

ZEN NOTES



SOKEI-AN SAYS

BUDDHIST STUDENTS There are two kinds of Buddhist students.

One prefers to attain wisdom; the other prefers to attain the completion of the deed. In the Sutra of Vimalakirti these two natures are explained. Both have their merit. The one who prefers to attain wisdom is philosophical; he is a thinker. The other, who prefers the completion of the deed, is usually called the religious type; he has the sense of Zen and is a self-observer. Such a one always has a pang in his conscience; his daily life is a record of commandment. He does not kill a mosquito near him, nor does he hit a fly absent-mindedly. But such a one occasionally lacks the understanding of why he must or must not do something. The law is written in his conscience, while the other, who is more philosophical, possesses the law within his mind.

When you meet Buddhist teachers, you will find these two types. One has a keen understanding of Buddhism, but his daily life is rather careless; the other lives a good and careful life, but the point of each law is not quite clear to him. So we always have two teachers of the way to become a monk. One is a teacher of Dharma, the other is a teacher of commandment. The teacher of Dharma sets one's mind on fire and purifies it; the teacher of commandment washes one's heart with water and cleanses it. The one who has attained and teaches Dharma, even though he knows that his words are wrong, must say something immediate, to lead his pupil into Buddhism. So he will speak of the hypothesis of reincarnation and the wheel of Karma, even though he knows that it is not ultimate truth. This is the agony of the teacher. The

teacher of commandment also has his agony: he knows the perfect law and yet he violates it occasionally.

One of the great Mahayana teachers said, "One who violates the law of commandment is a Bodhisattva. One who has no commandment is not a Buddhist; he is a heretic." Commandment is both a keystone and a milestone. It is the milestone of daily life; we measure how close we are to it or how far we are from it. The heretic does not have this milestone for measurement of his conduct, and such a one is not a Buddhist. Though you violate the law, you must find the milestone in yourself. To find it in your heart is an ultimatum to a Buddhist who wishes complete behavior.

And one can say this or that to intellectual people, but one must have the true keystone of the entire structure of Buddhism in one's mind. Then one will not mind someone saying what is not true, for he will know the other's state and the error of his ways. He will know even though he will smile-- "Oh, yes!"-- that statements of the other are in error. As a Buddhist he will have a keystone in the mind and a milestone in the heart.

But it is not easy to find a complete Buddhist. To have both a keystone and a milestone one must give oneself into Buddha's Dharma. Some will observe Buddha's Dharma from outside, or study it with their minds, or pretend that they have given themselves. But only entire submission will attain both the milestone and the keystone. Christianity will say that one must submit oneself to God's will-- it is the same thing. Complete submission will attain the milestone and the keystone.

Then, in Zen terms, I will become Itself. That is a Zen term-- I will become

Itself. If one wishes to become a good husband he becomes his wife. If one wishes to become a good mother she becomes her child. It is Yoga. He is not himself; he must make complete contact with the object.

The term *submission* gives you a shade of humiliation. You must be flat on the ground. When you meditate on a koan, you surrender to it. When an artist studies for many years, then he finally surrenders to great Nature. To catch something from it, you must become it. You cannot catch it from outside, you must embody in it--then the things you wish to have are yours. To have a husband is the same thing. The true woman does not think of herself but of him entirely. If she thinks of herself, he is not hers, for she cannot be him. But to realize complete submission you must be very conscientious. You must understand the gesture of Nature, you must see the shades of Nature's handiwork, you must listen to Nature's suggestion. In the common expression, you must listen to the still small voice. It leads you into complete submission.

The Buddha, when he was in the Bamboo Garden, told his disciples that there were four kinds of good horses. The best horse sees the shadow of the rod and runs; it sees the shadow of the driver holding up the rod in his hand, and before it is struck, it runs. This is the best horse. The second horse will run when the rod touches its tail lightly. The third good horse will start to run when the rod strikes its body. And the fourth horse will not run until the rider's spur penetrates to the quick; the stupid horse stands still until the rider's heel strikes its side.

A good disciple of the Buddha is just like one of these horses. A good

Buddhist student hears that something has happened in the town--a man has died in agony after a long sickness--and he thinks deeply and surrenders to it. Another will think of coming to the day when he loses his child, or his mother or father dies. His father was the pillar of the house; from tomorrow on the child must find bread by himself. A third will really come to the day when he loses his child. And a fourth must experience itself and must pass through the agony of death itself or the crisis of a great earthquake or the iron rain of battle.

These four are good students. They will think deeply and find the true meaning of Dharma and surrender to it. They will listen to the suggestion of Nature and complete their submission and find the body of commandment. Until that day the teacher will not hand them the commandment. When a general completes his plan of strategy, he will hand it to his officer, but if he doubts the officer's mind, he will not hand this plan to him. The lower officer must show his true and honest heart. Mere brain power or good technique is not sufficient; the heart must be shown. Before the teacher of commandment hands down the entire commandment to the student, he must be sure that the student has the true milestone in his mind. Then he will leave all action to the student's judgment and will never doubt what the student does. In the same way, the Zen master, after transmission of the Dharma, understands. But to attain this complete submission to the suggestion of Nature, great power is necessary. If you do not pass this point, you cannot have the body of commandment or the mirror of Zen.

A heathen monk came to see the Buddha and said, "I ask of you neither a

word nor no word. Tell me directly, what is your Dharma?" The Buddha usually answered in silence or spoke a million words. In this case the Buddha kept himself quiet a little while. He performed quietude for a while. He did not care what the heathen monk said. Then the monk said, "O Tathagata, you are the Body of Love and Compassion. You have brushed away the cloud of illusion and made me enter into the Dharma." The heretic, filled with admiration, said this and left. Ananda watched him going and said, "My Tathagata, you did not say a word, but he said he had attained Dharma. I wonder what he really attained." The Buddha said, "He is as a good horse when he sees the shadow of the rod." He receives just a slight suggestion, and he opens his eyes completely

and he enters. Such a one is a good student.

To attain so keen and clear and straight an entrance into Dharma depends on your heart, which must practice submission and humbleness before the real truth. This real truth will manifest itself nowhere but in your own conscience, in your own brain, and when you get a suggestion from it, you must relinquish all notions, all conceptions.

Zen is a terribly intellectual religion, but the simplicity of it is the same as that of other religions which emphasize the pure heart. From either pure behavior or pure mind you can come to the same point. If you try this once, then it will be easier for you, day by day.

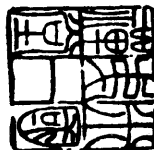
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