

ZEN NOTES



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BUDDHA'S BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION this year was honored by the presence of Zachary Jarrett, first born January 29th, 1986. Although 1986 is the year of the Tiger, Zachary is not officially a tiger, as the tiger year began, according to D. Logan, the authority I am using for our annual note on the subject, February 9th. That makes Zachary an ox. He does, as you can see from his photo, taken by his father, Spencer, at age 1½ weeks, show promise of fulfilling the ox personality prediction, which follows. A January male ox will be delightful, a bit reserved in his relationships with others, desiring harmony, and not at all pushy.

All tiger people are thought to be meditative and do much deep thinking. Their sign is LUCK. They are independent, and courageous, rather suspicious and quite selfish.

The tiger represents strength. It is thought he has the power to absorb into himself the evil qualities of others, thus rendering them powerless.

The tiger year is a year for great deeds of strength and daring. Expect changes--political realignments, theatrical coups, revolution, prospects of war, catastrophe. So be careful!

The cover tiger is, of course, by Sengai, and is part of a calendar, the gift of Mr. Yandell, who has, through the years, provided us with a fine collection of these. Thank you, Mr. Y.

It is said clearly in the sutra that you take refuge in the Buddha of your own nature. It does not say that you take refuge in the Buddha which is not your own nature. If you do not take refuge within yourself, in what do you take refuge? You have already enlightened yourself. It is your own enlightenment. You ought to take refuge in the three treasures of your own mind. If you regulate your mind within and respect others without, you are, so to speak, taking refuge in your own nature.

Virtuous scholars, you have taken refuge already in the three treasures of your own nature. Your thoughts are now the same as mine. I have made you see the Trikaya Buddha of your own nature. That Trikaya Buddha which you have plainly seen with your own enlightened mind conforms to my words. With your very body you have taken refuge in the pure Dharmakaya Buddha; with your very body you have taken refuge in the perfect Samghogakaya Buddha; and with your very body you have taken refuge in the numberless Nirmanakaya Buddhas.

SOKEI-AN SAYS This is the explanation of your first koan; the secret is disclosed. That koan: "Before your father and mother, what were you?" was given to a monk by the Sixth Patriarch as a mysterious word, but the secret significance of this koan was given by him here. In the last paragraph, he explains it as clearly as if he were showing you an apple on your palm. He caught it as he said: *It is said clearly in the sutra that you take refuge in the Buddha of your own nature.* He does not mean that you take refuge in the Buddha which is not your own nature. From the Zen standpoint, there is no Buddha but your own self. Everyone is Buddha. Everyone is God. There is no soul created by God because every soul is God; every soul is Buddha. There is no water created for any special utensil. The water in each utensil is the same water.

From the Buddhistic view, our soul is one of the waves in the ocean of soul. When we die, the waves cease and go back to the waveless ocean. The surface of the sea is fluctuating and dashing waves

toward the sky, but at the bottom is eternal calm. The soul that emerges and submerges is the shadow of the fluctuating soul that, in modern terms, is called consciousness, unconsciousness, subconsciousness, or sleep. But if you go back too deep, you cannot come back anymore because you have returned to the ocean of soul. In Sanskrit, Tathatagarbha means "the womb of Buddha." All enlightened souls come from that womb.

You do not need to do anything to realize that you are Buddha. Buddha is your original nature. You are IT. It is your notion only that separates you. It is your ignorance that puts you out of your original nature which is Buddha. The enlightened one will see everything in the state of original force. There is no woman, no man, neither money nor diamonds; these are nothing but forms of the original force.

Someone may come and spit in your face, but that does not harm the original force, so you need not notice it. When you see everything as this original force, all is simple and clear, but to reach this original force, you must deprive yourself of your notions.

If someone with a sword in his hand comes to see you, you will probably view him with your own notion. You must see him as a force and then it is clear. Look at everything as original force without any interpretation by the notions in your mind. Original force is soul. It is mind--not the human mind, but MIND.

I do not like to translate the word Zen as "meditation," because Zen and meditation are different. Meditation is a method to get away from your notions. These notions are ailments. Zen has nothing to do with notions; we do not listen to them nor do we try to answer them. You heard some gossip at the temple. Now you are sitting on your bed taking off your shoe and the gossip tumbles about in your mind and you put your shoe back on, reach for the telephone and chatter, chatter, chatter. Your friend says, "Come over" and you take a taxi even if it is eleven o'clock at night. These are all notions. But when you meditate, the notions come out. You cannot escape notions growing out of the unconscious into the conscious like mushrooms, but if you train your-

self, you will not entertain them. You cannot keep the birds of notions from coming into your brain and chattering, but you need not answer. Living under the elevated, if you entertain the noise, you will die in half a day, so you must forget about it. Do not entertain notions. Sit on them. You are like the man who went to the country and could not bear the noise, so he came back to the city at once.

If you meditate for many years, you will grow strong and well. You will read another's mind directly. You will become physically calm and mentally strong because you will not waste your brain power on notions. Meditation is the best practice to make one's personality strong. Zen students are always calm and healthy-looking because of this practice of zazen. When you see a beautiful woman--she is just beautiful. Entertaining notions is the first step to disaster. If you do not entertain notions, your Buddha is immediate; that is why the monks practice zazen. When you go home, watch your mind for five minutes and you will see a pandemoniac parade.

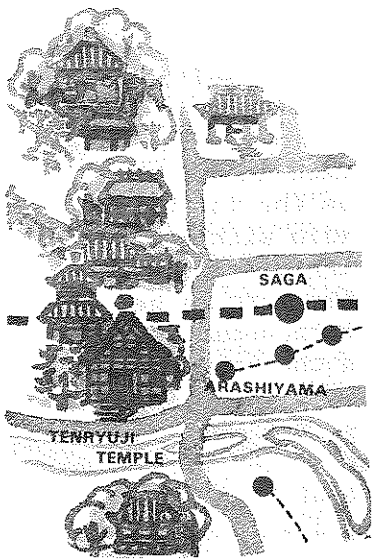
I was eighteen years old when I realized that I was thinking something all the time. I said to my mother: "I think someone is living in my attic." "Therefore you are insane," she answered.

It does not say that you take refuge in the Buddha which is not your own nature. If you do not take refuge within yourself, in what do you take refuge? This does not mean this mind in the skull. This skull is your radio. The universal, infinite mind is not enclosed in the skull. You gather your thoughts from the infinite mind; you gather notions with your radio within the skull. Anyone who is in your same vibration catches your vibrations. So when we gather here, we get vibrations or broadcasts of two thousand years ago. All these minds of monks are the community of Buddha.

Buddha is within you and the law is written in your body. But your mind is like an uncultivated forest filled with skunks and snakes. Clean it out. Make of it a beautiful garden. If you regulate your mind within, you will respect yourself; then you can respect others.

Letter
to
the
editor

LETTER FROM KYOTO was the title of a feature of Zen Notes I haven't had occasion to use for a long time. But here it is again, from Long Arm, who ran from that city one day in April. His letter is headed Tenryu-ji. Ed. Must sleep--few more lines. I slipped out of the temple and bought a Big Mac Choco Shake to enjoy back in my frigid temple room. Luckily, the gas heater works. Tourists tromp like happy bovine over gravel paths. I haven't seen a monk yet--or a roshi either. Outside rows of soda machines. I did 10 minutes of zazen with N. (an actor). We sat alone in a huge room. Nervous photographers scuttled round taking snaps. Tomorrow he will run with me. He paled when I said I would start at 6 AM but did not protest.



BOOK NOTED by John Storm

Practicing Zen is something like recovering from a long, hard sickness. You feel bad; then you feel a little better; then, in flashes, sometimes spectacular flashes, you feel pretty good; and then, having recovered, you forget the whole thing: feeling O.K., after all, is now normal. Some people, however, seem to be irresistibly moved to tell all about their experience in the sickroom, and over the years they have produced a substantial body of confessional Zen literature. An intriguing example is "Nine-Headed Dragon River: Zen Journals 1969-1985," by Peter Matthiessen (Shambhala, 1986, \$16.95.)

In addition to much acclaimed fiction and non-fiction, Matthiessen is the author of "The Snow Leopard," a Zen-inspired account of a Himalayan pilgrimage undertaken in 1973 after the death of his wife. He has studied under Soen Nakagawa, Eido Shimano, Taizen Maezumi and Bernard Tetsugen Glassman, all influenced strongly by a "non-sectarian" Soto-Rinzai approach deriving from Hakuun Yasutani and Sogaku Harada. Matthiessen is thus in a position to present an inside view of the practices and politics of a significant fragment of the American Zen community--and, incidentally, of two of the three sex-power controversies that have shaken that community to its roots in recent years. He does so energetically and straightforwardly, for the most part, providing interesting material about his teachers' use of koans and other devices. But his references to the controversies are very cryptic--perhaps for legal reasons, no doubt for diplomatic and humane ones--and readers are left to imagine lurid goings-on when in reality the facts might have been quite commonplace. His main purpose, in any event, is to attract people "toward the path of Zen," and he identifies "Nine-Headed River" as the property of the Zen Community of New York, a group led by his current teacher, Tetsugen Glassman, "this American buddha," as the author later describes him.

Matthiessen's spiritual quest has spanned more than 15 years, several parts of the world and many, many sesshins. Indeed, his descriptions of zazen experiences are especially vivid. "Small silver breaths, farther and farther apart, scoured the last tatters of thought

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and emotion from the inside of my skull, now a silent bell," he writes. "And very suddenly, on an inhaled breath, this earthbound body-mind, in a great hush, began to swell and fragment and dissolve in light, expanding outward into a fresh universe in the very process of creation." Relayed to the dokusan room with high emotion, this experience was accepted as valid by one of the masters, who assured Matthiessen that "more complete kensho experiences" were to come. Other such "openings" receive considerable emphasis, including a major one of Tetsugen Glassman's. This is said to have occurred with much laughing and crying while riding in a carpool to work, where "luckily," he says, "I was an executive and had my own office."

Toward the end of the book, a portrait of the late Soen Roshi, visited during a pilgrimage to Japan, is most touching. The enigmatic old teacher, long cut off from students and colleagues in seclusion at Ryutaku-ji, consents to meet with the travelers and there is a joyful reunion. "Then," Matthiessen writes, "as if his eyes had died, he withdrew behind the remote expression I remembered so well from dokusan, in which his mouth sets as in a mask and his eyes disappear behind two slits. Without a word, he got up, bowed, and led us back down the crooked stair." We are left wondering what strange, bleak mood in the end took possession of this sometimes quixotic man who played such a pivotal role in the transmission of Zen to America.

SOKEI-AN SAYS (ZN Apr. 1970 "Prajna")

Zen strips you of everything: all preconceived notions, all words, all that you have studied. Then you find yourself. Suddenly, you realize--"Ah, this is IT!" You don't take a dramatic attitude--just a quiet "Ah, this is IT!"

For information on the Seminar on the Sutras with Joshu Sasaki Roshi, write or call Jemez Bodhi Mandala Box 8, Jemez Springs, New Mexico 87025 * 505-829-3854 Seminar month May 30-June 29

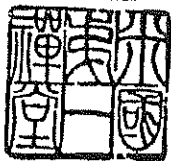
ZN XXXII/12, p.3, 1.2. *Amara* should be *amala*. The old problem Japanese have with "r" completely escaped our editorial eye. So sorry. Thank you, Dr.G.

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

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