



SOKEI-AN SAYS

THE BASE OF THE COMMANDMENTS Of the Sutras handed down from China to us, the Agamas are the oldest. In Pali these are called the Nikayas. The Agamas are the collection of the knowledge of Buddhism, of the Buddha's teachings. Sutra means *guidepost, indicator, way*--in Chinese, *Tao, law*. In the Agamas the oldest teachings of the Buddha were gathered together and repeated by his disciples. After the Buddha's death, Ananda and five hundred monks met in a stone grotto and collected these teachings in twenty-one divisions. At that time all the great disciples of the Buddha had died. The oldest, Mahakashyapa, became the leader of the five hundred monks. It was he who edited the sutras called the Agamas.

At the same time about fifteen hundred monks made their own assembly some thirty miles from the grotto temple. They made their own collection of the Buddha's teachings. These monks were called the Mahasanghikah--the Great Assembly. The five hundred monks who made their assembly in the grotto temple were called the Sthavirah, or Elders. And so, twenty-one days after the Buddha's death his disciples split into two divisions--the Sthavirah and the Mahasanghikah.

In the practice of Buddhism the scholars among the Elders placed their emphasis on the observance of the commandments. The scholars of the Mahasanghikah--the multitude of plain Buddhists--placed their emphasis on the practice of meditation.

There are four different collections of Agamas. Three were edited by the five hundred monks; one was edited by the Mahasanghikah--the Great Assembly.

The Buddhism that came to China, Korea, and Japan is of the lineage of

the Great Assembly. Today we call these scholars Mahayanists, and we call the other school Hinayanists--the Great Vehicle and the Small Vehicle. But there is really no small or great vehicle in Buddhism.

To the Elders the great question, left unanswered from the Buddha's time, was: "What is Buddha-mind, the mind that made the commandments?" The commandments are very plain in Buddhism; everyone knows them. Ancient monks observed 250 commandments. But the base of all these commandments is the Five Commandments.

Another great question was left unsolved in the Great Assembly: What was the Buddha's attainment, the final attainment of the Buddha's knowledge--that is: What is meditation?

About two hundred years after the Buddha's death the Sthavirah were observing meditation from the standpoint of the commandments, while the Mahasanghikah were observing the commandments from the standpoint of meditation. They had solved the difficult question from both angles.

To live we should practice giving and taking. These are the six ways of taking:

1. To produce something from nothing--as a farmer produces something by toil, from an empty field.
2. To take by exchange. I have a watch; you have money.
3. You have something; I have nothing. I grab what you have, take it away from you by force.
4. To take by deceiving. "Please give me that. I will give you my money--not today, tomorrow." And he doesn't give you the money. There are many ways of deceiving.

Dear Everyone:

SPRING has at last arrived in Kyoto. And with spring have arrived the hordes of tourists, Japanese and foreign, who hope for, if not anticipate, blue skies, bright sunshine, balmy breezes, and blooming cherry trees. All too often, as this year, we have a spell of good weather that brings the cherries just to the point of perfection, then on a Sunday, when the entire world goes out to view them and to enhance high spirits with pure spirit at picnics in the open, a cold rain comes to drench the delicate flowers and a high wind to scatter their petals on the wet ground, leaving them to be trampled on by the sodden feet of the disappointed.

The moment to see cherries in flower, like every high moment in life, is just one moment. Plans for a specific time and place almost always go awry. One must ever be prepared to experience the moment, always alert and aware, so that at whatever time or in whatever way it presents itself, it does not pass one by unnoticed. Like the virgins with their lamps always trimmed and burning. Then, with all the senses wide open, and the mind like a clear mirror, unclouded by personal conceptions or prejudices, one tree in full bloom seen from the streetcar can be the ultimate and unforgettable experience in cherry-viewing.

The sight-seeing season, which begins in early spring and ends only in late autumn, is presenting me with an increasingly troublesome problem. Little by little I seem to be becoming, in the tourist mind at least, one of the "historic sights" of Kyoto, one of the "musts" for such sightseers as have heard that Zen is a cultural aspect of Japan that should not be missed. A typical and amusing telephone conversation took place the other morning. A Japanese gentleman, despite Washino San's demurring, insisted that I come to the phone, as his business was urgent.

"I am Mr. So and So," he said. "An American gentleman wishes to see you to talk about Zen and we will arrive at your temple in half an hour."

"I am sorry, but I cannot see you in half an hour. Who is the gentleman and has he an introduction to me?"

"No, he has no introduction, but he told me he wanted to know about Zen, and I know about you, so I told him I would introduce him to you."

"But who are you? Are you a tourist guide?"

"Yes, I am a tourist guide and I am guiding this gentleman."

"I am sorry to have to tell you that I do not have the

time to see people who do not come with personal introductions. I am too busy to see casual visitors."

"O, all right. Then please introduce him to some Zen temples."

"But you are a guide. Certainly you know the Zen temples in Kyoto that are open to sightseers."

"Well then, please arrange for him to see Zen monks meditating. He says he wants to see Zen monks meditating."

"I'm sorry, but no one can go and look at Zen monks practicing meditation. It is not permitted. Besides, the monasteries are having vacation at the moment and the monks are not practicing meditation just now."

"Then nothing doing?"

"Yes, nothing doing!"

"Well, I'll tell him nothing doing."

People also present themselves unexpectedly at the front entrance. They have only this one day in Kyoto; they are leaving in the morning. They must talk with me. They have come all the way from Mexico, or South Africa. Please! If it is possible, I try to see such people for a few minutes at least. In the past, the main reason for most persons' coming seemed to be to display to me their own complete understanding of what Zen is. Recently, however, people have been arriving who want to be instructed in Zen so that they can go home and practice it. In thirty minutes they want me to tell them, about whom I know nothing at all, all about sitting, breathing, meditation, concentration, koans, and so forth. An impossible assignment, of

course. I feel sorry for many of them, for a number are much involved emotionally with the idea that Zen is what can solve all their problems if only they can have some instruction in it. Thirty minutes hardly suffice, however, and undoubtedly they leave disappointed in Zen to say nothing of being disappointed in me.

Occasionally a very well prepared person comes, as for instance a certain professor of Indian and Chinese philosophy from an Australian university who is a specialist in Chinese Buddhism. He told me that among his students there is great interest to know about Zen, but since, in spite of voluminous reading on the subject, he had not been able to get a sufficiently clear idea of what it was himself, he felt quite inadequate to explain it to them. An hour's talk clarified a number of his problems. A sudden recall to Australia made it impossible for him to sit for a few evenings in the zendo, as we had both hoped he might, for one or two evenings in deep silence and--for inexperienced sitters--pain, teaches more than many, many words. But he telephoned just before he left to say that after having carefully read the little pamphlets *Zen, A Religion*, *Zen, A Method for Religious Awakening*, and *Rinzai Zen Study for Foreigners in Japan*, for the first time he felt that he had a clear grasp of the aim and the way of practice in Zen, and could now present Zen intelligibly to his students.

I tell you this so that you may know that the Japanese branch of

your Institute is little by little making some contribution to correct knowledge about traditionally transmitted Zen. Since people are now coming from all parts of the world to Japan, here in Kyoto we touch those of varied nationalities. And since some of those who visit us, even though they cannot remain, become associate members and thus continue their contact, our membership list is gradually coming to include many different countries. As Japan becomes less and less distant from other parts of the world, such associate members are from time to time returning to visit us again, and those who have become members through hearing about the Kyoto Institute are coming to visit it for the first time. A long-time correspondent, returning to his home in Peru after two years of work in Ceylon, was able to spend several days with us recently. Since he had studied Buddhism for many years and had attempted some meditation practice in Ceylon, with little result, he was prepared to take excellent advantage of even the few days he was able to spend in Kyoto. Two members from Caracas, Venezuela, are presently with us for ten days. They have been on a leisurely trip around the world, and they had much of interest to tell us about their stay in Nepal--fast becoming a tourist-ridden little country with paved roads, many automobiles, and all the comforts that the modern traveller from the West demands. They were also able to visit some wonderful Buddhist caves in Afghanistan, these quite out of the

sightseer's route. Roads are being built here, too, largely by Russian engineers, but obviously not for the purpose of attracting tourists.

Of course the most satisfactory visitors from our standpoint, the Zen standpoint, are those who can remain for two months or more and whose aim in coming to Japan is to make a beginning at serious Zen practice. If for two months or more they can sit almost every night in the zendo and then hear the informal talks on Friday nights and Kobori San's lectures on *Mumonkan* on Thursday afternoons, after two months they grasp the basic technique of sitting and breathing and concentrating, and come to have a clearer idea of what Zen is really concerned with.

One such student at present is an Australian who has spent considerable time in the study of lacquer making, and is now engaged in that of pottery. He came several months ago and hopes that a visa extension will permit him to remain until October. Another Australian arrived only yesterday, Marie Byles. I mention Miss Byles by name, since she is the author of a charming and interesting book, *Journey into Burmese Silence*, published by George Allen and Unwin only in England, I think. This is a book that many of you would both enjoy and profit by reading, I feel sure. Miss Byles has been to Burma two or three times, spending several months on each visit in a Burmese meditation center at Mandalay, principally. She is clear-headed and clear-eyed. I shall be much interested to see what two months

of Zen meditation will do for her, and she with it. Burmese and Zen meditation methods appear to differ considerably. Whether it is wise, when once well-embarked on one method, to take up another is a question which has concerned me and which I am now looking forward to having answered. Still another long-term student, a Swiss woman who has lived much of her life in Egypt, will be arriving within the month.

The first of this month (April) we lost one of our most assiduous students, Bill Laws. For several years Bill and his wife Judy were members of the New York Institute, and there both practiced zazen diligently. About a year and a half ago they came to Kyoto to live. Judy has come to sit as often as she could with both a growing boy and now a new baby boy in the household. Bill has continued his single-minded devotion to sitting, going from time to time to Ryutaku-ji for a period of concentrated meditation. He had already become a formal disciple of Miura Roshi before he left New York, and recently was accepted as a religious member of the Nanzen-ji branch of Rinzai Zen. (Miura Roshi belongs to the Nanzen-ji line.)

The first day of April, with his head shaven and wearing the full monk's robes, with his sutra books, bowls, and various credentials in a pack on his back, Bill presented himself at the gate of Myoshin-ji monastery in the outskirts of Kyoto. (A monk almost always studies at a monastery belonging to a different *honzan* [headquarters temple]

than that of which he is a member.) I understand that Bill knelt at the gate for three days in the traditional fashion, his forehead resting on his folded hands on the ground before him, looking neither to the right nor the left. At the end of that time, with his forehead bearing a black and blue bruise, he was admitted to the Myoshin-ji Sodo, as a qualified student-monk. The story that reaches my ears is that the monks of Myoshin-ji were tremendously impressed by Bill's sincerity. Today's young Japanese monks, finding the sitting with bowed head before the gate both tedious and painful, too often wiggle and squirm and manage excuses for turning around or getting up. Also, these days they are arriving with suitcases instead of the traditional pack on the back, something which causes them immediately to be refused entrance into Myoshin-ji. This is the first time that Myoshin-ji has accepted a foreigner as a full-fledged student-monk. As a matter of fact, I am not sure that a foreigner has ever before become a full Zen monk in the completely traditional manner. Myoshin-ji has the reputation of being the toughest Rinzai Zen monastery in Japan, and the present roshi one of the most difficult masters to satisfy. We all wish Bill well, I'm sure.

Ryosen-an
Daitoku-ji
April 8, 1963
Published with ZEN NOTES
Vol. X, No. 5, May, 1963



5. I don't take but it is given. I am just sitting on the street corner very meekly or miserably and someone drops me a penny.

Someone asked a monk the difference between monks and beggars. He answered: "The beggar begs; the monk doesn't beg. Everything is given to him so he doesn't beg." This is a way of taking, too.

6. To pick up something that is there. You place your pail somewhere and look up at the sky, and a gold coin is dropped from the sky suddenly--z-z-z-zing!--in your corner. You go to a gambling house, place your money and the wheel goes round and drops--whir-r-r-r!--in your corner. To take by way of opposites--gambling.

You can take in these six different ways. When you have a healthy body with the knowledge of the ages you can produce something from nature. You know where there are fish; in the morning you go there and spread your net--a fisherman is a gambler also. You learn to shoot: you meet someone who has a big pocketful and you steal. You can make up your face and with its charm win yourself a home to create children in your own shape. Some ways are better than others, but all told there are not more than six ways of taking--all are in order to live.

All sentient beings have one desire--to live. If you have a wish to die we don't call it desire. Everyone is free to die, you can say, but he is not free to die if he is a member of society, a family, or a country. Then he has no right to kill himself. One who does not take on the duty of being a member of human society will be pushed out. He has no duty, no occupation; no one loves him, no one needs him. He has the freedom to commit suicide. However, as long as we live as members of human society

and accomplish our five desires, by giving and taking, we cannot kill ourselves.

The Five Desires are:

1. To generate;
2. To preserve the race;
3. To nourish the body with food;
4. To preserve things against need;
5. To make oneself superior.

There is one more desire--the desire for sleeping. Very important. At the end you don't want to take medicine, drink or food, you want only sleep. Sleep allows us to conserve energy so we can revive again. For your mental body you need a mental hotel to stay in to find Nirvana. Religion has one message, the provision of a comfortable place for the mind. You have money, you go to Italy, buy a castle, and think you will take a rest. But there is no rest in the world. How can you give rest to the mind?

Everyone has these Five Desires. Different men find gratification of them in their own ways. The little animal takes on the same color as autumn leaves to save himself from his enemies; it is his occupation. The pine tree so tall, that is its occupation. The willow tree so pliant, so graceful, is like a kid-glove diplomat. When he says "Yes," it means "Perhaps." He never says "No." All sentient beings, from weeds to man, to survive as members of this sentient world, to live, have to observe their duties.

The Chinese sorted out five ways of observing this duty to survive:

1. Love
2. Duty
3. Propriety (I ask you saying "Please give me"; I don't say "Give me.")
4. Wisdom
5. Confidence (Do not destroy the other's confidence)

These are the so-called Five Cardinal Virtues. Without these we cannot be mem-

bers of sentient society.

Then there are the Five Commandments:

1. *You shall not kill.* To preserve your life and the other's is the first covenant between human beings. "Do not kill" not only this life, but anything.

2. *You shall not steal* the other's food or property.

3. *You shall not commit adultery.* The father should know his own child. If we don't observe this, we cannot keep our family life or our country straight.

4. *You shall not lie.* By lying you will lose your friend's confidence in you, and your confidence in your friends.

5. *You shall not become intoxicated.* You shall not exhaust your body by taking wine.

These were the first commandments in the Buddha's time. But their meaning has changed.

1. *You shall not kill* anything at all. If we divide everything into matter and energy, you cannot annihilate energy, you cannot destroy matter completely. No one can kill. If you think you can kill your belief in God you will fall into agnosticism.

2. *You shall not steal.* Nothing belongs to any particular person. At certain times we can possess things, but only temporarily.

3. *You shall not commit adultery.* Love doesn't belong to anyone. You cannot make love. Love is given. If you think you have your own ego, that you are an individual separate from all others, then you are violating this third commandment.

4. *You shall not lie.* Nothing has

a name; in the beginning everything was nameless. We invented names, put a tag on everything. Any type of conviction is a lie. Anything can be called by many names. We have no right to say that this is the only answer, that there is no other. The answer should not be a word. If you call it a word and stick to it, it is a lie.

5. *You shall not become intoxicated.*

This is the significance of the Five Commandments. Their significance has been developed. Today we correlate them with the Five Skandhas (the Five Shadows).

1. *Do not kill* this physical body--Rupaskandha.

2. *Do not steal* from what? Stealing belongs to the five senses--Vedana.

3. *Do not commit adultery.* Do not deceive love; it belongs to mind. If you send your wife to a doctor and the doctor operates on her womb with a knife, you don't call it adultery--Samjna.

4. *Do not lie.* You can think one thing many, many ways. To lie is not of our word; it is of our knowledge, our wisdom--Samskara.

5. *Do not become intoxicated.* You sleep forever in original darkness. You become ignorant together with non-existence. Who deluded you? Who is the creator of this illusion? The creator is within you; it is your own consciousness. It is Vijnana.

So far as I know this is the highest development in Buddhism. I cannot speak of everything. In time I will speak of the practice in daily life.

Reconstructed by BRIAN HEALD

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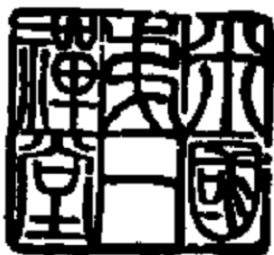
THE FIRST ZEN INSTITUTE OF AMERICA, INC.
113 East 30th Street, New York 16, N.Y.

Vol. X, No. 5, May, 1963
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