

ZEN NOTES



SOKEI-AN SAYS

TWO KINDS OF MEN

It is said that Buddhism is the religion of wisdom. Buddha means know-er; bodhi means knowing. Both come from a root meaning awake. To know is its cardinal principle. We must know what we are doing, where we are, and what we are saying. The universe is boundless; we cannot know all there is to know about this, that, and the other thing, but we can know more than those who do not strive to know where they are and what they are saying.

I have no objection to the statement that Buddhism is the religion of wisdom. However, one should not limit the meaning of wisdom to that particular English word "wisdom," for Buddha and bodhi have a deeper sense than any mere word. When I say "awake" to this, for example, or "I have awakened" to this, I do not mean just *this* (here Sokei-an struck the table) material existence.

We must know what we are doing. The Buddha gave his disciples an example of "not knowing" what one is doing when he told, in a sutra, about a little twelve-year-old girl of the temple who was punished by her superior for not getting up when she was supposed to. (In another sutra she is said to have wet the bed.) "You, my disciples," the Buddha commented, "though you are enlightened, are exactly like this little girl when you are not aware of what you are doing." The Buddha then went on to tell them how they could "know" their own and others' natures.

"There are two kinds of men," the Buddha said, "those who have faith and those who do not have faith." Of course we know that the one who has faith is a better man than the one who

has not, but among those who have faith, there are two kinds--one who will come to see me and one who will not come to see me. One kind of man who will come to see me is better than the one who will not, but among those who have faith and come to see me, there are also two kinds of people. One of these two kinds comes to hear something from me; the other kind is indifferent to what I have to say.

Many people come to see me. They talk about fishing, hunting and all sorts of things other than Buddhism. Their words are just talk. Though they have a desire to know Buddhism, they say, they never ask anything about it though to bring them to Buddha's understanding is why I am here.

Of course, among those who come to see me, the ones who wish to hear something from me about Buddhism are better than those who do not, but among those who listen to what I have to say about Buddhism there are also two kinds, those who listen with concentration and those who are not concentrated. Naturally, those who listen to me with concentration are better than those who do not, but among them there are again two kinds. One listens to my idea and takes it into his heart; the other, though he listens concentratedly, does not take in my idea. The one who takes is better than the one who does not, but among those who take my teaching to heart are still again two kinds. One kind of those who "get" my idea will merely hold on to it, while the other will not only take hold of it, but will observe it and meditate upon it. Of course, the ones who meditate on the teaching are better than the ones who merely hold on to it, but even among those there

are two kinds of men. One will meditate and attain enlightenment, while the other will continue to meditate but without attaining enlightenment. The one who meditates and attains enlightenment will be born into the body of Buddha, as, when a woman meditates upon a man, she will be born in him. Similarly, the one who has attained enlightenment, holds onto a koan, meditates upon it, and, breaking through it, attains wisdom. However, among those who attain wisdom, again there are two kinds of men. One attains wisdom and gains merit for himself alone, while the other attains wisdom and passes it on to the whole world, bringing everyone to enlightenment. The one who observes, meditates and, being born into it, attains wisdom is good, but if he creates merit for himself only, it is not enough. One must promulgate IT to everyone.

The Buddha said that a man who promulgates the teaching to everyone is like the essence of a cow. (The Buddha uses the cow as a symbol because in India the cow is sacred). There are so many things a cow is good for! It produces milk; from milk comes cream; from cream butter is produced and a fine nourishing cheese. The last (the cheese) is best, so it may be compared to the distillation of the man who achieves enlightenment and passes it on to everyone.

Among students who complete their course of study, some go to school, shake hands with the professors, take their diplomas and go away, but never take a job. Those who, having received their diplomas, pass on the teachings they have received, are better.

The highest attainment in Buddhism is concentration in all circumstances.

When I have occasion to see anyone driving an automobile, I observe his concentration. I do not like to ride with anyone who is not fully concentrated.

In Japan, everyone who comes to a temple must take his shoes off upon entering. No one would wear shoes (with which he may have stepped into dog dung, for instance) that might bring filth into the temple. When the visitor sets down his shoes, we always notice what he does with them. A dignified-looking man wearing beautiful silk robes may seem to be a gentleman, but if we observe that he leaves his shoes one here, one there, we realize this gentleman's concentration does not extend below his heels. We must know the foundation upon which we are standing.

Many things are just the opposite in America and Japan, for instance in America, one checks his hat, in Japan, his shoes. In Japan, a horse stands looking out of his stall; in America, the passerby sees his rear end. In Japan, the husband walks in front of the wife, who follows four or five steps behind; in America, the husband goes behind the wife, far behind. In English, the object follows the verb; in Japanese, the verb follows the object. To balance the differences between America and Japan, you'd have to somersault across the Pacific.

A disciple of the Buddha asked, "Is there any merit in my daily life? I am meditating all day long. Is there any merit in this that will benefit humanity?" I think this student must have been an honest man.

"If I meditate from morning to evening, will this benefit all New York City?" Some people might be afraid to

ask such a question of the Buddha.

The Buddha said, "There are many merits, much value and profit in meditating all day." This answer is quite strange. If one practices emptiness and attains the universal wisdom of emptiness he will be a factor for the profit of human society? Can you understand this? Emptiness is always a troublesome question in Buddhism. What is this emptiness and is there any merit in it? The Buddha says, "Yes, there is great merit."

In the early training of novices there is always the practice of observing the whole world as impure. Human mind is impure, beds are impure; I prefer to sleep outside on the grass. But if you look closely at the grass you'll see dog-dung there. Infants are always throwing up--they are impure. Babies cry--yayayaya--babies are impure. Men and women are impure. All my body, my life is impure. Marriage is impure. Clouds in the sky are impure. A teacher came to Carnegie Hall and lectured: "The mistake of all human beings is that they were born." So we must commit suicide. But that is also wrong. From that angle everything is wrong, everything is impure.

Then you meet a teacher who says, "Observe the whole Universe as pure." There is no impurity from one corner to the other. A woman giving birth to a baby is pure, fertilizer is pure, my body, mind, eating, marriage, all are pure. Earth, water, fire, air-- Where is the impurity? There is none.

The next step is to realize: both views are just your observation. Reality has nothing to do with purity or impurity. Good-bad is only your observation. To observe reality you must hold your mind steady, not take a one-

sided or medium view, not take any view. Just observe it as it is. It exists as it is but to observe this you must empty out all notions. This is the real meaning of meditation.

From this standpoint one attains the stage of arhat. The whole universe is his because he is not taking a one-sided view. He shows his emptiness as an example of the true human attitude. He is like the axle of a wheel. If the axle favors one side, the car cannot go. Everyone will take some view, but not he. He is sitting upon emptiness. Sharing his empty attitude everything is in balance. Everything is given to the one who is in the center of emptiness.

Therefore, the Buddha said, "Meditating alone in the woods creates great merit and gives benefit to all humanity." When you empty yourself of all desires and notions, you will attain wisdom itself. To attain emptiness is the first stage. Then you will find the path written on that empty mind and you will observe everything as it is.

Reconstructed by Frances Reiter

RINZAI RECORD--continued from page 6
is nirmanakaya, the soul is sambhogakaya, and the source of all is dharmakaya.

He is the source of all the Buddhas. The very place where you are now, brothers, is the home to which you long to return. Many Buddhas all reduce to one point. That point is your own mind. That is Buddha. Man searches for truth in outward form. God is everywhere, but someday he will come to his own shrine that is supported by his own feet, and he will find Buddha in the very place where he stands.

Rinzai Reed

Accepting these views as authoritative, the masters of the sutra and the abhidharma take the triune body to be the fundamental principle, but, according to my view, this is not the case. The three bodies are merely three names and what is denoted by these names is conceptual. The ancients said that these bodies exist theoretically and that their fields exist consequentially. The essential body and the essential field of Buddha are now evident: they are the shadows of one's mind. My virtuous brothers, you must recognize the one who operates these shadows. He is the source of all the Buddhas. The very place where you are now, brothers, is the home to which you long to return.

SOKEI-AN SAYS

The triune body is the Buddha's three bodies; a Buddha manifests his body in these three different stages at once.

Nirmanakaya is the transformation body, the body in which the Buddha transforms himself. (This is not the Buddha who was the prince of the Shakya tribe; that body was one of the transforming bodies of the Buddha.) This Buddha is the wisdom of the universe.

According to the Buddha's understanding, everyone is a Buddha whether he knows it or not--everyone has Buddha nature.

Sambhogakaya is the responding body, the body of response. It means consciousness. The first stage of consciousness was unmanifested consciousness; then consciousness perceived its own being without having any contact with others.

The whole universe, as one body, knows its own being; it can feel its own vibration, pulse. This consciousness can realize that it is living, and then, by making contact with this vibration, can realize the whole universe.

Dharmakaya is the essential body

of Buddha, the knower of the universe. It does not manifest its own existence, but exists as essence.

The theory of the three bodies is not exactly the same as the three bodies of God, though perhaps it comes from the same source. Zen Master Rinzai criticizes this theory.

The Buddha's teachings are named the tripitaka, the three sets of libraries, sutra, vinaya, and abhidharma.

The vinaya is the part of the precepts, commandments, the law of the everyday deeds of the Buddhist which is applied to the nirmanakaya body of transformation.

The sutra is the record of practice to attain Nirvana--annihilation of desire at the source, and of thoughts arising from desire. Practicing those devices to attain highest enlightenment, one will be carried to the stage of dharmakaya.

The abhidharma is the philosophical part of Buddhism. The foundation is wisdom; then analyzing experience and theorizing, it created a system--how to understand Buddhism metaphysically. Studying this, we find our own place, our own plane of consciousness. This

abhidharma will be applied to sambhogakaya, the body of response (the inmost soul is sambhogakaya). We can then put aside the vinaya, for it is the teaching of the practice, how to speak and do. To teach and associate is not part of the theory.

Accepting these views as authoritative, the masters of the sutra and the abhidharma take the triune body to be the fundamental principle, but, according to my view, this is not the case. The three bodies are merely three names and what is denoted by these names is conceptual. Dharmakaya, sambhogakaya, nirmanakaya; etheric, astral, physical body; air, water, earth; Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are also three names. But we cannot prove existence with names. A name is like the cane of an old man, without which he cannot stand. Without names we cannot make conceptions, so we formulate names as true, like the old man who grasps the cane as his own life.

There was a blind scholar of Taoism in Japan. One summer night he was giving a lecture, from memory, to his students. There was no electricity and a whiff of breeze blew out the candle. A student said, "Wait, teacher, I will kindle another candle." The teacher said, "There is no such problem in the world of the blind. You are more in the dark than we."

If we have no names with which to conceive, we are totally blind.

What is denoted by the names? Sometimes we can imagine without names, but it is very obscure. We put it in names as in a chest. If we lose the key, we lose the essential meaning. Names are convenient but also troublesome. In some commentary, this part was explained. Our true concept originally

has no name. We put one on, like a robe, warm and not very clear; then we try another, and another. Now three sets of robes complete our concept.

The ancients said that these bodies exist theoretically and that their fields exist consequentially. The ancients were those in India nine hundred years after the Buddha's death. Here we must notice "body" and "field"--body and house; three houses in dharmakaya, and three in its dominion--six in dharmakaya. Then we have sambhogakaya and its dominion, and nirmanakaya and its dominion. The field, or place as dominion of the body is called kshetra--so we have kaya and kshetra.

The essential body and the essential field of Buddha are now evident: they are the shadows of one's mind. The essential body is dharmakaya, body of essence. So dharmakaya is the body of essential nature. Dharmata means Buddha itself; dhata means "own" nature of existence, universal nature itself.

You create it with the light of your mind. It is like a moving picture on a screen. The brain is the machine operating the film. The three bodies appear on the screen and you think that it is Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; you pray to it. No wonder there is no answer.

My virtuous brothers, you must recognize the one who operates these shadows. He who operates these three bodies and three fields is a master, not your body, not mind-stuff, but your own light. Mind is light and mind-stuff is the field. You see light, and cast it into bronze or write it in a character, and pray to it. This is all nonsense. The master is here: the body

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THE TRIBANDHANAS--Last time I mentioned the three bandhanas or baskets of trouble. Sometimes a bandhana may be a compress.

The Buddha had a brother by the name of Mahanama who, after the Buddha's father's death, became the Maharajah of Kapilavastu, the city of the Shakya tribe. This Mahanama's death was very tragic. Kapilavastu was surrounded by an enemy army. Mahanama asked Visudaka, the leader, for time for the innocent women and children to run away from the castle. Visudaka asked him, "How long shall I wait? One moment or two?" Mahanama said, "I will dive into the pond. Wait until I come back up to the surface before attacking the castle again." Visudaka agreed. Mahanama jumped into the pond, fastened his hair to a tree root at the bottom, and died. In this long "moment" many women and children were saved.

The Buddha's talk with Mahanama took place when he was still the rajah of the Shakya tribe. Mahanama said to the Buddha: "My Lokanatha, you said that if one suppresses the three bandhanas, *srotapanna* can be attained (the first stage of the Buddhist who can attain enlightenment). *Srotapanna* means "to enter the stream," that is, the stream of sacred life, or one can say "to go against the stream" of samsara, the recurrence of birth-and-death.

"I have tried to suppress my three bandhanas," Mahanama continued, "but I cannot free myself from the fear of meeting wild elephants, oxen or mules. I am always worrying that they will harm me, kill me. How can I escape from this fear?"

The Buddha answered him, "Never mind about your fear, brother. If you really annihilate the three bandhanas,

there will be no more fear."

There are many agonies in human life, the Buddha explained, but the most painful are to kill, to conceive the idea of killing, and to fear or imagine that one will be killed.

The Buddha did not particularly emphasize the agony of sickness, but rather the agonies that come from passion. A person who clings to his passions is clinging to the cause of all agony. This is the cause of the ideas of killing, or of being killed. "Therefore," the Buddha told Mahanama, "if you do not cling to your passions you will abandon your idea of killing or being killed and it will follow that you will free yourself from all the afflictions of worldly life."

The bandhana is formed by one's belief that the physical body is a real existence. If one has this idea, then naturally one will think that carnal desire is the most important thing in human life.

With such a belief, human beings return to the stage of animals. As religion and sex are very closely connected from the beginning of religion, people very naturally fall into the worship of sex gods. There are many religions of this type in China and Japan. In the red light districts of Japan, for instance, every house has a stone lingam (phallic image). It is the god of prostitutes.

In the beginning of practice, the Buddha made strict commandments about carnal desire. The arhats observed these commandments for their own purposes, to attain enlightenment. The bodhisattvas of the Mahayana sects also observed the commandments, but for others. You will not understand the meaning of this "for others" unless

you practice it. When you do, this bandhana will be annihilated.

In the sutra about Mahanama the Buddha particularly emphasized the bandhana of the wrong practice of commandments.

The Buddha said, "Before I reached an understanding of the mysterious, I was meditating for six years in hard labor of mind. I did not sleep or eat.

According to the description, he was eating just one grain of rice or millet a day. Starving oneself was a common practice. It is told how in Tibet donors offer such a meditator so much food that it rots around him, while he starves himself. The offering is made in the hope that if the meditator attains enlightenment, those who have offered him food will receive their enlightenment more quickly because of the merit built up by their giving.

Not sleeping is a favored practice among Zen students also. My teacher told me that he did not sleep for three years. He was so busy in the daytime that night was the only time he could meditate. For three years he did not lie down. I do not know if this is true, but I can believe it, knowing his nature.

The Buddha said, "My body was like that of an old man. When I tried to stand I fell to the ground. For I believed that agony, not happiness, would lead me to peace."

That agony would carry one to the realm of peace is an old idea in India that has continued until now. When the Buddha was visiting various teachers, he met an ascetic in a dark cave who was practicing harsh commandments with his disciples. One was pointing to the sun with one finger all day long, another was standing on his head.

The Buddha asked: "Why do you practice these painful commandments?"

The ascetic answered: "Past sins are washed away with the agony of the present. Present agony is washed away with the practicing of more pain (in Japan, children with a toothache are told to bite hard on a match). When agony is washed away, one attains Nirvana." This was the teaching of the Jains, the Skyclad. Their clothing is the blue sky; they do not put anything on their skins.

The Buddha answered, "Practicing agony will not clear present agony away, nor will it bring Nirvana."

It is easy for us to see that this is a foolish way. Bimbisara, the rajah, took the way of happiness, or luxury.

"My peace is different from both of these," the Buddha said.

"What is your peace?" the ascetic asked. The Buddha folded his hands upon his feet and sat calmly. Here you feel that there is Zen. What is your peace? He folded his arms in SILENCE. "Thus, Mahanama, you can attain peace."

"When you see a great pond," he also said to Mahanama, "you can take out one drop and say that there are many drops of water in the pond, or that the pond has a great deal of water. Which is true?"

Mahanama said, "The pond has a great deal of water, not drops of water."

The Buddha said, "Very well, if you think this is the water of a pond, not a drop of water, you will attain peace."

Here you see the idea of ego and non-ego. Our soul is not one separated soul, but the whole world is a pond of soul and we are not a separate drop in the pond. "If you observe in such a way, you will attain peace," was the Buddha's message to Mahanama.

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