

ZEN notes



Philip L. H. Hing

CHRISTMAS HUMPHREYS

1901-1983

An Appreciation

By Mary Farkas

Gentle judge, eccentric and Buddhist were the words used by the London Times to characterize the Westerner who has probably done more to elevate Buddhism in international dignity than any other individual.

Son of a famous judge and a mother who was the "chairman of a suburban Bench," a graduate of Cambridge university, Mr. Humphreys prosecuted 250 murder cases for the crown with force and skill before attaining a reputation as the "gentle judge" because of the sometimes questionable leniency of his sentencing, which on one occasion caused a national *furor*.

As President of the Shakespearean Authorship Society, he was firmly convinced that the Earl of Oxford authored the Shakespearean plays and poems.

Another interest was gardening and he followed his father as Master of the Worshipful Company of Saddlers of the City of London.

And he was most happily married for nearly fifty years.

As The London Times said, "a character of pleasing contrarieties."

In 1917, the death on active service of his beloved older brother left him asking "Why?" Theosophy seemed to give him an answer.

In 1918, he bought and read Ananda Coomaraswamy's *"Buddha and the Gospel of Buddhism"* and said, "That is true, and it seems that I am a Buddhist."

Later he left the Theosophical Society "for it was fast deserting the great principles which H.P. Blavatsky had founded it to proclaim." "But," he added, "I am yet unshaken in my view that the Theosophy of H.P. Blavatsky is an exposition of an Ancient Wisdom-Religion which antedates all known religions, and that Buddhism is the noblest and least defiled of the many branches of the undying parent tree..and the part I have played in the Buddhist movement in this country can never be divorced from the Theosophical background against which I stand." He believed firmly in Karma and Rebirth.

In 1924 Mr. Humphreys and his wife founded a Buddhist Lodge (originally chartered by the Theosophical Society) with the

threefold object, "To publish and make known the principles of Buddhism, and to encourage the study and practice of these principles."

Mr. Humphreys pointed out, in *The Development of Buddhism in England*, 1937: "This threefold Object has distinguished the Lodge from the old Society, whose membership justly prided itself on its standard of scholarship. The interest of the Lodge has been focused on producing Buddhists, unafraid to style themselves as such, rather than on making known the finer points of Buddhism."

By 1926 their monthly Bulletin had become what would later be called The Middle Way, Buddhism's most successful and informative periodical, with an international circulation and news coverage.

A prolific writer, in the next fifty years, Mr. Humphreys published twenty books, most of them on Buddhism. In 1928, his textbook for beginners, *"What is Buddhism?"* was published and remained in print until "I 'cannibalized' much of it in my 1951 Pelican *Buddhism*," he wrote in *Sixty Years of Buddhism in England*. "I began by re-reading

the greater part of some hundred works on the subject, and then in the course of twelve months wrote 75,000 words as the fruit of thirty years' study." It has now been translated into several languages and sold more than half a million copies."

A library beginning with one bookcase in 1925 fifty years later made available 5,000 selected books, as well as tapes on many subjects, and correspondence courses.

In 1930 Mr. Humphreys started a Meditation Circle which "as time went on...became more and more interested in Zen." In fact, it came to be a Zen class. In the 1950's, it was stimulated even more by the visits of Dr. Suzuki and, in 1958, of Alan Watts, returning to London after 20 years in America, where his books, talks, and life style had aroused a great deal of interest and imitation.

Zen practice in the absence of a Zen master became the controversial question of the day. What should people who wanted to experience Zen do? Live life to the full, take LSD, study philosophy, go to a monastery, or meditate?

Mr. Humphrey's *Zen Comes West* (1960) describes what he and his group did.

On a visit in 1958, Mrs. Ruth Sasaki did not conceal her disapprobation.

Mr. Humphreys was seeking a solution to the problem in his Zen class: "How to attain the experience without a visit to Japan? The answer is--by study of the background of Buddhism and the history of Zen, by meditation, regular and deep, by the deliberate cultivation, by all 'devices' possible, of the power of intuition, and by having in Europe from time to time such help from Japan as we need, until our own *roshis* have emerged and been given the 'real transmission,' that they in turn may train their pupils to that same high office and responsibility."

Ruth Sasaki's answer to Mr. Humphrey's question on Zen for the West, in a letter of December, 1965, was unequivocally stated: "Put them on a hard course of physical sitting; no nonsense about meditating, just plain sitting. Meditating cannot correctly begin until body and mind are fused, and that's a long time practice. Then put them on a hard course of study of Mahayana doctrine."

In 1957, she had written to him: "The 'transmission' of Zen begins with the first koan and ends

when, after the final koan is completed, the Roshi gives the student his *inka* or Seal of Transmission. A man who has not experienced the total of Zen, and has not his understanding of it acknowledged as correct, is not considered prepared to 'transmit' even the first step of Zen to another... Don't for a moment believe that Ch'an is based upon individual intuitions only. It is soundly based upon doctrine. In my experience every koan relates to doctrine. The Ch'an method is a method of teaching doctrine, first by having a good understanding of Mahayana doctrine, then putting the books away for a time, coming through meditation and koans to realisation of the manifold points of the doctrine, and their application to daily life *through one's own body*, then a fusion of this intuitionally realised understanding of doctrine with the intellectual understanding of it. Only then does one grasp the teaching in its wholeness."

In 1946 Mr. Humphreys went to Japan for seven months as a lawyer concerned in the international war crimes trials: "I spent my days in my office, and my evenings and weekends

working for Japanese Buddhism...I took down in long-hand D.T. Suzuki's translation of the two lectures which he gave to the Emperor on Japanese Buddhism, which we published in London as *The Essence of Buddhism*, and took possession of the commentary on the *Sutra of Hui-neng* which we published in London as *The Zen Doctrine of No-Mind*."

In 1927, D.T. Suzuki's first series of *Essays in Zen Buddhism* had opened the eyes of English Buddhists to the range and glory of the Mahayana and in particular to Rinzai Zen. Before him, European scholars and philosophers had been interested mainly in the Hinayana and had translated its works from a scholarly point of view. But with Dr. Suzuki, the main emphasis was on enlightenment. The Mahayana writings were to be understood as an expression of the religious experience of individuals.

During the war, book stocks in England had almost entirely disappeared. Dr. Suzuki had spent the war years in seclusion in Japan writing in Japanese and English. So when Dr. Suzuki made Mr. Humphreys his agent and eight volumes

of his works were quickly published by Rider and Company, Buddhism and Zen took on a new lease on life. Mr. Humphreys vowed to make a complete and uniform set of Dr. Suzuki's works in English, to include translations of all works as yet unknown to the world outside Japan.

In the 50's, Dr. Suzuki returned for two more times, and though his age was great, his charm was greater. His talks, even more than his writings, impressed. Here was the living exponent of Zen Buddhism.

Meanwhile, in America, Alan Watts had done a great deal toward making Dr. Suzuki's teachings known. He himself had been known to Mr. Humphreys since he was a boy of fifteen whose correspondence had been enough to convince Mr. Humphreys that he was a mature thinker. In the late 30's Watts had met and married Eleanor Everett, daughter of Ruth Sasaki, and gone to America, where his ideas of Zen liberation, largely based on Dr. Suzuki's views, were taking on new dimensions in the counter-culture.

In the Memorial Service for Dr. Suzuki reported in the Feb. 7th, 1971 Middle Way, Mr. Humphreys encapsulates his view of Zen. Speaking of

Dr. Suzuki, he says: "He taught me in one remark what Zen is not, and gave a hint of what it is. We were discussing Buddhism as pantheism. 'I see what you mean,' I said, 'all is God but there is no God.' 'No,' he said, after the usual moment's thought. 'It would be better to say, 'all is God and there is no God.'"

It was Dr. Suzuki who brought Mr. Humphreys to Zen. And it was Mr. Humphreys who kept Dr. Suzuki in print in the West.

After the war crimes trials, Mr. Humphreys visited the major Buddhist countries--Ceylon, Burma, Siam, also China, India and Japan. He was endeavoring to secure agreement among the various Buddhist schools on Twelve Principles of Buddhism which he had drafted as a unifying measure looking toward a World Buddhism founded on a common ground.

Like Colonel Olcott of Theosophical fame before him (with his fourteen fundamental beliefs), he received the approval of seventeen of the Japanese sects and of the leaders of Siam, Burma, and Ceylon (described in his *Via Tokyo*, Hutchinson and Co., Great Britain, 1948). Only time would tell if they would be applied.

In 1950, the First World

Conference was held in Colombo in May. Others have followed. A World Fellowship of Buddhists was organized which is still continuing.

In 1964, Mr. Humphreys wrote, "We felt we had firmly become the established Centre of Buddhism in Europe." Looking back at the close of the first half century of the Buddhist Society's life," Mr. Humphreys wrote in 1974, "I ask myself to what extent its original Object has been fulfilled. We have indeed 'published and made known' the basic principles of Buddhism; by our own publications, including *The Middle Way*, by stimulating other publishers to pour out works on Buddhism, by lectures far and wide; and passively, by providing a Centre where information is sought by Government Departments, Embassies, colleges of high and low degree, and by students and visitors from all corners of the world. We have, I believe, 'encouraged the study and application of these principles' by our own publications, lectures, classes, courses in meditation, and a wide range of interviews. We might have done more, but we have not, as history may one day hold, quite laboured in vain."

This 1942 version of THE FOUR MEASURES rounds out Sokei-an's "elucidation" he had said (1935) he would probably never repeat. The written commentary prepared by Ruth Sasaki for him to read is in italics to distinguish it from his spontaneous remarks.

TEXT At the evening gathering Rinzai addressed the assembly, saying:

"In some instances I abstract man from the environment; in other instances I abstract the environment from man; in yet other instances I abstract both man and environment; and in still other instances I abstract neither man nor environment."

Then a monk questioned Rinzai: "What do you mean by 'to abstract man from the environment?'"

Rinzai answered in a gatha:

"When the warm spring sun rises
Trees and flowers brocade the earth;
An infant's tresses droop
Like silver threads."

The monk asked:

"What do you mean by 'to abstract the environment from man?'"

Again Rinzai answered in a gatha:

"The command of the Sovereign
Has gone abroad in the land;
In the dominions beyond the wall,
The Lord of War has laid the dust of battle."

Again the monk asked:

"What do you mean by 'to abstract both man and environment?'"

Rinzai replied:

"Hei and Fun have severed
Their connection with the central land;
In the Castle of the Hanging Melon
They hold themselves aloof."

And again the monk asked:

"What do you mean by 'to abstract neither man nor environment?'"

Again Rinzai replied:

"When the Emperor ascends
The jewelled palace,
The old peasants in the fields rejoice,
Singing his praises."

SOKEI-AN SAYS

This famous sermon was later called "Rinzai's Four Measures." With these measures, the Master sounded the depth of the student's attainment.

While men divide whole entity into two halves, mind and matter, or inside and outside, sometimes we place emphasis on mind and sometimes on matter. Occasionally--not always--we measure erroneously, place the moment incorrectly. Rinzai used these Four Measures to measure the student's attainment.

"Man" here signifies 'person as an existing unit which can be abstracted from the environment.' In this usage, therefore, man signifies 'mind' or 'consciousness'--in a word, the subjective quality of man. "Environment" signifies objective existence, such as mountains, rivers, the earth, and so forth. Words, characters and mind-material are also to be considered as environment.

Naturally, according to Rinzai, man himself is not the same as those dreams or thoughts. Buddhists from ancient days handled those mental matters as objects.

As a formula, Rinzai's words may be stated thus: To rid man of his surroundings, to rid the surroundings of man, to get rid of both man and surroundings, and to get rid of neither man nor surroundings.

For instance, you may say that all is empty. Thus you deny the existence of "man," but accept the empty surroundings.

Like the meditation in arupadhatu, in this sphere of meditation, there is only space. The meditator accepts the space and denies his own existence. Of course hypothetically he can manufacture such a sphere. In that case, we say that we get rid of man from the environment.

Or you may say that all is Buddha-nature. You have accepted the dynamic nature of person, but you deny exterior existence.

Arupadhatu meditation can be cited as an illustration here, meditation in the sphere of nothing but consciousness. He had thought there was an existence called "space," but it was an erroneous concept of the meditator. This space was not exterior extension, but it was the duration of his consciousness. Duration means time. There is nothing existing but he himself. It is consciousness which has this duration and also this extension.

In the sermon on "A true man upon the heart made of red flesh," the Master said: "What a chunk of dried dung (Kanshi-ketsu) is this true man who belongs to no class of souls!" He was afraid that the student might cling to the physical self, accepting it as the "true man." He got rid of the "true man" by regarding it as a chunk of dried dung.

In the sermon, "the true man upon the heart made of red flesh," he asked, "have you realized it?" I think you must remember this sermon, one of the famous ones. This "true man" means Buddha, but not Shakyamuni Buddha. And a monk asked: "Where is the true man who is abiding upon the heart made of red flesh?" Rinzai grabbed his chest and slapped his face, then pushed him away and said: "Who do you think the true man is? The true man is nothing but a chunk of dry dung."

All Zen students remember this sermon. The Master said, "What chunk of dry dung is this-- 'that belongs to no class of souls?' No "class of souls" means hell-being, preta, man, deva or beast. But this belongs to no class of souls.

Dr. Suzuki translating this place did not say "dry dung." It is written so, but he translated it "dry dung" originally and his American wife said "Oh no!" so he changed it.

Rinzai was afraid the student might cling to the physical and accept it as the true man. So, to get rid of this "flesh," Rinzai used a strong word. Of course Rinzai's word had to have force to get rid of the "man."

Now I shall elucidate the meaning of the poems for you:

*"When the warm spring sun rises
Trees and flowers brocade the earth;*

In these two lines, the Master exhibited to the monk environment only.

As an artist tries to make a sketch of New York City, and walks all day long trying to find a view of the forest of skyscrapers. All day he went around and met no one. Later, his friend said: "There were many people downtown today. It was a very busy day." He replied, "I didn't see anyone!"

An infant's tresses droop
Like silver threads."

The Chinese characters of the last line are, literally, "like white string." Rinzai presented to the questioner the fantastic picture of an infant whose hair is white, like that of an old man. By this picture, the Master symbolized the denial of the existence of such an infant. Thus he abstracted "man" from the "environment."

Of course a baby in this country sometimes has white hair, but in China no baby has. All have black hair.

"The command of the Sovereign
Has gone abroad through the land;
In the dominions beyond the Wall,
The Lord of War has laid the dust of battle.

When the entire country is governed by the power of the Emperor, and the countries beyond the Great Wall, such as Mongolia or Turkestan, have been subdued by the might of the Imperial army, no territory will be left which is not subject to the will-power of "man." Thus Rinzai demonstrated to the monk that surroundings can be ignored and "man" alone be left.

In my father's day, the western feudal lords revolted against the Tokugawa regime. They changed the feudal system and carried out a new Mikado regime. They took away the two swords from the Samurai and made the Samurais commoners. Those sword-smiths lost their jobs entirely. No one bought new swords any more and old swords were melted again to make chains to fasten dogs which came from western countries and were very precious at that time. The sword-smiths had to change their occupations to make shovels and pick-axes for the farmers. They were terribly ashamed and refused to take such inferior positions. They committed harakiri and died. They tried to ignore environment, insisting upon the existence of man. So they had to exist as dead men, but they avoided coming down to beat shovels.

"Hei and Fun have severed
Their connection with the central land;
In the Castle of the Hanging Melon
They hold themselves aloof."

This poem must be explained in greater detail. Hei and Fun were two northwest prefectures which today are part of the province of Shansi. During the Tang dynasty, Go-gensai led a revolt of these two prefectures against the central government. He retired to the lofty castle known as "The Hanging Melon" which no one had ever successfully attacked. There he was besieged by the Imperial army under Li-saku. One winter night, when the heavily falling snow reached almost to the top of the castle walls, Li-saku's army broke in upon the castle and destroyed it. Go-gensai was captured and slain.

Rinzai used this story to symbolize denial of the entire state of existence, subjective and objective alike. The destruction of the Hanging Melon Castle denotes the abolishment of the "surroundings," and the slaying of Go-gensai denotes the abolishment of "man."

It is difficult to describe this entire negative view of existence. As long as we are existing here, the concrete state of non-existence cannot be demonstrated here--yet Rinzai did it.

Through the final poem, the Master affirmed that both "man" and "environment" exist simultaneously.

"When the Emperor ascends
The jewelled palace,
The old peasants in the fields rejoice,
Singing his praises."

"When the Emperor ascends the jewelled palace" signifies the coronation of the Emperor. Thus Rinzai pointed out "man."

"The old peasants in the fields rejoice, singing his praises" represents "environment."

In some Zen demonstrations, you point out the environment only, like:

"The white cloud is a canopy
The running stream, a harp."

This describes Dharmakaya.

"The Three Worlds are empty. From where do you draw the cause of existence?" In such a koan you describe the environment by reciting such a poem.

Then the Zen master does not accept this, thus abstracting the environment and leaving you there. But you do not know that you yourself are left there, so you go around the universe to find some cause.

Rinzai used these Measures only to put a disciple in shape.

THE RECORD OF BANKEI

Translated by Peter Haskell

When you abide in the Unborn, you're abiding at the source of all things. What the buddhas of the past realized was the Unborn Buddha Mind; and what buddhas in the future will realize is the Unborn Buddha Mind too. We today are living in the Degenerate Age of Buddhism, yet when there's even one man who abides in the Unborn, the true teaching has been restored to the world. All of you, isn't it so? It certainly is! When you've conclusively realized this, then and there you'll open the eye that sees into men's minds, and that's why my school is called the Clear-Eyed School. When the eye that sees into

men is manifested, whenever it happens to be, that moment is the complete realization of the Dharma. I want you to know this. Whoever you may be, at that moment, you are my heir!

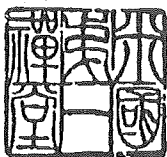
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Please Note
Tudor's birth-day is April 4th, not as stated.

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