

ZEN notes



1966



The Horse

SOKEI-AN SAYS

PRAYER Christianity emphasizes offering prayer to God. What is prayer for the Buddhist? How do Buddhists pray?

Heavenly desire is prayer. Earthly prayer comes from selfish desire, but when we pray for peace and happiness for all sentient beings, desire and prayer are one, and this desire is the foundation of our life. Without desire, earthly life has no meaning; prayer is the foundation of our religious life.

Our first real prayer is to cut off our selfish nature. Today is the result of yesterday's prayer and today is the cause of tomorrow's prayer. We offer our prayer to the future and that prayer is heard and answered today. Praying that all prayer will be heard and answered, we continue the great prayer.

But now we must ask: to whom do we pray, to whom do we offer our prayer? Of course the answer is clear. It should not be necessary to speak of it.

But I must mention the many things to be avoided, the unnecessary things that people do because they do not know true prayer.

If you go to Japan or China, you will see men and women kneeling down before the image of the Buddha or the Bodhisattva, and praying on behalf of a sick mother or a dying father. Some offer prayer to Avalokiteshvara.

One of my cousins offered prayers every morning to Avalokiteshvara while beating on the wooden fish (*mokugyo*). She never stopped no matter what happened. On the day of the big earthquake, she put her large image of Avalokiteshvara on her back and tried

to run through the great conflagration. Everyone cried, "Throw it away!" but she would not. A friend found her body with the image still on her back. He came to tell me of her faith in Avalokiteshvara: "Well, she is certainly in heaven." I could not say a word, but I pitied her, thinking, "This is not real prayer." Her eagerness was pathetic, but she was stupid.

Of course you would not carry an image of Avalokiteshvara on your back, but might you not carry some mental image in your mind, which you would not give up even when confronting death? It is just the same to attach to a mental conception that you cannot abandon while you die in a mental conflagration. You laugh at my cousin, and I will laugh at you. She was uneducated, so she carried an objective article; you are educated, but you carry mental objects. If there is any subjective notion in your mind, you are not praying a true prayer. The true prayer is: "I will not have any notion in my mind, I will not attach to any notion. My mind is one pure existence of emptiness." Emptiness means pure existence that has no notion in it--like pure water.

If you go to Fifth Avenue and try to buy a crystal ball, you will look to see if there is any air bubble in it; if so, it is an imitation. The real crystal ball has nothing in it. Our conception of emptiness is like a crystal ball; its emptiness is not a void. This is the main point of Buddhism; if nature were void, there would be no power, no source.

We cannot find anything outside the universe; the universe is not void, it is something. Observing it



Beginning with this issue I am rectifying the name of "Letter from Kyoto" to a more accurate description of its current content. The drawing by William Briggs presented in large here will appear in small on future issues to identify it.

"Letter from Kyoto" was intended to be just what its name indicates. "From Where I Sit" will present personal views (not necessarily mine). There will be more comments from or about Kyoto, but as the place from which the view is taken may be anywhere, the new name seems more appropriate.

Once, when I was in some doubt as to whether it was worthwhile to go on doing this sort of thing at all, I happened to receive a letter of encouragement from that old hand at writing, Nyogen Senzaki. His advice was always: write from your own view, that's the only worthwhile one. He used to send me his own articles, also, saying: Here's something for your trash basket. So, readers, it is my thought to present matters that are of interest to me, as a Zen student, in the hope that they may be of interest to you also. And, although I don't always answer you individually, or print your letters, I appreciate hearing your views, too.

With all good wishes,

May Tsuchi

EDITOR

THE MAGICAL HANNYA By Mary Farkas
Two descriptions of the magical properties of our Hannya Shingyo deserve sharing. The source for the first is Hsüan Tsang, to whom we are indebted for the Hannya's translation into Chinese. The following story of his learning to use it is quoted from his "Life."

"Going onward, he reached the Mo-ho-yen Desert which stretched for more than eight hundred li. This was the "desert river," as called by the ancient people. No bird flew above, nor any beast roamed below, nor was there water or grass. Now he had only his lonely shadow as his travelling company and all he could do was to repeat the name of the Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva and recite the Prajnaparamitahrdaya Sutra.

"Formerly when the Master was in Szechuan, he once saw a sick man suffering from foul boils and dressed in rags. With pity he took him to his monastery and supplied him with food and clothes. Out of gratitude the sick man taught the Master this sutra, which he often recited. In the desert he met many strange-looking demons that surrounded him and refused to be dispelled, although he repeated the name of Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva. But as soon as they heard the utterance of this sutra, they disappeared immediately. It was this sutra that saved him from many a peril."

The description of the Mo-ho-yen desert bears a certain resemblance to the desert described

by Sokei-an many times as the residence of the pretas. (See ZN, XII-7). Hsuan Tsang's account suggests the explanation of another story, told by Sokei-an in 1937, which has been held in abeyance pending more information about it, as it was preserved for us in the notes of only one person. Both the name of the baby and of the sutra were garbled, but the spelling of the sutra was such as to lend credence to its being a story of the efficacy of the Hannya. Even if it is not the Hannya that is referred to, the use is the same. As it is not at all instructive except as an example of the magical use of the sutras I feel to include it in this issue rather than in ZEN NOTES, which is most frequently the display case for Sokei-an's words.

SOKEI-AN SAYS

ANURUDDHA AND HARITI Among the sutras of the Samyutta Nikaya there is a poem:

Piyankara, why do you cry?
Listen to the monk reciting
the Prajnaparamita,
One who knows the Prajnaparamita
Kills no more and lies no more.
He can abandon wrongdoing
And be emancipated from the
body of the demon.

One of the Buddha's immediate disciples was a cousin of his who had been converted to Buddhism and become a monk. One time he was travelling through Magadha, the central part of India, to the western part of India. He walked a long, long way through the Red Desert--The sand of this desert

is as red as blood, so it is called the Red Desert. Through the Red Desert one can reach the western shore of the Indian Peninsula and a city that is familiar today, Bombay. Aviators who take off from Bombay go through the sky over the Red Desert.

Anuruddha had lost his way, gone astray in the desert. Evening fell. In the distance he saw a light and thought, "Oh, that is a light. Some house must be there; someone must be living there." He went down the sandhill, in the direction of the light flickering in the distant darkness, and entered an oasis. Among the weeds there was a road. He went along it in the darkness. He saw houses abutting on a sand cliff. On the other side of the houses there were woods. "Why in the world," he thought, "are people living in such a desert! What are they doing? How do they make a living?"

He saw that one house was bigger than the others and entered its courtyard where there was a well. He swallowed some water and then sat down there, not knocking at the door lest he wake the people in the house. He fell into slumber.

He awoke hearing a baby's cry, and thought: "In the faraway desert in the deep night without a moon, babies cry in the desert house!" He began to recite the Prajnaparamita, a famous teaching of the Buddha, composed of long syllables, very slowly. The baby stopped crying; he stopped reciting. The baby started to cry a-

gain, so he began to recite again.

It is very pensive to hear a baby's cry in an unknown place in the night when you have lost your way. I experienced this myself when I was going at night through a narrow pass in the mountain next to Hakone Mountain where my temple was. I heard a baby crying under a rock, a huge rock, far from any village. I shivered hearing that baby's cry, for it was very mysterious. According to legend, in ancient days the rock had fallen upon a pregnant woman and killed her. The baby was born and still cries according to the story. The truth is that on the other side of the valley there is a farmer's house. When the farmer's baby cries, the cries echo.

Anuruddha recited the poem for he had realized that this was a village of demons. A long time before he had heard that in the Red Desert there was a village of demons and that if anyone stayed there overnight he would never return. As he was a monk who had abandoned all fear, he knocked at the door. The door was opened and he peeped in, then went in. The room was decorated with jewels and there was in it a beautiful white-skinned woman, not old. She was fat and her expression was calm.

Anuruddha said: "I am one of the Buddha's monks. I lost my way in the desert. Seeing a light in the house, I came under the eaves to rest. I heard crying, so I recited the Prajnaparamita for the baby."

The woman looked at him. " I know you. You are Anuruddha. I drew you here with my magic to make you recite your Prajnaparamita for my sick baby."

" Who are you?" Anuruddha asked the woman.

" I am Hariti," she told him.

" Oh, you are Hariti, the demon with five hundred children?"

" Do you wish to see my family?" she asked Anuruddha. And she opened the dark curtains and there were five hundred children shining like stars. " But Anuruddha, this is my last child. I can have no more, and he is dying." Anuruddha wept at the door. " I am ashamed to show you my dying child," she told him. " You must leave before dawn, Anuruddha."

Hariti, in a previous incarnation, had been the daughter of a king, the patron of the Buddha before Shakyamuni, Kashyapa. She became a nun but violated the commandments, so in this life she had been born in the body of a demon. When she would lose one of her children, she would enter the human world and devour a child. Each time she devoured a human child, another of her infants would die, so she would go again and again into the human world to devour more children.

The Buddha's son Rahula, who was a monk, found a solution. He concealed one of Hariti's children by covering it with a bowl. When she missed it, she came raging--green-eyed and red-lipped into every house where a woman had children.

Finally, she came to the Bud-

dha's temple. The Buddha said, " Hariti, this is not a place to look for babies. But if you promise to kill no more human babies, I will find your baby for you."

When Hariti had made a vow to the Buddha that she would kill no more human babies, he overturned the bowl in which Rahula had hidden her baby, and returned it to her.

This is all of the story. It does not have much relation to Buddhist philosophy, but it is a subject in Buddhist iconography, in which Hariti is shown as a white-skinned fat woman about forty, with jewels around her neck and five hundred breasts with which to feed her five hundred children. Perhaps she is related to the Artemis of Ephesus who symbolizes productiveness; she had five hundred breasts also.

A symbolic explanation is that once a year the sun is covered by the moon as Rahula covered the child of Hariti with a bowl. The sun--consciousness--is covered by the moon--wisdom, that is, consciousness is covered by the wisdom of the night (unenlightened wisdom, in this case) while the Buddha discloses real Wisdom when he removes the bowl and saves the demon from delusion (killing human babies).

from the original angle, we call it Emptiness. Seeing it in our mind, it is like the waves of the ocean, changing phase at every moment. We see the water as waves, as the body of the ocean, but at the bottom there are no waves, it is stillness. We call it Emptiness, Shunyata. We enter this stillness through meditation, and we see through that body of mind, of soul, just as we see through the body of the ocean to the bottom. This is true prayer. By holding that prayer, we drop off all agonies, all disturbances, all unnecessary desires and we know the Reality which is the true life of the human being. We are not living in phenomena or in mind stuff. To realize this life is Reality itself. Keeping this prayer, we know the laws of heaven, earth, and man; this clear understanding today is the cause of tomorrow's peace.

Those who dream are not praying. We must know how to pray the true prayer, must realize that life is Reality. This is the main principle of Buddhism. There is just one fundamental method. Many sects alter the method, but they always fall into this three-fold method. If you really grasp this three-fold way, then living in America is just the same as listening to the words direct from the Buddha's lips.

From the temporary world we enter Emptiness. The first stage is to leave the unreal. What is the unreal? Color, sound, smell, touch, taste, are unreal--they have no real value. Red, blue, yellow--I am sure you are not so ignorant as to believe that color is an object. Color is vibration.

So we enter into oneness, the clear, pure oneness of Emptiness. By science you analyze objective exist-

ence and find the monad, the electron, the proton, and you call it objective existence. But yesterday's science is gone now. So we analyze our mental situation, clear it out. By contemplation we enter into calm meditation. This is one angle.

The second angle is that from this calm Emptiness we observe the surface of the waves: we see the sky, the hurricane--all is phantom, dream, not the true life. Nothing exists objectively, all exists subjectively, a creation of our alaya consciousness (deepest consciousness). We call this the manifestation of Emptiness. To see the manifestation as electron and proton is not seeing true form, but the organization of form. Therefore it is not true observation. The first angle is called stopping motion. From the second angle, we observe everything as a dream, looking at it from the state of Emptiness. From this aspect, we fold our arms and observe the world: everything is going and coming, the flowers of spring and the leaves of autumn. "Alas, they fade" is poetical but not true observation.

The third angle is true observation. Why analyze? Why speak of electrons and protons? Why make the mind calm and enter into Emptiness? All this is unnecessary--this is not phenomena nor is it Emptiness. It is not necessary to wipe out the waves--as long as the ocean exists there will be waves. We must observe *both* at once. Then we realize the original aspect. Avoiding all the factitious analysis and meditation, we can observe it directly as it is: it is existing; it has always existed and will always exist. It is neither phenomena nor noumena. Avoiding all mind activities,

we observe everything exactly as it is.

Then we have found the true ground of our life. This is so-called observation.

So we have three views of life and Reality. Life is phenomena, life is noumena, wipe out both views and come to Reality. So we wipe out the outer dream, wipe out the inner dream, and come to Mind itself. Then we live our daily life which, in itself, is the power, the Reality.

In Zen practice we have these terms for the three stages. *Samatha*--stop motion; *Samapatti*--observe from stillness; *Dhyana*--no distinction between noumena and phenomena.

At every moment you must concentrate into what you are doing. When all doubt is resolved, you can take the hand of Reality and live in Wisdom.

PURE MIND A child asked his father who was always meditating: "Father, why do you practice meditation?"

The father answered: "I am trying to keep my mind pure."

The child asked: "What is pure mind?"

The father replied: "The mind must be kept like pure water--colorless, tasteless."

The child said: "My teacher said that pure water has no fish in it."

The father said: "He does not understand the purity of water. Water is pure no matter what is in it."

The child answered: "Then, Father, you do not need to practice meditation."

The father said: "I practice it anyway."

To attain pure mind, we begin by keeping the mind as pure as water. Everyone creates karma that causes him to fall into hell because of the impurities in his mind. The only reason you go to hell is that the impurities in your mind raise hell with you. The experiences you undergo cause your karma and this karma takes place in your mind. It has no other place. The karma that you create does not stay in the sky or on the earth, or under the earth, but in your own mind. Usually the working part of the mind and the stuff in it are considered together in Buddhism--mind and mind-stuff. If mind is like pure water, then mind stuff is like ashes in it.

When the everyday mind that has mind stuff in it relates to something else, the mind stuff churns in the mind water and we call it impure--"I hate her, I love him, I wish I had that..." There is no hell under the earth to which you will go when you

die. There is just this impure mind. This impure mind is hell.

In meditation, we keep our mind quiet and exterminate the mind stuff to attain pure mind power. In the morning the mind stuff shakes up when you go out and associate with people, but in the evening when you come home you keep your mind quiet and let the mind stuff settle down. When you have practiced this settling down of the mind stuff, even though your mind is full of mind stuff you can feel that the nature of mind is originally pure. The great ocean that produces Mount Sumeru, the world, is not always clean and pure on the surface, but in the depths, all is pure. The great man's mind is like that. Its nature is always pure. But the ordinary man's mind does not know that pure condition of mind.

In the daytime the ordinary man agitates his mind. At night, even when he is sleeping, it is just the same. He dreams, hates, loves, possesses as in the daytime. There is no time that the mind settles down and there is clear water on top.

The Japanese has a queer habit to wash his hands twenty-five times a day to keep his hand pure.

It is best to associate with people who have pure minds. If you associate with someone who has an impure mind, whatever word you say will be twisted. No word can go into his mind smoothly. Whatever you say, the impure mind will twist, while the pure-minded person will see through to your meaning immediately. You have no trouble when you associate with pure-minded people.

There are many religions in the world, but all emphasize the simple and pure mind. This is the only useful part of religion.

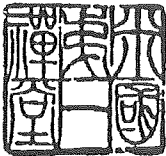
In Christianity, in prayer you confess everything to God and your mind becomes pure. In Buddhism you meditate. Perhaps it will come into your mind: "He insulted me today." You shake your head and forget about it. Or: "I lost all my money today." And you shake your head and forget that, too.

Reconstructed by Vanessa Coward and Mary Farkas from 1933 and 1934 notes. For *mind stuff* see also ZN XII/9. The missing word in ZN XII/12 was "Barbarians."

Persons born in a horse year, according to the Chinese zodiacal system, are cheerful, headstrong and independent. This year is a "fire horse"; for more details, see NYT article 12/9/66.

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