

ZEN NOTES



ILLUSTRATION
In the Daihannya-kyo
Monju on lion
13th Century, Nara

EDITOR'S NOTE

This lecture of 2/11/42 has been taken from the notes of Ruth F. Sasaki.

Ruth had persuaded Sokei-an to write out his commentary and read it. He had agreed, but in the actual speaking added to his written phrases. To differentiate it, the written commentary is italicized.

The names of persons have been kept in the Japanese rendering. It should be remembered that they have symbolic or mythical identities as well as personal ones.

Rinzai's statements on the three principles and, following, on the four positions of subject and object, are not attractive to people like me. I find it difficult to believe they were written by the same person who composed the wonderfully simple and direct words that immediately followed. For their text, see ZN XVII/1, Jan. 1970. But in order to complete the recording of Sokei-an's commentary we need to be familiar with them.

THE RECORD OF RINZAI SOKEI-AN SAYS

I was speaking about the second of the Three Principles. Rinzai's terms are very difficult. In the past I have not written any commentary, but this is a new attempt, my ascribing a commentary on Rinzai.

In *The Record of Rinzai* Monju is called "Marvelous Understanding."

Monju is the name of the Bodhisattva Manjushri. In Buddhist sculpture, Monju is presented as a young Bodhisattva, mounted upon a lion, holding a sword in the right hand and a scroll of scripture on the left palm.

Monju is called Marvelous Understanding. Marvelous Understanding as a name came from the nature of this Bodhisattva. Of course you must know there are many kinds of Bodhisattvas; Bodhisattvas who were really living historically and another group of Bodhisattvas who were mythological figures. Those who are handled mythologically represent some ideas in Buddhism. Just as the Virgin Mary is not a real person, but represents a doctrine in Christianity. Monju is a representation of Intrinsic Wisdom or Marvelous Understanding.

This name 'Marvelous Understanding' implies Monju's comprehension of Absolute Reality.

Absolute Reality is a very big word, but I think you understand what I mean. There must be two kinds of Reality: Absolute Reality and Relative Reality. The nature of Reality abstracted from these phenomenal existences is Absolute Reality.

I must speak in such fashion in order to acquaint you with Monju's state.

Monju's state is unattainable by human beings through the five senses or the mind which has four stages.

No one can reach the state of Monju's mind. Monju's understanding is like the sword which severs all the bonds of entangling notions; or like an elephant which cuts across the current to the other shore.

Monju always has a sword in his hand. It is the symbol of this state of Absolute Reality, or the intellect which knows the existence of this Absolute state. Usually people use ideas or notions or reasoning to reach the state of Reality. It is a way of reaching there, but as long as you are in that reasoning you cannot emerge into the state itself. You must look at the bound-

dary of the state from the outside.

To realize this state of so-called Absolute Reality is something like the way of the Christian who reaches God purely by faith. While the Christian talks about the attributes of God by terms or thinks about the attributes of God by reasoning he cannot have faith in God. But when you have faith in God all of a sudden you stand face to face with God. You do not need any reasoning or terms with which to think about him.

The metaphor of the elephant appears in some old sutra. It describes the Buddha's attitude in approaching truth. The elephant goes thru the bottom of the stream to reach the other shore. Monju's sword and this elephant have the virtue of severing all obstacles and hindrances to reach Absolute Reality.

Monju's state of Original Wisdom is not to be obtained by ordinary men.

I do not mean to disparage ordinary men. I mean ordinary men, those who do not think anything about God.

Mujaku is used

here to represent ordinary men.

The ordinary man does not think or philosophize about God or Buddha, but is a good and honest man and marvelous worker. He does not realize it but he is the son of God. He does not realize it but he is the child of Buddha.

How, then, could Monju permit Mujaku to question him? Even ordinary people, however, can attain the understanding of Buddhism by philosophizing, by practicing meditation and by making use of all kinds of expedients (upayas). In the end these upayas are not at variance with, do not contradict, Monju's Absolute Wisdom.

Monju lives always in absolute Reality. How could he permit the ordinary man, Mujaku, to ask all kinds of questions. Ordinary men cannot attain sudden enlightenment, cannot stand face to face with God. So there are upayas, expedients, contrivances. Building magnificent cathedrals, for instance, the priest invites the ordinary men and lets them hear the beautiful choir and the music of the organ. The ordinary man's mind is exalted by these arts and feels something that is higher than everyday

life. Thus these expedients lead men, rouse faith in their minds. A half-baked man will say, "Why do we need these things? We can go into the desert and pray." No, we cannot lead the ordinary man thus. They must see something magnificent with their eyes, they must hear wonderful music with their ears, listen to wonderful words so they can stand on their toes and peep into this which is Absolute Reality.

Ikkyu was a Zen Master who was invited to visit a rich man. He was a careless, plain-minded monk. He did not forget expedients. He went in his ordinary robe with no followers. The servants kicked him out saying, "This wonderful Ikkyu is coming. Get out, you beggar monk!" So he returned to the temple, and dressing himself in his most gorgeous robes and surrounding himself with many attendants bearing incense and umbrellas, he returned to the home of his host. This time he was immediately admitted with much ceremony, though of course the servant did not recognize in the beautifully dressed priest the same ragged monk who had come to the gate a short time before. When the feast which the rich man

had prepared was served, Ikkyu took off the outer one of his gorgeous robes and began to feed the food to it. The rich man exclaimed in great surprise. "The beautiful robes were invited so I am feeding them," explained Ikkyu.

Then there are meditation and reading sutras and chanting. We do not need these things. You can attain enlightenment alone, anywhere. All of a sudden you come to a place that is solid and true and you know it. This moment, this is existence, this is existence! You don't need to divide the universe into pieces, you do not need to hush those five senses, do not need to unravel all the entanglements. With the entanglements, with the five senses, you come to this Reality. No cathedral, no beautiful robes. So in the end Monju's Wisdom and the ordinary man's mind will meet.

THE RECORD OF BANKEI
Translated by Haskel

On another occasion, Yui'e came and asked: "In my sect, we have the teaching of the Five Ranks of Lord and Retainer. Since ancient times it has been difficult to understand.

What actually is this teaching meant to elucidate?"

The Master said: "Since this is a formulated teaching, it's worthless to students of the Way."

Yui'e said: "In that case, are Rinzai's Three Phrases and Four Positions of Subject and Object, Tozan's Five Ranks of Lord and Retainer, and so forth, all just constructions of useless words?"

The Master said: "When you imagine there is some truth in the Five Ranks, Three Phrases and so forth and speculate over them, taking them to be real understanding, then they are all useless words. The wisdom of the old masters, in its perfect clarity, functioned freely and naturally, and that's why, in dealing with the particular capacities of their students, they left behind different sorts of things; (but these were all) temporary expedients. It was their disciples who, carried away by their reverence for their masters, set these down in writing to preserve them for future generations."

Copr. by Peter Haskel 1982

BOOK REVIEW—*The Buddha Eye*
Noted by John Storm

For more than sixty years, "The Eastern Bud-

dhist" has been filling in the philosophical background behind the teachings of the Zen masters. It was founded by D.T. Suzuki, and became over time a forum for Nishitani Keiji, Abe Masao and others of the Kyoto school, a group of mahayanist-existentialist thinkers at Otani University in Kyoto committed, like Suzuki, to building bridges with the west. Now Frederick Franck, author of *The Zen of Seeing* and several other books on Zen, has put together an interesting anthology of essays drawn mostly from "The Eastern Buddhist."

The book, *The Buddha Eye*, (Crossroad, New York, 1982), offers four pieces by Suzuki, including one written in 1960 when he was ninety years old, and a dialogue between "one and zero" by Kobori Sohaku Nanrei, a Zen master who is head of the Daitokuji branch of Rinzai Zen in Japan. In addition, there is a section on the Shin sect, a branch of which is sponsor of Otani University, and there are several thoughtful pieces by Nishitani, Abe and their followers in the Kyoto School, such as "Zen as the Negation of Holiness" by Hisamatsu Shin'ichi and "Nothingness in Meister Eckhart and Zen Buddhism" by Ueda Shizuteru.

TANDEN, SOURCE OF SPIRITUAL STRENGTH, by KONGO ROSHI

Briefed from an article in

The Diamond Sword

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...There is one particular aspect of zazen that is just glossed over, this is Zen breathing and the tanden. *Sekai tanden* in Japanese means spiritual field. The tanden itself is a point located about two inches below the navel ...Here in the Western world, we don't often think

...in terms of having a point of gravity, a vital center...This is rarely touched upon, and if it is, it is just glossed over. General instruction is given as to the posture, correct breathing: "Breathe from the abdomen."

...In zazen, in Zen training, in Zen thinking, not only in Zen, but throughout all of the Orient the idea is tanden, or another word, *hara*, meaning bodily strength, abdominal strength -- living from this center point of gravity...

...What happens when we become angry...we become excited, become anxious... we completely lose our cool? Right? Hot-headed.

Now the idea is to draw this energy down, and to live from the hara... When you do so, you discover a power, a confidence, a strength in your lives that is incomparable to anything you've experienced before... I'm not talking about anything occult, magical, but daily life.

... This power, this confidence, is not something that one has, it's something in which one stands.

... A lot of people really are looking for power to overwhelm others—not necessarily even that—the power, the strength just to get through our daily lives. Many of us would be satisfied with that.

... What is the instruction as far as the mental disposition, the disposition of the mind in zazen?

Dogen Zenji instructs us: "Look inwardly at the rise and fall of thoughts as they occur. Do not try to suppress your thoughts, do not attempt to direct your thoughts... just observe... Breathe from the diaphragm." But after sitting for awhile, after your sitting becomes ripe and you realize an integration between body and mind, there is one further step that you must go. And this is putting strength into the

tanden. Because there is a point that you can reach in your Zen practice where there is thoughtlessness. There is no thought. You experience a state of no thought. Then from this point, take this one step further." Without thinking, feel the strength in the tanden. Tremendous power opens to you: you live, you breathe, you act, you go through life and all decisions come from this sekai tanden, this spiritual field. This is that one step beyond.

... The first thing you want to do is lower the shoulders... The next thing is loosen the belly... Allow the belly to expand. And then, put strength into the belly... not thought, because all preconceived notions will be wrong... Now breathe from the tanden and hara. How? Don't breathe! Let the breathing happen. ... Observe the inhalations and exhalations as they occur without interfering, without guiding. When you do this, very casually, but very definitely you put strength into the abdominal area. So when you breathe from the tanden, you let the breath occur. Try that in your practice and see what happens.

JOSHU SASAKI ROSHI SAYS

Everyone is living in oneness with this cosmos,with this one world. Even though there may be an earthquake that destroys our earth,yet we can never leave this world that we live in.Yet we think that somehow this self of ours is separate from the world,we look upon the world as an object,and that is the basis for an illness. We think that the world and our selves are different, but in reality they are one thing. When you look upon the world as an object,then there appears this personal or individual self. And this self is thenalways thinking how can I become one,how can I be not left out of the world? But in reality,the world will never leave you out. It is always working,including you. It is only because you get attached to that personal,fixed self that you start worrying about being left out. When you really know how to get along with the world, coming to a truly friendly relationship with this one world,then you will never feel the need to worry about being left out. But when you are constantly attached to a fixed,individual self,when

you are thinking only about your own convenience,then you will forever be in a state of insecurity,worrying that you will be abandoned by everybody. Noted by Storm

CONVERSATIONS WITH FARKAS

Noted by Hackney

I have always had strangers do things for me. I am not sure what it is about me,perhaps my size...Anyway,I almost never have to ask for help. It comes to me. When I was younger and would hitchhike,men would pick me up and be not only surprised that I was doing it,but pleased to have my company.

Often,assistance comes more from people that I do not know than from ones I do.Just the other day I was walking on the street with one of the boys and I was pulling a heavily-loaded cart. When I came to a high curb a man rushed over to help me with it.

As I get older,the willingness of infantile people of my acquaintance to assist me is lessening. If I tire or don't know something,they are angry and anxious.They resent my using glasses to see menus or photographs. Is it because they fear their mother is becoming less dependable?

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