

ZEN NOTES

INSIDE THE FZI,7



Audrey Kepner
Henry Platov
Edna Kenton

1945

For a few months (the entries ceased in November) after Sasaki's return from Japan to the U.S (he arrived in Seattle, Washington, in Aug. 1928), five men and one woman paid tuition intermittently at the rate of \$5 a month into a fund described in a journal labeled the "American Branch, Ryomo Zen Buddhism Institute." William Jusambro Iwami, who had signed the April 8, 1928 letter to Sokatsu asking that Sasaki be sent to instruct the "many members of our group" of "faithful adherents of Buddhism", had sent \$300 to Sasaki at a Seattle bank operated by a man named Furuya--a Japanese banker--for his expenses.

Upon his arrival in New York August 20, 1928, Sasaki went to Iwami's place of business at 611/621 Broadway (Iwami and Company--"so meager I was surprised"). Iwami invited him to stay at his home at Dyckman Street. Sasaki agreed to go there.

The first meeting of the group, probably September 1, 1928, at Iwami's house consisted of three persons. These were: Daniel A. Cahn, a businessman and Theosophist who was working to " get Theosophists back...to their original Buddhist beginnings." (See Goddard--letter of March 1, 1933, ZN XXVIII/4); Robert Sanborn of

Los Angeles, a faithful friend from the early Orientalia days, and one more man. (The five persons credited with paying tuition that month were: Kinnaga Nakano, William Jusabro Iwami, Mrs. Belle Cahn, D.A. Cahn, and Robert Sanborn. It seems reasonable to suppose that the third person present at the first meeting was therefore Nakano.)

The many Buddhist men and women Iwami had described as eager to be instructed did not materialize. A few ("usually about five") young girl friends of Maude Iwami (Jusabro's wife?) began to come to meetings. One, named Salome Marchward, lived at 115th Street, where a friend, Fina Perkins, had rented a six-room apartment, which she shared with others. Salome was Iwami's sweetheart. She had introduced Iwami to Fina, and to Audrey Kepner, who roomed with Fina.

In the spring of 1929 Sasaki had begun to work at Mogi's furniture repair shop again--on Third Avenue--often at night. Downstairs there was a dining room, where Mrs. Cahn would come in sometimes and have lunch.

Meanwhile Iwami had sent a report to Japan, after which Sasaki received a letter from Sokatsu, his teacher, saying he was no good, had no guts, had done nothing, was a failure--that it had been a big mistake to send him to America--

Sasaki had had some correspondence with Dr. Goddard, whom he had never met, and had been invited to visit him in Thetford, Vermont, at the latter's expense, so when he was thinking he should leave Iwami's place (Maude told

him, "You are wise. You had better go. Iwami is jealous.") he decided to accept Dr. Goddard's invitation, and left as if for the summer.

"In my own mind," Sa saki said, "I went for ten days, but on the third day I came back to New York." Many years later he told the story..

"We had a talk. Dr. Goddard asked me how I came to Buddhism. 'One summer,' I told him, 'to help me financially,' I took a position in the parcel post office. There was plenty of disturbance from the time I went in at night to one o'clock in the morning. Then, from one to five, we spent our time in discussion.

"One law student there told me four words--subjective, objective, abstract, concrete. This made me begin to think until I went crazy. What were those words? What did they mean? This made me what I am today. Thus, Dr. Goddard, I came to Buddhism.'

"Dr. Goddard said, 'Cook my potatoes!' I was very glad of that word. I thought he talked to me in the freedom of Zen.

"But the next morning he carried me to his potato field. One man was working there at four dollars a day. He said to me: 'If you can plow, you can stay as long as you like.'

"I stood and thought. Then I said to him: 'Dr. Goddard, this ground has no trees. Where there are no trees, Buddhism will not grow. I will go back to the city.'

"My interview with Dr. Goddard was very unfortunate."

Sasaki moved to a room at 113th Street, which Iwami found for

SOKEI-AN SAYS

Principles of Buddhism, II

Buddhism differs from other religions in the way of attaining to fundamental understanding. All religions have contrivance methods, but the method of Buddhism is quite different from that of the others. I will speak about this difference.

The founder, Shakyamuni Buddha, did not use any of the religious contrivances of India, such as the worship of Gods. At that time many Gods and Goddesses were worshipped. Also, Indians practiced austerities, endured torment to attain enlightenment, and philosophized with many logical methods. The Buddha did not believe in these devices. He discarded the worship of God in the sun and moon, and of the invisible goddesses who, in their mischievousness, bewitched the human spirit. The Buddha did not dream of such as these as true existences. There were also the higher Gods like Brahma to whom, out of fear, prayer and sacrifice were offered.

The Buddha discarded all notions or preconceived ideas as requisites to the attainment of enlightenment. What he used was the sense organs, the body and its functions, all the mental activities except mind-stuff, that is, just the pure activity of mind. Also, the Buddha used real material as a requisite of attainment--took all outside as part of his body, using outer phenomena as the material to exalt himself into higher enlightenment. His attitude was exactly like that of the Zen student of today. The Zen student

never uses any preconceived ideas, philosophical terms, notions, thoughts, or names. He depends purely upon his own consciousness--the six sense organs and the reflection upon his consciousness. These are the only material upon which he constructs his attainment--his own body and mind.

So the Buddha's Buddhism and Zen are the same religion. It is not necessary to call it Buddhism, but the Buddha's desire for attainment and ours is exactly the same, so we do not hesitate to call our religion Buddhism, and the Buddha would not refuse the use of that name.

In these days, we add to our sense organs, using microscopes and magnifying glasses to look outside.

Shariputra, the Buddha's famous disciple, used only the five senses to analyze the outside. No matter how deeply or carefully we observe this outside, looking into the solar system, into the atom--they are outer existence. Though we call it electron, proton, or ether--it is all outer material. Perhaps a monad of dust is the same construction as the solar system. We do not call it spirit; it is matter. We use this material to construct our religion. Shariputra's method has developed into the method of today; we use all knowledge to attain understanding.

The Buddha taught his disciples: "There are three elements that harm the human being, disturb and agonize him. Ignorance and fear compounded are the first. Then he is angry about anything that endangers or threatens him. And desire

leads him into outer attractions. These are the three factors of agony.”

Today, the German psychologist, Jung, calls the three major factors of human life: security, sex, and self-expression. This is the same idea as the Buddha's: ignorance, desire, and anger. Abandoning desire, protection from fear and agony, we try to attain enlightenment, which is self-expression.

We use the five senses, and we use carefully the material gained from analyzing the outside, but in the conclusion we do not add anything that we can define. Using all material in exactly the same way as the Buddha did, the addition of the microscope is nothing to us; we wish to get to the bottom of the sense organs--that is all. So we use all our capabilities really to attain enlightenment. It is not necessary to call it Buddhism.

In the Buddha's time, the outer matter consisted of four elements: water, earth, air, fire. The fifth, Akasha (ether today), was the purest and the fundamental essence.

As mental activity, there were the five organs of perception, but the Buddha added a sixth: the capability to reflect upon something, to perceive something beyond the five organs. If we do not reflect, we cannot perceive (Vedana). Mental phenomena, vision, all these thoughts, we call Samjna. Manas is the perception of that which is intangible to our minds; we think thunder with our mind, Samjna will perceive it. The lower animal will hear the sound but doesn't know thunder for he has not developed Samjna. But we do not know how our stomach digests food, how the heart pumps blood--this power

we call Manas. This does not belong to the human being; he is living within it. Manas is the end, the extinction of man; in Manas we die--but there is another perception (Vijnana) that will never die; it keeps all the seeds of memory and lives forever. When the time comes for us to reincarnate, then all the memories are called out once more and all activity is repeated. This is our human viewpoint.

If we alter the angle, then Vijnana always goes as its own nature--no space, no time, no particular ages; all different names of men, cats, dogs, plants--all are in the same place like a fine point where all is kept as seed. When the seed develops, it does not come to maturity suddenly--there are trunk, leaves, flowers, and fruit. Alaya Vijnana keeps the oneness of existence of the universe, but it also develops by degrees. Then comes the great music of the universe--all one but all different.

To be individualized, you may have the notion that you will remain in the bosom of nature, and you may at the same time have another notion: that you are one with the universe--the universe itself. You can have these two notions at once and both are true, for if you think very carefully, you will find the same answer in these two logical constructions.

The Buddha thought that this mental structure consisted of five senses and that the last was the Vijnana Alaya consciousness.

Today, we do not think how many mental structures we have, but all arise from these original structures. We use these materials. There is no other way to attain enlightenment. Without using these materials, what

can you do? You must use all your own functions to attain enlightenment.

We think in the shortest, simplest way, trying to get just the one point, one essence, out of everything. If my heart is honest, I cannot puzzle my mind with *two*. I wish to have *one* conclusion, not bothering with philosophical systems, but *grasping* the point. All simple, honest men avoid entanglement and go straight to the point; they take the many technical terms and try to digest them into one point. This fire, for instance, when you call it fire it differs from heat--pedantic! What is the difference?

A Chinese scholar carefully thought into the mystery of phenomena. First, he made a circle, saying that it indicated all inside. Next he put a point in the center; all is in it, and when the circumference disappears, the point will cover all. Then he thought of 3 points and made a triangle--then another. The next time, he inverted the triangle so the bases met. "Marvellous!" he thought. "Put a point in a circle (one in all), change the direction of a triangle, painting four ways--put all this together and it will explain existence!" This was Fu Chi, the first geometrist who founded the I Ching system which is still in use today.

But the Buddhist uses *this* thing (strikes chest). Why keep everything outside? However, Fu Chi's conclusion is our conclusion, so we can call him a Buddhist. All the simplest ways, we call Buddhism.

The Bodhi tree keeps its own shape of tree in all conditions--nourishment, location, and through all changes in the environment. So, Buddhism is always the same Buddhism

but uses different language and symbols.

We always create anew. From the simple ground of the five senses, we again create that Bodhi tree. If you want to arrive, just use *this* and *that*; think in the simplest way in all your activities; nourish your inner self with everything from the outside and create your own religion honest and simple. Because our materials are limited, we carefully observe outside and inside.. To meet the Buddha's Buddhism, you must find your own foundation of life, depending upon yourself--not on the Buddha.

In a Zen monastery, one spends three years in this practice--no books, just using *this* (slaps body).

FZI, CONT'D FROM PAGE 2

him. He then gave a few more lectures at Fina's apartment, which was fairly near his room.. After a short time, he "disappeared." Actually, Yamanaka had his address, so that when Mr. Miya returned from a trip to Japan in late 1929, he was easily able to find Sasaki on West 53rd Street, where he had a quite good room, though under the 6th Avenue L, with a black family.

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CONVERSATIONS WITH FARKAS
Noted by Hackney

Frankie always had a good appetite. Of all the cats who came to the top of the garden stairs landing that our kitchen opened on, he was the only one who was capable of experiencing the joy of the gourmet. Not that he turned up his nose at ordinary fare. At the time I first knew him, he was the decided senior of the night cats. A veteran of many battles, he was still a fighter to be reckoned with, but the scars of his dreadful lifestyle were now all that protected his rheumatic frame from being torn to pieces by contenders. His fur, once black, was rusty and grayed, with no gloss to it.

He "lived" several fences down Waverly Place in an apartment house basement along with the others of the gang who sought badweather shelter behind the garbage cans near some heating pipes. I suppose the rather mean janitor there allowed them to remain inside in preference to the rats and mice that would otherwise have prevailed. The stench of cat merely added to the garbage smell.

It was Frankie's ears that were almost unbearable. They appeared to be chewed down to the bone and the raw red wounds were open and festering. Earmites contributed. Even with goodwill, no one could get near enough to touch him. People hated seeing him. Even relatively kind people including the Franciscan nuns next door urged that he be "put out of his misery." It wasn't that they felt sorry for Frankie. They just couldn't

bear seeing him.

My husband Nicholas had the carpenters at his studio build a house, like a doghouse, for Frankie, and Frankie would sit in it during the day but at night, after dinner, he always went back to the garbage cans. Of course he wouldn't come inside the house. Outside cats rarely do, even when invited.

A time came when things went from bad to worse. Frankie was clearly failing. His son (or perhaps grandson) Blackie, who resembled him, took over the territory. Frankie was obliged to wait, down at the bottom of the steps, while Blackie ate. This meant I had to wait, too, so that I could put out the "specials" I reserved for Frankie's taste, after Blackie had had his fill. Dinner leftovers, a bowl of turkey, or chicken livers, something of that sort, instead of the hyped up flavors of commercial catfood that Blackie went for with the enthusiasm of a TV adster.

Observation of individual animals--not laboratory animals or any other garbage like that and not by people who don't *know* animals or know themselves--shows all kinds of interesting things in the same way that observing babies will. The actual observation tells you so much more than all the theories about behavior under lab conditions, which is, of course, what men note. Men think that in this way they will find out things. It is true that you will find out certain things, but they are different from what you observe in natural life conditions.

Animals do such funny things..

We have the dominance-subordinance pattern in Frankie and Blackie in our yard.

After eating, Blackie would do one of several things. He would jump up on a box making way for the older one to come up the stairs and eat or he might go down into the yard past the other or he might just stay there. According to Blackie's particular attitude of the day, he would do one of these three things and the older cat would respond differently to each one.

Having observed this and wanting the older one to get his share, especially of any goodies, I would speak to the old one and say, "Frankie, come up..." Then I'd close the door and he'd begin to come up the stairs to the food in his rheumatic way. At this point Blackie might put on a show of bravado or just jump away. Blackie did this specifically to Frankie. If another cat came he wouldn't do the same things. But with his parental relative, he would go through these steps.

If Blackie took too long and was obnoxious, I'd chase him away. In his last weeks, Frankie recognized this and that I was going to give him some privilege, some advantage, because I favored him and called him by name. He would look straight at me with a beautiful look of great intelligence, and, I feel, true appreciation. He was clearly OK.

Also, he didn't wait any longer at the *bottom* of the steps. He sat only two steps down from the food.

His attitude was changed

by my attitude towards him. He knew that I would provide for him in a special way.

When Blackie would pass Frankie on the stairs, they would have a 'passage of paws' in which each would strike at the other with a certain number of blows--like one, two and one, two on both sides.

How was this worked out between them? What prompted it? It has to do with dominance and subordinance. It is not good or bad, but natural..

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THE RECORD OF BANKEI Translated by Haskel

With my sole thought to find the Buddha Mind, I struggled vainly, floundering desperately about. The matter of finding the Buddha Mind had to be set aside, and I found myself instead beset by illness and was confined to bed for a long time, so I'm well acquainted with (the nature of) illness. Being born into this world, we must expect (to meet with) illness. (But) when you conclusively realize the Unborn Buddha Mind, you don't distress yourself over the pain of illness. You can clearly distinguish illness as illness, pain as pain. The reason for this dist-

inction is that the Buddha Mind, being originally unborn, has nothing to do with pain or pleasure. We speak of this as unborn because it is free from thought. It is precisely when thoughts arise that you usher in pleasure and pain. Since the Buddha Mind isn't attached to illness but just remains as it is in the Unborn, it's not subject to suffering. If thoughts arose from the place of the *Unborn* and you caused yourself suffering by attaching to your illness, transforming the Buddha Mind, then your suffering would indeed be inevitable, (but that's hardly the case).

Even the perverse sufferings of beings in hell, so far as the suffering itself is concerned, are no different (from this human suffering of yours). At times, caught up in the suffering of attaching to your illness, you may (start to) think: "I ought to be back on my feet again by now;" "maybe the medicine's not right;" "perhaps the doctor's no good," and so on, transforming the Buddha Mind into anguished thoughts so that the illness besetting your mind becomes worse than your *original* illness. You anxiously pursue the (well-being) that (seems) to elude you, so that, even as you gradually *do* recover, although you've gotten back your *physical* health, the *mental* suffering aroused by this pursuit only becomes aggravated: this is what it means to suffer from attachment.

If there's anyone who tells you that he can undergo not only illness, but every kind of suffering without feeling any pain, that fellow is a liar who still hasn't realized the marvelously illuminating dynamic function of the Buddha Mind. If

there's anyone who tells you that he feels absolutely no pain, I want you to understand that this not feeling pain is actually pain. There is no such thing as not feeling pain. Since we possess the marvelously illuminating dynamic function of the Buddha Mind, not only illness, but all circumstances whatever can be readily understood and differentiated. Moreover, if even when you're faced with the sufferings of illness, you don't give them any special attention and don't attach to them, you can stand up to *any* situation. So if you're overcome by illness and endure the pangs of illness, then go ahead and groan with pain; (but) whether you're sick or not, it's best to remain always in the Unborn Buddha Mind. However, you should understand that when, in response to the sufferings of illness, you become involved with thoughts, then, besides your (actual) illness, you turn the Buddha Mind into thoughts and cause yourself (mental) suffering (as well). That which is originally *without* thoughts is the Unborn Buddha Mind. Failing to realize the unborn (nature) of the Buddha Mind, you are bound to suffer, changing (the Buddha Mind) for thoughts; and then, however much you claim that you're not feeling pain, you're (just) talking about your *idea* of being without pain, it's (merely) a notion based on thoughts, so that, after all, you aren't *free* from pain. Indeed, the fact that such thoughts arise at all shows that, having failed to firmly realize the Buddha Mind which transcends birth and death, you are *suffering* from birth and death!

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