

ZEN NOTES



Letter to Peter Haskel from his friend the Shingon priest Ryuichi Abe noting winter events in Japan.

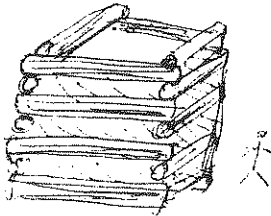
Dear Peter:

We had an exceptionally cold snowy winter. 30 days of snowing in Tokyo! Of course it's a new record in history. My brother and I spent many painful days removing over 8 inches of snow from the temple garden and cemetery. Especially troublesome was the snow on the roof of *Hondo* and *Shorodo* (bell tower). It all slides down as soon as the temperature goes up in the morning and piles up on the facades of buildings as thick as my height. We couldn't believe that this all happened in Tokyo. I never saw that much snow even in New York or my favourite ski resorts in northern Japan! Sometimes the snow fell from the roof when we were working underneath and my brother was almost burried alive once!

On a chilly day early in February we went to the Homa festival held by Kiriya Seiyu in Kyoto. As soon as we got off Shinkansen at Kyoto station we were astonished by the size of the crowd. Tens of thousand of people lined up to wait for the shuttle bus to pick them up. The organization, "Agon-shu," --literally, "the school of Agama"-- hired 35 large buses for the shuttle service between the festival site and the station. All the buses were fully occupied all day through. (Each bus facilitates 100 people) We waited for forty-five minutes at the end of one of many lines. But, finally realized that everyone waited for almost two hours to get the free bus ride. So we picked a taxi. Even the taxi driver told us that that day was one of the happiest in a year for he and his friends had no trouble finding customers. While we were in the line, a young woman wearing the uniform of Agon-shu distributed free booklets to everyone in the line. These booklets were well designed, expensive-looking, and filled with propogandas. It said, all the misfortunes a family had to face, accidents, illness, mischieves of children etc., were caused by the vicious souls of the family ancestors and by the souls of babies died before delivery. Only way to get lid of them was

to try and attend Kiriyama's ritual, and with the help of devas, nagas, Acalas (Fudos), etc. invoked by his magical power in the Homa fire, make these vicious souls attain Buddhahood.

As we got close to the site--it was on the top of one of the Higashiyama mountains, actually not far from Chishaku-in--we were bowed by the uniformed people who stood on the road side for every 100 meters. Each time taxis and buses carrying the believers to pass by they brought their palms together before their chests. Their attitude toward followers were hundred times better than that of "professional monks." We realized how well-trained or brain-washed they were. The site itself was beautiful and huge. On one of the peaks they were constructing their new gigantic headquarters temple. We walked in the forest of pine tree for ten minutes to get to the actual place of Homa festival. This was rather like a football stadium. There were two huge square piles of logs in the middle of an open field surrounded by tall grand stands. Each pile was about 5 meters



tall, wide and long. Kiriyama himself was conducting the ceremony on one corner of the stadium wearing crimson yamabushi outfit. All other priests wearing white yamabushi outfits were working, busy throwing Homa

plates (wooden plates each marked with a believer's name and his wish) up into the fire, and pouring water on the logs so that the logs did not have to burn. All the spectators standing on the stand prayed and waited to see until they found the devas, nagas, bodhisattvas manifesting themselves in the fire. But they could not stay in one place for longer than 5 minutes because the uniformed "guides" pushed them away constantly toward the exits to accommodate newly arriving crowds. It was also fascinating that they had TV staffs to broadcast this ceremony and hundreds of BOSE 700 speakers (each costs \$1,000 in Japan) to spread Kiriyama's ugly mantra recitation. They even rented a helicopter so that its video camera could catch the moment when the Homa fire took the place of nagas and Acalas ... Sincerely, Ryuichi

THE GREAT SIXTH PATRIARCH'S TEACHINGS

Chapter IV,7

Virtuous friends,when your mind is kept unstained by circumstances,it is then in the practice of mindlessness. Relying upon your own mind,you emancipate yourself from all circumstances and bear no mind as the effect of all existences. If you just think nothing whatsoever and annihilate all your mind,you will be reborn somewhere in an entirely different place. The view that you attain is therefore a great error. You who are learning Buddhism must consider this. It is pardonable that you commit an error on your own,not knowing the principle of the teachings,but how can you mislead others? In your own delusion,you do not see this error and also do not know that you are depreciating the scriptures of the Buddha's teachings. For this reason,I lay down this mindlessness as the fundamental principle of my sect.

SOKEI-AN SAYS

The Sixth Patriarch,Hui-neng,here defined the fundamental principle of his sect of Zen as "mindlessness." The Chinese is literally "no-mind." Perhaps "mindlessness" is nearer to English usage. This gives you a clear idea of the attitude of mind in Zen meditation.

When you see the water of an autumn pool with many red maple leaves in it,it looks as though the water is stained red. If you dip up the water,you will see that the water is as pure as it ever was. The red or pink of all those colored leaves cannot tint the water,which always remains unstained.

Our mind must be the same as that autumn pool. With all the stuff in it,it must be kept unstained. This is the natural condition of the mind. If you see a donkey,you think of it,but when the donkey goes away,you think nothing. This is mindlessness. I shall explain this a little more carefully. Our mind is separated into two: mind activity and mind-stuff. It is like water and the dirt in the water--all the debris,like dead cats and so forth,is mind stuff. But the waves that carry it away are mind

activity. If you practice meditation, you will observe a pandemonium of things. They will amaze you and make it difficult to keep yourself quiet. You must go deep, to the bottom of the mind. There you will see something moving always, like a gossamer in the New Jersey spring, or like steam from the kettle spout. In the distance, you can see it, but nearby you do not. This is called "manas consciousness." It is the marvelous vibration of the mind that creates the seeds of thought. Gradually the seeds grow and create mind stuff--you see the faces of demons or dragons. Mind activity without waves is as pure as universal consciousness. Mindlessness is this: the waves are always fluctuating, but the nature of the water remains unchanged.

The water is moving in high surf or in a whirlpool; then it becomes calm, like a mirror with no mark of any sort. Our mind is just like water. Sometimes it becomes disturbed and creates a commotion, but when it is calm, it is like a mirror, keeping no marks or impressions of any activity. This is the original nature of the mind. You must keep your mind like this always. Do not put it into a mold; do not make a gelatin pudding of your mind. When you see your mind forming a mold, bring it back to a liquid. After you use it, always bring it back to liquid form. Almost everyone's mind is either like a pudding in a mold, like ice-cream, or so hard that it must be crushed with a hammer. You must break up this mold; it must be crushed. Do not accept molds from other minds and think that they are yours. In any mold, it is not your mind activity; it is somebody else's mind, created with words.

I do not accept this mind; you must sculpture your own mind, create it, use your pure mind activity without the mind-stuff. That is Zen. You can call it by any name--call it dog or call it noumenon--but the substance of mind is always the same. It does not change from the original condition.

Virtuous friends, when your mind is kept unstained by circumstances, your mind is then in the practice of mindlessness. (This is Zen)

Relying upon your mind, you emancipate yourself from all circumstances. Standing upon your mind activity, you will think of dog, cat, horse, donkey-- all are merely mind stuff. But standing upon your own mind, you can emancipate yourself. You can bring the whole mind into one pocket; you can swallow the whole ocean; you can bring one million things into one, and create one million things from one.

When you understand Dharmakaya, you can emancipate yourself and be free from all names. You must train yourself well for several years; then you can step up into the second stage of Zen. In this stage, your mind will be emancipated at every moment. You are smiling, crying, buying, selling, but in every act from morning to evening your mind will be emancipated from it all. You will not go home with a frown between your brows, like all those people in the subway who keep the troubles of the day. When you step out of your office, you forget about it.

And bear no mind as the effect of all existences. (The next line presents an attitude different from that of the Sixth Patriarch but as it appears in the text it is included.) *If you just think nothing whatsoever and annihilate all your mind:* Some think this statement is not a part of the Record. It is not the true attitude.

After death annihilates the last mind, you will be reborn in an entirely different place. You try to think nothing, but the mind cannot do this for very long. I have experienced this. In meditation, all of a sudden I am thinking, "The cat will jump into my pickles!" Some people think this is Zen--but while you are embodied in thoughts, from one thing to another--from spider to tiger to liver--all is transmigrating, and you have no chance to become a Buddha. Some think this will be after death, but it can happen at any moment. Karma and reincarnation are explained in mind activity.

The Buddha said that the really enlightened one will not reincarnate again. He will go just once and will not return. When you really find mindlessness, you will not come back any more. After "annihilating the last mind," you will never return. You will attain

Nirvana. The Anagamin will go away and not come back any more. The Arhat comes and goes at will. He is supported by everything--sun, moon, stars--the whole universe. He accepts all mind stuff and mind activity, but he does not go with it. He speaks to the pedestrian from the window, but he does not follow him.

The view that you maintain is therefore a great error. The author is speaking here of the school that thinks that to stop the mind's activity is Buddhism.

The last part is not important, but I shall read it again.

You who are learning Buddhism must consider this. It is pardonable that you commit an error on your own, not knowing the principle of the teaching: When you look at the moon, don't think it is moving. Moving is not yourself, but the four elements and the mind stuff. Moving is the sky. Sailing is not the moon; it is the cloud. Flowing is not the body; it is the water, but not the water that composes your physical body.

When you look down from the bridge, you feel that the bridge is flowing, but you are not moving yourself. You yourself are not moving, because it is the water that is flowing. You think that you are getting old but this "old" is not yourself. Your self is always young. And moving is not yourself because your self is always quiet. You don't know this, so you commit errors.

But how can you mislead others? With such a wrong attitude, you think it is the Buddhist Dharma, and you will tell another that you are enlightened. When you say that you are enlightened, you are not enlightened. This is the third commandment in Buddhism. If you violate this, you are not a Buddhist.

At one time, there was a group stricken by famine; no one could get anything to eat, for no one had anything to give. The Buddha ordered the monks to scatter all over India, seeking families who had something. Someone said, when at a little village, "No one has ever come here, so perhaps we can say: 'I am an Anagamin or an Arhat,' and they will support us." The families believed them,

giving them food and beds.

Twice a year, Buddhist monks must make an assembly, and in the rainy season they went back to the Buddha's place. The monks there were all skin and bones, all emaciated, and they sympathized with one another for undergoing those hard years.

And then the monks with greasy faces and big bellies came in, and the Buddha said: "Where have you been?" They replied: "Oh, there wasn't any trouble begging food; we have fared well." The Buddha said: "You are not enlightened but you told people that you are. Therefore I make this commandment: 'No one who is not enlightened can call himself enlightened.'" In Western terms, this is called "bearing false witness." No one who is a Buddhist can do this.

LATE RAT NEWS

After reading the last ZN, Gwendolyn W. Pong reports from LaConner, WA, that in Toledo, OH, a rat saved a woman's life by licking her face to wake her up. Her heat blanket was on fire. She was able to turn off the electric current and call the Fire Department.

The black rat was on her bed because she wanted to keep it warm as it was sick. She suffered and was treated for smoke inhalation but the rat was all right. He was her pet.

"Another notable person to be born in the year of the Rat," Mrs. Pong continued, "was my husband Takping Pong. He founded the Bodhi-Dharma Center, Seattle, in his old age."

Q and A: JOSHU SASAKI
Noted: John Storm 10/80

Q What is the value of sitting without sanzen?

A Shakyamuni said that after his death Dharma (that is, the function that forms the world) would be the teacher; not the outside world. That means you don't need to make the roshi or Buddha or God your teacher because you possess the function of Dharma in yourself. Just as we all have the function of "mother and father" in us. Make this your teacher. Contemplate this function you already have.

If you have a teacher, go to your teacher. But if you don't, please contemplate on Dharma. So, when you are alone, it is a good idea to do zazen.

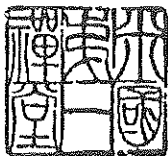
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Mary Farkas, Editor
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First Zen Institute of America
113 E30 Street
New York, New York 10016
(212-686-2520)

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