

ZEN NOTES



SOKEI-AN SAYS

LEAKAGE *Ashrava* is a Sanskrit word meaning to leak out or to ooze, a discharge of liquid matter, perspiration or transudation. This word was used in Buddhism from the Buddha's time to express the mind flowing out from our sense organs as water flows out from a broken tub. In a word of common parlance in English, notion. When you lose control of your mind, your notions flow out like dripping water. I find that American or Western people have noticed this flowing out of notions and called it subconscious mind. Your conscious mind is the control--how to speak, how to convey the meaning, but your subconscious mind is not in your own control. This subconscious mind, in a term of your analytical psychology, exactly corresponds to our *ashrava*.

There are three kinds of *ashrava*. Our suffering notions leak out from our mind, our sense organs, like the pus discharged from a boil. According to the *Kosha-shastra*, these notions, uncontrollable flowing afflictions, leak out from six kinds of boils. Six kinds of boils means our six sense organs--eye, ear, nose, mouth, body, mind. I remember that in some early sutra among the Agamas the Buddha said also that our minds, our passions, are leaking out like the pus leaking from a boil. The term *ashrava*, therefore, is quite an old one in Buddhism.

This metaphor is not used in any other religious scriptures that I know of. *Ashrava* and the allied *anashrava* and *ashravakshaya* are particularly Buddhistic, for this idea is produced from experiencing meditation. Without the experience of meditation you will never apprehend its meaning. But when you practice meditation you will immediately realize what *ashrava* is.

Perhaps you have been to a Buddhist temple and seen the monks meditating surrounding the Buddha and you go home and imitate the attitude of meditation, putting your hands on your lap, straightening your back, stretching your neck and breathing according to the rhythm of nature. Holding your lower body on your crossed legs, you meditate upon your own mind.

Do not meditate upon any word or notion. Do not meditate upon any symbol, such as a triangle, square, or circle. Just meditate upon your own mind. As a practice of meditation for beginners, we tell them to meditate upon all the sounds they hear. If you hear a piano, the elevated, automobiles, rustling paper, palpitation of your heart--anything--meditate upon these not one by one, but all at once. Open your ear very wide. Meditate upon this sound until all sound comes into you. You are meditating upon the outside, but all sound is produced inside you. Thus, you will naturally meditate upon your own mind.

I advise beginners to meditate upon the sound in their own minds, but very soon you will forget your mind, that you are concentrating to your audible sense, and other things will take place. Those other things are imagination, notions. "Oh yes, I lent Mrs. So-and-so five dollars three years ago. I will telephone her and tell her she must pay it back." This is a clue to stretch your imagination and one by one your thoughts go round like a merry-go-round and your mind is disturbed and your face changes and the teacher watching your face will shout at you. Then you start to meditate again. This is subconscious mind. In the daylight, you mostly forget it, but at night it comes out and you dream it. When you have nothing to do in the afternoon, it comes out as a daydream. When your strength of mind becomes feeble, when your mind loses its control, this *ashrava* begins to leak. All the year, you were healthy. You felt there was some sickness in your body, but you controlled it. But when you take your vacation, you lie

on the ground and your body becomes limp and your energy goes and your mind comes and goes, comes and goes. Or when your pocketbook gets empty and you cannot stay longer on your vacation, when you buy your ticket and come back to the office, this stops.

Your mind must be in shape as your body is in shape.

The names of the three leakages are kama-ashrava (ashrava in kama-dhatu); bhava-ashrava, ashrava itself; avidya-ashrava, ashrava of ignorance. These technical terms described here have been explained many times.

Without counting avidya, all the afflictions of the kama-dhatu are called ashrava; in rupa-dhatu and arupa-dhatu, excepting avidya, all other concepts are also called ashrava. So in rupa-dhatu this color (red) is also ashrava leaking out from the eye. Sound is also ashrava, leaking out from the ear. From a deluded viewpoint, color came into the eye, sound came into the ear. Looking at white clouds floating, the white clouds are the production of your mind.

In arupa-dhatu in your meditation, you think there is nothing in the world but space. Now there is neither I nor space, but time exists. This space and time, the motionlessness of your consciousness that you feel upon your consciousness, is the ashrava of your consciousness. These are called existing ashrava, ashrava-bhavika or bhava-ashrava. Of course, in the state of ashrava, there is no desire or passion, but the pure existence of seeing or non-seeing is also the leakage of ashrava.

Through the three states--kama-dhatu, rupa-dhatu and arupa-dhatu--you yourself will enter avidya, the state

of ignorance in which you are not aware of your own existence and in which you are unaware of the state of Reality. This is also called ashrava, avidya-ashrava. Heretics do not take this view of the state of original ignorance. They think it is the state of Nirvana. But the Buddha had a different opinion. This is a very deep, a very exalted part of Buddhism. When you stay in the conscious state with your unconscious mind, you are unaware of the state of Reality. In one word, you are sleeping. You are hibernating in an unconscious state. There is no light of wisdom. Wisdom does not elucidate that darkness. The heretics call this the state of Nirvana. The Buddha did not accept this as Nirvana. The Buddhistic idea of the state of Nirvana is entirely different. Therefore this avidya is also called ignorance. These are the three states of ashrava.

When you understand what ashrava is, naturally you will also understand the state of anashrava. When ashrava is clearly wiped out, it is called ashvakashaya, the state of annihilation of ashrava. When the original darkness is destroyed, you realize the state of anashrava. When you are still in darkness in your meditation, closing your eyes, covering your ears, you forget your own consciousness, hibernating in the mountain cave. If you are in that state, you are not yet in Nirvana. Therefore you are still in the state of leakage. When the final state of meditation is completely destroyed, then you will come into the state of anashrava. There are many metaphors explaining this state of meditation. The mind must be empty and in that state you meditate upon Emptiness. The sky is empty and you

meditate upon the sky. But when the sky is destroyed, when you realize there is neither sky nor yourself, nor earth, you will attain the state of anashrava. When you meditate upon the mirror, you look at the images reflected on the mirror and you realize that these reflections are not the nature of the mirror. You avoid all these images from the mirror and you become mirror-by-itself--like a mirror standing in empty space with no reflections upon it. You think it is the state of anashrava; you think it is the state of Nirvana. This mirror must be completely destroyed. Then you realize the real state of anashrava.

Zen students say that when you kill alaya consciousness with your dagger you will attain original nature. So the real state of anashrava is very difficult to attain.

THE MONK'S COMMANDMENT If a Buddhist monk comes from Ceylon to New York and you go to shake hands with him, he will pull his hand backward. One such came here. I was shaking hands with everyone and he said of me: "That monk is always breaking the commandment, shaking hands with everyone." That he keeps a commandment made a thousand years ago means nothing to him. How to keep these commandments has a very deep significance--it is not merely to follow forms. I do not say that a Buddhist monk in these modern times should violate the commandments, but I say they should know the real significance of the commandment, and they don't know it. The monk's commandment is the intuitive reaction of monks against daily life. It is easy to observe and hard to violate.

THE COMMUNITY OF MONKS An excerpt
By Dr. G.P. Malalasekera of Ceylon
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It is a view common to all religions that family life and worldly business are incompatible with the quest for higher spiritual development. The religion of the Buddha is no exception; while the layman could practice many of the teachings and enjoy many of the blessings of the religious life, the Buddha held that the path to holiness could not be fully traversed among the occupations and interests of common life. The records do speak, it is true, of men who became arahants, i.e. saints, while in the condition of householders but it is explained that such men had assiduously practiced the monastic life in former births and were thus fully ripe for salvation.

The life of complete holiness, in Buddhism, thus involves withdrawal from the world; home and family must be abandoned; profession, trade and craft left behind. The detachment needed for the higher life can only be realized by the unflinching severance of all home ties. It was for this reason that immediately after the attainment of Enlightenment the Buddha founded a religious order which has continued to the present day with very little change in its essential character. It is known as the Sangha and its members are called Bhikkhus.

This Order originated with the five ascetics to whom the Buddha preached his first sermon at Benares and who became his earliest converts.

The emphasis laid by the Buddha on insight and knowledge, rather than on ritual and observance, was such that

at first the response was mainly from the educated young men of what were called good families. The number of young nobles who sought admission to the Sangha became so large that it excited considerable disquiet and complaints were made that soon there would be no more fathers to beget sons, wives were being widowed and families would soon become extinct; when the monks went about for alms they were reviled as destroyers of the family-life. But soon the people understood the true import of the Order and became its most ardent supporters. The Buddha's teaching was not that life was worthless but that all life was unsatisfactory.

Very early in the history of the Sangha, King Bimbisara of Magadha, who was one of the Buddha's greatest admirers and most faithful followers, issued a proclamation granting complete freedom from all laws to those joining the Buddhist fraternity of monks; he also presented for their use his own pleasure-park near the capital as a place of rest and quiet. It was the first of many similar gifts by those who followed the royal example.

As a result, it was not only the seekers after the Truth and the higher life that wished to be admitted to the Order, but even robbers, debtors, slaves running away from their masters, boys in search of pleasant food, soldiers anxious to escape service, sufferers from loathsome diseases and others seeking protection from the clutches of the law or those merely wishing to lead an idle and comfortable life began to avail themselves of these immunities. The Buddha at first laid down no barrier of race, caste, occupation or age but soon it

became necessary to make definite regulations to prevent the intrusion of the unfit and to give guidance in such matters as ceremonial, discipline, clothes, food, furniture, dwellings and medicine. The regulations were not all made at once but were formulated from time to time as each incident and difficulty arose and was brought to the Buddha's notice. This resulted in the gradual elaboration of a code of discipline, known as the Vinaya, which was meant to secure that only those influenced by the proper motives would seek admission into the Order and only those who conducted themselves properly could remain within it.

At first the Buddha admitted members of the Order himself but increasing distances and other practical difficulties rendered this more and more inconvenient and the disciples themselves were permitted to admit members.

Two simple ceremonies were prescribed for admission to the novitiate and to full privileges, respectively. Though sometimes described as "ordination," they are unlike the ordination of other religions but are rather applications from postulants which are granted by a Chapter of monks consisting of not less than ten members. The admission to the novitiate--Samaneraship--is called *pabbajja* or going forth i.e. leaving the world. The would-be novice has his hair shorn, and also his beard, if he has any--for novices can be enrolled at any age--and puts on yellow robes. He recites a formula known as the Three Refuges whereby he professes his faith in the Buddha, the Teaching and the Order of Monks. He also takes upon himself a promise to observe ten precepts which consist in abstinence

from hurting life, stealing, impurity, lying, intoxicants, eating at forbidden times, dancing, music and theatrical shows, garlands, perfumes and ornaments, high or large beds and accepting gold and silver. This is his formal abandonment of the world.

Full membership of the Order is obtained by a further ceremony, called *Upasampada*. No candidate is so admitted under twenty years of age; he is examined to ascertain that he is a free man, that neither his parents nor the State have a claim on him, and that he does not suffer from certain diseases and physical disabilities. He is introduced to the Chapter by a learned and competent monk who asks those in favor of his admission to signify the same by their silence and those who are not, to speak. When this formula is repeated three times without objection being recorded, the ceremony is complete. The newly-admitted Bhikkhu is placed under a qualified preceptor, the *upajjhaya*, of at least ten years' standing in the community. He has to wait upon the preceptor, seeing to the latter's clothes, bath, bed, etc., and in return, the preceptor gives him spiritual instruction, supervises his conduct and tends him in sickness. No vows of obedience are taken and the monk is always at liberty to return to the world. No disgrace of any kind attaches to the man who so reverts, provided that he has not been guilty of evil conduct while being a monk.

It is a grave and strenuous discipline that the monk is expected to practice. The Buddha described it as the Middle Way, equally distant from luxury and from self-mortification; on the one side from the world, with its interests, its enjoyments and passions

and on the other from the practices of the hairclad ascetic and naked devotee. It is interesting to note that some contemporary opinion in India criticised the monks as easy going and lax. It is said that the Buddha's own cousin, Devadatta, tried to induce him to make the discipline more severe. The Buddhist monks could not claim, much less exact, anything from the layman, yet it was considered the layman's duty and his privilege to provide the monks with food, clothes, lodging and whatever else they might legitimately need. It was the most obvious and easy method for a layman to acquire merit. Strictly speaking, a monk does not beg for food, nor does he give thanks for what he receives. He gives the layman a chance of doing a good deed and it is the donor, not the recipient, who should be thankful. The monk, on his part, by leading the good life to the best of his ability, ensures that the gifts provided by the piety of laymen earn for them the greatest reward.

The monk's conduct must be grave and serious; the doors of the senses must be closely guarded. He must always be mindful and self-possessed, constantly on the alert in all actions, ardent and strenuous, not hankering after the objects and pleasures of the world and feeling no dejection at their loss. Such ceaseless attentiveness requires a long training in concentration and for this purpose solitude and meditation are necessary. Beginning from such simple exercises as the contemplation of the impurities of the body, he rises to greater heights of contemplation, to raptures and ecstasies, both mental and moral. Four such Raptures are specially mentioned,

in the first of which the monk pervades the whole of the universe with boundless love, above, below, around, with far-reaching and measureless love. His mind is filled with Sympathy with all things that have life, Pity for those involved in all forms of suffering and Equanimity which can bear the sight of the world of Ill without quailing, confident in the means to end it. By successive processes of abstraction and intense inward withdrawal he reaches a state of void in which all consciousness of ideas and feelings has wholly passed away and the light of Truth shines in his mind, translucent and unobstructed and he is filled with the sense of complete freedom.

But only rare souls can climb such heights; the ordinary member of the Sangha is not so ambitious and he takes upon himself a long period of less strenuous training. He would rise early, travel about or go round to beg his only meal and, having taken it, spend the heat of the day in retirement and meditation. In the evening there would be discussion and instruction. Sometimes he might be entertained to a substantial meal at the house of some rich devotee and a comfortable house provided for him. But he has no right to expect any of these things. It is the duty of monks to wait upon their sick colleagues and to help each other in all their needs.

The private possessions allowed to a member of the Order are only the three garments he wears on his person, a belt, an alms-bowl, a razor, a needle and a water-strainer. Everything else that may be given to an individual has to be handed over to the confraternity to be held in common. All prop-

erty belonging to the Order is communal. It sometimes happened even in the Buddha's life-time that conditions in monastic establishments, especially near the principal cities, attained a high level of comfort, according to the standards of the times. Here and there the liberality of the laity erected large residences with halls for exercise, store-rooms for robes and other requisites, warm baths and ample grounds. In such cases all sorts of restrictive precepts prevented any tendency towards luxury.

Generally, however, the Brethren live in little groups of huts and their lives are of the greatest simplicity. A monk is only sufficiently clad to protect him from cold and heat and his food just enough to maintain his health for the inward concentration needed. Rags gathered from different places would go to make his clothes if no pious layman provides them and food is obtained by the daily round from house to house, if there is no invitation to a meal. If he lives in the forest, as many do to this day, the trees and creepers there would provide him with berries and roots.

A monk's year is divided into two parts. During nine months he would wander about in the woods or reside in a monastery. During the remaining three months residence in a monastery is obligatory and the laity are expected to make the necessary provisions. This period is the *Vassa* or the rainy season when traveling is impossible. No special observances are prescribed for this period but as it is the time when people have most leisure and the monks are brought into continual and more intimate contact with them, it has come to be regarded

as the appropriate season for instructing the laity in matters of religion. The end of the rains is marked by a ceremony called *pavarana* or the End of the Retreat, at which the monks living in the same monastery ask one another to pardon any offences that might have been committed by them. Immediately after this comes the *Kathina* ceremony or distribution of robes. The word *Kathina* signifies the store of raw cotton presented by the laity and held as common property until distributed to individuals. In modern times this has become a very elaborate ceremonial.

As the rules prescribed for monks implied a life of continuous tension, it was soon found necessary to make provision for the regulation of strict discipline and to impose remedies for its violation. It was, therefore, laid down--tradition says at the suggestion of King Bimbisara--that all the monks inhabiting a parish or district, within limits formally prescribed by the monks themselves, to hold periodical meetings attendance at which was compulsory. These meetings are held at the new and full moon and on the eighth days after the new and full moons. They have become occasions for mutual confession and the ceremony consists of the recital of a formula called the *Patimokkha* or "Disburdenment," embodying a list of formal transgressions and acts of unseemly behavior, some 227 in all.

These rules show that the Buddha was very particular about refinement in conduct and "gentlemanliness" in personal behavior, including the strict observance of good manners. The monks would assemble in the evening and after a duly trained Elder has opened

the proceedings, each rule is repeated three times. After each item the question is put to the assembly, "Are you pure in this matter?" Silence indicates a good conscience; only if a monk has something to confess does he speak. Failure to acknowledge a remembered transgression involves intentional falsehood which would prevent higher stages of spiritual development. If a monk confesses to having destroyed human life, or committed unchastity or theft or to have falsely proclaimed the possession of advanced insight, he would be expelled from the community. For minor offences the offender may be rebuked, suspended, some form of expiation prescribed. But this can be done only if the monk admits his guilt; no allegations or evidence against him will suffice. The Buddha insisted that no adherence to rules was of any use apart from the emancipation and purity of heart and mind and the cultivation of love and knowledge.

From its inception the Buddhist Sangha has been a model democratic institution. There are no vows of obedience, and no recognition of rank other than simple seniority or the relation of teacher to pupil. As time went on various expedients were invented in different countries since the management of large bodies of men necessitates authority in some form but these have never assumed the right to direct the belief and conduct of others. In the Sangha no monk can give orders to another; there is no compulsion, no suppression of discussion, no delegated power to explain or supplement the truth. The Buddha considered himself only as an elder brother who set the perfect example and he refused to nominate a successor to be

the head of the Order after his death. The Teaching and the Rules of Order were to be their guide. At gatherings of the monks a chairman is elected by the unanimous consent of those present, and the procedure--the proposal of a resolution and the request for an expression of opinion--is that adopted in modern public meetings, except that assent is signified by silence. All decisions are taken by majority vote and sometimes, where strong differences of opinion seem to exist, a decision is postponed for a more suitable occasion and special committees are set up to deal with problems needing investigation.

At first the Sangha consisted exclusively of monks but about five years after its establishment, women too were admitted with a few restrictions, dictated not by any prejudice the Buddha had against women, but as a concession to current public opinion. The Buddhist Sangha never promoted wars nor claimed to be the source and guide of civil power. It has no Pope and no hierarchy; nor does it profess to cover the whole field of religion. It has always practiced toleration and true unworldliness, directly encouraged art and literature and never opposed the progress of knowledge. The monk is merely one who is on a higher spiritual level than laymen; he may teach, though teaching is not obligatory to him. Yet always the monastery has been the center of education and these monasteries sometimes developed into mighty universities like that at Nalanda with its 5,000 students all fed, clothed and taught free, or like the Maha-Vihara at Anuradhapura which attracted men in search of learning from all parts of the then known world.

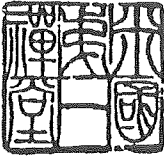
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