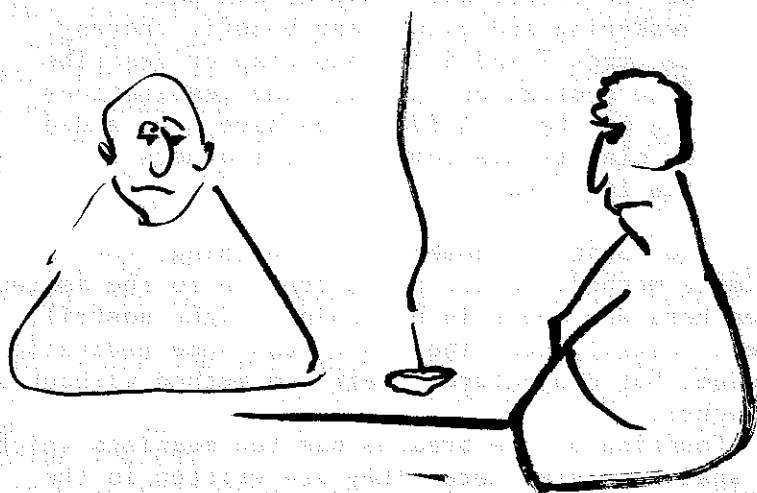


ZEN NOTES



ZEN PRACTICE

A practice session for seven days and nights. No sleep or repose at all. A section of bamboo three feet long was placed on the ground between the two participants. If either's eyelids were to drop, even for a split second, the other was to crack him between the eyes with the slat. Posture ramrod straight, teeth clenched tightly.

--Noted by Hakuin in "Wild Ivy." Translated by Norman Waddell, "The Eastern Buddhist," vol. XVI, no. 1, 1983. (Illustration by Jim Shapiro.)

Q AND A

Q HOW ARE THE BREATHS TO BE COUNTED?

SOKEI-AN SAYS (5/28/41 & 6/4/41) comment upon *The Sutra of Perfect Awakening*, Chapter XI, Sermon on the various methods of practice by which sentient beings of the future world may attain pure awakening and gain great benefit thereby. Lectures 7 and 8 on this chapter describe "the meditation in which the respirations are counted." A few notes have been added to clarify his comments from others of his lectures.

A To count the numbers in breathing, you use a simple method. Do not pay attention to the amateur teachers who count in-breathing--right nostril, left nostril, etc. They have read some meditation guide, but conjectured their own method without a teacher.

Counting of the breaths has ten meanings which I shall not give here. They are written in the sutras and in the agamas. You must know when you are inhaling and when you are exhaling. You count in order to keep your awareness concentrated. This awareness is a key with which you may attain enlightenment. Meditation is to wake you up. Otherwise you can meditate for a hundred years--no good! You are listening to an important teaching which has been handed down to us for thousands of years. Very rarely do we come across a teaching that explains the practice of meditation so clearly.

O obedient one, if sentient beings would practice Dhyana, they must first practice the meditation in which the respirations are counted. During the process of meditation, they must have a clear consciousness of the growing, remaining and vanishing of thought: (Decaying was omitted here, but it may be assumed, according to Tsung-mi, a commentator often consulted by Sokei-an.)

Watch carefully the thoughts that haunt your mind. In the daytime these appear as day-dreams; at night they are dreams. You must watch your thoughts as a cat watches a mouse, or as a gate-guard watches

for a burglar. Counting helps to eliminate these.

They must know clearly the similarity and variety of thoughts, the beginning of thoughts and the number thereof.

You must sort out your thoughts. When you are meditating, what kind of thoughts enter your mind? Do they relate to your koan, or other thoughts? You must also watch the irregular coming of thoughts--can you count their four phases? When you are awake, the thoughts probably stay only a little while, but when you are sleepy...no matter how you clean your mind, you cannot keep the thoughts from coming in. However, you need not entertain these thoughts. This is as though you are counting one by one. Tsung-mi's commentary divides the thoughts into classes, but this is not necessary.

Therefore you must enumerate the respirations. In simple numbers--one to ten. No more than fifty. When you count into the hundreds, your meditation becomes a dream.

In your Four Dignities (walking, standing, lying, sitting), *you must take note of the number of your thoughts. You must be aware of all of them.* Don't let any thought pass without stamping it! Be like an immigration officer. One, two, three. It is said of a haunting ghost that if you call its name, it disappears. So it is with thoughts. They vanish when you become aware of them. It is something like the work of the psychologist today: he must know what thoughts are "eating" his patient. Then he can name them.

Thus your power of awareness will gradually increase. You will be aware of hundreds and thousands of worlds as of a single drop of rain, or as though you behold your every-day objects with your eyes. One million worlds! The whole universe appears before you--as this world: it comes, stays, decays and goes. It appears as empty, then as Reality. But suddenly you will realize that *all* is your own consciousness. With one awareness you observe three phases of Reality. In one observation, all phenomena lie before you. If anyone really attains this state, he has attained Buddhahood.

When you are practicing dhyana, the third of The Three Ways of Observation, the first two, samatha (tranquil awareness) and samapatti (compassion) are practiced at the same time. With tranquil awareness, the practitioner observes the thoughts one by one as they pass through the mind. This can be done with the counting of the breaths. It can be understood as "rhythm," so counting is not necessary. It is called "samkalpa," meaning "to notice the action that you are performing." When you breathe rhythmically, you are practicing this "samkalpa"; in its original meaning, it has nothing to do with counting in numbers. Here, it means "bo notice." With care, your mind will follow the breath.

Now to use this awakened awareness in dhyana: keep notice of your thoughts coming in and going out. When you have practiced this for a long time, you will realize that you are in the state of dhyana. It is like practicing the piano: at first, you are putting your attention into the practice, but after a long time, it is as if another person is playing. You are not doing it. And a skillful horseman--is he bumping against the horse? No. Upon the horse is no man and beneath the man is no horse--they are one. The practice of dhyana (noting) is like this.

Do not forget these words. (Note them. It's how you increase your own wisdom.) "Once, twenty years ago, Sokei-an said this. Now I have come to it." In this power of awareness, as it increases, you can attain many things. To train your awareness, you must keep sharpening it, putting it back into the furnace. In English, this awareness is called the sixth sense.

When you practice meditation and sanzen, the answer to your koan will arise from this aspect of your mind. You must not think about it--it is the answer that springs into your mind that you must trust. It is an instantaneous decision.

We all have this power of quick decision instinctively, but we have spoiled it. It is called "prajna" ("intuitive wisdom"). Only a teacher can test and know if a student has attained this. In this respect, Zen is different from all other religions, where they *speak*. In Zen, even a poor teacher like me, what I speak, I know from my own experience.

Virtuous scholars, when you take refuge in your own nature, you will have taken refuge in the true Buddha. What is this "taking refuge in one's own nature?" It is this: if you extirpate the evil mind; the malicious mind, the flattering mind, the egotistic mind and the haughty mind, which dwell in your nature; if you always guard yourself lest you commit any evil deed or censure another for his offence, or mention another's like or dislike, you have taken refuge in yourself. If you practice the modesty of your mind and always pay respect to others, and see your own original mind till you find no hindrance in penetrating all existences, you have taken refuge in yourself.

SOKEI-AN SAYS

The true Buddhist attitude is not to take refuge in anything but yourself, so to take refuge in yourself is to take refuge in the true Buddha.

One's own nature is, of course, original nature.

Extirpate means "to root out." Naturally, if you eradicate all the evil minds, you can find your own original nature. It is just as if you take all the dirt out of a muddy pool, it becomes pure. So, to see original nature, it is not necessary to read any books or to listen to any lectures. Can you "hear the sound of one hand?" So many things are in your mind that you cannot hear the sound--but when you take all these things away, you will hear it immediately.

Not to "censure another for his offence" is one of the Ten Commandments of Buddhism. To protect oneself by censuring another is an offence.

In the course of his "public" life, a teacher must censure others, but in his private life, he does not.

"Not to mention another's like or dislike" is also a commandment we observe in private life.

I am bringing Buddhism to America. As yet, it has no value. But America will slowly realize its value and say that Buddhism gives us something we can use as a base or foundation for our mind.

Buddhism can help you in all aspects of your

private life. Suppose you are standing in the corner of your office, thinking that your boss is about to fire you. You are shaking with fright. Someone comes and says: "The boss wants to see you." Your friend tells you, "Don't be discouraged. Be brave!" You go to his office, and he keeps you waiting. You are still more frightened. Such agony. Then the boss may say, "From next week your wages will be raised." "Oh, thank you." And you think the raise will be five dollars, so you can make a first payment on an auto or a radio. When you find that the raise is only one dollar, you don't have the courage to ask for more.

If your mind is firm in Buddhism, at each step you know what to do. Buddhism will help you in every crisis.

Now, I am here as your Osho. If I go to a night club (of course, I have no money to go), but if I had the money to go and went there to dance and sing, I would not be paying respect to you for your respect to me. For my life has a public nature as well as a private one. If I were to flatter the many young ladies who come here, I would be mocking you, as I am accepting your respect as your teacher. This is the public aspect of my life.

Our public life must be lived in a true way. It is like a highway, the public way. Our private houses are standing on both sides of the highway. There is a little road off to the side that is our private way. If this private way comes to be a public way and we still behave as if it were our private way, the private way will be annihilated. If we say, I'll fight for my rights, it must be clear whether it is your own right, or a public issue. We do not censure the private way, but the public way we will punish with annihilation.

In the army, we accept orders from the officer-- "Yes, Sir!"--and we do it. We are not slaves; he is not the master, but there is a public force involved. If however, a boss squeezes his employees' wages, we make a sit-down strike.

My Buddhism isn't really altogether public as yet, but I am certainly working for it.

BOOK NOTED by John Storm

Presumably, people who go through the non-ego realization will have little to say about themselves. Nothing much useful can be said about nothing, after all, and to write at any length about the experience of nothing--by nothing--would seem, to put it gently, rather futile. Therefore, an uneasy question cries out to be asked about any first-person account of the Zen life: "Why was this written?" It may be an advertisement for a particular roshi, for example. Or it may be a teaching text by a careerist seeking roshi credentials. Or it may be an outpouring of strong feelings by a professional writer or editor who's accustomed to translating experiences into words but who's not accustomed to experiencing strong feelings. Or it may be a combination of the above or, of course, something else altogether. *Diary of a Zen Nun*, by Nancy Amphoux (Dutton, 1986, \$15.95), is something else.

Amphoux is a disciple of the late Deshimaru Taisen, founder of the Zen Association of Europe, and in a way her book is an introduction to the Roshi, his teachings and his sangha. She isn't self-conscious about it, however, and her fast-moving, almost cinematic technique of short scenes and vignettes averts any danger of earnestness or dogmatism. She threads together a number of stories: her treatment for cancer; the day-to-day happenings at a sesshin; her early morning rides on a sometimes recalcitrant horse; some idyllic days on a Wisconsin lake; a trip through several countries with the souvenir-hungry Roshi; her care for an injured cat.

Perhaps the most affecting story is the one about her battle with cancer. Amphoux doesn't dramatize her ordeal, although from the glimpses she gives of her treatment it's clear she must have been carried off to some unimaginable extremity of misery. Recalling the Third Patriarch's advice that "one must not choose," she writes: "Most of the people I have to do with know that I am a Zen nun and have shaved my head on that account and they also know that I have had chemotherapy treatment for cancer and, fearing that hanks of falling hair on the morning pillow might depress me, have shaved my head on that account. At least two of the people I have to

do with, and both of them pretty close to me, upon hearing that the old skull was again in evidence this summer, automatically enquired, 'Oh, has she been having more chemotherapy?' Cancer is their choice; but they must not choose. It is not good for me or for them. It is, above all, inaccurate."

The cancer-treatment story, like the others in this open-ended book, remains unfinished; indeed, we're even left wondering to what extent--or whether--Amphoux's treatment was effective. She makes that seem unimportant, however. Did her Zen practice help? She doesn't say, although at the end she asks: Does Zen enable one to deal any better with the frustrations, vexations and boredom of daily life? And she answers: Yes.

THREE JOURNEYS IN LADAKH Noted by Valeria

Ladakh is a tiny country high on the Tibetan plateau. It is extremely hot, extremely cold, extremely dry, extremely remote and extremely Buddhist. Shooting each other across its borders are the Chinese, Pakistanis and Indians. Cashing in on its few remaining thankas and prayer wheels are the Kashmiris just up from Srinagar.

A young Oxford scholar, Andrew Harvey, wrote *A Journey in Ladakh* (Flamengo, 1983) and placed it on the literary map. He studied Tibetan Buddhism, learned Ladakhi and fulfilled more than one friend's premonition by journeying through Ladakh's monasteries and his own ecstasy.

In Ladakh he absorbs and reflects the secrets of this ancient undisturbed--until recently--culture. People trust him. He is befriended by bloody butchers. He is received by entranced oracles and in the end he receives the transmission directly from the famous young Drukchen Rinpoche. His book moves from adventure, to esoteric philosophy straight into farce effortlessly. So it's compelling to travel as his companion.

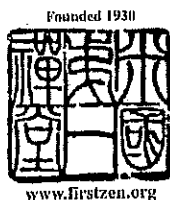
I found *A Journey in Ladakh* during a six hour delay in the London airport. That was in November. In June my partner and I gulped down our first lungful of de-oxygenated Himalayan air in Ladakh's capital city of Leh. Because this is a book review I must now ask...is this effect any reflection of the book's merit?

Journal notes

Copyr. 1986 The First Zen Institute of America, Inc.
113 East 30th St., New York, NY 10016

Vol. XXXIII, No. 8, Aug., 1986
Editor, Mary Farkas
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Copyright of Zen Notes is the property of the First Zen Institute of America, Inc. and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download or email articles for individual use.



www.firstzen.org

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

(Open House Wednesdays: 7:30-9:30 PM)
Meditation and tea: 8-9:30 PM

美國第一禪協會