnotes.

There is, of course, the problem of Buddhist terminology in general. Since reference to the sutras is frequently made and technical terms other than those used only in Zen are often found, the need for a standardized translation of such terms is constantly felt. This, however, is a highly involved problem, outside the scope of this brief paper.

Now, with all these problems, how accurate a translation may be hoped for? In material of this sort, anything approaching complete accuracy is not to be anticipated. A questionable point, no matter how thoroughly investigated, may very well still remain questionable. Not only is the text itself subject to various interpretations from a linguistic basis but the Zen meaning is also subject to a variety of traditional interpretations. No finished translation of any given text can be hoped for. It must be left to later scholars and Zen adherents to correct errors, furnish variant interpretations, and further perfect the translation of any given text. Meanwhile a start at least is being made to opening up this relatively untouched field of Chinese literature to scholars of language and religion.

("Some Problems in the Translation of Chinese Zen Material," by Philip Yampolsky).

NOW to give you a little news. This last week has been more or less of a social week, something quite unusual for Ryōsen-an.

First of all, your own member William Clarke arrived in Kyoto on the last lap of his trip around the world. Zuiun-ken being still more or less in the throes of remodeling, Ogata San was kind enough to put him up at Chōtoku-in. But "Bill," as he insists on our calling him, is sitting regularly with us in the zendo at night.

Next, our Egyptian lady came from Tokyo where she is now living permanently. She could remain only two days, but it was so good to see her again, and to have her sitting with us.

On Friday evening, instead of the usual lecture, we had a special treat. Mr. Kurt Brasch from Tokyo brought down a number of Zen paintings from his famous collection and showed them to us. The library was too small for the group of students and guests who assembled to hear him talk about Zenga, or paintings done by Zen masters--Hakuin, Tōrei, and others--so we took all the *fusuma* (sliding wall panels) out in the main house and made of it one great big room. The Daitoku-ji Kanchō sent over his magnificent "Bodhi-dharma" by Hakuin, and Ryōsen-an was able to contribute a "Kannon"--an earlier gift from Mr. Brasch--and a piece of calligraphy--the gift of Morimoto Rōshi both by Hakuin.

Claude Dalenberg, who has been with us for a year and a half and for the last few months has been living at Zuiun-ken, is leaving on October 6th to return to San Francisco via Europe. So Saturday night there was a small farewell dinner for him at Ryōsen-an, followed by a larger party at Zuiun-ken later.

On Sunday several of us made an in-

teresting excursion to Empuku-ji. The Kyoto Branch of the K.B.S. (Society for International Cultural Relations), in cooperation with the Rōshi of Empuku-ji, had arranged a short week-end at that monastery for foreigners interested in Zen and Zen monastery life. Empuku-ji is a large Zen monastery belonging to Myōshin-ji, and is situated in the deep country about fifteen miles out from Kyoto.

When I first came to Kyoto, Kozuki Tesshu was the resident rōshi. He was much interested in introducing Zen to foreigners even at that early date (thirty years ago), and, under the inspiration of the well-known writer Mrs. L. Adams Beck and Dr. and Mrs. Suzuki, built a small dormitory and "meditation cave," an actual cave hollowed out of a nearby hill--for the use of foreigners. Unfortunately Kozuki Rōshi was killed shortly afterwards in an automobile accident. The rōshi who followed him, not being sympathetic to foreigners, closed the dormitory and, to my knowledge, Empuku-ji has had no relation with foreigners since. The present rōshi, who is also the priest of Shōin-ji, Hakuin's old temple at Hara in Shizuoka Prefecture, is much more friendly.

Altogether about fifty foreigners arrived at the temple by bus and car around eleven-thirty Sunday morning. We were all immediately invited to the Hondō (Main Hall) where the Rōshi greeted us and the monks served tea and cakes. Then we were ushered into the main entertaining rooms of the monastery. In passing, it may be of interest to you to know that "The Palace," as these entertaining rooms are known, was presented to Empuku-ji by the Arisugawa family and originally comprised the first floor of the building, the second floor of which was presented to Daitoku-ji and is now Zuin-ken.

There the Rōshi gave an interesting talk on the founding of the monastery, in Japanese, of course, but interpreted by one of the officers of the K.B.S., who functioned in this capacity during the entire visit. When this pleasantly short speech had ended, we were called to dinner in another part of the temple. We sat at the usual low wooden tables used by the monks and were served especially good monastery food in the customary manner. The chief monk sat at the head table. Before dinner began he gave instructions in monastery manners, asking everyone to follow them, then chanted the "Hannya," in which I am pleased to say Mr. Clarke could join, as well as several of our members.

Dinner over, we all repaired again to the entertaining rooms where we found

that the Rōshi and Mr. Brasch had hung a fine collection of Zenga paintings, some of which the Rōshi had brought from Shōin-ji. For this meeting Mr. Brasch had prepared a long and learned paper in English on the development of Zenga. He is far too modest about his spoken English, and so on Friday night had inveigled me into promising to read it for him. Fortunately he has given me a copy, and perhaps someday I can share it with you.

After the talk and a viewing of the paintings, the chief monk perched himself upon a table and gave a personal demonstration of zazen posture, with instructions in breathing and concentration. Then he dragged the more hardy ones down to the Zendo for an hour of zazen before supper. I understand this was to be followed by a talk on Zen by the Rōshi, then early to bed. Everyone was to get up at four the next morning, attend a sutra-chanting service, a period of zazen, then breakfast. I am waiting to hear how many managed to get through the entire program.

After a farewell cup of tea with the Rōshi in his room, I'm afraid we skipped off to town, where we left Bill and Jack starting off to *bura-bura* (browae) in old bookstores. Most shops are open on Sundays here, and always until ten o'clock.

*Eryu*

Ryōsen-an  
Daitoku-ji  
October 3, 1960  
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DHARMA OR MAN (continued from first page) The ancients thought about these two principles thus: Sometimes Man is first and Dharma is second; sometimes Dharma is first and Man is second; sometimes there is neither Dharma nor man; sometimes we face ourselves reciprocally and use ourselves to uphold Man and apply Dharma, or we carry out Dharma including Man. Therefore there are four viewpoints; there is no single viewpoint. When you recognize one view you recognize the others; you cannot recognize one and refuse the others.

About the first two viewpoints--that Man is first and Dharma is second-- I have already spoken a little. The third view, that there is neither Dharma nor Man, relates to periods like those of catastrophe. In the time of an earthquake, for instance, we cannot save our children, we cannot save ourselves, we cannot save the monks or protect the temples. We cannot do anything; we must simply abandon all hope.

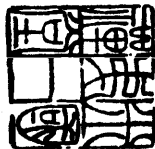
In peaceful days we do not need to make any inclination to either Dharma or Man. Man and Dharma can be carried out in one harmony. The professor can go to school and forget his family for a while. When evening comes he returns home. It is then permitted to him to forget the school; he can stay with his family in precious love. Other times we cannot think about our families or our beloved ones, but must go into fire or water, according to the superior officer's command. You cannot give a new hat every month to your wife. "What are you talking about! I must succeed in this business. I am very sorry I cannot buy a new dress for you. I have to pay these debts or I lose this business." Or, if you are a politician, "Sometime, my dear, when I have been elected, and have served my term, I shall resign and spend a peaceful life with you, for you have been helping me so very much. Yes, I shall live very happily with you."

When we think thus, we can breathe, we can understand human life. So I do not accept the view that the person is first. Also I refuse the view that not the person, but your service is first. Human life is not such a narrow thing. There are more views of it, all these views of it. November 8, 1941

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