

ZEN NOTES



SOKEI-AN SAYS

THE GOLDSMITH
Sunday Series 1938

BUDDHISM is an immense ocean, which has seen more than 2,500 years and about 250 different sects. It is important for a Buddhist monk to become acquainted with the whole of this ocean of Buddhism and also to study a particular part of it as his profession. The complete Buddhist scriptures have been translated from the Sanskrit in Chinese. This task took 1700 years and fills 5048 volumes. No one in his lifetime can even run his eyes over all this.

We study a particular sutra; we try to understand it more deeply after going through its narrow entrance. I studied both primitive Buddhism and Zen. First I studied the Samyukta Agamas, which are among the oldest of the scriptures of Buddhism; then I studied Zen, including the five different sects and the many schools. These can be studied from many points of view; I paid particular attention to the Zen koans--the Zen catechism. I entered the monastery at twenty years of age and I was forty-seven years old when I completed my studies. We may not think about time as having value like money when we study Buddhism, because Buddhism is valueless--it does not cost one penny. At the same time no one can buy it for one million dollars.

On Sunday mornings I give lectures on primitive Buddhism. Today I have selected a short part of a sutra from the forty-seventh volume of the Agamas. The name of the sutra in Pali consists of two words. One means "to squeeze";



Art
improves on
Nature

the other means "to train" or "shape"--it means to squeeze as in making wine, to train a man as we squeeze the grapes, to take all impurities out of the wine. But in the Agamas the title of the sutra is "The Goldsmith."

The Zen

ON THE AGAMAS

It is just as a goldsmith's apprentice who has been trained by his master removes the impurities from raw gold. If the apprentice does not refine the gold, the gold is not light or soft or shining. It breaks when it is bent and it cannot be wrought into an ornament.

O monks! If you attain samadhi you will renounce all possessions and will find tranquillity. In rest and peace you will achieve Dharma. In singleness of mind and soul you will annihilate all leakages and afflictions.

It is just as a goldsmith trains his apprentice to remove impurities from raw gold, in order to make it light, soft, and shining. Thus it will become pliant and easy to work with.

O monks! When you abandon observation and awareness, you will reach the second and third and fourth stages of Dhyana.

The Zen sect was originally called the Dhyana vehicle. In early Buddhism there are two different schools: one primitive, the other radical. Radical Buddhism is the teaching of the Buddha. It is very difficult to make a distinction between radical and primitive Buddhism, because we are not sure which sutras are the Buddha's teachings and which are the teachings of his disciples. But the period from the Buddha's lifetime to Ashoka--200 years--is generally called the period of primitive Buddhism.

The story of the goldsmith is one of the very famous sutras. All regard it

as one of the teachings of the Buddha.

It is just as a goldsmith's apprentice who has been trained by his master removes impurities from raw gold. The master must be the Buddha, and the disciples are the apprentices of the goldsmith. The Buddha trained them to remove impurities from their raw minds. Gautama Buddha's teaching was always negative, not like the Mahayana teaching, which was developed later. The basic teaching of the Buddha was that one must annihilate afflictions from one's mind. He was the Denier--he denied everything, and by this denying made the foundation of human life. His precept was: "Do not desire; do not love; do not attach." This is very different from the teaching of Christ. Christ affirmed everything; the Buddha denied everything.

But if you study Buddhism from beginning to end you will understand the Buddha's denial. The Buddha denied because he wished to affirm. Before you eat your dinner, you will clean up, wash your hands, comb your hair, take all impurities out of your system, and then come to dine. To take all impurities out of one's mind is the first step toward accepting the whole world in its own shape, in its own state. All distortions and superstitions must be annihilated in order to accept the real world and real human life. But very strange to say, the Buddha did not emphasize the acceptance of the world and human life--he placed emphasis upon denial.

Your mind is nothing but shadows of your consciousness; you create shadows between inside and outside and you cherish these shadows, you entertain them as your precious thoughts and stick to them and cannot change them under any circumstances. And so you cannot place yourself in real harmony with others.

A layman asked the Buddha: "Why do you not teach us the other side?" The Buddha said: "It has no merit--to teach you the other side. It can be acquired naturally." Many Buddhist monks explain this "other side" as life after death, and the Buddha's answer as meaning that there is no use to teach you what will happen after death; you will attain it naturally. This commentary must be changed; it is not clear. The "other side" means the layman's life as opposed to the monk's life. The student must accept the monk's life as a period of discipline. When a child lives at home with his mother and father he is training to become a man--he must accept this as a period of discipline. Then, later, when he becomes a man, he will lead his own life.

If the apprentice does not refine the gold, the gold is not light or soft or shining. It breaks when it is bent, and it cannot be wrought into an ornament. A child who tries to act as a man cannot live in the world because his nature is not pliant, his virtue is not shining, his mind is not soft, his attitude is not light. It is heavy, coarse, dark, and stubborn; it is raw like raw iron. It must be beaten; the impurities must be taken out and between fire and water it must be tempered.

O monks! If you attain samadhi you will renounce all possessions and will find tranquillity. Samadhi--in the Christian faith you have faith in God and you believe in God and accept all circumstances as God's purpose. This is very hard! But to the Buddhist it is not very hard, because the Buddhist believes that God is *within* and speaks to the heart if you will listen to it. So you listen to it and then you will regret and repent and hope and accept your

karma. Let us suppose that wherever I go all look at me as a stranger and refuse to accept me as a friend and I am alone, because of something that they say I have done. All talk about me and my world is very narrow. By being abused by friends I am paying back all my old debts of karma, and I quietly wait and calmly accept all abuse and so pass five or ten years, and then all these old debts will be wiped out, and friends will accept me with smiling faces because I listened to my own heart's whisper. But to do this my own mind must return to universal mind.

In tranquillity you will find this and will recall all errors that you have committed in the past, and you will clean out your mind by meditation and *in rest and peace you will achieve Dharma.* Dharma here means true religion, true enlightenment. When you attain rest and peace you will understand yourself and the cause of affliction. In meditation you will analyze all, confess everything to yourself, and attain samadhi. Then, in complete contact with the universe, you will forget your own existence; you will forget objective existence.

When you first ride a horse you are conscious of the horse and the horse is conscious of you; the horse manages you. Then you forget the horse and you manage the horse. Then both the horse and you forget each other; the horse is not conscious of you and you are not conscious of the horse. Horse and you gallop as one. That is samadhi. If I use your word God, you and God must become one. And in such a moment you must confess everything to yourself and renounce all possessions of your egotistic mind.

In singleness of mind and soul you will annihilate all leakages and afflictions. Leakage is called ashrava in

Sanskrit. It is like something that perspires from your skin. Instead of becoming one with your consciousness, old memories leak out of your mind. In meditation you try to become one with God, then something leaks-- "Oh, I lent him 25 cents...", and with that your seeing is distorted, with that you meet a friend in your mind, and you become altogether different. This leakage must be annihilated.

It is just as a goldsmith trains his apprentice to remove impurities from raw gold, in order to make it light, soft, and shining. Thus it will become pliant and easy to work with. The smith makes ornaments with refined gold as thin as hair, and it can be bent or woven into beautiful brocade. But if it is raw it will snap--you cannot do anything with it. Man's mind is just like this raw gold. It must be made light and shining and pliant, so that all can

use him and he can use all.

O monks! When you abandon observation and awareness, you will reach the second and third and fourth stages of Dhyana. The first of the so-called four stages of meditation is like a combination of earth and water. You use material and then use knowledge of this material to analyze and try to find truth. The first stage is observation and awareness. The second is like a combination of water and fire. The third is air and ether. The fourth-- called the state of the empyrean-- is pure ether, everything is clear as crystal. Here you do not deal in words. There is just pure consciousness, but there is also rhythm and emotion. As in absolute music, there is no meaning in it, there is nothing to be visualized, but you feel the rhythm of all experience in your mind.

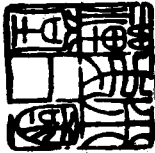
Edited by BRIAN HEALD

AT THE REQUEST of a California subscriber, Mr. Charles Siegfert (we're so glad you asked, as we had this in mind for a long time anyway), we are going to try to include one of Vanessa Coward's drawings in each issue of ZEN NOTES. This month's is on page one. Ed

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Founded in 1930 by
Sokei-an Sasaki

A square seal with a double-line border. Inside, the Chinese characters '第一禪院' (Dì Yī Chán Yuàn) are arranged in a 2x2 grid. The top-left character is '禪' (Chán), top-right is '一' (Yī), bottom-left is '院' (Yuàn), and bottom-right is '第' (Dì).

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