

ZEN NOTES



*I never said I was
"the dog of the year!"*



Rinzai Reed

SOKEI-AN SAYS

Perhaps we can agree that "consciousness" is the best term to express the "one" in which we have faith. "God" is the name the West gives to the "highest" being. The Japanese call it "kami." There are many other names for it also. The Buddhist says "consciousness" (Sanskrit *jnana*). It is in everything--microcosm and macrocosm, water, fire, dog, cat, lion, man, in all existence sentient and insentient. The consciousness of the insentient we call latent; it will be manifested when the time comes, but until then it is concealed. It is not necessary to prove that we are conscious by reason; we know we are. It is in all stages of development. In each it is given a name--vegetable, animal, man, group soul--but all are just one consciousness. We call this "master" and worship it in ourselves and behind ourselves. We cannot express it using terms such as depth or height; it is not ours. From the human standpoint, how can we express it in some way not related to the five senses? The master's master, the master that operates the power in the master, though it is not he? For there is no he, you, I, as separate individuals. We are inter-individual; we relate as you-and-I. We do not call this "God"; we do not worship this as "God." We worship the power that manifests in us from morning to evening in every word that we speak, in each deed we

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perform. So our religious life goes on twenty-four hours a day; there is no particular time for worshipping.

When you are in control, where you stand is the right spot. Nothing can make you budge. Though you bear the karma of past evil-doing, even the karma of the Five Crimes (the worst) is the "ocean of deliverance."

In a word, you must not be overcome by circumstances, environment. If you master your body, you can wear silk hose in winter without feeling the chill. When you have mastered all words, they will have but one meaning. Human words have different meanings; the human being is not using words, but is rather used by them. The deva (who is above the human being) speaks many words, but all have one meaning. Brahma Deva, in Buddhism, is the creator of the five seeds of words, the vowels. Each has a different sound but no meaning. With all the other sounds, the consonants, it is the same. All deva words--mountain, tree, fire--have only one meaning. Do you understand? From the deva standpoint, the whole universe has only one meaning. If you can understand this with a clear mind, you are a deva, master of yourself and others.

The true standpoint is one consciousness--form, color, sound are operated by it. Brahma Deva takes the form, sound, color of men, women, children, but the "one soul" is different from the human soul that has been al-

tered from its original nature.

There are higher beings than this Brahma Deva. There is the ashura, deva of light. When the ashura speaks, it is with light, fire. There is no sound, just one word that has all the different meanings. Its form is one homogeneous body of light, one soul. The human being should be the same. Why variegate ourselves and destroy one another?

Still "higher" than the ashura there is one body, one soul that is omnipresent, omnipotent consciousness. We are that really if we master ourselves. When we are not being deluded by form and color we are that only one in the universe.

It is so clear. There is nothing to talk about any more. But all sentient beings are deluded and have different circumstances and lives. Buddhists think we are striving through Six Paths. Say some consciousness is striving to manifest itself but finds no material in which to embody. For instance, a deep spirit wishes to incarnate in a human being but can find nothing for a shell; wandering without a shell in the sea, it runs into any shell, struggling through a million years in an invisible and disembodied condition called hell. This is naraka, the lowest being. One can imagine such a being trying to embody into something as a preta, a devouring spirit, desire--a tree sucking from the earth and supporting its own body. These preta are in us too. The heart and intestines are in this vegetative condition. We are eating always, feeding the vegetable in us, not the human being. The generating body with its arms and legs is animal. Where is the human being? The human being is in

the brain that is different from the animals. We must feed this human being that has a brain and speaks words. The human being, though he speaks, is always managed by the meaning of words; he cannot manage them. The one who understands substantial existence, who is not managed by words nor by the seven colors and forms, is the deva. The ashuras (anger) once belonged to the devas but fell below man's state. All spirits that enter the Six Paths are tortured. It makes a good story, doesn't it, to say that if you live like a vegetable, for instance, your consciousness will gradually weaken to the level of the vegetable, so after your death it will have no power to embody into a human being. My mother always used to tell me, "You will be an ox or a cow in your next incarnation."

When we give our progeny bad thoughts or teach our disciples a narrow view, we bring souls from one hell into another, for the human being is able to generate from brain to brain, unlike the animal. Thus it creates the karma of torture or peace.

The Five Crimes are:*

1. To profane or kill a mother or fully ordained nun.
2. To kill an arhat.
3. Parricide.
4. Shedding the blood of a Buddha.
5. Destroying the harmony of the Sangha.

When you understand what consciousness is, the torture of the past ceases. For this consciousness is not yours, but is inter-individual. There is just one being in the universe.

* The Five Crimes put you on the hell-path, in Avichi, the nonstop hell, to be exact. (See ZN XI/6 for details.)

SOKEI-AN SAYS

THE EIGHTEEN SHUNYATAS (Emptinesses) are:

1. Inside is empty.
2. Outside is empty.
3. Inside and outside are empty.
4. Emptiness is empty.
5. The great elements are empty.
6. Reality is empty.

The Eighteen Shunyatas is a stiff lecture, so I shall speak about six now and the rest will be spoken about later. If you truly understand these Eighteen Emptinesses, your study of Buddhism is over. I have been teaching for six years in New York (1936) and this is the first time I am speaking about these Eighteen Emptinesses.

These Emptinesses are explained by Shakyamuni Buddha in the Mahaprajnaparamita Sutra. He said to his disciple, "Oh, Shariputra, if you wish to stay within the Eighteen Shunyatas practice Prajnaparamita." These Eighteen Shunyatas are the conclusion of Prajnaparamita. In the Mahaprajnaparamita Sutra it is said that Buddha was practicing Prajnaparamita for eight years, and we have six hundred volumes of what happened. This Sutra speaks of Emptiness; Emptiness is the keystone of Buddhism.

If you ascend a triangle from bottom to top and then descend from top to bottom, this shunyata takes place on the sharp point of the triangle. It is the turning point from Hinayana to Mahayana Buddhism. From a Hinayana view, Emptiness is the reaching point, the goal of Buddhism. From a Mahayana view, Emptiness is the base of Buddhism, the starting point of Buddhism.

I hope you will understand this lecture. It is really only for an audience that is expert in Buddhism.

1. The inside is empty. (In Sanskrit, *Adhyatmashunyata*). *Adhyatma* means "one's supreme spirit"--the highest individual spirit of an individual--and that individual spirit is empty. According to Buddhism this inside has six ayatana or entrances.

What are the Six Entrances? You have five entrances from the outside to the inside--the five senses--and there is one more hidden inside so altogether there are six senses, and this "inside" is the highest supreme spirit. All are empty. Empty here means "There is no ego in it." Ego means atman. Eye has no ego, there is no master in it; ear has no spiritual center; the rest of the senses have no spiritual centers.

Then this one inner sense--people think it is the king of the spirit, think it belongs to you. The Buddhist thinks it is not individual. You think it is yours but from the Buddhist's standpoint it is nobody's. It is consciousness and consciousness is not yourself. There is no consciousness which is called you or I, so the "inside is empty."

2. The outside is empty. (*Bahirdhashunyata*). *Badhirdha* means outside--something that is other than one's self. What is "outside?" The outside is the existence opposite the six senses; color, sound, odor (smell), taste and touch--and these semi-material (touches head) thoughts, mindstuff, are all called *Badhirdha*.

Color you can see, like a rainbow, but it is just a vision--it has no real nature. We look at the phenomenal universe as though we were peering into a kaleidoscope. With all noumena, it is just a vision. A scientist would call this vibration; the retina of the eye

co-vibrates with the etheric vibrations and you perceive the colors on the retina. Colors are not existing outside. The outside is empty.

3. The inside and the outside are empty. (*Adhyatmabahirdhashunyata.*) It means that the twelve ayatana are empty. Ayatana means eye, ear, nose, mouth, tactual sense, inner consciousness, and color, sound, odor, taste, touch and mind stuff. Altogether there are twelve ayatana. They are empty; the inside is empty, so the outside is empty also. The outside is empty, so the inside is also empty. The outside and the inside are empty.

4. Emptiness is empty. (*Shunyata-shunyata.*) With emptiness annihilate emptiness. When you have "emptied" the outside and the inside, and find emptiness, you must empty this conception also. If you really understand this, your study is over. You don't need to take Sanzen any more.

When I was young, concentrating on all forms of meditation, I was habituated one summer to falling into unconsciousness--not sleep, but something like sleep--unconscious of conscious mind. It was a hot summer, and I almost passed away--I had the fear that sometime I would not come back.

One day in Oregon I went out with a dog on a mountain--the dog was watching me. I heard the sound of a train, opened my eyes and saw a *body*. I said: "According to Buddhism one must one day realize that this body is just a conception." I found my body sitting on a rock with the dog squatting alongside, heard the whistle of the train--and realized that with all this universe I am empty.

This is the first step to Mahayana Buddhism. We do not need to brush all

phenomena aside. Of course if you are a wise one, when you pass a koan, you should realize it. You pass koans just as a donkey passes a fence, but some day you will realize it. Man's conception of emptiness is Zen, but you must destroy that Zen--then you will find yourself with all the universe. That is Shunyata.

5. The great elements are empty. (*Mahashunyata.*) In the Sixth Patriarch's Record, the Sixth Patriarch was explaining Mahaprajnaparamita. *All the boundless universe is Mahaprajnaparamita*--there are no directions. This Mahashunyata is composed of the six great elements--earth, water, fire, air, akasha (ether--outside of air) and consciousness. Usually we say the four great elements, but here it is six. Outside the air is called akasha--pitch darkness, vacuum, space. Nothing shows its own figure there. Light doesn't shine, heat isn't hot. When they reach inside the air, light is transmuted into luminous light, heat into fire. In akasha there is nothing.

Why in meditation do we fall into darkness? Because we fall into akasha. The nature of akasha is consciousness, but when you try to realize the consciousness in it, there is no consciousness. You feel the consciousness in this state, but when you enter there you cannot realize it. It is not your consciousness--therefore it is empty.

This point is different from other religions. Before you reach Emptiness you do not realize true wisdom. All the universe is moving, acting. All Samskaras are manifesting their own elemental existence with nobody in it. Usually Samskara is translated as the aggregate of the creative elements of your own alaya consciousness.

In Shingon, the vowel U is Dharmakaya, A is Sambhogakaya, O is Nirmanakaya, the three cardinal elements. In Sanskrit all sounds are elements of consciousness. So also in English a.b.c. and so forth are each elements of thought. Flowers (roses, violets), trees, weeds are also kept in your mind, not only in the outside that you can see. Also all animals--cats, dogs, tigers, wolves, chickens, bears -- are in you. You can see those elements in a person's nature. Your consciousness consists of tiger, skunk, elephant. According to your karma, at certain times you take those positions.

When you truly understand this emptiness, you will see how all those elements come out and create the universe. It takes its own action; no one is the master, no one is the God. Here Buddhism is different from Christianity. There is no God who makes things on Monday, Tuesday, and on Sunday takes a rest. *Who is God?* If he is God, he is a before-Monday God. No one made God in Buddhism. Therefore God is empty. Yet you can see the activity of the Universe. When you pass the koan of the banner and the wind of the Sixth Patriarch--one monk said "The wind is fluttering;" another said "No, the banner is fluttering;" The Sixth Patriarch said: "Neither the wind nor the banner is fluttering, your soul is fluttering"--when you understand this koan, you will understand non-ego and all the creation of the world. You will actually see the so-called Mahaprajnaparamita.

6. Reality is empty. (*Paramartha-shunyata.*) *Paramartha* in English is the highest spiritual knowledge. What is the highest spiritual knowledge in

Buddhism? There is a simple way to explain it. When you attain Nirvana, you attain the highest spiritual knowledge. The Hinayanist thinks Nirvana is annihilation (that all is empty). You will annihilate that idea of Emptiness. All is empty, but emptiness is your conception, which is something. Therefore destroy this conception. Then you will see Reality.

What is Reality? Outside of this phenomenal world there is no Reality, so Reality must be in this phenomenal world. There is no Reality outside of my incense bowl. If you are a Zen student, you must prove this. Is Reality empty? You are asking me a question. All phenomena are Reality (strike's bowl.) It is the so-called highest knowledge when you understand that all phenomena are Reality.

In the Mahaprajnaparamita Sutra there is a famous line: "Rupa is shunyata, shunyata is Rupa." Rupa is Emptiness, Emptiness is Rupa. This is the keynote of Buddhism. Max Muller read this sutra and was much disappointed. "All these people think this sutra is wonderful, but how stupid..." The great Max Muller! I wish I were a contemporary of his. Perhaps I could say something to him.

When you attain the highest spiritual knowledge--Paramartha--then you realize that in that Reality there is nothing really. In this Reality I am holding the incense bowl--nothing looks like Reality. What is Reality? CONSCIOUSNESS. No teacher enjoys giving a lecture on these Eighteen Shunyatatas. He must see all his pupils' faces shuttlecock and battledore. Really it proves Emptiness there--nine-tenths of Emptiness.

Reconstructed by William McPheters



JOSHU SASAKI ROSHI SAYS (Mar.23, 1971)

Again I have to talk about MU. A monk heard Joshu's answer "MU." He doubted: "Nothingness, nothingness?" The monk thought: "Buddha said all sentient beings are Buddha. Now Joshu answered 'Nothingness.'" The monk was doubtful. He could not illuminate as Buddha and he had doubt. "Nothingness, nothingness?" When he heard Joshu's answer, if he grasped it, he would illuminate as nothingness but he could not, and he doubted. The practice is to manifest oneself as Buddha, as chair, as candle. All the time I am illuminating. And I am free. Everybody who thinks "I want to become free," cannot illuminate. He is bound tight by his idea.

(You understand my English? My English is not English, my English is Cimarron English. Everybody who wants to study Zen should study Cimarron English.)

This monk asked Joshu: "Buddha said that all sentient beings are Buddha. Why is this puppy not Buddha?" Suddenly he was foolish. If he were illuminating, he could understand Joshu's answer. And he has a question. He asked Joshu, "This puppy must be Buddha too?" But Joshu answered, "Nothingness." Why, why?

Everybody always has this "why." If everybody has transcended doubt, why this why? Roshi always says: "All

have this doubt; it is not a Zen doubt. Such doubt always affirms the consciousness that affirms an object. Always everybody needs an object. Zen consciousness is different, is prajna. If everybody has prajna, then there is no need to affirm any object. All is the object.

Again the monk asked "Why? Why is just this puppy not Buddha?" Joshu answered. (difficult in Cimarron English) This dog appears as karma. He has karma and he is not Buddha. (laughs) If you are not Buddha, you have karma. Buddha has no karma. And if a dog has karma, maybe the dog is you. You manifest yourself as karma, not Buddha. Of course it is not Buddha. If you are manifesting yourself as Buddha, then of course it is not karma.

How do you manifest yourself as karma? If you are to be free, you must be free from both. Sometimes you can manifest as man, sometimes as woman. You must be free from both. Now, today, I have been born. Maybe tonight I will die. My teisho is finished. Please manifest yourselves sometimes as karma, sometimes as Buddha, sometimes as woman, sometimes as man. If you cannot manifest as karma, then you cannot understand poor people. Poor people manifest as karma. You should manifest yourself as karma also. Don't refuse. Even if you don't like it, don't refuse. It is true realization.

NORWAY *Noted by* MARY FARKAS

If Zen Notes gets to you late this month, please forgive your roving editor, who spent the summer months in Europe, accent on Scandinavia.

Until the last few years, my circumstances were not such that I could leave New York easily for long enough to make it worthwhile, though it has always been my wish to see the world.

A massive factor in the selection of the summer months for this is to escape New York's polluted air at its worst. I regret to inform you, alas, that England, Belgium and Scandinavia in July are no havens for anyone with what used to be called hay fever. What this has to do with the ample supplies of hay I saw drying in variously attractive accumulations in all those countries I leave to the experts... The fact is, I haven't sneezed so in years. Except above the Arctic Circle. There air is indescribably delicious.

By fjord to the North Cape, which is just about as far north as anyone needs to go who doesn't have special business at the North Pole is so popular that one must book months ahead to get formal sleeping accommodations, not that it matters much, in full daylight, as it was twenty-four hours a day, making such expressions as "dark as night", and so forth, unverifiable.

The Cape itself juts into what looked, when I saw it, exactly like an illustration of the place described by Sokei-an in "Bodhidharma's Two Entrances" (ZN III/12). In his story, a traveler came to the "edge, the real edge, of the world, a great cliff. There he saw the chaos of the Infinite and couldn't take another step." In dense blue fog and a gale wind, after the rock and roll of a brief excursion

into the North Sea, one must be blind not to harbor some such thought.

The trip there also was intended to catch the midnight sun's non-setting, but I was obliged to content myself with a lesser display than this ultimate.

The reindeer herded by the Lapps for tourist observation and consumption were not a happy looking lot, nor were the Lapps themselves, though both have notable histories.

The main thing about Norway is its scenery. The whole coastline, one fjord after another, viewed through the horizontal of the mountain railway windows or the aboverail of the coastal steamer is like an ever-unrolling "Sansui" (mountain and water) scroll of endlessly fascinating variety, and imposing majesty. Someone has figured that if the coastline of the fjords was straightened out it would stretch half around the world--yet you would have to be a ruthless editor of a film of its totality to cut more than a few frames. Perhaps custom would "stale its infinite variety" but I certainly did not reach that point of familiarity.

The Norwegians live in this scenery with what appears to be great intimacy. Those I encountered seemed natural and friendly. Many speak English. They do not seem to have any uniform characteristics that would serve to distinguish them from other people, unless it is their relation to their particular kind of outdoors. Snow, as far as I could determine, is not something to master or struggle with, but a normal dimension of daily life. Skiing, according to some very ancient Chinese-looking pictures, goes back some four thousand years.

Zen notes

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