

ZEN notes



SOKEI-AN SAYS

THE THREE SAMADHIS Emancipation occurs in two states of mind. When it occurs in the leaking state of mind, it is called the three samadhis. When it occurs in the non-leaking state of mind it is called the three emancipations.

To understand Buddhism, you must be well-versed in the two terms, leaking ("ashrava") and non-leaking ("anashrava"). Leaking is the usual mind of sentient beings--desire, passion, anger, dreams, thoughts--all kinds of oozing suffering. It is produced in the same way that the body produces perspiration, pus, and all kinds of refuse. The Chinese describe leakage as something that is always leaking out, as from an old tub. Non-leaking is the state of mind when leakage has been annihilated by rooting out the cause of suffering.

In meditation, when you transform the alaya consciousness into mirror-wisdom, the former is said to be annihilated. You have given up everything that was deluded and you have attained the samadhi of annihilation, the non-leaking state of mind.

In the non-leaking three-gate emancipation, there are eight subdivisions. The ancient Buddhists meditated upon these to attain complete emancipation.

In the 16th Volume of the Anguttara Nikaya there is an explanation of the three samadhis. There is another in the Digha Nikaya. These are the oldest descriptions.

When you observe that "things" ("sarva-dharma") are entirely empty ("shunyata"), you attain the first of the three samadhis.

When you realize that "things" are "formless" you attain the second samadhi. Thoughts are a kind of mental "form," so in this case form includes thoughts, too. A glass of water has no thoughts, this "thing" has no form of its own. This one, myself, has no thoughts and form of its own. Thoughts and form are relative to the moment. There is no form of Sokei-an at this particular moment, nor are there any thoughts in Sokei-an at this particular moment. All is relative appearance. Observing this, you will attain the samadhi of no-form.

When we abandon our adherence to our intention and when we do not suffer in vain supplication, we attain the samadhi of no-supplication.

"O monks," Shakyamuni Buddha said, "While you know nothing about the three samadhis, in your samsara, you will never attain awakening to the enlightened state of mind."

In the Lotus Sutra it is told that when the Buddha was old, one day he said, "I am fatigued. I am just practicing samadhi in emptiness, samadhi in no-form, and samadhi in no-supplication." Thus the Buddha accepted his old age and the body in fatigue. This illustrates the Buddha's mind. Through the three samadhis he transcended the agony of illness and old age.

In the empty samadhi, the first of the three samadhis, you observe that "things" are relative appearance. You observe that in yourself there is no ego, no atman; you possess nothing that belongs to you particularly. Your eye is not yours, your ear is not yours, your body is not yours. You have no ego and no dwelling place for ego. When you have observed this you have attained empty samadhi.

In the first stage of the Four Noble Truths (translated by European scholars as suffering, the cause of suffering, the annihilation of suffering and the way of the annihilation of suffering) there are three elements: mutability, emptiness and non-ego. The first of the three samadhis corresponds to the non-ego of the first stage of the Four Noble Truths.

In Chinese the Four Noble Truths are the Four Solutions: dukkha--suffering; samudaya--accumulation of suffering; nirodha--annihilation; marga--the way. The second of the

three samadhis, the samadhi of no-form, comprises elements that relate also to those of the Four Noble Truths or Four Solutions. It is the key to open the door of the third of the Four Noble Truths, annihilation (nirodha).

Nirodha comprises several elements: (1) annihilation; (2) calmness, peace, stillness, tranquillity; (3) marvelous state, ecstasy, beauty, good; (4) detachment, to go away from, leave. In nirodha there is no noise. It is the marvelous state, aloof from all other states. In this nirodha (called Nirvana) there is neither color nor sound, smell nor taste nor touch, neither the form of man nor the form of woman. There is no form that has been created relatively; no form of birth, maintenance, decadence. These are the so-called ten stages of no-form. By the practice of this samadhi of no-form, one will reach Nirvana. All forms are created by causation. In the state of Reality there is no form, but sentient beings attach to the ten forms and take them as true. From the standpoint of Reality, there is neither one form nor many forms.

Nagarjuna made a gatha in his commentary on the three samadhis in his *Daichido-ron*. I have tried to translate this.

Looking down and looking up
Stooping down and stretching yourself
You come and go
You look at one another
You exchange words
You must know that there is no Reality
In these actions and words

Wind makes its action according to
its own consciousness
But in this consciousness itself



Sokei-an's Lives

Shigetsu, Zen Student, I

The Ryomokyo-kai was a group of "distinguished gentlemen" who practiced meditation with Imakita Kosen in Tokyo in the latter part of the last century. After Sokatsu Shaku had completed his Zen at twenty-nine and his pilgrimage to the great Zen temples of Japan and to Siam and Burma, he was directed by his teacher Soyen Shaku to revive this group which had dispersed.

So my master (Sokei-an says in *CAT'S YAWN*) went to Tokyo. With the help of four gentlemen, whom he had met while he was still a monk at Engakuji and who were his first students, a little temple was built in the village of Negishi at the foot of the slope behind the hill of Ueno. The students brought furniture and utensils and Sokatsu Shaku settled here. In the beginning he had ten or fifteen lay-disciples to whom he gave lectures on Buddhism and whom he instructed in the methods of Zen practice. As was the custom, he often went about the city of

Tokyo begging alms, holding a staff in his hand and wearing straw sandals on his feet. He was then thirty-two years old.

Gradually the little hut became too small for the students who gathered about him. After three years a new and larger temple was built at Nippori, a suburb of Tokyo. It was then that I came to my teacher. At that time I was a student of sculpture at the Imperial Academy of Art.

Ryomo-an, Sokatsu Shaku's temple at Nippori, had originally been an old farmhouse, but it was renovated and rebuilt under his direction so as to possess some of the characteristics of Buddhist architecture. It stood far out among the rice-fields, and the narrow paths between the paddies formed the only link between the temple grounds and the last streets of this Tokyo suburb situated behind Ueno hill.

There were two houses in the temple enclosure. The smaller served as the *hojo*, or living quarters, of our teacher. Stepping-stones connected the *hojo* with the other house, a very large building, which contained the temple proper, the student's meditation hall, or *zendo*, and the various offices. Just beyond the entrance to the grounds, as is customary in Zen temples, was the large lotus-pond, the magnificent white blooms of which came to their full glory in July and August.

At that time the disciples of Sokatsu Shaku were, for the most part, university students and young doctors, with a sprinkling of members of the nobility. The farmhouses of Nippori village were favorite lodging-places for the university students, who came

from all parts of Japan. The village itself was quiet but not too far from the city universities, and the households of the farmers afforded both pleasant and inexpensive living.

In rain and snow or in fine weather, at six o'clock in the morning we students were assembled waiting for the gate of Ryomo-an to open. Quietly we would enter the temple and, sitting together in the big room which served as our *zendo*, we would practice meditation after the fashion of the *sodo* or monastery monks. At seven o'clock *sanzen*, catechism, began. One by one we would enter our teacher's room to answer the *koan*, or Zen question, which he had previously given to each of us. After *sanzen* we would quietly leave the temple, returning home for breakfast and then going to our nine o'clock classes at school. Sunday passed as other days, except that our *Roshi*, our Zen teacher, gave a lecture, or *teisho*, which we were all expected to attend.

Five days in each month were devoted to *Sesshin*, a period of intense meditation, when our *Roshi* held *sanzen* four times each day. Because of the pressure of their studies few university students could take part in this monthly *Sesshin*, but many lay-men and lay-women participated in it, coming from the city and the surrounding suburbs, and even from the distant northern provinces. It was during the month of July, however, after the summer vacation had begun, that the activities of Ryomo-an reached their height. This was the period of the Great *Sesshin*, when for an entire month we subjected ourselves to the same severe discipline as that imposed upon the monks of the great headquarter temples.

My name when I was a novice was Shigetsu--meaning to point to the moon. The novice doesn't look at the moon, but at the pointer. Like a cat, he looks at the finger--not what it's pointing to. Human beings have the faculty of looking at their own minds. The Sutra is the finger to point out something, but most look at the words and go no further.

When I was in the monastery, the elder monk taught us how to meditate. He would always beat his abdomen, so all the young monks did so too--making faces, grunting. As he was quite fat, he could make a good sound beating his abdomen, but a young monk hasn't much of an abdomen.

Hinayana monks almost forget human beings. Like the Trappist monks, they don't speak a word. They just stay in meditation; for five or six years they don't speak a word. We call them cave dwellers. During that time they suppress all human desire. They eat enough to support the physical body, that is all. In winter there is no charcoal to warm their hands; they live like starving animals, but they must concentrate their minds to the abstract state. For this time their freedom is absolutely sacrificed. They are like fish in the ocean; one fish goes and all the fish follow. There is no individual mind, only the group mind. They are ruled by one mind, and individuality is not permitted. In my Hinayana phase, I was that type of man.

When I was living in the temple, I did not listen to back-talk, gossip, for many years. I had come to enlighten myself and that is all that I cared for! I did not pay attention to my teacher's criticism, nor to the criticism of my friends. I simply went to *sanzen* with an answer or not.

There are two kinds of Nirvana, that in which something remains, and that in which nothing remains.

When you annihilate sufferings, mind-stuff, your mind will go into Nirvana, but your body still remains here.

When I was young I was meditating blindly. Just meditating, not knowing anything. I was so afraid I thought I would fall into a trance and not come back. If you practice three hours a day, in two months you will experience the Nirvana that has remainder.

Nirvana that has no remainder is that mind is annihilated and body is also annihilated and you do not exist any more. Extinction? The Christians say that our religion is extinction. Before they criticize our religion they should know it. When your mind is not yours and your body is not yours you enter the Nirvana in which there is no remainder. Why endeavor to annihilate yourself? You are not existing from beginningless beginning to endless end.

To attain the true state of Nirvana you must drop yourself once for all. You must experience that your feet are not standing on the floor, your head is not placed under the ceiling. Your whole figure is shining through the universe, you are breathing with the great rhythm of the universe, you have lost your own *atman* center. You will enter there through the first *koan*.

MY FIRST KOAN

When I received the first koan from my teacher it was February, the first of February. I went around the lake of Shinobazu. It was not large, but I took about one hour to go around. How many times I went around I don't know. I didn't think anything but my koan--pounding my mind, trying to squeeze it, squeezing it, boiling it down, analyzing it, making it smaller, smaller, until finally it disappeared. And then, "Oh!" That way the answer comes to you.

The Buddha was passing along the road. There was a young girl who had an appointment with her lover. Under the hot sun she was waiting many hours. But he did not come, he failed to keep his promise. The girl sang a song:

If I were thinking of you
My love would not be very deep
I was not thinking of you
But I could never forget you

The Buddha listened to her song and said to his disciples: "Listen! That was the teaching Kashyapa Buddha promulgated when he was on earth. Now it has been promulgated so long here on earth that it has become a love-song."

This is so-called mindfulness--when we think about the problem we have about our religion. I abandoned my smriti and am depraved in my old age because I must do my work, but certainly when I was a young novice I thought of my koan always. When I lighted my cigarette my koan came to my mind; when I drank water my koan came to my mind. I was keeping my koan always in mind.

If merely sitting from morning to evening were enough for enlightenment, then the beggars sitting in the park would be enlightened. To awake is the important thing.

I was very busy in the monastery, had no time to sit and meditate. I meditated standing! Working in the kitchen, sweeping the garden, carving images for my teacher--in the bathroom, on the streetcar--I was always concentrated. When I came into a place for a little while where nobody was, I stretched my mind to my koan and meditated upon it. You must work with your brain upon your problem and boil it down. Then the question becomes very clear. As long as you have any doubt about it, you cannot attain. To awake is the goal.

When I was a novice, I was always thinking about enlightenment. I would read somewhere that someone was enlightened, or that enlightenment burst out in his mind. Somewhere even I remember reading "enlightenment thundered in his mind." But what was enlightenment? Today perhaps I would say it means "to realize the Reality of true existence." Of course there are many kinds and degrees of realization. For instance, you left your pocketbook at home when you went to the restaurant. You order your food and begin to eat. Then all of a sudden you realize that you left your pocketbook at home. This, too, is some kind of realization, isn't it? Or, you are thinking about the Reality of yourself and suddenly: "Oh, this is the Reality of myself." In that moment the realization will be experienced as enlightenment. But there is no flash of lightning through the mind. It is no such thing as that.

there is no form
There are no thoughts in any moment
of its action
Men and women in this and that form
entertain their egos
They attach to this deluded view
Because they are ignorant
Their forms are a structure of bone
Covered by flesh and skin
They move like automatons made of
wood
There is no truth in them though
they look like men
All are created relatively
All are like shadows of shining
gold in the water
Or like a field fire burning down
a bamboo wood
By their relative connections
They make many sounds

From my own generation I look back on our forefathers' conceptions of life and the world. These days I realize more and more, they truly believed that life and the existence of the outside are only phantoms. Though I am a Japanese, born in the heart of the Orient, I confess that this contemporary generation is materialistic. We have almost lost our traditional feeling toward life and the outside. Of course I feel that these no-form ideas of life and the outside are almost impossible of conception by Westerners. But after all they are true. There is no form in the outside nor in the inside. The only thing we can say to this, in vulgar American speech, is "So what!" The Hinayanists take this very pessimistically and regret that this is true. But regrets are of no importance. We must accept this as true.

An old translation in the Chinese

of the third of the three samadhis, the samadhi of no-supplication, is the samadhi of no-doing, no-making, no-intention. We must realize that we must accept this and in another American vulgarism we can say, "There is nothing doing."

The world is suffering because all is mutable (the first of the three elements of the first of the Four Noble Truths). There is the agony of birth, the agony of old age and the agony of sickness and the agony of death. According to the four forms of existence--birth, maintenance, decadence, and disappearance, everything is mutable. When we meet, we must separate. We meet sometimes those we like, but sometimes we must meet those we dislike. These are the agonies resulting from mutability. Thus we understand, we supplicate nothing from anyone. We pray God for nothing.

This third samadhi also includes elements that belong to the second Solution of the Four Solutions--accumulation ("samudaya"). Original darkness is the cause of everything. Because of it we accumulate all illusory notions in our mind and we were born as a result of this accumulation. Thus, as we were born, we make mental relations living in this illusory world, and we increase our agony. By the samadhi of no-supplication, we abandon these worlds of illusion and agony and return to the state of Nirvana.

We abominate living in agony in the ocean of accumulated suffering. By practicing the samadhi of no-supplication we detach ourselves from all agony in the ocean of agony. This will be experienced when you observe the koan of Ma Taishi. The abbot came

and asked Ma Taishi, when he was dying, "How are you feeling?" "*Nichimen-buttsu, getchimenbuttsu.*" "Moon-faced god and sun-faced god." When you observe this koan you will understand this type of detachment. Also in the koan, "In the pangs of death, how can you escape?" When you cannot swallow a drop of water or a bit of medicine, when your children are around you but you cannot see them, when your body is burning with fever but you are completely helpless--how can you escape from the agony of death? Or, when the steamer is sinking and all are trying to escape but there is no hope of being saved, you realize this samadhi of no-supplication. Every moment of every day life is like being on a sinking ship. This life is sinking every moment, surrounded by the ocean of agony and the waves of accumulation. Many times in life we need this samadhi of no-supplication.

Marga, the last of the Four Solutions, is the way. It is like a street by means of which we go from one place to another. Once you have realized suchness ("I am not different from THAT, I am exactly the same as THAT"), your activities from morning to night are the activities of marga.

By these three stages of practice, you can get out of the bondage of the illusory world and go to enlightenment (Bodhi). The elements of marga are like a boat or raft. You use them to go to Nirvana. In the end you must abandon them. By this practice you abandon all the devices of Buddhism, all the upayas. In Buddhism you have nothing to be attached to. One by one you throw away all the koans you have observed. There is nothing to hope for, nothing to attach to in Nirvana.

Through the three samadhis you experience the complete realization of Nirvana.

The arhat observes emptiness and the non-ego of "things" first with his worldly knowledge ("leaking mind"). Next he enters Nirvana. Then he observes the state of Nirvana with his non-leaking mind and realizes that annihilation is nothing but the form of the knowledge by which he observes that all is empty. Finally he enters real Nirvana (nirupadhisesa-nirvana). Such a man calls the three samadhis by different names: shunyata-samadhi, animitta-samadhi; apranitta-samadhi. This practice is called repeating the three samadhis. Why repeating? He observes that this is empty and then annihilates this view. So he finds that emptiness (shunyata) is also empty. Then he attains true nirvana.

The state of this true nirvana is beyond words. You must observe it by your experience in koan study. It is as though a man cremated a dead body with a stick. After the body is burned, the stick is burned also. Knowledge of the three samadhis is exactly like this. With this knowledge you burn all the illusory world and when the world is burned up, you must burn up your knowledge also. Then you will realize conclusive Nirvana.

The lectures on which The Three Samadhis is based were given by Sokei-an in 1939. One person only, Ruth Sasaki, took notes of the second and more complete of the lectures. This article has been reconstructed from those notes by Mary Farkas.

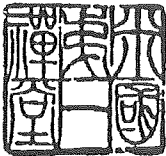
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