

# ZEN BOW

PHILIP KAPLEAU, Resident Teacher

The Zen Meditation Center of Rochester  
7 Arnold Park, Rochester, N.Y., 14607

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TEL. (716)-473-9180

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## A LETTER

Dear Philip Sensei,

These notes to you come from a feeling of deep gratitude for having become linked with you and the Meditation Center.

Before reading THE THREE PILLARS OF ZEN, I had thought that it would be impossible for me to practice sitting meditation. After my husband brought me the book from the library I tried some of the postures you described and pictured and found that I could sit properly in the Burmese posture for a few minutes. This was a most surprising and joyful discovery, because I have had back trouble since my early teens and had to alternate sitting and lying down during several of my high school years. I have always had a slouching posture sitting, standing and walking. Being able to sit with an absolutely straight back, on the floor, even for a few minutes, struck me as being near miraculous. I practiced it daily from then on and finally could stretch the time for one sitting to 20 minutes. A few months later we bought the paperback edition and found that you were in Rochester. The first 20 minute sitting period after your first introductory lecture convinced me that I would seriously practice zazen from then on. I was deeply touched by the atmosphere in the zendo and felt somehow that I belonged there, I knew not why.

During my first sesshin I wondered several times if I would see the end of the sesshin or come to some sort of an end myself before it was over. The pains in my legs and back were nothing I had ever gone through before and finally my whole body was in total agony. The striking with the kyosaku paddle I heard around me brought thoughts of concentration camp to my mind. (I couldn't help chuckling at the word "concentration" camp.) No one in my immediate family has experienced concentration camps, but as my mother is Jewish, the threat was an ever present one. (My girl friend, with whom I was confirmed in the Lutheran church, committed suicide with her parents when her mother was ordered to go to a concentration camp, on the same day that my mother received similar orders.) My father is gentile, and both my parents are scientists and agnostics; we children were baptised, in our home, because my parents wished to protect us from becoming classified as fully Jewish. I experienced strong religious longings during my teens, especially during the year of preparation for confirmation; these remained utterly unfulfilled. The minister seemed irritated and then brushed over my questions, and I could never understand how Christ could have atoned with his death for the world's and my own sins. After that I channelled my search for meaning into philosophy, psychology and lastly mythology. This is how I became acquainted with Oriental wisdom and, finally, Zen Buddhism. So, at an early stage during the first sesshin, I became totally involved with thoughts of suffering at a concentration camp. (I was doing shikan-taza then.)

"The mind of the Zen adept is taut—ready like a drawn bow"

I figured that if some people had been able to survive them, I could surely survive this sesshin and maybe at the same time rid myself once and for all of the fear of pain, torture, and death which have at times haunted my life. On a walk after work on Sunday I had a profound experience which solved for me the problem of Jewish suffering once and for all. With it I rid myself, or began ridding myself, of a good portion of self-pity and a false sense of significance (personal significance) through suffering. When the sesshin came to an end I felt vastly restored, buoyant, most grateful to you for your guidance, and utterly convinced that I was on the right Path.

During my third sesshin pains again carried me to almost the breaking point. I mentioned them to you and you advised me not to separate myself from them but to try to become totally one with them. At first I was unable to do this. Then I realized that everything that I had "done" until now, like thinking about the pain, how unbearable it was, waiting for the bell, searching for a better position, etc., were the very separation that you had mentioned. So I discarded all of this and threw myself wholeheartedly into my paining body. Soon I felt thoroughly pervaded by heat throughout and I was able to resume "Mu" with renewed vigor. During the last sitting before supper something in me "snapped," like a dislocated joint will snap back into its proper place. Instead of attacking Mu from the outside, I became one with it, and sitting, walking, eating, passing dishes around, etc., happened entirely on their own. Somehow, deeply inside, everything was utterly still and without the slightest stir. At dokusan you told me that some of my responses to your questions were a manifestation of my True-Nature, and I knew what you meant. When I left the sesshin I felt like freely moving within a vast network of vibrations; there was no sense of boundary between my body and the outside world. In the car on the way home there was no distance whatever from my husband and son. When I helped my husband sand our window sills later on (a job which I had disliked and evaded before), there was no problem left; there was just the sanding and it was the most meaningful thing that went on right then. My daily life has not been the same since starting zazen.

During the February sesshin, this year, I tried to sit up all night, for the first time (thanks to your continued encouragement to the sitters and two other equally determined members). Usually during zazen my eyes are in the dark; somehow, I became used to this condition ever since the time my concentration became strong. Now, suddenly, after an intense struggle with pains and sleepiness, I felt a luminescence without and within which I had never experienced before. My head, which a few minutes before had almost burst with agony, was now utterly clear, cool, and transparent. All pain was gone from my body. As a matter of fact, there was no body feeling left. I had quite forgotten my koan during the struggle with pain and sleepiness, but now the answer bubbled up out of nowhere. This was totally effortless sitting, with no desires left. It was pure wakefulness. Absolutely marvellous. When I was a child I often thought that if I was in my mother's womb once before, without knowing it, and then born into this world, it was entirely possible that I was now just in a bigger womb, growing ready to be born again into another world. This time, though, I hoped I would be fully aware of the process. Now I know that this was no childish thought and wish.

I wrote at the beginning that the first delusive hindrance which I needed to shed was that of self-pity and the false sense of personal importance derived from suffering. Pain and suffering have taken on a new meaning and significance now. All the deeper states of oneness which I have experienced during sesshin have come after I had become one with intense bodily agony. It is marvellous. Attachments to sense gratifications have to be cut, not for moral or ethical or ascetic reasons, but simply because one cannot, as in the case of desire for sleep, be awake and asleep at the same time. My gratitude to you and Zen Buddhism is infinite.

With gassho (A Member)

April 21, 1969

## THE RESPONSIVE COMMUNION BETWEEN BUDDHAS AND SENTIENT BEINGS

by Roshi Yasutani

Radio and television, as we all know, make it possible for us to hear and see things happening far away. The responsive communion between Buddhas and sentient beings is of this kind of long-distance communication on a spiritual plane. This is to say, the reciprocity can be invisible and take place regardless of distance.

You have already heard me say that Buddha-nature is indigenous to all, and that Buddhas of the past continue to exist and perfect their own Buddha-nature. Still, if there were no mutual attraction or sympathy between Buddhas and sentient beings, none of us could ever become a Buddha. Just as a seed will not sprout without sunlight or heat or water or soil, so our Buddha-nature seed without the light of the Buddhas' wisdom and the waters of their compassion will not grow and flourish.

Chin-k'ai, founder of the T'ien-t'ai sect of Buddhism in China, describes four types of responsive communion between Buddhas and other forms of consciousness.

### (1) Latent motivation and undiscernible response:

Our deep-rooted desire is not apparent to us, yet in our subconscious mind we are already seeking the Buddha's Way, which is likewise undiscernible but is nonetheless guiding us at all times. It is like the seed of the plant which has not been exposed to the sun's light or heat directly but which responds to the indirect stimuli of temperature and humidity. Of the four kinds of responsive communion, this is the most fundamental. Though one may not be consciously aware of seeking the Buddha's teachings, at a subconscious level one may well be searching. The Buddhas' invisible response is to this subconscious yearning.

The main source of this unapparent response is monks who do zazen by themselves in small mountain temples or solitary retreats. Isolated from intruders and visitors, they devote themselves to zazen, to chanting sutras (the teachings of the Buddha), and to reciting the Great Vows to save all living beings. The response also comes from the many great masters who spend their lives in mountain retreats doing zazen and engaging in other devotions to feed this invisible response. Those of shallow understanding protest that such endeavors contribute nothing of social value and are no more than a selfish concern with one's own well-being. Actually, such work is altruism of the highest order.

### (2) Latent motivation and discernible response:

Now the Buddha's teaching is evident. Lectures on the Buddha's Way are being given in many places and many zazen meditation groups are active. Although it may seem that most people are not interested in such activities, yet in their subconscious minds they are being influenced in greater ways than is realized. We should not be discouraged if large numbers of persons do not attend lectures on Buddhism or engage in zazen. Such efforts are not in vain. Much more is being accomplished than we realize, and on many levels. It is like the seed under the soil which is ready to sprout but only needs light and water to bring it forth. Therefore it is good to commit oneself to these unspectacular exertions with strong faith and joy. Our efforts are bound to be effective.

### (3) Discernible motivation and latent response:

We are becoming eager and now we are aware of it. We look for a leader but can't find one. Despite delays and disappointments, we will not be put off. So long as we continue to study and practice devotedly, our understanding of the Buddha's Way becomes clearer and deeper and eventually this ardor brings forth a good teacher.

The greater one's devotion to the Buddha's Way, the greater the guidance from the Buddha and the sooner the opening of the Mind's eye. Like a plant which because it is properly nourished and cared for blooms earlier and more beautifully, our awakening also is quicker and more complete.

Let me give you a concrete example of the working of responsive communion between Buddhas and living beings. What I am about to tell you happens to be a true story which was told me by one of the parties. This gentleman, who had no particular interest in Buddhism, took his convalescing child one summer to sunny Kamakura, a city famous in Japan for its many Buddhist temples and shrines. On a certain day he and his daughter visited Kencho-ji, a well-known temple in Kamakura, for no other reason than that the temple and grounds were so serene and attractive. Since he had no intention of doing zazen or of engaging in any devotions, it would appear that what led him there was nothing more than this pleasant atmosphere. But we must not overlook "latent motivation and undiscernible response."

Before returning to Tokyo, late in the summer, this gentleman decided to call on the abbot of Kencho-ji. During the visit the abbot spoke nothing of Zen but simply served his visitor tea, exchanged pleasantries with him, and gave him as a present a small sutra book containing the Buddha's sermons and dialogues. Believing the gift to be no more than a routine gesture, the man didn't even open it. Still, when he returned home he put the little book in the family Buddhist altar-shrine. Notice: latent motivation and discernible response.

A few years passed. One day after a nap in a reclining chair near the altar-shrine, he spied the little book. Out of idle curiosity and to pass the time, he took it down and began thumbing through it. This particular sutra talked about the love of parents for their children and the good karma that

flowed from it. This gentleman was so impressed by the contents of the book that he immediately dispatched a servant to a Buddhist bookstore to buy him a commentary on the sutra. This he read thoroughly and became convinced of the profundity and applicability of the sutra to his daily life. He was still without direct guidance, but the fact of his having received the book from the abbot was surely indirect guidance. So we now have discernible motivation and unapparent response.

It soon became evident to this man how easily one can go astray studying alone, so he decided to visit the master of a nearby Zen temple for monthly instruction. Now his karma was ripe and he commenced zazen under the guidance of the abbot whose temple he had first visited in Kamakura. Discernible motive and discernible response.

Mencius, the Chinese sage, said, "Whatever is accomplished in one day is not accomplished in that day alone; it is accomplished by (previous) causes." Nothing, then, is done in one day or night, and of course nothing happens of itself.

Now, even as there are many Buddhas so are there many Bodhisattvas, and between them and ourselves there is also a responsive communion. Given this sympathetic attraction between Buddhas and Bodhisattvas on the one hand and ourselves on the other, it might be asked, Can we not become Buddhas even without practice and discipline? Unfortunately, it is not so simple and this is why: The reciprocity is not merely between them and us; it exists between us and all other forms of existence. Thus we respond to devils as much as to Buddhas, to bad friends as well as to good, to both selfish and altruistic causes. We admire the man who works hard, but we also envy the lazy fellow who gets by without lifting a finger.

Just as we can choose which TV channel to watch, so we can attune ourselves to the Buddha's teaching and im-

prove our lives, or tune in to those who would persuade us to do evil. One who likes alcohol inevitably finds himself in the company of drunkards. The gambler associates with other gamblers. Those who practice zazen are attracted to people similarly inclined.

This mutual sympathy also extends to animals. Dogs take kindly to a person who likes them, and so do cats. In a certain sense, this type of attraction is even more sensitive than that between human beings since animals, having less complex minds, are naturally more intuitive. As an example, when cattle are led into the slaughterhouse they sense their fate and protest in their own fashion, even with tears in their eyes. Buddhists stress vegetarianism because of this empathy between man and beast. Confucius said, "One who has heard the scream of an animal being killed could never bear to eat any animal's flesh."

In one of the Chinese scriptures there is recounted the incident of a boy who used to play with seagulls by the ocean. One day his father, who had observed his rapport with birds, said to him, "Tomorrow catch one of those birds for me, will you?" "If you insist, father, I will," the boy replied. But the next day when the boy went down to the beach as usual, no seagulls were in sight. This story is believable if we accept the fact that the birds sensed the boy's intention to snare one of them and for that reason never appeared.

In this connection there's a remarkable anecdote involving a Zen master in ancient China who had no head monk in his monastery. When asked by his monks why he did not appoint one he replied, "My head monk has not yet been born." The monks were perplexed by this cryptic answer. Sometime later the Master informed them, "My head monk has been born." This statement left them no less bewildered, but they did not press him for an explanation. Again, many years later, the Master

announced, "My head monk has become a novitiate and is undergoing training on a pilgrimage." The monks found this answer no more enlightening than the others. Then one day the Master told his monks, "Inasmuch as my head monk is coming today, please clean his room." Telling them exactly when the head monk would arrive, he added, "You must go to the main gate to welcome him."

With mixed feelings the monks cleaned the room, and at the proper time went to the main gate. A traveling monk had indeed arrived. After the visitor had gone to the Master's room to extend his formal greetings, the Master inquired, "When did you decide to come to this monastery?" "A few months ago I heard of you. I wanted to meet you and practice under you," the traveling monk replied. To this the Master said, "I knew before you were born that you would come here. That is why I did not appoint a head monk until today. Although you are new, from now on you are the head monk."

The Master then spoke to him as follows: "You and I were born in India at the time of the Buddha Shakyamuni and became his disciples. We worked very hard and developed a mysterious power. Naturally we were good friends. Subsequently, for three lifetimes, you were an emperor, and because you reveled in a worldly life you lost this power. I, on the other hand, having continued to perfect myself, still retain that power. That is why I was able, even before you were born, to predict that you would come here." (This monk, I might say, in time became one of the most distinguished masters in the history of Zen. In Japan he is known as Unmon.)

When my own teacher, Roshi Harada, related this story, he stated that its import could not be understood on the level of our puny intellect.

Lastly, there is also mutual sympathy and response between teacher and student. A teacher who is a strict

disciplinarian will attract many ardent disciples, whereas one who is lax will find himself surrounded by lukewarm students. Enlightenment involves a responsive communion. A competent teacher can help a student make his mind a clean slate. The harder the student strives the stricter the teacher's guidance. Eventually this brings about enlightenment.

--adapted from the booklet  
EIGHT BASES OF BELIEF IN BUDDHISM

#### LECTURE ACTIVITIES

"There is one thing stronger than all the armies in the world: and that is an idea whose time has come." This observation by Victor Hugo applies remarkably to the flowering of interest in Zen practice among young Americans (as well as their seniors) in the last decade. The many invitations which Philip Kapleau has received to speak and conduct zazen-meditation at colleges and before seminar groups since his return to this country three years ago bear witness to this fact.

A trip to the University of Texas in December produced the largest turnout to date. The lecture brought over 400 listeners into an auditorium in Austin designed to seat only 300, and was followed by a lively question-and-answer period. The next day 190 students and townspeople showed up for instruction and practice in zazen, necessitating two different meetings in the exhibition galleries of the University Art Department, one in the morning and another in the afternoon. Some 75 participants expressed an interest in setting up a zazen group in Austin, and Mr. Kapleau suggested that he might come down periodically from Rochester to conduct sesshin should such a group materialize.

Texans, however, aren't the only ones to do things in a big way. A two-day meeting at the University of Michigan in February brought over 300 lis-

teners to one of several lectures and 175 sitters to the two zazen meetings held the next day. This turnout, while gratifying, was less surprising; the fact that we have five or six members who have moved from Ann Arbor in recent months seems to indicate a karmic affinity between Ann Arbor and the Rochester Center.

Other lecture and zazen meetings have taken place at Wesleyan University, the University of Toronto (where Jack Canfield, one of our oldest members, teaches), and at Syracuse University. In May Philip Kapleau will fulfill speaking and zazen engagements at M.I.T., Western College, Case Western Reserve, and Emory College, in Atlanta.

In the past six months interest has been growing in Philip Kapleau's Zen seminar-workshops, a format which has evolved from the introductory lectures on Zen practice which he used to give for an hour on three successive Friday nights at the Center. The workshops, which offer greater audience participation in all aspects of Zen training and at the same time enable Sensei to present in greater depth the theory and methods of Zen, have proved very popular since they were inaugurated on February 1st. The Center's workshops occur at six-week intervals on Saturdays, beginning at 9:30 in the morning and ending at 4:30. In spite of limited publicity, each one has been filled to our capacity of 45 persons.

What is fueling this increased involvement with Zen as a personal discipline? It can only be the spiritual vacuum in America about which so much has been written in recent years (see "The Search for God," ZEN BOW, Vol. I, No. 3). And small wonder. The insensitive quest for power in places high and low has produced symptoms ranging from the Vietnamese war to the refusal of some Americans to respond to a neighbor's cries for help. With no solutions apparent, many have dropped out of their society, only to find themselves taking drugs to relieve the

## Summer Plans

The Board of Directors met on the evening of March 13 to determine the financial details and calendar of activities for the projected summer program at the Gratwick Farm in Pavilion, New York. As indicated in the last issue of ZEN BOW, a great deal has been planned, all of which we present below.

Sesshins. Since the Center staff will not move out to the farm until June 29, the June sesshin will be held on the customary second weekend of the month, the length to be announced at a later date. Summer sesshins at the farm will last five and seven days, respectively. In July, the sesshin will go from the evening of Tuesday, the 9th, to that of Sunday, the 14th, and in August, from the evening of Sunday, the 4th, to the evening of Sunday, the 11th. In these, as in all our sesshins, preference will be given to those who apply for the full five and seven day periods. There will be a slight reduction in the cost for those members applying for the full seven-day August sesshin, but the exact amount has not yet been determined.

Guest Speakers. The Center has not yet made final its plans concerning guest speakers at the farm, but we hope to announce in the next issue of ZEN BOW more specific information about time, place, and names of speakers.

Resident-students. Philip Kapleau has decided to make room in the summer's plans for three men to train as semi-monastics along with the present three full-time monastics. Because the Center has no endowment fund, however, but must rely on dues, sesshin contributions, and other donations of its members, if it is to continue its activities, there will be a charge of \$1.50 per day per monastic, or \$39.00 for the non-sesshin days of July, and \$27.50 for the non-sesshin days of August. The three students will, however, receive a reduction of the usual sesshin contribution of \$12.50 per day to \$8.00 per day. Applicants must be members in good physical and mental health.

Paying Guests. Two periods during the summer, July 14 to August 1, and August 14 to August 24, have been especially set aside when members and non-members may come to the farm on a weekly basis for what may appropriately be called a Zen vacation. Individuals or married couples may apply. These training-vacation periods will include daily zazen, contact with and instruction by Philip Kapleau, and a share in the work projects connected with the running of a country Center. The fields and woods of the farm offer ample opportunity for long walks, and the swimming pool in back of the Big House will be open for those who want to swim. Participation, of course, should be recognized as a solid opportunity to develop a disciplined life with the ultimate aim of Self-realization. For various reasons, it has been decided that only those beyond high-school age can be considered for inclusion in this experimental summer program.

Listed below are the kinds of accomodations that will be available at the farm:

Paying guest members, double room occupancy.....	\$10.00 per day
	65.00 per week
Paying guest members, sleeping porch (two cots).....	\$ 8.00 per day
	51.00 per week
Paying guest non-members, double room occupancy.....	\$12.50 per day
	82.50 per week

Camping Out. Either couples or individuals who wish to camp out, at a place on the farm to be provided for this purpose, will be asked to contribute \$5.00 per day per individual (meals included).

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#### Verses on the Faith-Mind

The editors of ZEN BOW would like to take this opportunity to apologize to Professor Richard Clarke for some errors made in the typing of his translation, Verses on the Faith-Mind (Hsinhsinming), in the last issue of ZEN BOW. Below we note the errors, themselves, so that our readers can correct their copies of that inspiring Zen verse. We humbly confess our lack of the kind of mindfulness that Zen training seeks to inculcate, and promise to be more careful in the future so that distortions of such fine translations as Professor Clarke's do not recur.

Pg. 1, 5 lines up, insert "tentatively" before "translated."

Pg. 2, 16 lines down, after the line ending with "...true nature of things," insert the following two lines: "Live neither in the entanglements of outer things/ nor in inner feelings of emptiness."

Pg. 5, 5th, 4th, and 3rd lines up should read "To come directly into harmony with this reality,/ just simply say when doubts arise, "Not two."/ In this "not two" nothing is separate, nothing is excluded."

Pg. 6, 3rd line from the top change "emptiness" to "Emptiness."

-oo-

#### INNER ACTIVITY

"By 'activity' in the modern usage of the word is usually meant an action which brings about a change in an existing situation by means of an expenditure of energy. Thus a man is considered active if he does business, studies medicine, works on an endless belt, builds a table, or is engaged in sports. Common to all these activities is that they are directed toward an outside goal to be achieved. What is not taken into account is the motivation of activity. Take, for instance, a man driven to incessant work by a sense of deep insecurity and loneliness; or another one driven by ambition, or greed for money. In all these cases the person is the slave of a passion, and his activity is in a reality a 'passivity' because he is driven; he is the sufferer, not the 'actor.' On the other hand, a man sitting quietly and contemplating, with no purpose or aim except that of experiencing himself and his oneness with the world, is considered to be passive, because he is not 'doing' anything. In reality, this attitude of concentrated meditation is the highest activity there is, an activity of the soul, which is possible only under the condition of inner freedom and independence. One concept of activity, the modern one, refers to the use of energy for the achievement of external aims; the other concept of activity refers to the use of man's inherent powers, regardless of whether any external change is brought about.

--from, THE ART OF LOVING  
by Erich Fromm