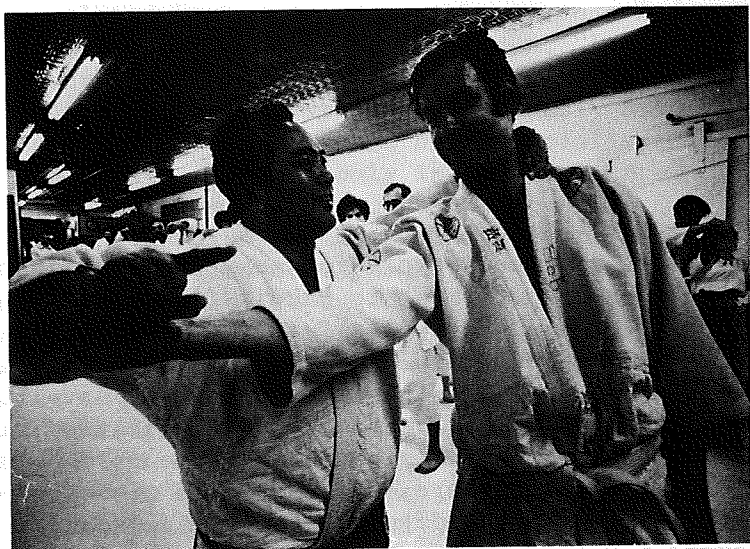


ZEN notes





ON BREATHING Noted by MF

Racking my memory store for an updated definition of Zen breathing, I went to Hakuin (the *Orategama*). Listen to this.

"The enlightened man allows the vital breath to accumulate fully...in the space below the navel... For the mind that is master of true meditation, the space below the navel is as firm as though a huge rock were settled there, and when this mind functions in its awesome dignity, not one deluded thought may enter; not one discriminating idea can exist...the source of strength two inches below the navel must naturally be filled with the vital breath...this area should be pendulous and well-rounded, somewhat like a new ball that has yet to be used."

JOE HARRIS WRITES, "MATSUOKA ROSHI, a robust Soto man, instructs to inhale from the solar plexus rather than pushing down into, or toward."

that have proliferated about Ikkyu, and the beautifully produced "Unraveling Zen's Red Thread," by Jon Carter Covell, in collaboration with Abbot Sobin Yamada, an interweaving of Ikkyu's life and writings. (The "red thread" is a metaphor for sexual passion.) Also available are translations of individual poems and prose works by Donald Keene, R.H. Blyth, N.A. Waddell, Thomas Cleary and Peter Haskel.

Clearly, Ikkyu delights in using shock tactics on the sanctimonious; from our perspective, he looks like a natural-born bomb thrower, a kind of transcendental terrorist. He writes about brothels and prostitutes, about sexual pleasure in a variety of forms. ("Those who keep the precepts become donkeys, those who break them, men," he says in a poem translated by Keene.) He can be crude: A death poem, as rendered by Sanford, concludes, "In the end I take a crap as offering to Brahma." And in one of the legends, he is portrayed as exuberantly urinating over a sacred image he had been specially called in to consecrate. But not only is he indelicate; from the standpoint of moving up in the power structure, he is also hopelessly impolitic. He is outraged more or less continuously over what he sees as false Zen and repeatedly denounces his colleagues as corrupt, in the process permanently alienating a powerful brother-monk responsible for upgrading the fortunes of Ikkyu's own headquarters temple. Finally, in his seventies, a vigorous precept-bender to the end, Ikkyu woos and wins a mistress (a lovely blind folksinger, by all accounts), then writes sweetly, shamelessly, almost pornographically, of their most intimate lovemaking.

You might ask: Where in all this sensuality, bad temper and bad taste is the Zen? Ikkyu certainly has nothing in common with the smiling, unctuously aggressive careerist; nor is he of the immature anything-goes type or its self-righteous, finger-wagging opposite. In "The Great War on Hell," one of the prose works translated by Sanford, Ikkyu says: "Hell and paradise are not different...When we awaken to bodhi, there is nothing to fear." He also says: "For the wise, who know this, there is no sin in any action." He thus locates himself in

the Middle Way, in the samsara-is-nirvana equation the hell-lived-without-self-reference-is-heaven equation. This is traditional Zen, of course, but Ikkyu, because of the incandescent brilliance of his effort to live it during his lifetime, lives on into ours, a permanent reproach to anyone, now as then, who teaches one-sided, feel-good, peace-and-quiet Zen. "It is foolish to say, 'We come and we depart from this world,'" he says in a poem translated by Covell. "I'll teach you to neither come nor go." And he adds: "I won't die, won't go anywhere. I'll be here, but if you ask me anything, I won't reply!"

A LEFTOVER THOUGHT Noted by Storm

Zen is always in plain view but inconspicuous, not the first thing you see but quietly making itself felt, like the overhead power line that suddenly ruffles your hair.

POEMS BY IKKYU Translated by Peter Haskell

Love

A moonlit evening and, thinking of you, for a long while

*I cannot put you from my mind.
The night deepens and with it my burning love,
As I lie sleeping in my empty bed.
In my dreams we clasp each other's hands.
I want to speak with you,
But I'm startled by the bell at dawn,
Come to pierce my heart still yet again.*

To A Dissolute Priest

Deep runs the river of my desire,

The "clouds and rain" of love with a beautiful woman.

Upstairs in the brothel a harlot and an old Zen monk are singing.

*Tasting the delights of kissing and embracing,
I have no wish to leave this world of flesh,*

No care for the burning hell-fires of my passion.

The disciples remembered the Master's word regarding the preservation of his head. They thereafter wrapped the head in cloths soaked in lacquer and coated it with metal foil; then, guarding it, they entered the stupa. The inside of the stupa was pervaded with white light. In three days, the light penetrated the sky and dispersed. The officials of the prefecture of Shao went to the Emperor and, according to the Imperial decree, the monument was erected in commemoration of the Master's religious life. He lived for seventy-six years. The Dharma was transmitted to him when he was twenty-four years old. He shaved his head to take the Order of the Sangha when he was thirty-nine. He promulgated the Dharma on behalf of others for thirty-seven years. His heirs of Dharma were forty-three in number, and he had countless other disciples of high attainment. The robe transmitted to him by Bodhidharma, the mo-na robe, and the crystal bowl bestowed upon him by the Emperor Chung Tsung, the image of the Master modeled in clay by Fang-p'ien, and the sacred implements which the Master had used, remained in the temple of Pao-lin. This Sutra of the Earthen Platform also remained there to testify to the main principle of the Master's teaching: to perpetuate the Three Treasures and to bless all sentient beings.

SOKEI-AN SAYS

The disciples remembered the Master's word regarding the preservation of his head. I think you remember in the previous lecture that the Master predicted that, after five or six years, someone would come and take his head. The disciples realized the Master's foreboding and separated his head from his body and preserved it. There is no description about this preservation in any other place, but the disciples remembered the prediction. Perhaps the Master was saying: "After my death, do not preserve my body, but preserve my head." According to his teaching of sudden enlightenment, he certainly placed more emphasis on his intellect than on any other part of his body. While the students in the Northern School of Zen were practicing intense meditation, the Sixth Patriarch emphasized the realization of one's Original Nature. Realization belongs to the intellect,

not to the exercise of meditation.

They therefore wrapped the head in cloths soaked in lacquer and coated it with metal foil; then, guarding it, they entered the stupa. The stupa is a pagoda tower. In China, in every Zen temple there is a stupa built of stone, tile and clay.

The inside of the stupa was pervaded with a white light. In three days, the light penetrated the sky and dispersed. This is the usual description of a miracle, to describe the death of a wonderful man.

The officials of the prefecture of Shao went to the Emperor. There were three officials who came and attended the funeral service of the Sixth Patriarch. These were the officials in whose territory the Sixth Patriarch's stupa was built. Ts'ao-ch'i was a territory in the prefecture of Shao-chou.

According to the Imperial decree, the monument was erected. Monuments also belong to each Zen temple. These are built of stone, tile and clay. They are of quite excellent shape, beautiful objects in the temple.

In commemoration of the Master's religious life. He lived for seventy-six years. The Dharma was transmitted to him when he was twenty-four years old. He stayed in the Fifth Patriarch's temple only eight months, pounding rice in the barn. Those incidents are described in the first chapter of this record. The Fifth Patriarch called him at midnight and transmitted the Dharma which had been transmitted by Bodhidharma. The Fifth Patriarch handed down the Diamond Sutra and commented on it for him; and, as the transmission of the Dharma, perhaps he gave the principles of the Ten Commandments, commented upon by Bodhidharma. A long time ago I heard about this; perhaps my teacher spoke of it. From that time, the Master gave the commentary on the Ten Commandments when he transmitted the Dharma to his disciples. I never came across any description of this, but I think it is true. All descriptions of how to transmit the Dharma are still very obscure.

These days we transmit the Dharma through koans. The student makes his own solution to the question which is hidden in the koan, and the Master uses this solution as a measure to prove the student's attainment. Finally, the complete Dharma will be

I assert, therefore, my authentic knowledge and I insist that my view is true by transmitted Dharma. Transcribe this in your notebooks, and in the future if anyone starts to argue about the Buddha's true standpoint, you must uphold this view, and with this knowledge you must teach them. If there is any biased view mentally or materially, it is not the true view. When you have formed your physical body, put your hands on your lap, fold your legs and keep your mind clear and bright. This moment is Buddha's Buddhism. Do not fancy to become some other sentient being or some demi-god in the sky, and do not fall into the dark view of the cave dweller. Do not cherish any thought in your mind. To prove this is the right view, as the Buddha spoke it for forty-nine years, to prove this real view, the disciples of the Buddha, from generation to generation, have written those sutras--five thousand forty-eight in number. To prove this present condition of our consciousness from the Buddha to Bodhidharma and from Bodhidharma to us, this is Zen. It is impossible to describe in words, but it is transmitted from mind to mind. Thus the Dharma must be transmitted. Do not be disturbed by other teachings which talk about heaven or hell. You have your position in your present moment.

He shaved his head to take the Order of the Sangha when he was thirty-nine years old. After the Dharma had been transmitted to him, he went to the southern country and hid himself. One day in the temple, he was sweeping the garden while two monks were arguing about a flag which was waving above their heads. One said that the banner was waving and the other said that the wind was waving. The Sixth Patriarch forgot his own present condition--that he was hiding himself as a common laborer--and he said: "It is neither the banner nor the wind that is waving; it is your soul that is waving."

The Abbot of the temple shivered when he heard this. He knew that this was no common man. Coming out, he made a bow to this man sweeping the garden. Then the Sixth Patriarch disclosed himself as the heir of the Fifth Patriarch. It was this Abbot who shaved the head of Hui-neng and made him a monk. Until that day he had been a lay disciple. So this

Dharma was transmitted to anyone, high or low, monk or layman. To those who have the head or brain, to them the Dharma will be transmitted. The robe or the shaved head does not make Dharma; your enlightened mind makes Dharma, makes a true Buddhist.

The Sixth Patriarch was a small man and he stood on an earthen platform to give his teachings.

We are working to perpetuate these Three Treasures. I, too, am working to promulgate these teachings in this world and to bless all sentient beings.

SOYEN SHAKU SAYS

Buddhist practical faith is...threefold:
(1) to cease from wrong-doing, (2) to promote goodness, and (3) to enlighten the ignorant. Buddhist ethics is the simplest thing to practice in the world. It has nothing mysterious, nothing superstitious, nothing idolatrous, nothing supernatural. Stop doing anything wrong, which is against the reason of things; do whatever is good, which advances the cause of reason in this life; and finally help those who are still behind and weary of life to realize enlightenment: and here is Buddhism in a nutshell. It has nothing to do with prayer and worship and singing and what not. Our simple everyday life of love and sympathy is all that is needed to be a good Buddhist.

I was once asked whether there was such a thing as religious life particularly. To which my answer was simple enough: "Attend to your daily business, do all you can for the promotion of goodness in this world, and out of fullness of heart help your fellow-beings to gain the path of enlightenment. Outside of this there cannot be anything to be specially called a religious life."

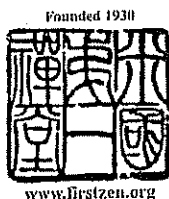
Read before the National Geographic Society,
Washington, D.C. April 1906

Copyr. 1987 The First Zen Institute of America, Inc.
113 East 30th St., New York, NY 10016

Vol. XXXIV, No. 9, Sept., 1987
Editor, Mary Farkas
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Zen notes

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.



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