

ZEN NOTES



日月

THE KEY In India the sages and Shakyamuni left home in order to attain enlightenment and did not return. Their religion was to come out of their homes so that they could enter the Absolute. Until Ashvaghosha began the teaching of Mahayana Buddhism, there wasn't any Buddhism that was concerned with human life. All Buddhism before Ashvaghosha abominated human life and tried to retire from it. There was no opportunity to speak about love among human beings. Of course that was not true Buddhism. When you hear those stories of the Jataka told by the Buddha--how simply and kindly the Buddha spoke about compassion and sympathy! But in Hinayana Buddhism, especially that followed by monks, there was no such deep compassion nor conception of love among human beings. They emphasized Nirvana so strongly that they forgot about human beings, they forgot about love. Christ came and completed that side which Buddhism did not touch.

Living in this Western hemisphere so many years, I am convinced that Christianity is still alive in your veins, in your blood, and in your social life, though perhaps the churches have forgotten it. There are so many sects! But even though people hate each other it is still love that they experience. When we observe people loving each other and hating each other both are expressions of love. Without strong hatred, there is no strong love. Both are included in the one word *love*. Love goes into the tips of the veins and in the West the expression of it is so extravagant, so extraordinary, that the Oriental could never dream of it.

The Buddha's teaching is in an entirely different direction. It is Nirvana. That part wasn't revealed by Christ or thought of by his disciples or by

Christians. Christ did not talk about Emptiness. But if love does not come from Emptiness, it is merely partiality. It is not pure at all. If it does not come from Nirvana, it is selfish love. Love that comes from Emptiness is the love of pure Being, not of a selfish being.

No one can invent love. Love is a natural power of the human being. No one can counterfeit love by his own will power. Love has no egotistic attitude, for the egotistic attitude has no love--it has desire but no love. Love is as a bird in a cage--it sings, sings! It has no desire. What makes a bird sing? It is love.

We Buddhists admire Christianity for its wonderful teaching of love. Of course we have our own terms that mean the same thing--Mahamaitri and Mahaprajna are the father and mother of love. But Buddhism emphasizes the power of wisdom, of knowledge, more than love. For example, I am aware of my own existence; but weeds and trees are not aware of their own existences. Theirs is latent knowledge. The baby cries, but the baby has no awakened wisdom--in other words, no consciousness--of its own existence; for babies are sleeping. But they are awakening.

What is the most important thing for the human being? Power to know. I know you are here; you know I am here; you have done this to me--it was harmful, but you know it.

Wisdom is intrinsic to all sentient nature, and the Buddha emphasized wisdom. The wisdom we have is also intrinsic. We cannot make our power of knowing. It is natural, intuitive; we cannot create it. Children may come from educated homes, be sent to the university, yet cannot graduate from college; they cannot create the power of knowledge.

It is another element of non-ego.

Christian love also is non-ego, just as is the wisdom of Buddhism. You admire love between man and woman because you cannot create it by will power. A man and a woman meet and they love because it is natural. You cannot buy love with money; you cannot obtain it by will power. Therefore it is wonderful and sacred. If you try to buy it with money, you desecrate the whole of love and it will be broken in pieces. All those things that cannot be desecrated are wonderful--the wisdom through which we see, hear, understand; and the love through which we combine, come together, so that we are interested in this life and have the courage to fight for living.

I think in the future Christians studying Buddhism must supply that forgotten part of Christianity. And we Buddhists must study from Christians what we have forgotten.

In order to create good will between Buddhists and Christians I shall say something about the fundamental faiths of the Buddhist and the Christian. The convictions of each spring from what are really analogous terms.

Christianity emphasizes love, of which Christ spoke aloud in the field. Love is the essential element binding together all sentient beings. In the early period of Greek philosophy they thought each molecule had some kind of hook by which it linked itself with the other molecules. Without this hook nothing could maintain its force; nothing could maintain its own existence. They thought that each molecule was a link in the chain of material existence, and that each link had a hook to engage with other links. Today scientists say it is electricity that provides the cohesiveness that forms matter.

From a religious standpoint, the power that makes human beings combine together is love. Without it there is no society, no family. This love is a wonderful instinct in all sentient beings--not only human beings but even ferocious tigers love with another's love, a child's love.

Two thousand years ago Christ spoke this word "Love" out loud and made people's minds wide awake. You must think about the period when Christ descended on earth. There was a monarch named Herod, and he oppressed all the nation and no one had any freedom. All were ruled entirely by this tyrant. Christ made their minds free. Love is the only pure thing and it gave them freedom.

I am very happy that I, as one human being, could understand these two wonderful teachings of the West and of the East. Both have the same common basis--non-ego. It has different names in the two religions but it is the same principle, one of the cardinal principles of Buddhism. It corresponds to love in Christianity. I did not discover this secret for a long, long time. It was my mission to grasp something that was exactly the same in the East and in the West. If I could find this key, I could open all the secrets of both hemispheres, East and West. If I had been a merchant, and had found the secret of the West, I could have sold this secret to the East. I came to this country with my teacher when I was twenty and stayed twelve years. I went back and forth several times and have now (1938) been back nine years observing the heart and life of the people of the West.

Comparing Eastern and Western philosophy, and primitive Buddhism and Greek philosophy, I failed at first to discover a key to open both sides, East and West. Finally I found that key, one key with



Dear Everyone:

A few days ago I had my 69th birthday. In these days when many of the world's most important statesmen are nearing that age or even well past it, it is perhaps not such an imposing age. But it does cause one to pause and think a little, to think what changes have taken place in the world in that period, and what changes have happened to the particular person one was born as. Especially, however, one thinks of the years that may be left to one. Will they be a number or only a few?

When I was a child my parents, who were devout Christians, often spoke of the Biblical three score years and ten as the ultimate one might hope to reach. That age seemed as distant as the stars. And yet now it is almost here, and in so short a time! At this age one comes to realize that the most valuable commodity one possesses in life is time. With time anything and everything is possible. Without it, nothing can be accomplished. When we are children the days and months pass so slowly; we are always wishing for them to rush by so that Christmas will be here again. Then we are wanting the school years to hurry, first so that vacation will come, then that we may enter into the adult world. It is perhaps not until middle life that time begins to take on a value for us, that we begin to realize that only from the womb of time can the fulfillment of our dreams emerge. Yet already half or more of our span of life is already spent. And at seventy one can only look forward to putting the last touches on work already begun, hoping always that mind and body will continue to serve us even though with gradually diminishing energy and power.

All this is not indulgence in sentimental pessimism. This is just life. Buddhism has always taught that everything that is born grows, matures, and passes away. The Totality of life, which includes death, must be accepted with open hands and open heart. It is clinging to time that has passed, refusing the now, and fearing the future that causes much of human suffering. The "now", whatever the age, is what we must live in fully. But that "now" contains at once the distillation of the past and the seeds of the future. I do not believe that "living in the now" is living as if only this moment and nothing else mattered. The "now" is this moment when the seeds of the future are impregnated with the essence of the past. It is the crucial moment of creation. Through each one of us each moment that creation is being carried on. Therefore we can say that there is only this moment; therefore we must value each moment, and valuing each moment value time supremely. At no matter what age it is our most precious possession.

Our Zen practice takes us a step further--or at least that is what we hope and strive to realize through it--to timeless

time. There the beauty, the rightness, and the imperative urgency of each individual moment of one's own short individual life span is not lessened; in the context of eternal creation each becomes at once of even more significance. Each is one bead in that everywhere extending, all embracing and endlessly shining net of Indra. Timeless time! It is not time where there is no time. Timeless time is infinite, everlasting, never-ending, eternal time. We cannot comprehend it with this finite mind, but sometimes for an instant of relative time we are vividly aware of our participation in this utterly timeless time. Then we know that the moment at three is eternal, the moment at twenty is eternal, the moment now at seventy is eternal. There is only the eternally extending warp of time upon which the individual moments of individual relative time are endlessly weaving patterns of infinite variety, and that they have always been and will always be an intrinsic part of timeless time.

This last year has been one of confused change for the entire world, and Ryōsen-an has shared the general world karma in its own way. In such a period of frustrated hopes, delayed accomplishment, and necessary adjustment to unexpected circumstances, it seems to me even more than ever that we must remain understanding, adaptable, and patient, yet in our own hearts never deviating from the course we have set ourselves or the ideals we hold.

The weather in Kyoto has followed the general pattern. Never

such a cold winter or such a hot summer. Spring came and went before we knew it, and we are having an autumn in which one night we sit in the zendo, the perspiration running down our bodies, and the next we are fortified with a series of sweaters that usually are needed only in December. The severe typhoon that struck us in September, while it did us personally little harm, has injured the foliage on the trees so that I doubt we shall have much color in our maples. None has appeared as yet. The papers say that the salty moisture in the typhoon winds coated the leaves, and as a result the usually golden gingkos, with which many of our wider streets are lined, have now turned black. We have been waiting for those beautiful sunny autumn days to take the books out of our library for an airing, but aside from two or three in October, we have had only continued heavy rain, muggy or shivery grey days, or pale sunshine. There is always so much dampness here that to keep the foreign-style bound books free from mildew and the old Japanese books free from mildew and worms, they need to be thoroughly sunned once a year.

The ups and downs of the weather have been duplicated in our work. Sometimes things have moved along smoothly and well, then suddenly we have been brought up short by problems that have been difficult to solve. There have been different aims, different ideas of how to attain those aims, and sometimes impatience that so much time and care is necessary for our work. Unfor-

Unfortunately we are working in an as yet little tilled field. There are few precedents for us to depend upon. It is simple enough to translate a piece of Chinese or Japanese text as if it were an ordinary text, but then Zen syntax is not in many cases ordinary Chinese syntax, the idioms do not mean the same, pronunciation of names and terms are often special for Zen in both Chinese and Japanese, the commentators, old and modern, are often at odds, and then comes the final problem of how to find English words which will convey at least in part the Zen meaning. Furthermore, readers in the West have as yet a relatively thin background, so much must be supplied to them.

Our library personnel has undergone some changes this year. Dr. Watson returned late this summer to Columbia University to teach for a time. Mr. Yampolsky, also, I believe, plans to return to America. Gary Snyder, who has been at the Institute on a scholarship, resigned and he and his wife plan to leave for India shortly. Kanetsuki San, who worked with Gary Snyder on *The Wooden Fish*, the valuable collection of small sutras chanted at Zen monasteries which we published, unfortunately was taken ill during the winter and had to return to his father's temple. The excellent secretary we have had for three years or more became Mrs. Wakamura in December, and the end of this year will leave us so as to take over fully the duties of a young married woman. It will be difficult to find a substitute for her.

On the other hand, Professor Kanaseki of Osaka University, whom many of you met while he was in New York several years ago, is now with us several days a week, as is one of his colleagues in the English Department of that University, Mr. Oka. Furuta San, a personal disciple of Miura Roshi, who is presently a student at Otani University, has taken up the work on the big name index where Kanetsuki San was forced to give it up. Professor Iriya is now able to give us more time, and Professor Yanagida is working as devotedly as always.

The household of Ryōsen-an has also changed. The three pretty girls who had become so capable under Washino San's experienced hands, have one by one left with marriage in view. Replacing them is extremely difficult these days. All the young girls want to work in factories, many of which are being put up in country districts so as to draw on the youth of the farming villages and towns. Though they earn less in many cases than in a good household position, they have the freedom and the distractions which are all-alluring these days.

Zuiun-ken has perhaps seen the most changes. Last winter seven American men lived there, but by spring, for one reason or another, all had drifted away. Most thought they had come for serious Zen study and practice. But what in America one dreams of Zen practice and study being and the actuality in Japan are very different. The "freedom" of Zen so tempting when read about and so easy to talk about glibly, unfortunate as it may

be, is a freedom of the spirit attained only after long self-discipline. Also life in Japan presents many unexpected aspects. Some are too fascinating to forgo; some are so different from expectations that they shock and disillusion the Westerner. And besides, living is not so inexpensive here as many hope. One may live much more cheaply than in America, partly because one does not have to live as one lives in America. But the cost of living is rapidly going up, and in several cases, extra funds had to be found. Unfortunately jobs which can pay enough to live on do not give time for Zen study, in the early years at least.

A middle-aged Zen priest came in the spring to live at Zuiun-ken and take charge of our Zendo. But he soon found his outside duties more demanding than he had thought they would be, and the first of August left to devote himself wholly to them. An American woman and an English woman, together with several guests, have been at Zuiun-ken during the summer. The American woman returned when the two month's stay she had planned came to an end. The Englishwoman remains more or less permanently and is really digging into her Zen study, which since May has included sanzen with Oda Roshi.

Outside students this year have included Bill Laws and his wife, now in their own home not far from us. Bill is presently getting a taste of country monastery life at Nakagawa Soyen's Ryütaku-ji. Our Swiss student, here now for a year, continues her devoted practice of zazen and her studies in Japanese art. And for six months this summer and early autumn we have had with us the president of the Vienna Buddhist Society and his wife. Mr. Hungerlieder has been an ardent student of Hinayana for many

years, and these six months he has devoted himself as ardently and conscientiously to the study of Mahayana Buddhism in Japan. It was with real regret we said good-bye to them in October, but they promise to return within another two years. Recently a young Swiss scholar, who has specialized in Madhyamika philosophy and is now studying Chinese and Japanese at Kyoto University, has come to sit with us also.

One of the very happy events that has taken place is the arrival of Teisan to be head of our Zendo and of the students' practice at Zuiun-ken. By the merest chance we happened to meet this summer through an English friend. He had been twelve years in Engaku-ji Sodo and left last year only because of an operation, from which he has now fully recovered. He is very interested in teaching foreign students, and particularly able in instructing them in sitting and in maintaining a real zendo atmosphere in the meditation hall. Teisan loves gardens. Yesterday he and Washino San went shopping for tulips and narcissus and rose plants. Today he is planting bulbs in the garden at Zuiun-ken and preparing the garden for the roses.

A day or two ago we picked three autumn roses here at Ryōsen-an. In spite of the vagaries of the weather and the bugs that, resisting almost daily spraying, ate up all the green leaves, the roses have patiently put forth new foliage, and in a valiant fling before winter, given us three lovely last blooms to be grateful to them for.

Ryōsen-an
Daitoku-ji
November 8, 1961

Printed with *Zen Notes* Vol. VIII No. 12



two names, love and non-ego. I should have been rewarded. I had found the priceless jewel.

In love you and I are one. When I say something, you are speaking the same thing. When you say something, I am speaking the same thing. We are not in love with each other. In love you must not recognize yourself: you are he. He must not recognize himself: he is you. Both are completely united. There are no two persons. There must be one person.

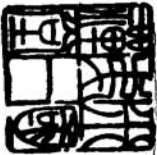
If I were to explain what non-ego is I would use the same words to explain its significance. Non-ego does not destroy the person; it supports all and is supported by the whole. Love is just the same. Christianity is the religion of love. The Oriental attitude of non-ego is the attitude of love of Christian people. Buddhism is the religion of wisdom. Without love wisdom is like a sword that destroys but cannot create. Love without wisdom is like a fire that burns everything and does not give life to things. Love and wisdom are one thing. When we take this into our-

selves it is wisdom. When we give it to another it is love.

With this one key in my mind, Christianity and Buddhism become completely assimilated to each other. I stayed in this country for a long time. I felt I had completed my mission by finding this key. Those who do not pay attention to thoughts think my discovery doesn't mean anything. It has no more value than any cultured pearl. But those who study the thoughts of man will certainly accept my discovery, as a key with which anyone can open the chest that keeps the secret of West and East. Those who try to earn money or build cities don't place much emphasis on thoughts. But human beings live in thoughts. They are the only treasure human beings possess. I am a student of thoughts, and those who come here are students of thoughts. I rejoice to have the opportunity to announce this discovery. The one who first announces this discovery is myself, humble SOKEI-AN.

Composite reconstructed by M. Farkas

zen notes
Copyright 1961 by The First
Zen Institute of America, Inc.



Vol. VIII, No. 12, Dec. 1961
Mary Farkas, Editor
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Published monthly by
THE FIRST ZEN INSTITUTE OF AMERICA, INC.
113 East 30th Street, New York 16, N.Y.

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

Copyright of Zen Notes is the property of the First Zen Institute of America, Inc., and its content may not be copied or e-mailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download or e-mail articles for individual use.

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

會協禪一第國美