

JEN NOTES



Year of
the
Cock
1981



February 5, 1981 to January 24, 1982. A hard year, a year of reaction. Good for military careers. Risk of the abuse of police powers, also unemployment, but great for cocks. Years of the cock in the 20th century: 1909, 1921, 1933, 1945, 1957, 1969, 1981, and 1993. Some roosters are: Groucho Marx, Richelieu, Goebbels, Kipling, Colette, Katherine Hepburn, Dwight Goddard, Michael Hotz.

According to the *Asian Animal Zodiac*, by Ruth Q. Sun, (Charles E. Tuttle Co., Japan, 1974) the Cock is of celestial origin. At the very beginning of things, he was sent down by the Creator to ascertain what the world looked like. But he tarried so long (since he was well pleased with what he saw) that he was forbidden to return to heaven. That, at least, is an ancient Ainu myth.

The Cock also plays a leading role in the Shinto sun myth. According to the Kojiki account, when the sun goddess protested her brother's violence by hiding in a cave, leaving the world in darkness, the Cock was brought before the sealed entrance to crow. This made the goddess think that the day had dawned without her presence. Curiosity led her to emerge from her hiding place, and the world was bright again. From that time forward, the Cock has been considered the messenger of the sun goddess; at the Grand Shrine of Ise, devoted to the divine ancestors of Japan, gorgeously plumed, long-tailed species of Cock are always to be seen around the shrines. The torii (gate) at the entrance to every Shinto shrine is in fact a replica of the Cock's perch.

The image of a Cock perched upon a large drum, also seen frequently in Asia, alludes to an ancient Chinese legend concerning the drum placed in early times before the emperor's palace to summon the troops in case of attack. During the reign of Emperor Yao, the times were so peaceful that the drum was not needed at all and chickens nested in it. In this manner the drum and the Cock together became the symbol of peace in the land.

Another Chinese tale concerns an exploit of a son of Emperor Yap. Imprisoned on one occasion in the town of Kan Kok Kan, where the prison gates were always locked from sun-set until cock-crow, the prince managed to escape in the night with his retainer, because the servant gave such a skillful imitation of the Cock that the guards awakened and opened the heavy doors without question!

Another Chinese legend concerning the Cock tells of one of the three women immortals, Ma Ku. It had been her grandfather's custom to allow his overworked laborers to stop their work only when the Cock crowed at daybreak. In order to permit the workers some rest, the daughter imitated the Cock's crowing.

The Cock is believed to embody the element *yang*, representing universal warmth, strength and life. The Chinese ascribe special virtues to the Cock: the crown of his head is said to be the mark of his literary spirit; the spurs on his feet are tokens of a warlike disposition; and he is also a symbol of courage; he fights his enemies bravely. (Cockfights are extremely popular throughout Asia). At the same time he is benevolent, always clucking for the hen to come and share when he scratches up grain. And, he is faithful, for he never forgets the hour to crow. Additionally, he is a symbol of protection against fire, so a picture of a red Cock is often pasted on the wall of a house for that reason. Pleasurable country life is suggested by paintings of a cock and a hen in a garden of rocks and peonies.

People born in the Year of the Cock are thought to be profound thinkers, always sure they are right, adventurous but somewhat insecure. Blunt and brave, interesting and difficult. Financially, they have their ups and downs, and they tend to be improvident.

From THE GREAT NATURAL WAY by the Ven. Hozen Seki

Cuda-panthaka and his older brother became disciples of the Buddha. Cuda-panthaka was slow, had little capacity and was unable to remember the Buddha's words. His older brother, who was very keen, called him one day and told him how poor his memory was and how everyone was laughing at him and how he, his older brother, was ashamed of him. He ended by asking Cuda-panthaka to quit the Sangha.

That night Cuda-panthaka wept in the forest. Soon, however, the Buddha passed by and asked why he was weeping. Cuda-panthaka told the Buddha. Then the Buddha said that he need not leave. "Try," he said, "to memorize one word; I will help you. Memorize 'sweep.' And beginning tomorrow, take a broom and simply sweep the yard, saying 'sweep, sweep, sweep.'"

The next day Cuda-panthaka swept and recited--and so for three months or more. While he was cleaning the grove one day, suddenly something happened in the depth of his mind. "*Sweeping*," he thought, "is not only cleaning outwardly, but *sweeping my own mind*. How beautiful it is! We have dust on the mind, but cleaning it reveals something beautiful!"

Overjoyed, he told the story to the Buddha with gratitude. "I experienced the sweeping in my mind."

"Fine!" said the Buddha; "you obtained an enlightenment!"

Thus, even without much intelligence, but with single-minded practice, Cuda-panthaka reached enlightenment. When the student of Buddha-Dharma first enters temple life, his task is to clean the temple, from early in the morning. This goes on for years. Finally, he will understand something.

"Sweeping" is a very important part of life.

The Master said: "Worthy scholars, if you are disposed to practice this, those who are living at home can also practice this. It is not dependent upon monastic life. If you practice this, though living in the home, you will be the same as he whose soul is good, even though he lives in the East. If you do not practice this, though living in the temple, you will be the same as he whose soul is bad, even though he lives in the West. If only your mind is pure, that is the Westward within your own nature."

The Prefect Wei again questioned: "How can a layman practice this? Teach us, I pray you."

The Master said: "I will recite the chant of no-formula (non-extrinsic formula) of mind. Conduct your practice relying upon this only. Thus you will always be with me though you live elsewhere. If you do otherwise, there will be no result from your shaving the head and living away from home. This is the chant."

SOKEI-AN SAYS

If your mind is plain, why should you try to keep commandments? If your conduct is straight, why should you struggle to practice meditation? This is the first line of the chant. Next time I shall translate the rest. The Sixth Patriarch has said that the layman can also attain enlightenment, which is not dependent upon monastic life. Even though men become monks and live in a temple, if they do not care about the practice of daily life in Buddhism, they are worse than those living in a lay family, drinking and gambling.

If you are disposed to practice this, those who are living at home can also practice it. It is not dependent upon monastic life. There are many laymen who have a profound knowledge, who are truly enlightened. In the Buddha's time, he called them Bodhisattvas. Later, Bodhisattva came to be looked upon as meaning "demi-god." "Sattva" means *being*--the being who has an enlightened mind, the awakened being. But the Buddha called lay brothers "Bodhisattvas." The knowledge and wisdom was handed down from generation to generation. In China, the name "Bodhisattva" was changed to "Koji." When the Zen master gives this name to anyone, that one must have entered--he must no longer be outside the gate. In my group, those who have been given Zen names are inside of Buddhism.

Those of the Pure Land Sect thought that all those who had entered were in the Western Heaven. Making a distinction from the Western Heaven, they deduced that the Heaven of the others must be in the East.

If you practice this, even though living in a home, you will be the same as he whose soul is good, even though he lives in the East. If you do not practice Buddhism, even though you live in a temple or in the Pure Western Land, your soul is bad.

If only your mind is pure, that is the Westward within your nature. Purenness of mind is the Western Heaven. It is very simple, but very

hard to attain. Buddhists say: "Pureness of the abdomen, of the breast, and pureness of the mind; pureness of wisdom and pureness of speech." The abdomen is the base--but we don't mean the physical abdomen. When we are sitting upon the line of life and death, we say we are sitting on the abdomen. It is like a great general sitting in his tent and receiving all the messages from every side of the battle; he is sitting upon the earth. When the great general is asked for his decision, his directions are spoken from the abdomen. It is as I say "No" to a student's answer to a koan. No teacher will give you the answer to a koan; you have to break through by yourself, with your own power. That is Zen. To talk about the mind being pure, the abdomen and the heart must be pure. Remember that this abdomen means the line between life and death. You must sit upon this line every day and at every moment. Sometimes we say of a man: "Great abdomen, great guts, good heart, good mind!" The heart must be deep and wide. Then you can have a good mind, good brain, good speech. That is the law. But, usually man is upside-down. He may have wonderful speech and a clever mind--but a bad heart. In other words, he has no guts; he is no good.

Prelect Wei again questioned: "How can a layman practice this? Teach us, I pray you!"

The Master said: "I will recite the chant of no-formula of mind." The Sixth Patriarch has a commandment and that commandment is the formula of no-formula of mind, Alakshana--no-formula. I think I have told you of this before. Our minds must be in this kind of moldless form. A box has a formula, or mold. But our mind should have no mold. However, our mother made a mold for us; the whole world made a formula for us, and we have to put our Self into these molds because of circumstances. But when we get out, it is ridiculous to remain within this mold, to hold on to it. This is the theory of the Sixth Patriarch's commandment. You cannot carry out the intrinsic formula because you have made an extrinsic formula. You must break this and enter natural being.

Thus you will always be with me though you live elsewhere. If you do otherwise, there will be no result from your shaving the head and living away from home. The only difference between the enlightened one and the deluded one is in sitting on the abdomen--not hanging on life and death.

If your mind is plain, why should you strive to keep the commandments? This means the commandments given you by the Buddha. You do not touch Mind itself when you are in some mold received through circumstances. You must find your own commandment which is written in your heart and mind.

If your conduct is straight, why should you struggle to practice meditation? If one has a naturally deep heart, a clear abdomen, a bright mind, he does not need to practice meditation.

AN APPEAL

I have, exceptionally, given a mailing list and the use of my name to a committee organized by Dr. Kurt Leidecher and Dr. B.P. Kirtisinghe, both known to me for many years, to collect for distribution to the Cambodian Refugees and the Sakyas and Koliyas, (the Buddha's paternal and maternal descendents living in Rajasthan, India) by The World Fellowship of Buddhists in Thailand with the cooperation of the Ministry of Home Affairs of Thailand. Contributions are to be sent to Ven. Hozen Seki, President, The American Buddhist Academy, 331 Riverside Drive, New York, NY, 10025, who is assuming personal responsibility for the fund. Be sure to give your name and address so a receipt can be sent to you. Mary Farkas

SPRING SESSHIN

Roshi Joshu Sasaki has notified us that he will be at the Institute for a sesshin March 24-30. Applications will be mailed to subscribers and previous sesshin attendants who have requested notification.

Write or call David Radin, The Ithaca Zen Center, 312 Auburn St., Ithaca, NY, 14850, Tel. (607) 273-3190, for information on the Summer Seminar on the Sutras.

FROM THE RECORD OF BANKEI

Translated by Haskel

A monk asked: "I have heard that the masters of old attained great enlightenment through difficult and painful practice, and that the masters of our own day too realized the truth of Buddhism by various sorts of difficult practice. I can't quite accept (the idea) that someone like myself, without engaging in religious practice or attaining enlightenment, can realize the Unborn Buddha Mind, just as I am."

The Master said: "Suppose there is a group of travelers who, passing through tall mountain peaks in a place where there's no water, become thirsty. One of their number goes looking for water in a distant valley, and after strenuously searching all over, at last finds the water and returns to give it to his companions to drink. Without making any strenuous efforts themselves, the people who drink the water can satisfy their thirst just the same as the one who did make such effort, can't they? (On the other hand), those who harbor doubts and refuse to drink the water will have no way to satisfy their thirst. Because I did not meet up with any clear-eyed men (in my youth), I went astray and engaged in (all sorts of) strenuous efforts (till) finally I uncovered the Buddha within my own mind. So when I tell you all that without painful practice, you (can uncover) the Buddha in your *own* mind it is just like (the travelers) drinking the water and slaking their thirst without (having actually gone in search of it themselves). In this way, when you make use of the Buddha Mind that everyone intrinsically possesses, just as it is, and attain serenity of mind without delusory difficult practice, that is the precious, true Dharma, isn't it?" Copr. Peter Haskel

The 13th Buddhist Symposium, co-sponsored by The International Buddhist Exchange Center and the Japan Buddhist Federation, chose as its theme the topic: "What is Zero?" Twenty-five scientists, including mathematicians and Buddhists, discussed the possibilities of the relationship between zero and meditation on Sunyata in Buddhism. The symposium began with Professor Shoji Maebara's lecture. He spoke of the role of zero, a substantial subject in present day mathematics. "Zero is one of the numbers and it means nothing unless connected to other numbers. The basic element in today's mathematics is not the number, but the concurrence. The concurrence with no element, called vacant concurrence, is the foundation for all the subjects in mathematics."

Prof. Maebara did not refer to the history of the zero discovery, presumably because of his lack of knowledge on the matter. He did express an opposing view to the relation between meditation on Sunyata in Buddhism and the zero concept in mathematics.

Professor Ekyo Ejima, in his lecture titled "Significance of Meditation of Sunyata", defined the concept of sunyata (relativity). "Where one realizes the law that all elements in this world are non-substantial, namely that all beings and forms of existence in this world are born or produced on the basis of the law of causality, and therefore they have no self-nature."

He then logically analyzed the thought of Indian meditators for the sunyata, saying that their way of thinking on sunyata requires strict consideration, especially the consideration resulting in denial.

"This thought gives rise to a strong motivation to produce many fruitful achievements in the Mahayana Buddhism," Prof. Ejima said, pointing out the significance of meditation on sunyata.

Prof. Ejima also refused to give an affirmative comment on the relation between the two concepts. "We need a more careful comparison before coming to a conclusion," he said.

All of the mathematicians took the opposing stand on the relationship, while some of the Buddhists expressed an affirmative view. "There seems to be similar underlying principle in the concept of zero and the Buddhist tenet of an unlimited supply from nothing," some averred, but almost all participants, mathematicians and Buddhists alike agreed in support of the negative view that although sunyata has a direction towards enlightenment, zero does not have such an attribute.

The concept of both zero and meditation on sunyata came from India and in Buddhist analogy zero might have become into being from meditation on sunyata. For this reason the symposium focused on examining the possibilities of a relationship between the two concepts.

Journal notes

CONVERSATIONS WITH FARKAS

Noted by Hackney

More on unconscious conflicts. You cannot see the unconscious of course, but you can see what is occurring when it occurs. You can be aware of what is happening and the results. In the Chinese method which is described by Charles Luk and called Hua t'ou, you have to deal with the thought before it develops.

Is it as Salter indicates that for dealing with problems or bad habits the solution is not to do it? Being analytical can cramp you and limit your learning and understanding. The conscious mind does not "see" fast enough to monitor or "imagine" all the steps necessary to carry out many activities. Therefore, in order not to be foxed by the delinquent ego you have to suspend thinking and not energize its negativity.

Yes, but *how* do you do it? How does a sword-swallower get past the gag reflex? The not-thinking or not-doing presupposes doing it first. That is why we are discussing the "speed of mind." For a person in conflict with his 2 or 3 year old "no" operating effectively against his adult "yes" the well-entrenched delinquent ego will often have figured out exactly how, by giving the instruction to do something incorrectly at the same time the adult ego is trying to do the same act to make a mess of the result.

If your programming—which is what the ego is really doing for you—just as a dream in its own way monitors what you are going to do or comments on what you are doing (although it doesn't go beyond a point), doesn't "work", you can see where the problems lie. In the case between the delinquent ego and the adult ego, the programming is not being done wrong, it is doing exactly what the person is telling it to do, but the person is programming in a way not known or clear to him or her. Sometimes, it works like a tic—the "wrong" movement often has meaning. By grasping what the meaning of this movement is, the observer can detect what it is that the tic is really concealing. In the same way, by grasping what the conflict is concealing, the person can deal with it and move without obstruction. Meditation, or "clearing" the mind, makes it possible to see the process. Observing the "moments" of mind is rather like slowing down motion-picture film so you can see the individual frames.

RADIO STATION

WABC called to inquire about the Year of the Chicken since it sounded like a "Zen thing."

"Chicken?" I asked.

"Yes," he said. "We aren't allowed to use the other word on the radio."

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