

NOTES

OGATA SŌHAKU, 1901–1973

FRIENDS of the Reverend Ogata Sōhaku in all parts of the world were saddened by his passing away on March 21, 1973, a short time before his 73rd birthday.

Reverend Ogata was the first Zen abbot in Kyoto to open his temple, the Chōtokuin of the Shōkokuji, to international visitors in the immediate post World War II period. Between then and the time of his death thousands of visitors from all parts of the world found their way to his temple to learn from him, to benefit from his knowledge, wisdom and experience. All visitors were welcomed with a warmth and kindness which will always be remembered. His passing leaves a void in the lives of all who have known him but the inspiration he provided lives on.

Born on April 12, 1901, as the fifth son of an impoverished farmer in northern Kyushu, his early life was one of struggle to overcome economic hardships and to obtain an education. At the age of 12 he was sent to a Zen temple near his home for training. Life at that temple was harsh and severe. The priest permitted him to finish only elementary school. But he was determined to obtain a higher education. At the age of 18, with the quiet assistance of one of the families belonging to the temple, he ran away from the temple in Kyushu and went to Kyoto to study. It was his first time away from the prefecture in which he was born. By making a tremendous effort he finished in one year the higher school education necessary to enter a university. He then entered Rinzaishū University (which later became Hanazono University). Lack of funds made it necessary for him to withdraw from the University for two years. After he reentered the University he had to stay longer than usual due to the necessity for supporting himself and his studies. He graduated at the age of 29, late by Japanese standards.

In 1930, he made his first trip abroad, going first to Honolulu and then to San Francisco. In San Francisco he studied in the adult school classes of the

NOTES

public schools. He returned to Japan early in 1931 and shortly afterwards entered the monastery of the Shōkokuji to complete his training for the Zen priesthood.

In 1933, he accompanied the chief monk of the Shōkokuji monastery to Southeast Asia and India. Those travels took him to most of the holy places of Buddhism in India, Nepal, Burma and Ceylon. Among many places, he visited Bodha Gaya, Sarnath, Banares, Sanchi, Agra, and Delhi in India, Lumbini in Nepal, Pegu and Pagan in Burma and Kandy in Ceylon. Returning to Kyoto in 1934, he began teaching at his alma mater, Rinzaishū University. He continued teaching there until his retirement in 1967.

In August 1934, he was stricken with tuberculosis from which he had a slow recovery. In 1937, he became a novice at the Chōtokuin of the Shōkokuji. In 1938, when he was 37 years old, he entered Otani University as a graduate student to study under Suzuki Daisetz. At Otani he went deeply into comparative studies of Buddhism, Chinese and Sanskrit. He graduated from Otani in March, 1941. He became the Abbot of Yōgenin of the Shōkokuji a month before he graduated from Otani University. In March 1945, he became the Abbot of the Chōtokuin, the position he occupied until his death.

In February 1941, he married Yoshiko Iwao of Yufuin, a famous resort in the mountains of northern Kyushu not far from his birthplace. Three children were born to them; Yuji, the eldest son, Hiroko, a daughter, and Zenyo, a second son. He is survived by Mrs. Ogata and their three children.

The end of World War II was the beginning of a period of new activities for Reverend Ogata. Because of his ability to speak English, he soon came to occupy a unique position in providing contacts between Westerners with a newly acquired interest in Buddhism, and especially in Zen, and priests and abbots of various Japanese Buddhist sects. One of his early associations in the immediate post-war period was with Christmas Humphreys, President of the Buddhist Society of London, who was in Japan in 1946 on an official mission. The association with Mr. Humphreys, like so many others, was to continue for the rest of his life.

Reverend Ogata quickly realized the developing interest of the West in Buddhism and Zen. He especially realized the need for making available to Westerners interested in Buddhism the basic concepts of the various sects. From the beginning of his contacts with international visitors he was acutely

conscious of the lack of information concerning Buddhism in Western languages. He strove to make available to the increasing number of international visitors whatever written materials concerning Buddhism in Western languages that he could find.

In 1949, he was sent to the University of Chicago as one of the Garioa Scholars. During his two years in Chicago he spoke to various groups throughout the American Midwest on Buddhism and Zen. Among American scholars there was a growing interest in both. While in Chicago he concluded that it was necessary to translate the *Keitoku Dentōroku* in its entirety and while in Chicago he made a small beginning on that enormous task. He received encouragement from Suzuki Daisetz to make a complete translation of the *Keitoku Dentōroku*. Reverend Ogata's basic concept of such a translation was that it should be without commentaries so that Western readers could read the *Keitoku Dentōroku* themselves and form their own opinions. He thought that commentaries should come at a later stage after reading the work.

After his return from Chicago, he was increasingly occupied with international visitors in addition to his teaching at Hanazono University and his duties at the Chōtokuin and the Shōkokuji. Around the mid-1950's the number of international visitors began to increase more rapidly. His time became heavily occupied with such visitors. In 1956-1957 he was a Fulbright Lecturer at Washington University in St. Louis and Michigan University in Ann Arbor. During that period in the U.S. he also visited other places in the Midwest and on the East Coast to lecture and teach. He returned to Japan via London and India. In London he was able to meet again with Christmas Humphreys and others whom he had first met in Japan.

After his return to Japan he established the Zen Study Center at the Chōtokuin to provide a place where the rapidly growing number of international visitors could study, practice zazen and have discussions. He wrote *Zen for the West* and was trying to find time to translate the *Keitoku Dentōroku*. He was also continuing his teaching at Hanazono University. In September 1958, in the midst of this busy life he had the first of a series of strokes. The first one was not serious and he was soon as busy as ever. A second stroke in November 1959 was severe and left his right side partially paralyzed. Despite that handicap he was soon leading an active life again. Those who met him after his second stroke were always impressed by his ability to carry on his work, his enjoyment

NOTES

of life, his great friendliness and compassion, his sense of humor despite his difficulties.

Until 1967, he remained active in both teaching and the reception of international visitors. He was, however, aware of the passage of time so in 1967 he decided he must proceed with the translation of the *Keitoku Dentōroku* without further delay. He retired from Hanazono University and from late 1967 until mid-1972 he was occupied with the work of translation. By the end of 1971 the first ten books, of thirty books, had been translated and edited and were ready for publication. He continued work on the remaining twenty books until mid-1972 when physical disabilities forced him to discontinue the work. Until the end he was always hopeful of resuming the translation and often spoke of his hope to do so. One of his amazing abilities was his ability to dictate the translation of the ancient Chinese of the *Keitoku Dentōroku* directly into English.

For the many international visitors who stayed at the Chōtokuin, two aspects of life there will always be remembered. One was the wide ranging discussions at breakfast and following breakfast. The discussions would often last until 9:30 or 10:00 o'clock and sometimes until 10:30 or later. While the discussions might be on any topic, they frequently related to Buddhism and Zen. His knowledge of Buddhism and Zen was encyclopedic; his humor and gentleness were a constant lesson. The second memorable aspect of life in the Chōtokuin was the afternoon discussions, usually on Tuesday or Thursday afternoons. The afternoon discussions were normally related to Buddhism or Zen. They were always stimulating, always rewarding.

One of his best remembered remarks concerning Zen was one with which he usually began the instruction of newcomers before they started zazen. It was also a remark he would sometimes make after discussions of Zen. He would say, "... Zen can not be explained [intellectually]. It can only be experienced." Despite the many and frequent intellectual discussions of Zen he was insistent that Zen could only be understood through experience—through zazen, the use of koans and other traditional forms of Zen training and experience. This insistence on direct Zen experience was a guiding principle in his translation of the *Keitoku Dentōroku*. In many, often subtle, ways his translation emphasizes the primary importance of Zen experience if the ancient sayings, actions and writings in the *Keitoku Dentōroku* are to be understood in their true meaning.

But often when he would be emphasizing the Zen insistence on "A special transmission outside the scriptures Pointing directly to the mind . . ." he would laughingly remind his listeners of what a voluminous literature Zen has produced.

His sense of how transient and ephemeral life is and, perhaps, the urgency of the final task he had set himself is reflected in a poem he wrote some nine years before his death:

Life has now passed,
The goal
Not yet fulfilled.

V. E. Johnson

G. P. MALALASEKERA, 1899–1973

Professor Gunapala Piyasena Malalasekera passed away in Colombo on April 23rd, 1973. Dr. Malalasekera's first public appearance before Japanese Buddhists was on the occasion of the Second World Buddhist Conference held in Japan in 1952. He was then leading the Ceylonese delegation, comprising both bhikkhus and lay members, which was the largest of all visiting foreign groups. Undoubtedly Japanese Buddhists were not only brought directly into contact with this remarkable personality, but were favorably impressed by his vitality, eloquence, erudition, and social sense seasoned with humor and wit. Thereafter he visited Japan on many occasions, the last time being the occasion of the World Religionists' Conference held in Kyoto in the fall of 1970, and when the meeting of an Advisory Panel for UN in connection with the restoration of Lumbini was held in Tokyo in August, 1971. He had a number of friends and acquaintances among Japanese Buddhist scholars and priests.

He was one of the founding Presidents of the World Fellowship of Buddhists, which was formally organized in Colombo in 1950. He was its first President, and later Honorary Life President. As a Buddhist scholar, his career shows qualities seen in only a select few. He was not only a Buddhist scholar of great repute and professor at the Department of Pāli and Buddhist Studies at University College, Ceylon from 1927–57, but an able educator, organizer,

NOTES

and diplomat, as well. He is well known in the Buddhist world for having been one of the initiators of *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism*, of which he was Editor-in-Chief throughout his lifetime. He is said to have first conceived the idea of editing an *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism* in English modelled on the *Bukkyō Daijiten* edited by the late Dr. Mochizuki Shinkō. He aimed at making it comprise all major traditions, Theravāda, Mahāyāna and Tantrayāna, and well founded on the results of the latest scholarship.

He received education both in Ceylon and in Great Britain, and held a number of academic qualifications: B.A.; M.A.; Ph. D. and D. Litt (University of London); Hon. Ph.D. (Moscow); Hon. D. Litt (Ceylon); D. Litt (Vidyodaya University).

His publications include:

The Pāli Literature of Ceylon, published by the Royal Asiatic Society of Britain in their Prize Publication Series, 1927.

The Commentary on the Mahāvamsa (Chronicle of Ceylon), 2 vols., published by the Pali Text Society of England and financed by the Government of Ceylon, 1935.

The Dictionary of Pāli Proper Names, 2 vols. sponsored by the Government of India, published by Humphrey Milford, Oxford, 1938; 2nd ed. 1965.

The Extended (or Cambodian) Mahāvamsa, published by the Royal Asiatic Society of Ceylon.

Edited and published 12 volumes of the Pāli Text and Sinhala Translation of the Buddhist scriptures—(other volumes in preparation).

Edited and published 12 parts of the *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism* (in English), still in course of publication.

The Buddha and His Teaching, published by the Government of Ceylon.

Former Editor of *The Buddhist* (publication of the Young Men's Buddhist Association of Ceylon).

Published numerous articles in journals of international repute.

Some of principal offices he held were:

Professor and Head of the Department of Pāli and Buddhist Studies, University College, Ceylon (later University of Ceylon) 1927-1957.

Dean of the Faculty of Oriental Studies at various times for 15 years.

First Ambassador from Ceylon to the USSR with concurrent accreditation to Czechoslovakia, Poland and Rumania, 1957-1961.

THE EASTERN BUDDHIST

Permanent Representative of Ceylon to United Nations, 1961-1963.

High Commissioner for Ceylon in Canada, 1961-1963.

High Commissioner for Ceylon in Great Britain, 1963-1966.

Chairman, National Council of Higher Education in Ceylon, 1967-1971.

The Buddhist world needs not only leaders, devotionals, priestly as well as lay, but Buddhist educators and organizers with a world-wide perspective. No one would deny that the recent ecumenical trend in the Buddhist world owes much to the foresight of the late Dr. Malalasekera. He was certainly a remarkable example of such a personality. With his death the Buddhist world has lost one of its most prominent promoters of Buddhist ecumenism. His name will long be remembered in the modern history of Buddhism.

Bandō Shōjun