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*nas*, even non-Buddhists, may be able to eliminate some of the *anusayas*. In this case the path for eliminating the defilements is through the contemplation on the inferior state of the *prthagjanas*' own existence, not on the Four Noble Truths. Therefore, while the path does not belong to the *āryamārga*, it is nevertheless regarded as a sort of *bhāvanāmārga*, a *laukika*<sup>12</sup> *mārga*. Hence, this *laukika bhāvanāmārga* for the *prthagjana* naturally comes before his entering the *darśanamārga*, the first step of the path of the *āryapudgala*<sup>13</sup> (the sage). Therefore, it would be better to say that the *bhāvanāmārga* "does not bring forth its fruit immediately" on account of its being *laukika* (worldly), than to say, "because the *bhāvanāmārga* only becomes effective through it [the *darśanamārga*]" (p. 176).

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*This review was edited by Robert Kritzer.*

**THE ZEN EYE: A Collection of Zen Talks by Sōkei-an.** Edited by Mary Farkas, with a foreword by Huston Smith. Tokyo, New York: Weatherhill 1993, pp. 167. ISBN 0 8348 0272 4 (PBK)

ON MY WAY to Sōgen-ji in Okayama in August 1994 I stopped a few days in Kyoto, where Jeff Shore from the F. A. S. Society had invited me to join a small supper party at Ryōsen-an in Daitoku-ji. It was fifteen years since I had left Kyoto after having trained at Sōhaku Kōbō's temple Ryōkō-in. At that time we sat in the zendō of Ryōsen-an in the morning, cleaned the garden and had tea with its caretaker Ueno-san. It was a time full of memories, and so I was naturally moved by this opportunity to see Ryōsen-an again after all these years. I must admit that I was a bit disappointed to find that the nice little zendō, a miniature of that of the Daitoku-ji Sōdō, had been transformed into a hondō. I realised that Ryōsen-an was not used anymore as a place where western seekers without knowledge of Japanese could come and have their first Zen training. The western "study room" in Ryōsen-an with the extensive English library had not been in use since its abbess, Mrs. Ruth Fuller Sasaki, died in 1967 and was, I am sorry to say, still not in use in 1994.

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<sup>11</sup> Those who have not yet entered into *āryamārga*, and who therefore are not *āryapudgala*.

<sup>12</sup> Worldly, defiled (*sāsrava*), not *ārya*, not *anāsrava*.

<sup>13</sup> One who has entered in *āryamārga*, i.e., the pure undefiled (*anāsrava*) path.

When I came to Ryōsen-an the first time in 1969, the Chinese specialist in *I Ching* Mr. Leon was caretaker of Ryōsen-an. At that time there was still a vague echo of the golden days for western students of zen at Daitoku-ji. Names like Walter Nowick, Gary Snyder, Donnatienne Lebovitch, Philip Yampolsky, Burton Watson, Paul Wienpahl, Fred Summer, Dana Fraser, Vanessa Coward, Janwillem van der Wetering, Zef ben Shahar, Ernesto Falla, Irmgard Schloegl come to mind—all students of either Gōtō Zuigan Rōshi (1879–1965), Oda Sessō Rōshi (1901–1966) or Nakamura Rōshi.

Ruth Fuller Sasaki made it a part of her lifework to restore Ryōsen-an, a small temple within the precincts of Daitoku-ji, and turned it into “The First Zen Institute of America in Japan.” She built a study room, library and zendō for the serious western Zen students, who wanted to study the Buddhist religious texts, learn Japanese and practise zazen. It was a place both for advanced researchers and for those who wanted to undertake preliminary training and later to commit themselves to further training at the Daitoku-ji Sōdō.

Mrs. Sasaki began her Zen studies in 1932 under Nanshinken Rōshi at the Nanzen-ji Sōdō. She continued them under Sasaki Sōkei-an Rōshi in New York in 1938 at the First Zen Institute of America, founded by Sōkei-an in 1930. The daughter of a wealthy Chicago family, she was in a position to be a pillar of the Institute. Sōkei-an Rōshi thus married her in 1944 in order to legally stabilize the Institute at the time when his health was failing. Moreover she could have his name to carry out his work of translating the *Rinzai Roku*, the recorded sayings of Lin-chi, in Japan. Sōkei-an died in May 1945 without formally leaving any dharma-heir, and the work of the Institute was carried on by Ruth Fuller Sasaki. In 1949 she travelled to Japan to resume her Zen training under the elder dharma-brother of Sōkei-an, Gōtō Zuigan Rōshi, then Chief Abbot of Daitoku-ji.

At that time Daitoku-ji offered her as a residence a house built on the site of Ryōsen-an, the buildings of which had been demolished in the beginning of the Meiji Era during the anti-Buddhist movement. It was not by mere coincidence that she devoted the rest of her life to Ryōsen-an, for Sōkei-an was in fact ordained by Aweno Fuetsu, a priest of the Ryōsen line of Daitoku-ji. In 1956 Daitoku-ji gave Mrs. Sasaki permission to build the study room, library and the small sixteen-mat zendō on the grounds of Ryōsen-an. Upon its completion in 1958, Mrs. Sasaki was ordained a priest at Daitoku-ji and abbess of Ryōsen-an. She was the first non-Oriental and the first woman to hold such a traditional position in Japan.

Sōkei-an's family name was Sasaki Shigetsu. Born in 1882, he was the son of a Shinto scholar-priest who died when Shigetsu was fourteen. He did not know his biological mother, but his father's wife loved and cared for him as



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her own child. After completing middle school he became an apprentice to a woodcarver who taught him the art of carving dragons. He spent a year wandering from one mountain temple to another, carving dragons for roof beams. When he returned to Tokyo he entered the art school connected with Tokyo University. At that time he also found his biological mother, who was married and had several other children. Of the flower-willow milieu, she and her family and friends belonged to the theatrical world of geishas, jōruri singers, actors and rakugo comedians. The seventeen-year-old Sasaki Shigetsu found a new family ready to share their arts with him. He discovered that he had talent for performing and dreamt about becoming a rakugo monologist himself.

One day he overheard certain words that caught his attention, words like "subjective/objective" and "abstract/concrete." A student suggested that he visit the Zen master Shaku Sōkatsu (1870–1954), who guided a lay society called Ryōmo Kyōkai, which meant "The Society for Abandonment of Subjectivity and Objectivity." This was the beginning of Sōkei-an's life in Zen.

The Ryōmo Kyōkai had been started in 1875 by the Zen master Imagita Kōsen (1816–1892), who wanted to establish a zendō near Tokyo where lay people could train without entering a monastery to become monks. Imagita Kōsen Rōshi was the teacher of both Shaku Sōen (1859–1919) and D. T. Suzuki (1870–1966). He was himself trained at Sōgen-ji in Okayama by the great master Zenrai Gisan (1802–1878), as was Shaku Sōen. Kōsen Rōshi first studied Confucianism before he became a zen monk. These studies made him feel called upon to create an interest in zen among laymen as well as in the lay-education of young Zen Buddhist monks. I would like to mention that even today Sōgen-ji is living up to this tradition as a training place for both monks and laymen in the Inzan line of Hakuin Zen, with most of the laymen there today being westerners training under one of the most capable zen teachers of modern Japan, Harada Shōdō Rōshi.

Imagita Kōsen Rōshi, who was the grandfather of the Rinzai Zen that has come to the West, became Kanchō of Engaku-ji in Kamakura. D. T. Suzuki trained under him until his death in 1892. Shaku Sōen Rōshi was then appointed Kanchō, and Suzuki continued his training under him. Among those who came to study under Kōsen Rōshi during the latter years of his life was Shaku Sōkatsu. Sōkatsu continued his Zen study like Suzuki under Shaku Sōen, who adopted him as his son. Shaku Sōkatsu was only twenty-nine when he "finished" his Zen training and traveled to Thailand and Burma. When he returned Shaku Sōen asked him to go to Tokyo to revive the dispersed Ryōmo Kyōkai. It was here that Sōkei-an began his Zen training under Shaku Sōkatsu Rōshi.

Sōkei-an joined the Ryōmo Kyōkai in 1902 and visited Sōkatsu's zendō as often as he could. It was the eve of the Russo-Japanese War and he found himself much troubled politically and thought himself "a no-good boy for daily life." In 1905 he graduated from Tokyo University Academy of Art and then found himself in the army, transporting dynamite at the front in Manchuria. In spring 1906 the war ended and he returned to Japan. Already in September the same year Shaku Sōkatsu invited him to join a group of six lay students of Zen to travel with him to America to open a branch of the Ryōmo Kyōkai in San Francisco. Sōkatsu's group included the philosophy student Gōtō Zuigan and a vivacious young laywoman named Tomeko. As it was considered improper in those days for an unmarried woman to travel without her family, Sōkatsu suggested that Sōkei-an marry her. Sōkei-an was not at all unwilling to marry the attractive Tomeko. According to Gary Snyder, their children are now running ranches in the San Joaquin Valley in California.

The party sailed for America and this was the beginning of Sōkei-an's life and career in America until his death there in 1945. After some difficult years working at establishing a zendō in America, Shaku Sōkatsu in 1910 went back to Japan, taking his disciples with him, but leaving Sōkei-an and Tomeko behind. Sōkatsu said: "North America is the place where Buddhism will be spread in the future. You should stay here and familiarize yourself with the attitudes and culture of this land. Be diligent! If in the future no one else appears, the responsibility for bringing Buddhism to America will be yours."

"Yellow-faced Orientals" were not welcome in San Francisco in those days, but Sōkei-an and Tomeko found friendlier people in Seattle. A son was born in San Francisco in 1910 and a daughter in Seattle in 1912. For work, there was always cleaning to be done. Sōkei-an would help with the children in the winter, but in the summer he would go about the United States on foot and practice zazen in nature, sometimes dressed as a Siwash Indian. He began writing a column he called "Nonsense" for the Japanese-American newspapers and various journals in Japan. His writings became rather popular and one of his books went into four printings in Japan. In 1916, with a third child on the way, Tomeko and the children went back to Japan to live with his mother. Tomeko had been happy living a more primitive life among Indians on an island in the bay of Seattle, but she was unhappy with the civilized life in America. Shortly after Tomeko and the children had left for Japan, Sōkei-an went to live with artists and writers in Greenwich Village in New York. At that time he began to write sketches for *Chūō kōron*, one of the leading Japanese newspapers. According to Utsubo Kotsubo they were "frank conversations on the way of life of the common people in America, his writing crisp, clear, and unusual."

Suddenly one day in 1919 while walking down the street Sōkei-an saw the



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carcass of a dead horse, and something happened to him psychologically that made him realize he had to see his teacher Shaku Sōkatsu. He went straight back to Japan, reunited with Tomeko and the three children and resumed his Zen training. But he was not happy there and journeyed back and forth between America and Japan several times until he finally resolved to complete his Zen training in Japan. He "completed" his Zen training at the age of forty-eight, and in 1928 Sōkatsu authorized him to teach: "Your message is for America, return there!"

During the forty years of his teaching, some three thousand people came to Shaku Sōkatsu to study Zen. Of these he initiated nine hundred into Zen, but only thirteen completed the training. Of these only four had really penetrated to the core of Zen and were authorized to teach. They were Gōtō Zuigan, Tatsuta Eisan, Ohasama Chikudō and Sōkei-an. Sōkatsu had devoted his life to starting a lay Zen lineage of Ryōmo Kyōkai that Imagita Kōsen Rōshi had begun. However, Sōkei-an knew that Americans would not take a layman seriously as a Zen teacher. He therefore insisted upon returning to New York as an ordained priest. He was in fact ordained by Aweno Fuetsu, a priest of the Ryōsen line of Daitoku-ji. Shaku Sōkatsu became furious and never forgave him; they never spoke to each other again; in fact Sōkatsu officially declared him not to be his disciple.

Sōkei-an returned to New York with no money and no place to live. It took him several years of hard work to gather a small group of Zen students together in the so-called Buddhist Society of America. In the beginning in 1931 there were eight students, in 1935 fifteen, and in 1938 the group had doubled to thirty. This was the year Mrs. Ruth Fuller Everett joined the group and after a couple of years she became the editor of the society's first journal, *Cat's Yawn*. "Sōkei-an was a most remarkable teacher in sanzen," Ruth Everett wrote. "He was utterly transported out of himself when he sat in the Rōshi's chair. And you had the feeling before him that this was not a man, this was an absolute principle that you were up against."

The editor of *The Zen Eye*, Mary Farkas, once said: "When I am asked if we were given 'instruction' in Zen my answer is 'no,' for his way of transmitting the Dharma was on a completely different level. It was, of course, his silence that brought us into it with him. It was as if, by creating a vacuum, he drew all into the One after him." Sōkei-an spoke extremely slowly, his pauses sometimes seemed to last forever, but, as Mary Farkas noticed, his *teishō* was always dramatic: "Sōkei-an played not only the human roles, but also the animal, mineral, and vegetable as well. Sometimes he would be a huge golden mountain, sometimes a lonely coyote on the plains. At other times a willowy Chinese princess or Japanese geisha would appear before our eyes. . . . There was something of Kabuki's *jōruri*, something of Noh's otherworldliness,

something of a fairy story for children, something of archaic Japan. Yet all was as universal as the baby's first *waah* . . . all animated by his own vital energy."

In his talks Sōkei-an selected two texts as essential to an understanding of Buddhism. They were the Sixth Zen Patriarch Hui Neng's *Platform Sutra* and the *Record of Rinzai*. Sōkei-an worked on a rough English translation of them and commented on the texts sentence by sentence, explaining or pointing out their hidden meanings. He also delivered informal talks and general introductions to Buddhism and to Zen, especially giving very detailed etymological, psychological, existential, religious and philosophical descriptions of key Indian Buddhist concepts like the five Skandhas, the three Bodies of Buddha, the eight Consciousnesses, the four Wisdoms, etc. It is from these lectures that Mary Farkas collected the materials for the wonderful book she has edited.

In 1945 the Buddhist Society of America changed its name to the First Zen Institute of America. Mary Farkas became secretary of the Institute as well as editor of the Institute's new periodical, *Zen Notes*. Much of the material included in *The Zen Eye* has appeared over the years in both *Cat's Yawn* and *Zen Notes*. None of Sōkei-an's talks was ever written down by him, but there were always several listeners taking notes who recorded every talk he made. The talks were informal and concerned with introducing Buddhism and especially Zen Buddhism as a living and practical religion to those Americans who came to the Institute not only to hear about Zen, but to commit themselves to Zen training. Reading *The Zen Eye* one very clearly feels that Sōkei-an was exposed to Western literary formulations for many years and that he mainly expressed himself to an English-speaking audience. Mary Farkas has selected the lectures she found most compelling and most representative of Sōkei-an.

It is of course a matter of personal taste what should and shouldn't be included in a book introducing Sōkei-an's teaching and wisdom to a much broader audience. When I was in Kyoto in the seventies I happened to find all the back issues of *Zen Notes* at the library of the NCC Center for the Study of Japanese Religions. I copied all the talks by Sōkei-an, and skimming through them again I think I would have made a somewhat different selection. There are, for instance, in some of the omitted lectures deeper and more detailed evaluations and descriptions of important Mahayana Buddhist Sanskrit terms that I like very much. And at the same time there is an exceptionally different and novel interpretation of, for example, the five Skandhas in a contemplative context which fascinates me. The material left out will hopefully one day find its way into yet another book that delves deeper into Sōkei-an's spoken legacy.

Sōkei-an's at times shockingly direct and clear style, telling everything or saying too much, might annoy the reader who prefers a more subtle literary



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style, but I think it is refreshing. I think it is necessary too to break through Westerners' tendency to be very academic, intellectual and scientific, and be daringly open about our Buddhist engagement and our experiences. The direct and open approach is a help too for many seekers who have either read too many nutty books about occult spirituality or who do not study Buddhism at all, but just sit and sit or practice the liturgy. Here is a book that can blow clear the cluttered mind of many a misguided devotee and ruffle the careful academician a bit, because it all seems so easy to understand when Sōkei-an talks. Another thing that is important is that it is a great help on the way to know that it is indeed possible in this life to come to the realization hoped for, if your commitment is serious even if you are a layman in the middle of this maddening metropolitan life most of us live. Sōkei-an is not afraid to tell about his own experiences:

"How did I get into it? Well, I shall tell you the truth. One day I wiped out all the notions from my mind. I gave up all desire. I discarded all the words with which I thought, and stayed in quietude. I felt a little strange, as if I were being carried into something, or as if I were touching some other power unknown to me. I had been near it before; I had experienced it several times, but each time I had shaken my head and run away from it. This time I decided not to run away, and 'Ztt!'—I entered. I lost the boundary of my physical body. I had my skin, of course, but my physical body extended to the corners of the world. I walked two, three, four yards, but felt I was standing in the center of the cosmos. I spoke, but my words had lost their meaning. I saw people coming toward me, but all were the same man. All were myself! I had never known this world. I had believed that I was created, but now I had to change my opinion: I had never been created. I was the cosmos; no individual Mr. Sasaki existed. I went to my teacher. He looked at me and said, 'Tell me about your new experience, your entering the transcendental world.' Did I answer him? If I spoke, I would return to the old world. If I said one word, I would step out of the new world I had entered. I looked at his face. He smiled at me. He also did not say a word. . . . From the new world, I observed this world. Now, I enjoy this world very much, both in favorable circumstances and in adverse circumstances. I enjoy this world in joy and in agony. I have no fear of death. This is an easy world for me. . . . There is only one key that opens the door to the new transcendental world. I can find no single word for it in English, but, using two words perhaps I can convey the meaning: shining trance. In that clear, crystallized trance—*Ztt!*—you enter the transcendental world."

Tim Pallis