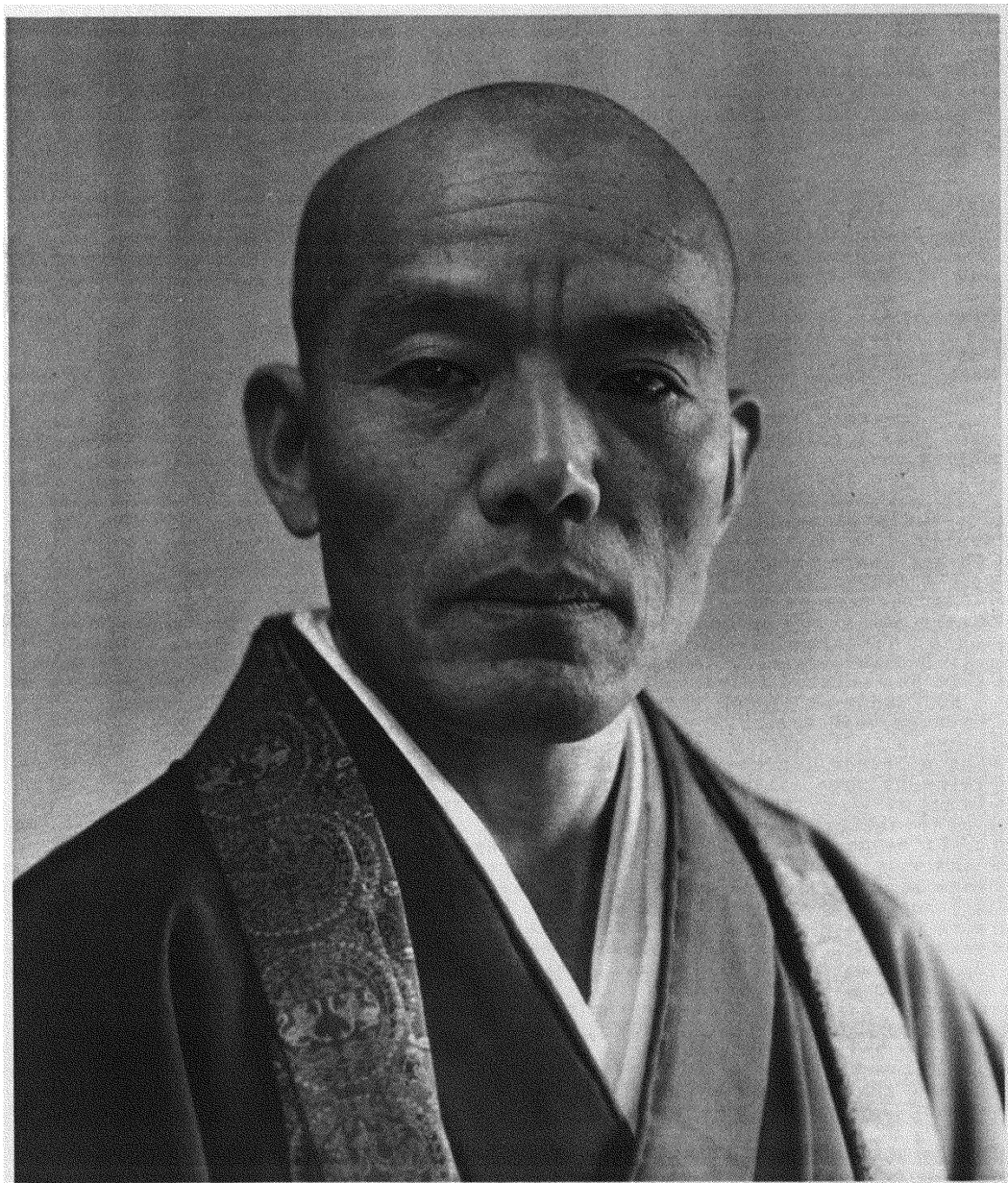


ZEN notes



SINCE I have come to you here in New York from so far away, and since I have been asked to leave a word in parting, I have been thinking over what I could say to you. You are all so extremely earnest in your zazen practice that there is really little need for me to add anything to what I have already said. This most important request I have to make, however, that you continue this earnest practice as long as you live.

A poor talk is without value and can even be harmful. If I were to speak thus at the conclusion of my visit, I would be extremely unfeeling. So I have decided to read to you the *KIKAN* ("ADMONITIONS") which I read to the monks in my Sodo. These ADMONITIONS, which consist of very important guiding principles for the practice of the monks, are always read (in Rinzaï Zen Sodos) at the opening and the middle of the summer and winter terms and at the beginning of Rohatsu O Sesshin. Please listen to them carefully to the very end.

All you worthy Zen students, for the sake of the Dharma, are alike wayfarers on Mount Tosotsu. If your dwelling-place shelters you from the rain and dew, if your food appeases your hunger and your clothing protects you against the cold, that will suffice.

First of all, we Zen monks are admonished against indulging in luxurious living. We are taught to practice the highest of practices while living the most frugal of lives.

Next come these words:

To imitate the attitudes of ordinary people or to gain your livelihood by engaging in business is not permitted you.

"To imitate the attitudes of ordinary people"--(The word translated as "attitudes," in the original text is literally "to knit the brows.") There is an interesting old Chinese tale relating to this: Long ago there lived in China a woman of peerless beauty whose name was Seishi. One day, when she was perhaps harboring some secret sorrow in her heart, she knit her brows and frowned. (But her beauty was such that, when she did so, her face seemed even more beautiful than before.) The ugly women of the village, seeing that her knitted brows (only added to her beauty), imitated her and went around with frowning faces. The village men, however, were horror-stricken at the sight and took to their heels in fright. Such is the amusing story.

When a person forgets to be himself and imitates other people, he becomes a laughing-stock in the world. We monks should not make ourselves ridiculous by concerning ourselves with moneymaking enterprises in imitation of men of the world. If we do so, we will be tempted to neglect our practice and will become the victims of avarice and ambition.

Since most of you are engaged in business of different kinds, I am afraid you may be offended by these words. But there is no occasion for you to be either offended or embarrassed. I beg of you to devote yourselves assiduously to your respective occupations. However, once you have stepped over the threshold of this First Zen Institute, please completely forget everything connected with the outside world and become just a monk.

Once you have become a monk--

Your concern lies elsewhere. Other than morning and evening sanzen you have nothing to do.

In the morning practicing zazen and taking sanzen; in the evening taking sanzen and practicing zazen.

A D M O N I T I O N S

A talk given in April, 1956
at The First Zen Institute

By MIURA ISSHU ROSHI

Translated by Ruth F. Sasaki

Confronting the realm where understanding through reason does not exist, each and everyone of you must summon up the koan which is his own to study, and investigate it to the limit, backwards and forwards. No matter what confusion and difficulties you may encounter, you must never let go of it.

This is the realm to which no theories, no expressions, no words and letters, no judgments, no discriminations, reach. In it all speech is completely cut off; in it all mind-activity is completely extinguished. Until you have arrived at this place, you must hold fast to the koan you have been given and never relax your hold of it, even for an instant.

Do not take sanzen like a blind man. Do not haphazardly point to this and to that saying, "This is Zen," "That is satori." Explaining (a thing) does not hit the pivot.

We must not take sanzen like groping blind men. We must not go about, puffed up with pride, making such irresponsible remarks as that Zen is this kind of thing and satori is that kind of thing. These are extremely harsh words. But in whatever way and however cleverly you may speak (about it), explaining backwards and forwards, it is absolutely impossible to come within reach of the Ultimate Tao.

By real sanzen you must attain the true proof. If you do not experience divine satori, what are you good for?

Unless we get the real thing in our hands by practicing zazen and taking sanzen with complete sincerity and by exerting our own concentrated effort to the utmost, of what good are we? Half-hearted sanzen only increases our delusions.

The only thing you have to do to make yourself a true monk is, by always keeping your eyes on the difficult barrier-gate and undergoing hardships and painful practice, to make your mind bright so that you may see into your own true nature.

"To make your mind bright so that you may see into your own true nature." This is what it is. This is the only thing. The hardships and painful practices of the patriarchs of history were only for this. My purpose in coming here from such a distance, and your purpose in coming here tonight in spite of your busy lives, both are only for the sake of making the mind bright so that you may see into your own true nature. But to make our mind bright so that we may see into our own true nature, we must go through hardships and painful practices, our eyes always turned toward the difficult barrier-gate.

As for this "difficult barrier-gate," Mumon Osho says, in his commentary on the koan MU, the first case of MUMONKAN ("THE BARRIER WITHOUT A GATE"):

"In the study of Zen one must pass through the bar-

rier-gate of the patriarchs. For marvelous satori it is essential that one reach the limit of the mind-path and annihilate it completely. If one does not pass through the barrier-gate of the patriarchs and does not completely annihilate the path of the mind, one becomes but a spirit leaning on grasses or attaching itself to trees.

"Tell me now, what is the barrier-gate of the patriarchs? This one word *MU* is the very barrier-gate of our sect."

This one gate is the source of the ten-thousand dharmas; it is the origin of the ten-thousand things. As for passing through this gate, ordinary effort will not bring you even near to it, to say nothing of passing through it. There is no other way than that of hardship, painful practice, and the utmost effort.

Do not build your house upon the sand.

You must not rely upon words and books, nor occupy your mind with visionary and illusory notions.

Make your true mind the basic ground; make your resolute vows the foundation-stones; make your genuine satori the measuring-line; make your zazen practice the beams and the rigpole. If you diligently and steadfastly carry on your quest with your entire being, never stopping for a moment, the time will surely come when you will attain that glorious lucidity which is the result of your strenuous efforts.

The longer, the firmer, the more meticulous a man's zazen practice, the truer the man will become. The greater the hardships he undergoes, the longer they continue, the more numerous they are, the truer the man will become. This is my view.

Always reflecting upon the Second Patriarch's devotion in severing his arm,

Last spring I told you about the Second Patriarch, so I shall omit this story now.

on Rinzai's pure and genuine toil

In the beginning of the *Anroku* ("Biography") Section of *RINZAI ROKU* ("THE RECORD OF RINZAI"), we read:

"In the beginning Rinzai was one of the assembly of monks under Obaku. Whatever he did was pure and sincere. The Head Monk commended him thus: 'Though he is a young fellow, he is different from the others.'"

"Then he said to Rinzai: 'Joza, how long have you been here?'"

"'Three years,' said Rinzai.

"'Have you ever asked the Master for instruction?' inquired the Head Monk.

"'No I have never asked him for any instruction,' Rinzai replied."

For three years Rinzai Zenji in silence practiced zazen purely and genuinely. Of course these three years of hardship were the corner-stone of Rinzai Zen. Rinzai's zazen practice is something people with the present-day spirit of impatience cannot imitate. But however long you may sit, whether it be three years or five years, if you sit with your mind occupied with vapid and delusive thoughts, nothing will come of it.

on Jimyo's encouraging himself with a gimlet,

The story of Jimyo, as it is found in ZENKAN SAKUSHIN ("A ZEN WHIP") is this:

"The three friends, Jimyo, Yokusan, and Roya, went together to study Zen under Funyo. It was a bad winter in Kato (a province in S.W. Shan-si), and all the assembly of monks shrank from doing their practice. But Jimyo aspired to attain Tao. From morning until night he was never neglectful. During the evening zazen, when he felt the desire to sleep, he would take out a gimlet and stab himself with it."

Always cherish the conduct of these three patriarchs and engrave it deeply upon your hearts.

do not cease to train yourself day by day; do not cease moment by moment to carry on your quest with your entire being. Never be idle for an instant.

A virtuous ancient has said: "If having become a monk, you do not penetrate into the Principle, then, donning fur and putting horns on your head, you must repay the alms which you have received."

To carry on our practice, we monks depend almost entirely upon the alms we receive from supporters. If our practice is not true practice, then we must one day become oxen and horses and by dint of hard labor pay back to our supporters the alms which we have received from them.

Be apprehensive, take heed! Exert yourselves and be on your guard!"

I have spoken to you on the outline of our KIKAN. (Though these MONITIONS are intended for monks living in a sodo and certain of them do not apply to laymen, the underlying principles of Zen study and practice for laymen and monks are not different. The spirit in which both must undertake and carry through their practice is exactly the same. And the goal toward which all are striving--and which I hope all may one day realize--is one and the same goal.)

I shall be happy if these ADMONITIONS are in any way helpful to you.

The photograph of Miura Roshi was taken by Muky Munkacsi on the occasion of Roshi's birthday April 10, 1956.

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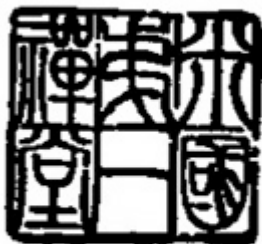
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