

# ZEN NOTES



STEPHEN TICHACHEK Among the voices that chant the Hannya on public occasions there has been one that stood out strongly among the more subdued and tentative renderings of its Japanese syllables. And when we would come to the "*kara-sō-gya-tei*," those acquainted with the Russian language could not help chuckling when they could clearly hear a hearty and wholly un-Japanese *harashō* ("all right") among its last sounds.

Steve Tichachek (at first acquaintance he would instruct everyone to call him Takacheck for convenience) was not a Russian by blood, however, but a Czech and his voice had a rich, strong quality not often heard in our quiet quarters. There was an enthusiasm in this man that burst out in everything he did. When newcomers would appear on Wednesdays he would soon be beside them urging them to take full part in our activities. (He was in fact the persuading factor in convincing one of our most active members to become just that, we recently learned.) In earlier years he liked to sit near the entrance at all our public meeting nights, so he could hand one of the Hannya folders to late arrivals to insure their being able to take part in the chanting if they were so moved.

When the combined zendo and Roshi's apartment on the top floor were to be renovated by members for Roshi's temporary quarters upon his permanent coming--or advent, as Steve called it--in 1959, Steve took full part in the work and the whole responsibility for plastering its decrepit walls. His blood, sweat, and spit were mingled with the surfacing, he told us proudly after it was finished. This was quite a discipline for Steve, as by then the increasing trembling of his hands (he had suffered for many years from Parkinson's disease, later compounded with other ailments) could not easily be brought to produce the perfection of work his expertise demanded of himself as well as of the rest of us, whom he cajoled and bullied to produce the professional standards of performance he felt the situation and expected occupant demanded. Steve's criteria were high as he was an accomplished scenic artist and had done much work in the theatre, where his sense of drama and repertory of tall tales had been cultivated by hobnobbing with the great and near-great of all its branches.

When tea came to be served on Wednesdays Steve took part in that, too, though in the last period he restricted himself to the serving of cookies, as he feared the possible result when the hot cups (we don't offer saucers in our cramped quarters) cause a possible flinching of the hands of unwary strangers, which requires firm control on the part of the offerer. Earlier, when his financial circumstances were more favorable, it would be Steve who most

(Please turn to last page)

## SOKEI-AN SAYS

### THE IDIOT AND THE FOX--1935

One morning, at an early hour the Buddha spoke to the multitude before all the monks of the Venuvana, the Bamboo Garden, went into the city of Rajagriha to beg their morning food. As you know, it was the custom. Everyone begs food. Someone will think: "What are the monks begging food for?" But it is the usual routine. It is as if you are working in an office or school. You will accept salary at the end of the month.

The Buddha asked, "Did you hear the fox crying almost at dawn last night?"

The monks answered, "Yes, Lokanatha."

The Buddha said to them, "There is one idiot who might want to be a fox because he keeps crying like a fox. If he wants to be a fox, in future he will be a fox. Therefore, you monks, practice the method of Buddhism to abandon such thoughts so that in the future you will not enter any evil reincarnation."

In this sutra the description ends here; there is no more. The primitive sutras are very, very short, while the Mahayana sutras are hideously long and fill volumes. But the primitive sutra is always in three or four lines. I like this.

In Buddhism there is a principle to talk about, fumigation of thoughts, just as incense fumigates your robes or any odor penetrates your garments. Thoughts are like odors, perfumes, they penetrate your consciousness. In Buddhistic terms we call this fumigation.

Some habit of thought penetrates the consciousness and stays there as a seed in the consciousness and the consciousness carries it through many, many incarnations. We say, "Do not plant such thoughts in his mind." Though he will not accept it, it will grow naturally, unconsciously in his mind. It is like a seed of ivy in a forest. If you drop one,

in fifty years the ivy will cover the entire forest. If you occupy yourself with a thought that is harmful and you entertain that poisonous thought in your mind it will grow and cover your soul.

This is what was in the Buddha's thoughts when he spoke about the idiot and the fox, saying there was an idiot who wished to become a fox because he was crying as a fox cries. Wanting to be a fox, in the future he would be a fox. So you should not entertain any seeds of erroneous thoughts in your mind, the Buddha said.

In Mahayanism later this inheritance of the seed of thought is made into a principle of Buddhism, the Alaya Consciousness System. There are two levels of both our deepest and our less deep consciousness. Alaya and amala consciousness form our deepest level. Amala is the deeper of the two and does not carry seed, but alaya carries seed. The higher and shallower level is made up of citta and manas consciousness. Citta is our present consciousness; it thinks and reasons. Deeper than citta and in our hearts and viscera is manas consciousness, which is common to trees and weeds. Alaya consciousness is deeper than manas consciousness, but it is still really sentient consciousness. Insentient consciousness we call amala consciousness. In Buddhism fire, water, earth, air are not insentient nor sentient, but are between those states. They have consciousness. We think fire has consciousness, air has consciousness, all have consciousness of a sort. After all they are not mere matter, they are living beings.

What is insentience to the Buddhist? The Buddhist thinks it is a vacuum, space, called Akasha. You call it ether, in which light is not shining, in which heat is not hot. Akasha, interstellar

space. Heat or light there is not hot or bright but when it comes into the region of air it is hot and bright. It has heat and shines. In Akasha it is invisible and intangible. Insentient consciousness does not carry the seed; it does not reincarnate. But today we have to think a little further. Electric space carries vibration and this vibration remains forever. So it carries seed also. Therefore, if I create some thought in my mind, though it is not described and not uttered, still it stays and it grows and it gives us our next life. So you must find Akasha in your mind. Do not linger in that interval between this consciousness and amala consciousness. You must find amala in the living body. Knowing it you realize that you are not a person, you are not an ego, you are the One that is universal. From this standpoint the one that assumes the next life, the one that takes the next reincarnation is not you, is not me. One who reaches this amala consciousness is not bothered by the reincarnation of lower consciousness. Like the wheel, the rim turns many times but the center does not turn. When one finds that center in his consciousness, from that day his attitude toward the life of human beings is entirely different.

In this short sutra the Buddha explained this thought. Later all the Buddha's thoughts that were concealed in so few lines were developed in Mahayanism. Of course this is incidental talk.

*There was one idiot in the Sangha:* The Buddha was blaming some disciple. A young monk who had been going down town was trapped by some temptation and the disagreeable news was carried back to the Sangha. The Buddha gave a warning. There is one who cries like a fox. It means he expressed some disagreement,

committed some harmful deed; because he wished to be a fox in his next incarnation--and he would be. The sense of this sutra is that the Buddha was speaking to the younger monks.

On the next page of the sutra, the Buddha spoke about this same fox. It must have been on the following night. He heard the fox crying in the bamboo forest again, behind the Venuvana. The Buddha had a habit of taking a walk, walking back and forth in meditation. The Buddha loved to do this. So many nights always just before dawn he heard this fox crying while he was practicing this walking meditation. Next morning he asked the monks, "Did you hear the fox crying in the night?"

The monks said, "Yes, Lokanatha."

The Buddha said, "Do you know why the fox cries every night?"

The monks said, "No, Lokanatha, we do not know the reason for this. Why does the fox cry every night?"

The Buddha said, "Monks, I have seen that fox. He was suffering from mange. His skin was dry and his fur was falling out. He came near me, looked at me with his pitiful eyes, and cried and shook his miserable body. He was suffering with mange so he came every night and cried. Monks, if you cure that mange for the fox, he will remember it and repay your favor some day. But, monks, here is an idiot with mange in his mind and I cured it for him but he has forgotten to repay me for my favor. Monks, you are living on two sides, good and bad. You have both good and evil in your nature. When you are given good you should repay it with a good deed. But here is one whose mind is mangy and I cured him and he has repaid good with an evil deed."

*Reconstructed by* BRIAN HEALD

Dear Everyone:

WE are in the midst of the summer heat, augmented by occasional flash rains and excessive humidity, thanks to a number of small and ineffectual typhoons that hover around the outskirts of the islands doing little more damage than making people excessively uncomfortable. The daily papers carry editorials telling how to keep the body cool and tempers also, since in weather like this the irritability index rises quickly with resultant quarrels among neighbors and fellow workers. Drivers of motor vehicles are especially admonished not to give in to the mounting frustration they feel when trying to negotiate the streets and roads choked with private cars, taxis, buses, trucks, and motorcycles of all descriptions, to say nothing of addled pedestrians, for the accident rate has been mounting with too many fatalities.

These editorials remind us of the summer habits of the "good old days." Then, of a warm evening, families dragged the tatami covered bench out into the road in front of the house, refreshed themselves by drinking barley tea that had been cooling in a bottle in the well all day, eating watermelon, fanning themselves with paper fans, and gossiping with the neighbor doing likewise on the opposite side of the road. Now no bench could survive the onslaughts of the various types of motor vehicles that careen down the roads, even those in the back country. The present style is to cool oneself with a beer or something on the rocks, then get into the car with all the windows down and drive fast enough to stir up a good wind; a breeze will not do. All this adds to the duties of the overtaxed traffic police and the hospitals, of course. But, "So what?"

For Japan is now in the throes of three "booms": a "leisure boom," a "luxury boom," and an "instanto boom." These are not my words, but the words daily appearing in the vernacular press. Shorter working hours and regular days off, to say nothing of an increasing number of holidays, give the general public time to indulge in all kinds of activities impossible in past years. Higher wages, large mid-year and year-end bonuses, and considerable small buyer participation in a rising stock market have made previously undreamed of sums available for expensive pleasures, from motor boats and night clubs down to the Toyo Pet into which all the family can be crammed, or at least a motor bike onto the rear of which one's trousered-legged girl can cling. The trains are packed and jammed, often even with no standing room available. The beaches are so crowded that in news photographs they look a solid black mass. Ten thousand people began the ascent of Mount Fuji the day the mountain was officially open for summer climbing, though only a fraction of that number managed to make the summit. As a matter of fact, mountain climbing has become one of the major summer sports for young people, as popular as skiing in the winter. The papers decry the fact that too few of these young people undertake this sport with any understanding of or preparation for the hazards involved. Young girls particularly, are given to start-

ing out for a climb dressed as for a stroll down the Ginza on a Sunday afternoon. All of which naturally causes unnecessary accidents and even fatalities.

Kyoto, still pretty much a backwater town, has not too much excitement to offer its leisure-seeking residents. There are, of course, the mushrooming night clubs, restaurants, and bars for those who find their overdistended pocketbooks heavy to carry around, and the brilliantly lighted, air-conditioned pachinko parlors, packed tight to their plate glass doors, for those with only silver in their pockets. The movies have lost much of their appeal now that watching television is the nightly occupation of all those who are not on the streets, and the movie houses are only half-full even for the evening show. Three large Kyoto movie houses closed just the other day for lack of patrons. Walking up and down the solidly packed sidewalks of the main streets and arcades remains the cheapest form of mass enjoyment these hot nights. When it comes time to go home there is scarcely an available taxi, let alone standing room in the buses and trams. This is the "leisure boom."

As for the "luxury boom," that also is in full swing. Radios are, of course, an old story, for almost every household owned one even before the war. About five or six years ago an electric washing machine became a must, then a television set, then an electric icebox, then a vacuum cleaner. Now the craze is for room coolers and automobiles. Ryosen-an is hopelessly behind the times. The other day, the older woman who has come to live with us temporarily until a younger girl arrives, said to Washino San: "This is a funny house, with all its old furniture! I sold my old furniture long ago and

bought all new. And the black electric fans! I have the latest models in my house, green, pink, and purple ones."

The department stores are doing a booming business. Everyone must have new clothes, all western style and in the latest fashion. This year one doesn't wear a summer dress, only summer suits are permissible, and naturally one wouldn't be seen dead on the street carrying a handbag purchased six months ago. The papers say that the department stores expect a thirty per cent increase in business this year! And no wonder. The counselling services for mid-year gifts in the better stores have been overwhelmed with requests for gift suggestions in the 300,000 to 400,000 Yen (\$850-\$1100) range, so I hear from a friend with personal knowledge of the situation. And yesterday's paper carried the information that there remained hardly an available electric fan in the whole of Japan. Fans here cost from \$10 to \$20 and up, so they are not cheap.

The "instanto boom" is also taking the country by storm. "Instanto" means any kind of packaged food that can be prepared for the table in a jiffy. Powdered coffee, in spite of its cost--three or four times the American retail price--is a must in every household with any pretensions. More and more canned foods of every description are appearing continuously on the market. But the latest rage is frozen foods. It won't be long before the Japanese supermarkets, now slowly edging out the small shops, will carry as varied a list as those in any American city. The cooking in the fine old Japanese restaurants can still hold its own with the best in the world, and is certainly the most exquisite in its appeal to the eye. But home-cooking, once the rice has been boiled, the nourishing

daily soup prepared by pouring hot water over soy bean paste, and the salted vegetables prettily cut up, has always been a rather sketchy affair. The busy housewife can now give less time than ever to preparing meals for her family and thus be freed to engage in an increasing number of outside interests and activities.

But something more revolutionary is taking place as a result of the "instant-boom," the household columns in the newspapers inform us. The Japanese male, who traditionally has resisted any and all attempts to lure him into the kitchen, has at last succumbed to the thrill of shopping on the way home from the office for the "instanto" food he most enjoys, taking it home, heating it up, then calling the family to "come and get it." I hear that in the last few weeks outdoor barbecue sets have appeared on the market. I don't know if chef caps and aprons are as yet on sale, but if not, they are sure to be soon.

In other words, the machine age with its higher incomes and attendant so-called higher standard of living, in the end comes to mean the same in Japan as in America.

But in all this rush to keep up with the times and our neighbors we mustn't forget Japanese culture. For the throngs of sightseers that surge in and out of the stations, Kyoto, the cultural capital of Japan, tries to offer at least glimpses of the former dignified and serene life for which the city is famous. Several hundred sight-seeing buses daily rush foreign and Japanese tourists alike from the Golden and Silver Pavillions to the two Honwanjis, Kiyomizudera, the Heian Shrine, Nijo Castle, and other famous spots. Recently I was invited to take a "cultural" night tour of the city. Not the \$10.00 tour urged on the foreigner,

which includes one of the more expensive restaurants and the most expensive night club where the men of the party, at least, can dance until the wee hours with pretty Japanese hostesses. This was a tour especially designed for Japanese sightseers at the modest sum of a little over one dollar a person.

That evening seven buses left the terminal, each carrying seventy-five passengers, about the daily average, I was told. Our itinerary included three places of interest, and the buses were routed--two, two, and three--to these places in different order so as not to make an unmanageable crowd at any one at the same time. After a pleasant drive through the main streets of the city we arrived at the Kaburenjo, a large hall in the Gion geisha district. There two *maiko*, or young girls in training to be geisha, handsomely dressed in elaborate kimonos, greeted the party at the entrance. Once inside the building, groups were quickly formed and the inevitable photographs taken by waiting photographers, with the little *maiko* graciously posing first with one group, then another. That out of the way, we were ushered into a small assembly hall. The curtain was soon parted showing the stage with a backdrop on which was painted the classic single pine tree. The little *maiko* now appeared and gave us two rather charmingly amateurish dances to the accompaniment of vocal and *samisen* music produced by a gramophone behind the scenes.

Into our shoes and off again for another drive to the western part of the city and the Sumiya in Shimabara. This is a famous 17th century house, formerly the mansion where the highest class of prostitutes, known as *taiyu*, lived, the women whose favors were reserved for the feudal lords only. The building itself

is an architectural treasure, but the crowd that packed itself into a rather small low-ceilinged room had not come to see the architecture, but to see one of the five remaining Kyoto taiyu. In the smoky light from two large candles, a plain little woman in her middle thirties, her teeth blackened in the old fashion, and her elaborate coiffure decorated with gold ornaments and pierced with long tortoise-shell pins, postured and paraded in the many layered gorgeous gold brocade robes these women affected. Then, with the help of two sweet little girls wearing ancient style kimonos, she knelt and performed a perfunctory tea ceremony, offering the cake and the bowl of tea to an old farmer sitting in the front row on the floor, and causing him nearly to faint with embarrassment. The neon lights hidden in the ceiling rafters were now turned on and the crowd poured out into the street to watch the taiyu walk by in the six inch high geta, or wooden clogs, that are the traditional footwear of her profession.

Our last stop was at the shoren-in, a Tendai Sect temple which originally, in the twelfth or thirteenth century-- the souvenir brochure is not too clear on dates -- had been a detached palace, but later was made over into a handsome and spacious temple with an elaborate garden. Our arrival obviously overlapped that of two earlier buses, for we found the floor of the neon-lighted main rooms of the temple, from which all the sliding screens had been removed, solidly packed with an earlier group of tourists, each seated with a piece of cake and a bowl of thick tea. Before the main altar a handsome and dynamic priest of about forty was addressing the crowd. His speech was colloquial and obviously full of humor, for he kept the crowd in a state of constant laughter.

The arrival of another hundred and fifty persons naturally caused considerable confusion, and the attempt to serve us tea and cake, as the brochure had promised, was finally abandoned. The priest led the way through a series of verandas to the garden at the back, very effectively lit with hidden spots. There on an island in the center of the lake sat two young women in the flowing robes of the Heian period playing on kotos, the long and graceful classic Japanese stringed instrument. The scene was quite lovely as was the music. But the crowd kept pushing from behind and the priest, holding an old fashioned paper lantern in his hand, had now stationed himself on the bridge leading to the island and was thoroughly enjoying himself explaining the garden and the music over a loud speaker. At this point we slipped away and walked up the hill to the Miyakao where we drank orange-ade in the almost deserted lounge.

Many Americans and Europeans cannot understand why their eager questions about Zen are received with such dumb bewilderment by the average English-speaking Japanese they happen to meet here.

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frequently offered goodies, perhaps a jar of kumquats or lichee nuts, Viennese cookies, or other change from the Lorna Doones, fig newtons, and ginger snaps dictated by a modest budget.

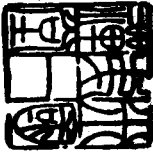
The last time Steve took part in a special occasion was at Roshi's birthday party April 10th. This was an intimate and joyous occasion with nearly all those present feeling like the members of one family. (There has been much discussion here as to what words would best express our feelings one to another and to Roshi. It is a feeling very different from that of the members of an organized body of strangers or mere acquaintances. Is it "socializing"? Is it love? Is it family feeling? Is it Sangha? A word with many meanings used by the Chinese can perhaps help us. It is *jen*. Sokei-an, in attempting to define its meaning said: "When two men meet, if they are true men, the natural result can only be *jen*." In another place, he equated this *jen* with human-heartedness.) Anyway, on Roshi's birthday this feeling, however our tastes dictate its description, manifested itself quite sharply. Steve's expression of it was the most boisterous. On this occasion it was a very fine brand of rosé supplied by Tudor to match the roulade of beef and noodles Alfredo made to Secki's recipe that crowned the birthday feast. It was Roshi himself who had suggested that wine be added to the menu. "If we are going to have a party, then let's have a party" might best express his attitude. By

the time the presents were being opened by Robin (our specialist for this responsibility, now aged five), Steve's enthusiasm in serving everyone had risen to a high pitch. We teased him for this, and his great dark eyes opened wider than before and his great black handlebar moustache bristled as he said, "What's the use of living if you can't enjoy yourself?"

That was the last time Steve was with us on a special occasion--very nearly on any occasion. It had been nearly a year before that Steve, who knew the end of living was soon coming for him, had asked that Roshi perform a religious service for him when it actually came. There was to be no body at the service, nor any to add to the twenty-odd Catholic Tichacheks residing in a local cemetery, for Steve as his last offering had dedicated his body to medical science, his eyes to the eyebank. As he was even then a man of vigorous body, it took quite a long time for the end to come. The date was August 21, 1961. He had made his own estimate of when it would be and had got himself to the hospital he had chosen as beneficiary to receive his body only a very few hours ahead. He would have been 51 years old on September 10th. On Sunday afternoon, August 27th, members of the zazenkai and friends burned incense to his memory and chanted the Hannya especially for him. Was there something missing in it when we came to the last lines? It seemed perfectly complete as always. *Harashō*, Steve.

MARY FARKAS

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