

ZEN notes

the zen 

SOKEI-AN SAYS

ANAPANASATI--*Thus have I heard. Once the Buddha was sojourning in Icchanangala. One day Lokanatha addressed the monks thus. "It is my desire to practice meditation about two months. With the exception of the one who brings me my meals (usually Ananda) you, O monks, must not visit me at any time other than at Upavasatha."* Under the full moon all the Buddhist adherents assembled to observe the ritual of confession. Younger members who were observing the commandments confessed any violations and the elder monks judged what was to be done.

After having made this announcement to the monks, the Buddha went into the practice of meditation. He retired into the woods. With the exception of the one who brought him his meals, none of the monks visited him at any time other than at Upavasatha. The Buddha passed two months in meditation. When he came out of meditation he returned to the monks, seated himself and said: "If any stranger (meaning the heretics, those who were not Buddhists) should come to ask you how Sramana Gautama (Sramana means ascetic or monk. Gautama was the name of the Buddha's family. Shakyas was the name of his tribe.) practiced meditation during these two months, you had better answer him thus: Heretics wished to know how the Buddha practiced meditation, just what the Buddha's meditation was.

We can easily count four different kinds of meditation. The first kind is for the purpose of attaining supernatural power--the power to read the other's mind, or to foretell the other's future, or to speak about his past, without any information or proof, about what he was doing yesterday or is going to do tomorrow.

The second kind is for the purpose of physical culture--to reduce oneself, to become stronger, or to produce a drumlike stomach.

The third kind is for the purpose of attaining absolute quiet of mind, to attain absolute absorption through trance.

The fourth kind is our meditation to attain enlightenment, to attain the highest wisdom.

If the heretics were to ask what kind of meditation the Buddha practiced, he told his monks to say: *"For two months Tathagata has practiced the contemplation of dhyana anapanasati."* Dhyana is the meditation to attain enlightenment. Ana is to inspire the breath; apana is to expire the breath; sati is to practice this breathing with mindfulness. Your usual breathing you practice without mindfulness, so your breathing is not in regular rhythm. Sometimes you breathe like a dog that smells something at a street corner. And at night when you sleep you snore. There is no mindfulness.

Anapanasati is practiced with your mind. You practice breathing with attention. This attention is the seed of the highest wisdom. Concentrated mind which is like a diamond--diamond-mind--is the seed of prajna, transcendental wisdom. But you do not cultivate it. You have it, but you have forgotten it. You have forgotten your own possession, your usual human mind. You use it as if it were a kitchen knife.

Now, by breathing, you practice this keen mind. The purpose is to learn to use it. You practice this mindfulness of breathing to sharpen your sword of mind, to polish your diamond mind. To do this, by that mind you go through many stages of consciousness, and finally you attain the original mind that is ultimate, intrinsic, transcendental wisdom.

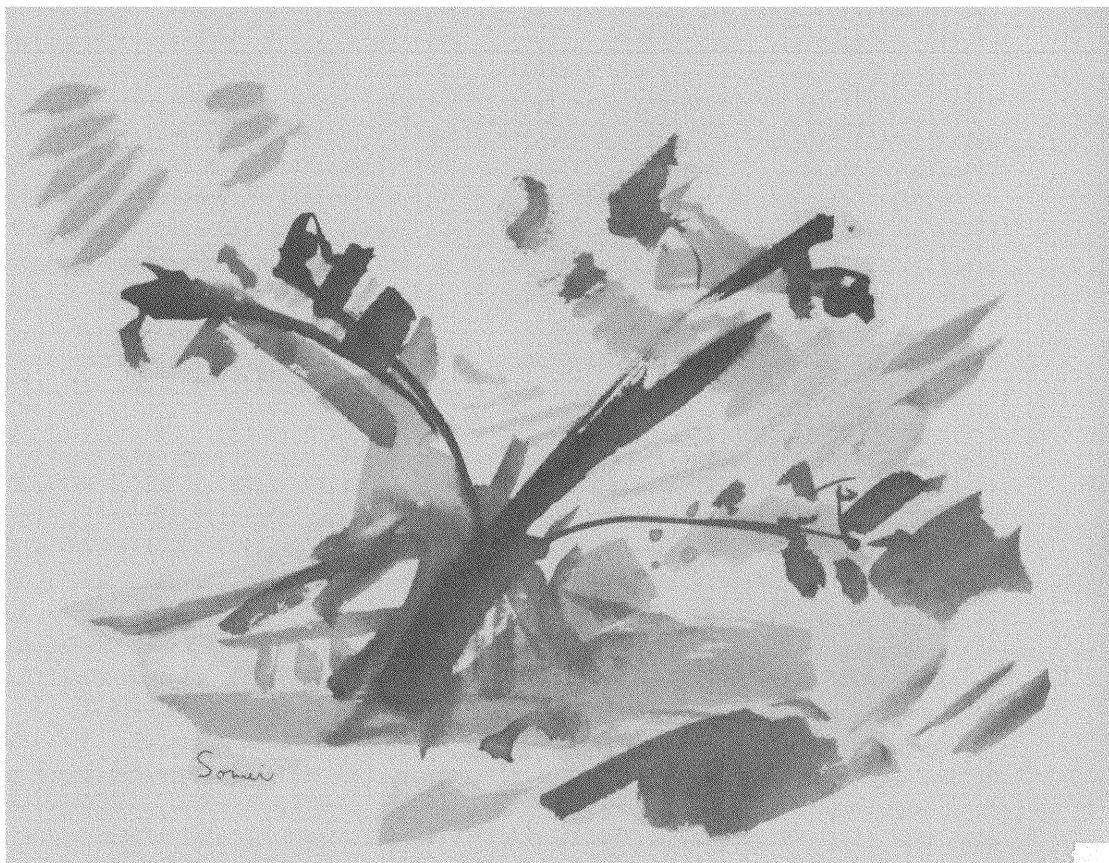
A certain Japanese monk was always practicing to keep his highest, keenest attention of mind. One big earthquake day he thought: "Now I must use my keenest mind, my highest

attention, but I must drink water first before I leave this shaking, falling house." The walls were falling, but he must drink water first. He went into the kitchen and drank. Then he ran out. Later, after the earthquake, he came back and re-entered the house. He saw the water was still in the glass. He was surprised to find that the water was still standing in the drinking-glass in the kitchen. "Surely I drank--!" Then he saw the glass of soy sauce was empty. And he realized that in his confusion he had drunk the glass of soy sauce and thought he was drinking water. "Surely I thought I had the keenest mind, but I lost it." So you cannot depend upon your mind. But of course his attention was very poor, wasn't it?

"Why? Because I remained in meditation with anapanasati for the greater part of these two months. In inspiration I am mindful of the inspiration, and I realize that I am inspiring the breath. This is the so-called 'first step' in meditation. There are six steps.

First: This is inspiring, and inspiring mindfully and realizing that I am inspiring mindfully. Keep your mind always with the breath. You never remember how you breathe. When you walk the street with someone you never know how you are breathing. When I practiced meditation in the cross-legged posture and someone came all of a sudden and pushed me and I fell over, he said: "Meditate mindfully!" When you are meditating mindlessly in the cross-legged posture, if someone comes and pushes you over, you will fall. If you were meditating mind-

Here I go



SOKEI-AN SAYS

THE CORAL TREE--Throughout the Buddhist sutras there are stories of a certain kind of large tree, the coral.

Once someone asked a Zen master: "What is the highest wisdom?" "Each treetop of the coral wood points to the moon."

According to an early sutra, the coral tree is one of the five trees surrounding the palace of Indra, the god of all gods, on the top of Mount Sumeru. This tree is said to have a trunk with a diameter of seven million feet and a height of one million feet, the branches spreading fifty million feet.

A Mahayana sutra uses the coral tree to explain the stages of the practice of Buddhism. In it the Buddha describes the seven phases of this tree which drops all its leaves, then buds again to bring forth its flowers.

The Buddha said: "When the coral tree becomes yellow and dry, this is the first stage. Soon the leaves scatter in the second stage. After that new leaves come and the young branches spread into a net. In the fourth stage, small bell-like flowers hang down and begin to open. In the fifth stage, birds come and pick worms off the tree. In the sixth stage, the flowers open wide to the seventh stage.

These seven phases may be compared to the progress of the Buddhist.

A young man thinks deeply and struggles mentally and physically. He leaves worldly life. This is the first stage. If he does not physically leave his home, he may mentally turn away from all luxury. The second stage occurs when the student goes to the teacher and asks to have his head shaved. Giving up everything, without possessions, he exerts himself to study the law of

the universe. This stage is represented by the tree standing with naked branches, all its leaves shed.

The young man now sees the life he has left as far behind. He attains the first stage of dhyana loka, which is reached when desire and jealousy are relinquished, when the agony that comes from pursuing fame and wealth is given up and he goes with the stream of the universe. This is the first phase of the developing Buddhist mind, the entrance. The student no longer rows against the stream. He places his arms upon his chest, crosses his legs and lets the boat flow downstream. Absolutely passive, he lets himself be carried by the water. He does not try to do anything, for he knows that the human being's little attempt is useless. He gives up. He lets go.

The coral tree is now in leaf again. The birds will come. A new life has begun.

In the next stage the young student thinks deeply. He observes all his notions, his thoughts, his conceptions. He realizes that mind stuff is not mind itself. In this struggle, he comes to know he is part of one mind. Then he is not bothered by anything anymore. This is the second dhyana loka. The coral tree has made its net of leaves. Nothing comes inside it from the outside. Everything that flows out is like a newborn baby. There is nothing impure in it. In this dhyana, he feels joy. All disturbance is gone. He is living alone in the universe; he and the universe are one. He is like a still pool reflecting the moon. In the third dhyana loka there is no joy and no sorrow, no emotion, neither joy nor sorrow. He is emancipated from emotion and intel-

lection. The rope of emotion is cut; reasoning and philosophy are blown away.

Between the second and third dhyana lokas, there is little distinction. In the second, one is still observing mind stuff, then realizing its difference from mind itself. Even in the third, the mind stuff is not entirely separate from deep meditation.

In this stage, the birds come to the tree, and the worms cause a disturbance, destroy this stage of consciousness.

A monk will say, "Now my mirror is clear." The master will yell at him: "Destroy that mirror."

As long as you have that mirror, something will reflect upon it; it is not yet a real stage of enlightenment. There is a struggle here, as you begin to know what original substance is. When joy, agony, good, bad--all relative concepts--are thrown away, then what?

You can imagine the third stage; it is like a lotus bud in deep water, not yet opened, keeping its petals as a man keeps a bird in his palm, guarding it so that no harm may come to it, no water may get in. One in meditation keeps that absolute trance, and the real tide of the universe flows into that meditation, and real enforcement will give you the power to open your eye and see the whole universe. Realization will come. In the third stage, in the whole universe there is nothing. Then, whence do you come? To know this is the fourth dhyana.

Between the third and fourth dhyanas is the arhat stage. In the fourth, the Bodhisattva is just hatching from the egg (on the tree hang the bells that are just starting to open). Then, the young man goes out from the tem-

ple and visits wayside temples, and associates with different monks and teachers. "I am a disciple of such and such an arhat; I have attained the fourth dhyana loka and now see what the world looks like." Now, the petals open wide and the air is filled with fragrance and reflects that scarlet color. Everyone can see the beautiful scarlet flowers. Just as when one enters a bath, he takes off everything first, then washes--second. Then he clambers in the hot spring, stretches, and flows with the water, third. Then what does he do? He comes out and puts on new clothes and perhaps a new necklace. This is the attitude of the Bodhisattva--the fourth dhyana.

This is a pure Hinayana sutra, primitive Buddhism; it flows out from the golden lips of the Buddha himself. We see here two phases of Buddhism--taking off and putting on--two phases already in the Buddha's mind. European scholars do not see the meaning. Having no experience in meditation, they do not know the four dhyana lokas.

There are seven stages and four dhyana lokas: two stages before the first dhyana loka; the third stage is the first dhyana; the fourth stage is the second dhyana; the fifth stage is the third dhyana; the sixth stage is the fourth dhyana; and then there is one more stage.

THE THREE STAGES--It is not easy to speak of Buddhism to those who have as yet no conception of this religion at all. I do not know how to lead you into the path, so I will just speak about the plain aspect of Buddhism that is given by the teachers from generation to generation.

Today we speak of two schools of

Buddhism--the small and the great vehicle (Hinayana and Mahayana), but in primitive Buddhism at the Buddha's time, there were three schools: Shravakayana, Pratyekayana, and Bodhisattvayana. (Yana means "school").

The first constitutes those who listen to the Buddha's speaking and understand the theory of Buddhism. The second is the religion of the thinker. He does not listen to lectures, but he thinks. This is for those who seclude themselves, who have some learning, who meditate alone and observe the development of man and nature--the hermits who understand something but are not as great as the enlightened. Pratyeka means "hermit." The third is for those who come to the conclusion of their understanding and try to give this understanding to others. They come down from the mountaintop and into the city, bringing the teaching into daily life. They live in their own bodies, but their bodies are united with all the bodies of sentient beings.

For these three types of Buddhists, the Buddha made three types of commandments. I shall give a simple outline of these.

For the listener, the Buddha taught the Four Noble Truths: Suffering; the cause of suffering (desire); the cessation of the cause of suffering (cessation of desire); the method to annihilate desire.

The listeners are told to observe the commandments and to meditate carefully, and to make no contact with human beings. This teaching, the small vehicle, was for the novice, the immature--from twelve years on. The Buddha created this teach-

ing for those whose bodies are growing and whose minds are restless; it is for their control. At the end of this exertion of training, the Buddha gave them the Eightfold Golden Path for the annihilation of desire.

Meditation and realization was possible for the second type, also, but if they remained in isolation, how could they help humanity?

For the Bodhisattva, the Buddha also emphasized meditation and realization. He must observe carefully, look within himself and grasp IT as it is. He must embody the truth. Enlightenment is the end of this type of Buddhism. Such a one sees himself and nature as a reflection of God. He has a natural attitude.

How can we put ourselves into that attitude? How can we reflect as the flower in the garden, the bird in the tree? We must make the mind clean and plain, so that it may reflect the whole cosmos. When we know the law of the universe, the growing and decaying of nature, we need not struggle to annihilate our desires; we watch them to cultivate our awareness.

One who has come to this point of awareness keeps his balance always. Even in the midst of battle, in joy and in pain, he is always poised--dwelling in nature as a bird in the wilds. He enters Nirvana in this daily life.

To understand Buddhism, you must pass through these three stages. Then your life itself is Buddhism. There is nothing to study, nothing to worship. Your religion is realized from moment to moment in your daily life.

fully you would be aware and not fall, you would be able to resist the push. But when you meditate mindlessly you fall down. Awareness must be there always. This is the first step to attain enlightenment.

Second step: *In expiration I am mindful of the expiration, and I realize that I am expiring the breath.* Begin to expire, and when you have expired you know. Then expire again. Breathe through your nose, not your mouth.

Third step: *In long breathing or in short, my entire body is aware that I am mindful of the inspiration, and realizes the inspiration of the breath.* Not only mind, but the body also. First, you are aware of breathing with your mind; second, you are aware of breathing with your body. Body means not only this body, but the entire universe. All the universe is your body. So when you breathe in, the entire universe breathes in; when you breathe out, the entire universe breathes out. Thus you destroy the gap between you and the universe.

Fourth step: *In expiration my entire body is aware that I am mindful of the expiration and realizes the expiration of the breath.*

And the fifth step: Now the fifth is not the body. It comes from this mind to body, from body to consciousness. Mind and consciousness are different. Mind is individual, is your own, but consciousness is universal, is Nature. Mind belongs to you, but consciousness does not belong to you. You belong to consciousness, you are possessed by consciousness.

When my body is at rest in mind-

ful inspiration, I realize that I am inspiring the breath: Now this breathing is not your breathing, this is universal consciousness breathing. Universal consciousness breathes in and breathes out. I feel this particularly in mountains. I feel this always when I go to volcanic mountains. They breathe wonderfully and sublimely. The whole volcano breathes in and breathes out, and the lava boils out and falls back--the consciousness of the world breathing. In such a way we breathe. You will forget yourself entirely. It is not yourself.

Then the sixth step; *When I am in Nirodha:* No more myself--absorption. In Nirodha your own ego is absolutely wiped out.

In mindful expiration I realize that I am expiring the breath. You are not sleeping. If you lose your attention you are in dreams, but if you keep your attention you are in Nirodha, absorption. You realize you are breathing in the state of Nirvana--no mind, no worry, no desire, no ambition. You will become one with the universe.

At all times I am aware of myself. With this kind of breathing you will naturally be aware of yourself. Your mind is superior to your worry; your mind is superior to your money, to your business. Counting money, to worry--it is important for human life, but it is not only business we have to attend to.

These are the six steps of breathing.

Next you practice the four dhyana lokas--the four dhyana stages, practices--in breathing. The four stages of Zen are practiced in

breathing.

Then I think of this. I am in the rough contemplation. Though he was breathing with the universe, without his ego, Shakyamuni Buddha thought he was still in the rough contemplation. Of course his mind, with breathing, comes and goes. He uses his own mind, he has his own attention in breathing. Therefore it is called "rough." That is the first stage of dhyana meditation.

In this contemplation I make my breath cease. "Cease" means he leaves, goes out of, the first stage of dhyana meditation and enters the next stage. This "leave" does not mean to die. This "cease" does not mean he dies. He dies in the first stage, the first dhyana, and then he will be born again in the second. But he does not change his physical body.

There are three kinds of birth and death in Buddhism.

First: you die in this body and appear in another, a different body.

Second: you die in your consciousness and will be born in the next stage of consciousness. For instance, you die in the fourth stage of rupa but you are born again in the stage of samjna. Or, you go to a movie. You see it, and when you come out you see that your mind died in the doorway of the movie house and you come back and attempt to make tea. Your mind was born again to make tea in the kitchen. You die in one consciousness and are born in the next stage of consciousness.

Third: you die in your mind. For instance, now you think of cigarette, and you think of train tickets. Your mind dies in cigarettes and is born

in train tickets. You die in the mind of cigarettes and are born in the mind of train tickets.

But this kind of death is the second kind, when "I make my breath cease."

When I contemplate in the finer contemplation: In rough contemplation your mind moves like your hand. In finer contemplation, you don't move your mind with your will power, but your mind is moved. It is as though you are in a dream. In a dream, you do not make a dream with your will power but you are managed by the dream. You are helpless, you cannot change it, you are passive. You would like to dream the same dream, but, if you do, it is not a real dream. But you can use your passive mind too. You can use your mind passively to perceive. You think you are in the bosom of God, and your mind is passive, you are moved. It is a very comfortable meditation. This is the so-called second stage of dhyana.

In that contemplation also I make my breath cease. And you then will be born in the third stage.

In yet finer contemplation I remain a longer time. This finer, third contemplation is the end. You will not expect the end in the second reincarnation, but, finally, in the third stage of dhyana it is the end. You don't return any more. You have certainly attained a complete change; you get out of your ego completely.

(To be continued)

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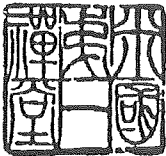
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