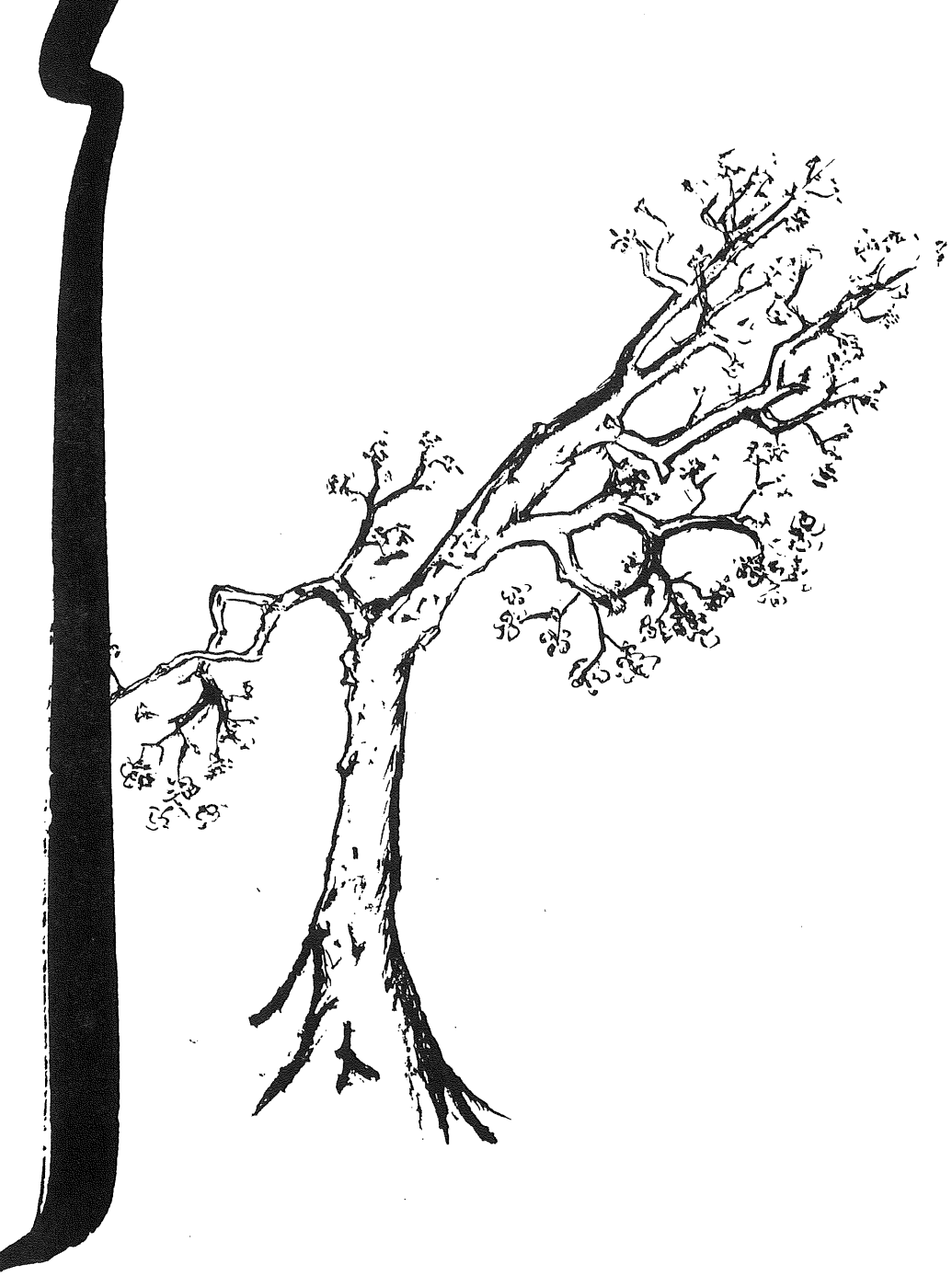


# ZEN NOTES



## THE GREAT SIXTH PATRIARCH'S TEACHING, Chapter III

*If you see your own nature at every instant in your own mind and live every day in the even mind, plain and straight, you will reach heaven and see Amida in the time it takes to snap your fingers.*

*Your Lordship, if you practice the ten virtues, supplication for your birth in the Western Sky is not necessary. Without extirpating the ten evil minds, how can you ask the Buddha to descend from heaven to receive you? If you are enlightened by the teachings of sudden awakening to the unborn, you could see the heaven of the West in a moment. Unless you have recourse to this awakening, even though you pray to the Buddha for yourself to be born there, heaven will be a long way for you to reach. How can you arrive there? I, Hui-neng, with all of you, will move into the Western heaven in this very moment.*

### SOKEI-AN SAYS

The Sixth Patriarch is giving a commentary on the Pure Land Faith from the standpoint of Zen, his Zen.

To think heaven is far away is the usual conception of all kinds of religious people. But the Zen school teaches that heaven is not in the Western sky, nor is it in the East, but that heaven is within your own mind. If you find heaven in your own mind, you will realize the heaven of Zen on the face of the earth.

*If you see your own nature at every instant in your own mind, and live every day in the even mind, plain and straight, you will reach heaven and see Amida in the time it takes to snap your fingers.*

The "snap of the fingers" is the Indian view of "a short moment." They also say "short as a wristless elbow."

If you have really passed the first koan, you will know the "even mind", but few students can penetrate so deeply at first. So, passing through many koans, gradually dis-burdening yourself of the many heavy cargoes you are bearing in your mind, eradicating your many afflictions and your ego, at last you will find the even mind, plain and straight, and you will live every day in it. Finally you will become aware of *this* moment; your mind will be clear and mellow; your physical body will be as big as the universe, and you will realize that without this awareness you cannot enter Buddhism though you meditate for a hundred years. Your soul pervades the universe and you become one with it. You don't feel that your skin sets any boundry to your body-- "Oh, this is it!" In Sanskrit, this is Bodhi. Without it there is no Buddhism. It is as when Mahakashyapa called Ananda, and Ananda answered: "Yes." In that moment, all wisdom burst into his mind. Wonderful moment!

When you attain to this moment, you will get the even mind, plain and straight. Sit down upon your cushion and sooner or later you will attain this awareness and you will enter Buddhism. Therefore this Bodhi is important, as taught by the Sixth Patriarch. You will reach heaven "in the snap of your fingers."

From the Christian standpoint, we cannot meet God without the intercession of Christ. In the Pure Land of Buddhism, through the name of Amida, your prayer will be heard. But from the Zen standpoint, it comes through awakening. Though you meditate for one hundred years, if awareness does not come, you cannot see God. This awareness is the Son of God. So, from our standpoint, Christianity is very easy to understand.

I wonder how the Christians would understand this. Perhaps they would say that it profanes the sacred teachings. You must awake here just as Shakyamuni Buddha awoke. Through Buddha we reach this East and West. If one speaks straight, all religions are one.

As the Pure Land people believed that after their death, they would be received in heaven and would have a new birth in the lotus, so accordingly, the name of Buddha was invoked. Offering their supplication, they believed they would be received by Amida. So the Sixth Patriarch said: "If you practice the ten virtues, you don't need to offer any supplication."

The ten commandments can be boiled down into one. To express this, I would say it is "the even mind, plain and straight." Natural as a tree, as the clouds of the sky, natural as rising smoke, without attachment or any particular view. This is according to the law of nature. The human mind must be like this. Then you know how to react, how to fight a good fight. That is the result of practicing the ten virtues.

If you see somebody walking on your green grass, you throw a stone at him. With such an ill temper, you may kill a man. An elder sister gets a beautiful kimono; the younger sister goes with the scissors and cuts it to pieces. Or someone marries a beautiful woman: "She is too good for him. I will kill him!" These are examples of the ten evil ways of thinking.

The Pure Land people believe that at the moment of death, with all the relatives surrounding the bed on which he is lying, all reciting the name of Buddha, the dying man must open his eye and try to see the world in his last moment. But Amida does not come!

In this country there is no Amida, but there is: "Oh good mother, do not die until you have signed your last will to me!" And grandmother, trying to live one moment longer, holding pen in hand, breathes her last. Both of these are beautiful moments in human life.

As a ceremony of human life, the dying moment is of great significance. Confucius said: "When a bird is dying, it cries. It is beautiful. And when a man is dying, he speaks. It is beautiful." Observing the dying moment in both bird and man, he sees beauty. The great man does this, but the small man pays no attention...he does not take off his hat even if his friend dies on the battlefield.

This unborn is an important term in Buddhism. In Chinese, it is just one word, Mu-sho, no life. There is no mortal life that will die,

because it was not born. Curious! In other words, nothing is created because the life of elements has no beginning and no end. When we are sitting on chairs, twenty or thirty people looking at each other, everyone seems to have his own soul. But if they think there is just one soul, then the individual souls are as if stretched and woven together to make the world--the universe. Perhaps you will be washing your face, and all of a sudden--"Oh, this is not a small soul," it will come to you. In that moment you have sudden enlightenment. Those of you who take *sanzen* could see the heaven of the Western world.

*Unless you have recourse to this awakening, even though you pray to the Buddha for yourself to be born there, heaven will be a long way for you to reach. How can you arrive there? I, Hui-neng, with all of you, will move into the Western Heaven in this very moment.* The Sixth Patriarch was speaking to everyone, to the whole world, when he made this statement.

This was many centuries ago. As soon as they heard this, they knelt down, joined hands and realized that heaven is right here. Such a simple religion. It will be easily accepted by the even mind. Do not think that Zen is complicated. It is a plain road.

FROM THE RECORD OF BANKEI

Translated by Haskel

A certain monk asked: "I am practicing with the object of attaining enlightenment. Is that alright?"

The Teacher replied: "There is no such thing as enlightenment. Since your mind's *originally* Buddha, what's missing in the Buddha Mind that you go searching outside for enlightenment? Let me tell you how, in all of you, the Buddha Mind is unborn and managing everything. From where I am, there's not a single one of all the things around me here that escapes my notice, even though I'm not making any deliberate effort to see them. And that's the marvelously illuminating function of the unborn Buddha Mind, the Buddha Mind which, being unborn, manages everything."

The monk said: "That's foolish. By going about things in this kind of way, it seems to me it will be hard to realize enlightenment. And, beginning in the past with our founder Bodhidharma right up to the present time, the realization of enlightenment has been the basic aim (of Zen)."

The Teacher said: "It was being foolish (like this) that Shakyas saved myriad numbers of sentient beings. That's what's meant by 'Buddha.' Now listen closely! Even though you've been deluded up till now, if you understand what you've heard, the truth that that which neither comes nor goes is the Unborn Buddha Mind, then you'll no longer cause yourself to transmigrate through myriad kalpas. When, even if someone slanders you or laughs at you, you don't attach to it, let it bother you or get to you, but refrain from injuring your Buddha Mind, then that's conclusively realizing your faith (in the Unborn)."

JOSHU SASAKI SAYS    Translated by K. Tsuchiya

Zen is a Japanese word; there is no word "Zen" in China or India. Zen comes from the Indian word dhyana. The meaning of dhyana is "to quiet one's mind." Dhyana was developed and was practiced in India even before the birth of the Buddha. When the Buddha attained satori, he was engaged in the posture and practice called dhyana; but when he attained satori, this was no longer the dhyana of conventional style. He had achieved a new method of dhyana. He had accomplished the dhyana of satori.

In China, the written character for dhyana was pronounced ch'an-na and this became ch'an. When ch'an came to Japan, the name ch'an changed into Zen (according to the Japanese pronunciation). As Zen developed in Japan, the original concept did not change, but became peculiarly Japanese. The same will be true if Zen is to grow in this country. It must develop as an American Zen.

I have noticed many people in many places in this country eagerly studying Zen. But it is Zen merely in accordance with dhyana, it is not true Zen as we know it in Japan today. In America most people seem to feel that Zen is meditation. But it is not really so. Then what is this Zen we speak of today?

Zen (a religion) was derived from a religion introduced into China by an Indian named Bodhidharma about 530 A.D. When Bodhidharma first introduced Zen into China, he called it Busshin-shu, or Buddha-mind religion. He did not use the name Ch'an. When he engaged in the posture called "zazen" he did not call it by that name. He was probably afraid that it might be mistaken for the dhyana of India, so he called his form *gyo-ju beki-kan* (1). Why he engaged in this posture would require a long explanation I'll talk more about in detail another time.

What I want to bring to your attention now is the term "self-manifestation", *gen-ryo*. (2) Bodhidharma preached that only through Buddha Nature, True Nature, could one unify subject and object and manifest one's true self. He also said that this "manifestation of self" was handed down from Buddha to his disciple and from disciple to disciple all the way to Bodhidharma himself. He therefore called his teaching Busshin-shu.

Busshin-shu became Zen-shu about three hundred years after Bodhidharma's death. The Chinese character for Zen-shu means to give one's seat or rank to another person. Quietness of mind is also included in the meaning. It was not meant to signify just the practice of dhyana.

(1) 凝住壁觀

(2) 現量

## CONVERSATIONS WITH FARKAS

Noted by Hackney

The people of the present generation don't learn to work. Very few intellectuals or well-to-do families bring up their children with the idea that to work is normal. Their idea is that working is no good. Even in households with young children, the children are given the idea that there is something unusual about working--they must, for example, be paid for it. And of course the parents don't do any work around the house if they can possibly avoid it. So people who come to the Institute from this sort of life say "I should clean? We hire people to do that." It is even more the case in Oriental countries. They all have servants.

This was not the attitude of certain Boston people with their "plain living and high thinking" or the independent people who expect to do things for themselves and enjoy working and building their own house or living in the wilderness. People are now beginning to take this up again but from a different angle.

Did we lose this attitude? Did Americans lose it? Is it because of money? To make money and to have it so you wouldn't have to work. It has got twisted.

I remember in my house--my mother never did any work to speak of, she always had servants and though she considered them a lower type of being she did associate with them because they were German. They were wonderful workers--effective at keeping things clean and in order.

As a baby I was taken care of by an Irish girl--also a hard worker. So, I had some contact with that kind of working life, but I don't know how I developed a taste for it because nothing could have been further from my mother's way of life. My father worked hard in his business, but he never did a lick of work around the house. Meals were served in the dining room by a servant.

I never have been interested in conventional life. Very few grow up today with the idea that there is a desirable way of living. What would you tell them? There are always the "professions." It's a difficult choice--to go into these worlds there are many drawbacks. If you feel there is a pattern you ought to live by or rules to follow, I think that's too bad.

People hear about Zen and often think of getting into a monastery and sitting long hours where they would be subjected to the already established rules made by others. They like the rigid adherence to details and rules which is really like military training. Are you being responsible for yourself under such conditions? Is to be enslaved by rules better than to be the slave of your own passions?

When Shinran Shonin was twenty-nine years old, he came to understand the One Mind, Amida's embrace. About four or five years later, he one day told a friend that his *shinjin* and Master Honen's were one and the same. His friend scolded him for speaking proudly. But Shinran firmly insisted, concerning this *shinjin*, "If I were to say that my knowledge, my practice, my academic understanding was the same as my master's, that would be a great mistake. My master's knowledge, practice, and academic achievement are beyond my small attainments and abilities. But concerning *shinjin*--this comes from Amida Buddha, the Great Natural Way. So it is the same with the master. *Shinjin* belongs to Amida Buddha. All are children of the Amida. The Amida's compassion is *shinjin*. We children cannot make this *shinjin*. There is no great or small *shinjin*, deep or shallow *shinjin*. It entirely comes from Amida Buddha."

So there was a big argument about *shinjin*. Finally the master was asked for his opinion. He clearly stated that Shinran was correct. If *shinjin* were different, we could not go to the same place.\* Such was Honen Shonin's statement.

*Shinjin* is often misunderstood, confused. Sometimes it is called *faith*; some understand *belief* by it. In the Shin teaching, *shinjin* means *Truth*, or Great Compassion. Shinran Shonin always said, "*Shinjin* means *Truth*; *Truth* means the Amida Buddha's compassion; it is beyond our thinking, beyond our belief and doubt." *Shinjin* therefore is not our mind. It is the Great Natural Way, like water running from the high place to the low. Shinran further explained that *shinjin* is One Mind.

My own understanding of One Mind: my existence is due to my father and my mother. Then I was born in this world. In my mind and body there is no father's side or mother's side. My mother's side disappeared and so did my father's side. In new life there is no dualistic system. This is called One Mind. One Mind is the state of two parts that disappear; then new phenomenon, new life appears. In One Mind, or *shinjin*, there is no Amida and myself. Amida disappears, I disappear. Then new life is born. That is One Mind.

\* I.e., to the Pure Land.

#### MORE BANKEI

At this training session, we have many monks present, assembled here from every quarter. While the teachings of their schools may differ, when they're practicing with the Unborn of the marvelously illuminating Buddha Mind, it makes no difference about particular schools or teachings. For those who realize conclusively and always abide in the Unborn Buddha Mind, whatever school they belong to, no matter who they are, they're all members of the School of Buddha Mind!

# *gan-ri-ta*

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