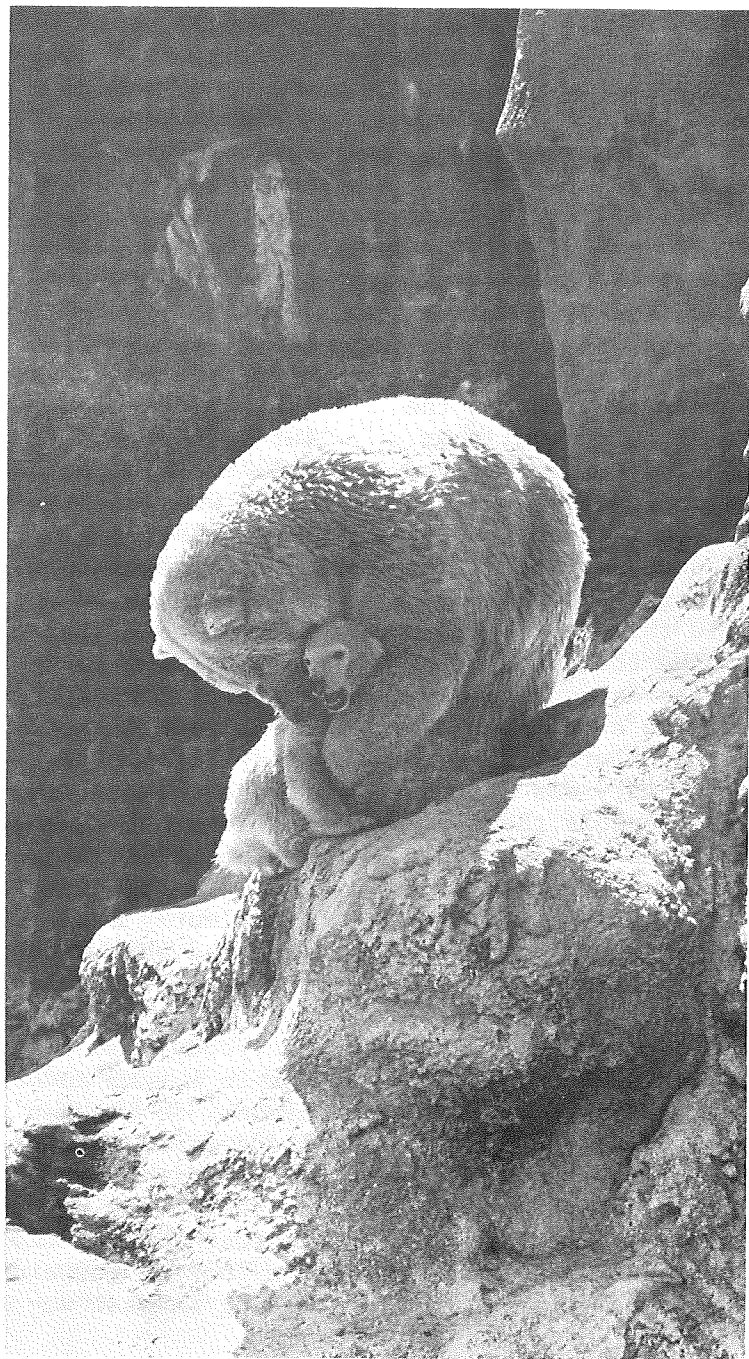


zen notes



JOSHU SASAKI ROSHI SAYS
On Zen Practice
Noted by MF 4/5/80

The Zen that we practice now is really quite different from the way it was 300 or 400 years ago. So, even though in Zen practice we have rules and customs, if you think that the way we practice now is just as it was in antiquity, that's quite wrong. We Japanese Zen monks wear these long-sleeved robes, but in the days of Shakyamuni they didn't have long-sleeved robes. The reason we wear such robes is because they were popular in the Tang and Sung Dynasties. Some people think that unless you have those long flowing sleeves, you don't look like a real Zen monk, but that's wrong. When the Sung Dynasty was destroyed by the Mongols, the style of clothes of northern nomadic people became popular in China. But the Chinese who had been used to Sung style garments were contemptuous of the northern nomadic people's style of dressing. When you progress farther down into the dynasty past the Ming Dynasty, you come to another northern dynasty, the Manchu or Ching, the costume becomes even

more along the lines of northern style costumes. My translator wears contemporary style Buddhist robes, which are, as you can see, quite different. In Japan we have preserved the ancient Tang and Sung Dynasty style long sleeves but when you come to the more recent Chinese robes, the sleeves are short. We in Japan have preserved the Zen of the Tang and Sung Dynasties and also the costume of those times. But I suspect that due to the Americanization of Japan we will be finding Zen monks going around in Western clothes. What I'd like you to consider is that the value of Zen is not to be found in a certain kind of dress or food. People who come to study with me wear black kimono and black hakama, but it's not I who have decided that this is what should be. I just stood by silently seeing. I wondered what kind of clothes they'd come up with, and, sure enough, everybody came to sanzen in hakama and black kimono. So it wasn't I who ordered it. But after all, it is pretty convenient to do zazen in that kind of clothes. I'm looking forward to seeing in what way Zen

will mature and develop in America, what direction it will take.

The basic rules for the way a Zen monastery is run were laid down in the beginning of the eighth century by Master Hyakujo. However, the original text of Hyakujo's rules for the Zen monastery was lost. When the Mongol Dynasty people went around the country by Imperial order searching for fragments, they came up with a so-called official, Imperial reconstruction of those ancient Zen rules. The Zen that came into Japan--Soto or Rinzai--is basically Sung Dynasty style. Since the Zen of Japan is of a style before the Chinese Imperial version of the Zen rules was formulated, it's not surprising that the customs of the Zen temples of Japan are different from the Imperial collection of Hyakujo's rules. Although the rules themselves were lost, a certain spirit remained throughout the Sung Dynasty which was transmitted to Japan. In later dynasties a new line of development in Chinese thought occurred in which the three religions that were known to the Chi-

nese--Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism--were all aiming at the same thing. This was called "Three Teachings, One Meaning." So when you look at the works of the Zen masters of the Ming Dynasty, there is something in them which is a little difficult to understand, something that is really not purely Buddhist.

Anyhow, although the general style of Hyakujo's rules was brought to Japan, the way we do Zen nowadays in Rinzai temples is quite different from that. Actually, in old times in Japan, Rinzai people also faced the wall when they sat, just as Soto people do today. Soto Zen people don't use the long stick. They use a short one and give you a whack from behind, without warning, so that it gives quite a shock to those who are asleep. In Japan, from the Tokugawa period, roughly from the start of the 17th century to the middle of the 19th century--there was quite a bit of confusion about the ways of learning in Zen temples. In the early

Tokugawa period, a Chinese monk named Ingen came to Japan. The military government of the Shoguns were not all that favorable to Buddhism at that time. In fact, they feared its power and tried to formulate a policy toward religion whereby they could make use of it for their own aims. The Shoguns were especially nervous about Rinzai monks, who were known to be on the wild side and pretty uncontrollable, so to deal with that, as soon as Ingen came from China, they welcomed him and gave him a lot of patronage, and they set him up to be their man to be opposed to the already established Japanese clergy. So, due to this patronage, Ingen Zen was set up so it was as powerful as established groups. The way he conducted Zen, how he set up temples, how he taught, coming from the Ming Dynasty very late, was quite different from what had been practiced in Rinzai temples up to that time. The upshot of all this was that quite a number of practitioners of that time, the 17th century, were impressed with Ingen and many went to study with

him. So, although there was on one hand the prospering of the new Zen brought in by Ingen, the old Rinzai Zen went into a decline. This style of Zen which was brought in by Ingen--you may have read about it--was the third, lesser school, called Obaku Zen. 70 or 80 years later, again another modern Chinese Zen master came to Japan. The result of these people coming from more modern times in China, was quite a change in style even in old establishments, and they were considerably influenced by the Ming Dynasty. The upshot of this influence, the style that was introduced at that time, or changes, rather, was to make training schedules like boot camp. Actually, the Rinzai school made these changes, getting official permission from the Shoguns of the Tokugawa government, that they could emulate the style brought in by so-called modern Zen masters. The way we do things now in Zen temples in Japan pretty much carries on the style of Zen that was created at that time. Because there were incessant political changes, the Sung overthrown by the Mongols,

the Mongols overthrown by the Ming, and so forth, this is why Zen monks developed boot camp mentality in training. There's something after all that is kind of invigorating about the way things are done in the military. When a bell rings you have to stand at attention, and so forth, and the Japanese like this. But we can't say that this way of following signals exactly was something entirely new, because in ancient times, they had put much emphasis on the rule of "harmonization." A harmonious life style, where everyone is moving in consonance with one another, was an ancient ideal. Anyway, it did become like the military. Our sticks got longer. Really, in ancient times Rinzaï people had short sticks and roshis held them during sanzen. If you answered off the wall, you got hit. Anyhow, the traditions of Zen temples you find in Japan are really only a few centuries old. Since roshis were in the habit of holding a stick and whacking people, monks got into the same habit. A few years ago I noticed that in Baldy Zendo there was a lot of whacking going on,

and I realized that just about everybody likes to go into this thing, not just the Japanese. Everyone wants to be macho and show how tough our practice is. During one session, a lady came to me and said, "I can't take it here any more--I'm going. Because my posture was a little off, the jikijitsu grabbed me and threw me down on the floor." So even in America people do things like that. Human beings do have this tendency of wanting to impress other people by showing them just how ferocious and incredible their practice is. What that is is a Zen performance, that is, turning a Zen temple into a playhouse. I would like you to develop your Zen practice here in a very calm way so that you don't turn this place into a Zen theater. Anyway, when you look at the history of Zen, you see times of prosperity and times of decline. In times of decline, practitioners wonder what they can do to make things better. What I would like you to keep in mind in setting the direction of Zen in America, is that the way we do Zen in Japan is not the only way to do Zen. So the way Zen will develop in America will be in

the future, and that is fine. It will be interesting to see just what kind of clothes you wear, what kind of food you eat-- will you eat rat's tails? Anyway, it's not right just to ape Japan--aping of something is not the real thing. Unless you can show the real thing-- when you take a sword out of its scabbard and see the real sword in front of you--you won't really develop your civilization.

CONVERSATION WITH FARKAS

MORE ON ANGER It's all very well to say "give it up" to a grownup. But grownups are not the ones who have the problem. It's usually babies.

I'm thinking now about how to help babies grow up. I don't know much about actual babies, except one. She used to be with me in my office, late mornings, where she came to nap. She would

get really angry if the doorbell or telephone rang. I never displayed anger toward her except once, when she had messed up my desk. She looked at me with reproof in her eyes, and said, "That was mean the way you spoke to me. But I know that deep down inside you really love me, so it's all right."

The angry babies I really don't know how to deal with are the 20, 30, 80-and-over year olds. The intrusion or recalcitrance of objects seem to be the worst offenders. Bells or buzzers, noises, telephonic disappointments, tools that don't work, things that get lost, and interruptions. Such frustration!

I saw a baby rage when a package was put in its carriage. The next moment the package was out. Thrown down. Demands that baby people do chores also rouse rage, defensive, one may suppose, that ends with things thrown down or door-slamming. It's easy enough to recognize what invasions of privacy for purposes of cleaning have to do with. Elementary, my dear Watson. And the invasions of strangers, that's the pits!

THE RECORD OF LIN-CHI
6/19/1935

In the evening gathering Lin-chi addressed the assembly: "In some instances I take you away from the surroundings. In another instance I take the surroundings away from you. In yet another instance I take both away, you and the surroundings. In another instance I take away neither you nor the surroundings."

A monk questioned Lin-chi: "What do you mean by 'to take you away from the surroundings?'"

COMMENTARY

Lifting a glass from a saucer in front of him, Sokei-an said: "If this is you and I do not take away anything else, the surroundings are left there, but I take you away. I take you...you are the living being, person, mind, subject...I take the subjective standpoint away from the objective...I take the man away from matter. When a doctor operates on the human body, it is just a body to him...not you or me. The body is uncovered and the man is deprived of it by anaesthesia. The doctor operates on a bundle of objective matter. You are not there.

The surroundings are there but you are not.

I walk the streets in New York. I do not enjoy looking at people's faces. Why must I look? Why bother looking at them? In a small village, in which you are living generation to generation, you could not ignore anyone. But in a big city like New York I do not look at anyone's face and I do not wish to be looked at by anyone. New York is like a desert. A vast pile of material. No human soul is living to me when I walk the street. But I do not "take away" the many buildings of New York. I just "take the people away" from New York. This is one standpoint.

I cannot move my hand; some universal power moves it. So with speaking, so with thinking. If you call this God, there is no man. All is God. A tedious work performed by your brain is not done by human power; it is the power of God. You take the human attitude and you interfere with it. When you understand your circumstances and limitations you do not struggle. But sometimes you struggle because you do not know this power is carrying you in its great current.

There is no human be-

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113 East 30th Street, New York, NY 10016 Mary Farkas, Editor

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ing in the world; all is just one power--universal power. The human being cannot think anything, though he thinks he is thinking. The human being operates what has already been set going by some great power. When I find an answer by thinking, it is not my answer. It was always there intrinsically. I just struck it as the gold miner strikes a vein that was always there. Truth is always. I struggle through earth and sand and finally I come to the gold vein. Truth is always there and we reach it. Therefore anything I think is not my thinking. It is always there by nature.

From this viewpoint, there is no subjective standpoint. Why must you put you into it? You cannot take any personal attitude to think.

I shall explain the other attitudes another time.

"The Bears" won a contest for the photographer, Nicholas Chrysanthem, Bronx, New York.

THE RECORD OF BANKEI Transl. by Peter Haskell

A visiting monk asked: "Is there any merit in performing zazen?"

The Master said: "Zazen isn't to be despised, nor are reciting sutras, performing prostrations and the like. Tokusan used the stick, Rinzai uttered the *katsu!*, Gutei raised his finger and Daruma faced the wall--but, while different, all these were only expedients of the old masters, methods to meet particular occasions and confront the individual capacities of the students involved. Right from the start, there were no fixed rules. Simply have firm faith in what I say, remaining as you innately are without making idle distinctions, just like when things are reflected in a mirror, and then there's nothing in the world you won't penetrate through and through. Do not doubt!"

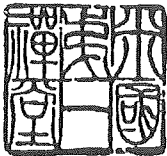
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Noted by John Storm

The heart's repose does not consist in remaining immobile, but in needing nothing.--St. Francis de Sales

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www.firstzen.org

First Zen Institute of America
113 E30 Street
New York, New York 10016
(212-686-2520)

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