

# ZEN notes



## SOKEI-AN SAYS

### THE FIVE PRINCIPLES OF SWEEPING

In a famous Agama Sutra there occurs the metaphor of sweeping the ground. This is a favorite allegory in Buddhism, and describes the cleaning up--the sweeping up--of the dust of the ground of your mind. Before I talk about this allegory I will tell a story from China. A Zen monk asked, "Master, how do you sweep the ground?" The master asked the monk, "Where do you keep a heap of refuse?" The monk answered, "I would keep it outside the temple." The Master said, "Then why don't you do so? We do not keep refuse and dust outside the temple, we let it stay inside the temple. You must keep this mental stuff outside with its broom and dust rag. Do not keep the broom and dust in this temple; keep it outside. I think this is hard to understand. When you need the broom you can use it, but you must keep it outside somewhere. You must practice this many, many years. Then your mind will be ordered in the way of nature.

The Buddha told his disciples that there are five principles to be remembered in sweeping the ground and that if these are followed they would attain merit.

*Do not sweep against a contrary wind; you must sweep in a fair wind. You must make a heap when you sweep; sweep everything into the litter. Sweep from south, west, east, and north when you make the heap. You must carry all the rubbish away and burn it up; you must annihilate it. And finally, after this work of sweeping, the ground must be pure and clean: Do not leave any dung of animals.*

These are the five principles of sweeping. Everyone knows them; it is not necessary to study them from the Buddha. Yet if you do not follow these five principles in your sweeping, it will attain no merit. The Buddha gave only these five principles to his monks, then Shariputra explained them, comparing them to the sweeping of our minds. There is nothing more in the Sutra about these five principles, but I can guess the Buddha's intent and I shall explain them.



*Do not sweep against a contrary wind.* You must find out the direction of the wind and sweep before it. How do you sweep your mind? In the evening when you go to bed you feel uneasy, because within your mind much dust flickers--it is a nuisance and an abomination. I meet many whose minds are like garbage cans or storage places where one keeps broken furniture and a waste of paper and ashes and mouse dung. This is not like the brain of a fish, because the fish has a soul and five senses and nothing else. And a baby's mind is like that of a fish: a baby has a soul and five senses and nothing else. But the baby takes in many stuffs received from his mother: "Don't you do that!" The baby will slowly take dust into his brain, and then when he tries to judge something he uses this stuff to judge with.

How dangerous--this is! It is as though he tried to put on a coat that had been made ten or fifteen years ago; it is out of fashion, old and uncomfortable, too small or too big; it does not fit. But it is a man's habit to judge occasional incidents by old conceptions. One who had a successful restaurant business will think, "I made a success of that restaurant; I am quite sure that I could do so anywhere." So he comes to New York, finds the same type of place, opens a restaurant, and then he realizes that business will not be so good. I have watched such places for months; one after another they come and open a restaurant, fail, and move away. They have not studied the place, the condition of the neighborhood--they are opening their own notions, not their restaurants. In just the same way, Sokei-an opened his idea. Well, New York does not need Buddhism--so he is not discouraged. If he thought that New

York must have it, then he would be discouraged and also not wise.

The mind stuff makes much trouble for us, because we do not perceive the outside through the five senses. In religion there is much error; in morality, in everything, there is much error. They think of soul and mind and the five senses. We call this topsy-turvy; we think of soul and five senses and outside and mind. Mind is the superstructure. Soul is the ground. The five senses are the first floor, outside is the second floor, and mind is the third floor. So we must keep mind there. It must be up under the roof. But everyone thinks that mind is ground and from mind they observe and study psychology. The mind is really a heap of dust. We use it but we must know where to keep it.

By meditation we sweep the dust of mind. But do you sweep against the wind or with a fair wind? Mind is usually kept between the soul and the five senses; you must close the five senses and try to sweep mind away from soul. But your broom comes from the second floor--from the five senses--and tries to sweep the dust into the soul. This is dilettante meditation; this is sweeping in a contrary wind.

*Sweep in a fair wind.* You are seated upon the ground, the soul; use the broom from there. Of course you see dust during concentration of the mind. You will have a mind image of a pine tree; look at the pine tree, then the mind will go away. Open your mind, look outside, study the conditions, and then you will realize that your mind is clean.

To sweep you must make a heap of dust. The Buddha thought the Dharma and made a heap of it. This Buddhism is a heap of dust. A koan is a heap of refuse,

for thinking over in many ways and thereby becoming accustomed to think the law of the cosmos. Father and mother, man and woman, dark and light, time and space, virtue and evil--these are all heaps of dust. There are always two circles supporting each other. Before creation there was no relative existence; before we think it is absolute. Then this absolute becomes a heap of reasoning, a heap of the mind stuff. When you throw it away, then you will be there, then you will not be able to find a word any more. There will be no trap, no word to ensnare you. If you come to a conclusion using words, that is an idea and it will be a heap of dust. You will not yet be facing your task to sweep the dust. Let go; then you will find clean ground. This is really the foundation of Buddhism.

I cannot speak about it any more; this is the end of speech. Some will come to it but will not be able to grasp it. To these we must say: "You must let go of it; don't think any word in the dictionary." Then there will be no mind stuff. "This is the ground!-- and they believe it. And believing it, they will slowly come to realize the composition of that real ground.

Make a heap. Use Zen, or "etheric conservation of energy," or any term you wish. Then throw it away. Then you will see pure ground. But when you do this, do good work. Clean up your emotional side too. Don't keep any dung--fear, hatred, sense of humiliation. You do not need such things.

Some rich man's child wishes to study Jiu-jitsu: "I will give you a thousand dollars, but don't twist my arm or hurt me." How can one learn that way? To study zazen in order to make true ground you must throw away the stuff of brain

and emotion. And clean away all thirst. If you wish to become a true student of Zen you must wash off desire for money. And even as young men of twenty-three or twenty-four years we do not pay any attention to Geisha girls. These two things are the first condition for monkhood; they form the battlefield for monks.

But one who has a family, children, wife, or husband cannot do this. So if your mind is clear you may do it in a way diametrically opposite to the way of monks. When you follow that type of life you do not become entangled in the Law, which is written in you, in Nature and the Universe.

Do not start with unclean or profaned soil or ground of the mind. All laymen must take the way of the monk in the beginning, in the morning. Then go out into the dust of the street. The monk's life is renouncing the world; the layman's life must be recognizing the world. What the monk denies the layman must affirm--both goodness and evil. Usually the layman affirms only goodness and denies evil, while the monk denies both good and evil. The monk should not imitate the ideal of the layman, or the layman that of the monk. When your ground is all swept the way of the layman and the way of the monk will be just the same. One will stand on the soul while the other is walking in the dust, but the one who walks in the dust knows how to sweep the ground, so he can come back to pure true ground in the evening.

*THE BROOM* is by Vanessa Coward. The painter of *Kanzan and Jitoku* (Ch. Han-shan and Shih-te) is unknown. The paintings are in the collection of William C. Segal of New York, who kindly had them photographed so we could reproduce them.





## THE THREE AWAKENINGS

IN the Agama Sutras the Buddha speaks about awakening--about the three different awakenings. Awakening is important in Buddhism because Buddhism itself rests upon it--upon the awakening of wisdom, the awakening not of the brain center but of the wisdom center. What wisdom is, and what the center of man's cognition is, are great problems for both philosophers and religious men. Awakening is easy to talk about--but awakening of what? I awake from sleep, but awakening for the Buddhist is not from physical sleep.

The Buddha taught that the first awakening is Initial Awakening, or the beginning of awakening. By it one awakes to the fact that he was sleeping and is now awakening--that he was unaware of his existence, unaware of his waking consciousness. This is easy to understand: before you wake up you are not aware of sleep, but in the morning you realize that you have been asleep. In a spiritual awakening (a handy phrase!) you realize that you were unaware of sleeping--you have been in that sleeping consciousness, even though you eat and drink and work. But with the initial awakening you realize that your consciousness was asleep.

A man who has lived in awakened consciousness cannot go back to the so-called stage of sleeping. A famous Zen poet named Kanzan (his name is that of the mountain on which he lived) wrote:

*I have been living ten years  
upon Kanzan*

*The top is so steep and high,  
shrouded by white clouds*

*Even the birds cannot trace  
the sharp rise of the peak.*

Occasionally he came down to the foot of the mountain to visit temple friends, who kept food for him and gave it to him when he came down. (I think you will recall a famous picture in China or Japan of two hermits in black robes, standing in front of a little fire of autumn leaves, smiling happily and talking.)

Kanzan was saying: I could not go back to the foot of the mountain for ten years. I had lost the way to go down because I had been living on the peak. The clouds, shrouding the rocks that soar the sky, close off the entire range from all birds. "All birds" means the "birds" in the mind, singing from morning to evening without stop. He means that his wisdom--his spiritual body--is living on that high mountain peak, and no birds--no whisper of the brain--can reach there.

When I go to Second or Third Avenue on 59th Street, with the El running, the clamor fills the air and I cannot hear my own mind. But Kanzan could not hear his mind even whispering.

This is a nicely expressed poem--a poem by a hermit. Though it does not express the real core of Buddhism, the poet was in the awakened stage and could not go back any more.

When you enter the awakening condition you realize that you have been sleeping. If you think

of this sleeping condition and this awakening condition you will understand that there are three consciousnesses: the intrinsic consciousness, the awakening consciousness, and the sleeping consciousness. If we had no intrinsic consciousness our consciousness could not awake; if we do not wake we cannot realize the sleeping consciousness. And so we realize that our awakening consciousness is the intrinsic consciousness. It is within you, latent; one day you will awake suddenly: "This is what I have been looking for for many, many years. Now I come close to it and I realize that it is myself--my world and my universe. This is my home."

From that day on you do not search around for anything any more. There is nothing to search for. "Well, I have awakened, and it was within me--through many reincarnations and many kalpas of years -- now I have suddenly awakened and this is the answer."

In about two or three days you will feel that you are standing in mid-air, and after four or five months you will realize that you are living in "That," eating "That," drinking "That." Just "That"--the Tathagata. He comes exactly as "That": *Tatha* means "That" or "It."

I have explained the circumstances and atmosphere of awakening, but I have not yet talked about the real point of it. What is awakening? One cannot speak of this point of awakening--there is nothing to speak about--one's tongue is too short to speak

about it, and one's words limit meaning. And so in Zen or any other sect of Buddhism all teachers try to hand this point to you without words. You must realize that this body is *That*--mind and wisdom and all this universe is *That*--not matter or spirit--it is *That*. In Sanskrit, *Bhutatahata*, in English, *Isness*. You will not need to open your eyes wider or look up to the sky or kneel upon the floor--this is *That*. Some day in some corner of your mind it will come: "Son, thou art always with me."

In the Shingon school the priest will tell you to concentrate on a word, *A*. *A* has the shape of wings, sky, emptiness. You imagine that there is a big moon. You place this *A* in your abdomen, in the center of the moon, and meditate on it. The sun shines into the moon and the moon shines back into the sun. And suddenly, some day: "Ah! This is *That*!" That is the beginning, and then you do not need Moon, Sun, and *A* any more. *A* was beginningless and *A* will be endless. I am IT.

In the Zen school, if you say "*A*" the priest will say "Shut your mouth!" "Throw it away! Sit down with nothing!" The Shingon monk uses this *A* like a cane; he says that within this *A* we sleep and eat. The Zen monk says, "Within or without anything." When you really awake you have nothing to talk about. That is the beginning. You are initiated.

When I came here everybody talked about initiation. Some teachers collected twenty-five

dollars for it. But though you pile up one thousand dollars you cannot purchase awakening. It has nothing to do with initiation--initiation of what?

--Since I have not much courage to speak of the heart of Buddhism I have strayed from the real point. Perhaps you do not understand yet.

The Buddha made the metaphor of the mirror, of the mirror in the pure sky. This sky is not the space that our sight and eye perceives, though that does give us an idea of the infinite. Einstein said that the universe is finite but boundless. Our life has beginning and end--it is finite. But it is also infinite--limitless. Certainly he made a wonderful remark: the world has end and beginning, of course, from Kalpa to Kalpa. Yet it is boundless.

The Buddha speaks, of course, of no time and space--of akasha, where if I make a sound there is in this single moment a million years. It is spaceless like radio waves, like electric space--intrinsic. The Buddha said that there is a mirror that reflects consciousness. In this electric space a million miles and a pin point--a million years and a moment--are exactly the same.

It is pure essence. Modern science might call it a quantum, or an electron, or proton. (The quantum is perhaps not pure essence, but one can call it so.) Matter and spirit are the same in that space. There is a mirror but nothing reflects upon it. We call it Original Consciousness--Original Akasha. Perhaps God in the Christian sense--I am afraid of speaking

about anything that is not familiar to me--no one can know what IT is.

Fire is burning. What is that which is burning? If there were no air, no wood, no match, no fire will burn. So what is fire really? Edison said he did not know what electricity is.

The Buddha said: IT has eyes, ears, nose, mouth, everything. IT has a law in its manifestation, an essential law in its constitution. You can see it in crystallization. You can see it in the tree. A tree is a crystallization. The human body also has the shape of a tree. Everything that has the nature of essential consciousness takes its own shape, its own crystallization. We call it the first law, though it is really the second law. But we cannot speak of the first law. The second law is the explosion. When this comes to our mind, we find entire freedom of mind. All is symmetrical. How does it grow distorted? The third law is a one-way road. Even though we have had the fourth dimensional explosion in our realization, in our daily life we must take the one-way road.

Reconstructed by BRIAN HEALD

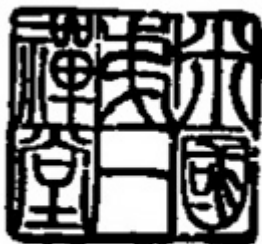
*The NOTES, mainly of one person, from which the two December articles were taken were exceptionally difficult to reconstruct. There remains still some uncertainty, particularly about the reading of the poem. For Akasha see ZN VI/10; for Three Laws ZN IX/3, VIII/5; Crystallization ZN VI/6; Mirror in the Sky ZN VI/11.*

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