

ZEN notes



SOKEI-AN SAYS

SAMBHOGAKAYA Before I came to the United States I did not understand Japan very well. But after I had arrived here and looked back at my country over seven thousand miles of waves, my soul clearly reflected it. I think everyone's experience is the same. If an American goes to France, he will understand America and it is the same with a Frenchman who leaves France.

I have a piece of steel but I do not know its quality. If I make a knife out of it and cut something with it, then I will know whether it is good or bad.

A little green sprout appears in the spring. You cannot know what will grow from it. But when it grows into a tree, opens its blossoms and produces fruit--Oh, an orange!

An infant comes forth from his mother's bosom, but no one knows who he is. One of these, in his old age, took and drank from a poisonous cup in Athens--then he was Socrates. When someone dies and is covered in his coffin, you can judge him. When a bird escapes from its cage, you understand its value. To discover if you are a good catcher, you must throw a ball against the wall and catch it.

Every one and every thing has a soul--fire, water, weeds, trees, insects, animals, man--all of these beings have a soul. Is this true? You know that a tree has a soul, but how does the tree know it? You know that an infant has a soul, but how does the infant know? The tree is sleeping. The infant is not sleeping, but it is not yet conscious of itself. And fire. Fire is not dead, but it is not living as a sentient being. Nor can any animal realize it has a soul.

We possess a soul and we know it,

but how can we prove it? Does the soul know about it or does something else know? With what do we realize it? We have five senses, and, like a tree, we open blossoms and produce fruit. We function and we receive the result of our actions. As its result, we are conscious of our soul. We perceive phenomena and therefore realize that we have perception. We radiate life and perceive it about us. When you kill the father, the son will avenge him. You slap and you will be slapped in return. If we do not manifest, we do not receive a result. This standpoint is called Sambhogakaya. We perceive and receive the results of our actions.

The body of Nirmanakaya is like the fingertip. The body of Sambhogakaya is like the joint of the hand. The root of the body of transformation, this manifestation, is perception. Without the five senses we could not realize Sambhogakaya. The baby cries for the mother's breast and searches with his little hand, but until he can see and hear, he cannot realize himself. Until your body is completed, you do not realize soul. Only then can you observe the universe, sun, moon, and so forth. Then you will realize there is a god or soul, that which is the center of manifestation. We call it by many names. But the soul of the universe is not created by human reason. We have abstract reasoning about perfect love and the abstract idealism that was created by Plotinus, but all this is just the knowledge of the human being. Of course it is wonderful, but if you stand upon a viewpoint that is separate from this human consciousness, can you realize the universal center? If you stand upon a universal viewpoint, can you realize it?

Sambhogakaya is abstract idealism, abstracted from real existence as I abstract a fan from my robe. To speak about it I must abstract it. If I keep a fan in my robe, I cannot speak about it clearly; I must take it out. So when I speak of Sambhogakaya, I abstract it from concrete existence. If you think it exists separately, you make a mistake in logic. A drop of water taken from the ocean is not the ocean until you put it back. So to abstract something and say it is the truth is impossible. Put it back and then it is the truth. Many religions make this mistake. Hence, we have to find our own Sambhogakaya here in this existence, in this body. Put yourself into the universe--this is the universe--here you are. But to abstract an idea outside of yourself, and put yourself into that, is quite impossible. You are in it; it has been done and cannot be done again.

In Christianity, you speak of the Three-in-One, and then you abstract God, throw him out into the sky and worship him. It is foolish to build temples, fill them with statues, bow down at mass, clasp your hands and worship what is not true, what is abstract. It was a form of religion when the human mind was not developed, but today we can understand that everything is within us. It is not necessary to abstract Sambhogakaya. I have it and can use it. The five consciousnesses within us called soul is the result of this function of our nature. To realize that we have it is Sambhogakaya. This is the shrine, this the temple. The image is here within us. How do we worship this? We sit quietly, abstain from thinking and talking; we seek our innermost--this

is worshipping it. The Buddha, taking his seat under the Bodhi Tree, attained to highest enlightenment within himself. He was not worshipping anything outside--not searching for a god in the sky.

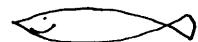
If you understand Sambhogakaya, you know that it is the one and the many. You can produce many from this one and reduce the many into this one--that is Sambhogakaya.

When you speak of the many, you will understand the system of reincarnation. But when you speak of the one, where is reincarnation? So with Sambhogakaya, it is the primal oneness of the soul that enters into trees, man--there is just one Sambhogakaya. But standing upon the body of transformation, Nirmanakaya, you can see all the separations and think of reincarnation. Then you return to Sambhogakaya and emancipate yourself from all transmigration. Of course if you stay there, you can never return to the human body. For if you stand upon the view that the universe is just one soul, then there is no man, no tree, no insect...

I am generally too lazy to explain all this; it is just by chance that I do so now.

There is a story about an evil deva with an egotistic soul who believed that all souls were separate, from alpha to omega. He enjoyed seeing confusion in human life, so while all were sleeping, he exchanged two souls. Morning came, the sun rose on no confusion. No one knew the difference--everything was perfectly all right. This is the standpoint of monism (Sambhogakaya). The idea of a judgment day expresses the pluralistic view. Both views are true: all souls are separated from the beginning and all souls are inseparable. Our brain can use pluralism or monism (two nostrils are a nose). We can see many as one and one as many. Sambhogakaya is the body of receiving results and the body of unity. We usually call it "body of enjoyment" because everything comes together here--comes to one point--and we feel joy.

This body of enjoyment within us is symbolized by Samantabhadra riding on a white elephant, holding a lotus. This name means simultaneous, or the same, and wisdom, the same wisdom in all--all-receiving and all-manifesting. This standpoint meets all other religions. The silvery white elephant, like snow, covers the universe. Great Nature has but one color.



THE IMAGE OF BUDDHA

By MARY FARKAS

For many years after the Buddha's death, no images of him were made. His living presence was remembered and his followers continued on the Way he had shown them. His relics were divided and enshrined in structures devised for this purpose. Later, symbolic reminders of his existence--the footprints, the vacant seat, the Bodhi Tree--reinforced the remembering of his attainment. Coming together, his followers recollected the events of his life, repeated his words and imitated his practice, following his suggestions and example as best they could in the light of their own understanding. They expressed their respect and gratitude for his forty-five year effort to help others work out their own way with very nearly the same gestures or postures they would have used if he were physically present. On such occasions the offering which would have been presented to a distinguished and revered teacher or guest probably would be placed before his symbol, or in a designated place. The ceremonies of Buddhism in essence follow these practices even today.

To the Westerner the Eastern modes of paying respect whether to the living or remembered teacher present serious psychological as well as physical difficulties, because his associations with the gestures and postures are different from those of the Easterner, to whom getting down on one's knees and bowing one's head to the ground, or prostrating oneself one or more times is not an unusual act, but often represents no more in form than an ordinary greeting. The nature of the Westerner's inner resistance to performing such acts, which is probably incomprehensible to the Easterner, often becomes an insuperable barrier to his benefiting from such Eastern practices. This is particularly true for the modern students of Zen Buddhism, for the Westerner who has been led to believe that this sect is completely free of what he dislikes in the rituals of the West from which he has turned to Zen is stunned to find in it what seem to be their counterparts.

Sokei-an, in describing the profound bow made on formal occasions before the altar, said: "In our salutation we clasp the Buddha's feet and press them to our brow. It is not worship, it is simply salutation--as you shake hands, 'How do you do.' *Worship* has a touch of superstition. When I bow, it is my profound salutation to a long-ago teacher, not to things made of wood or stone. When we cast ourselves on the ground to clasp the teacher's feet, it is not superstition. It is something true."

The *object of worship* is also often a subject for examination. Venerable U. Thittila, a Burmese Buddhist monk who is the president of the British Sangha Association and represents the modern Theravadin view, took the occasion of a ceremony enshrining a Buddhist relic in England October 18, 1964, to refute the idea that Buddhists are idol worshipers. He told the *London Times*: "Some people have the idea or imagine that we worship these relics or images of the Buddha or structures in which the relics are enshrined. We, Buddhists, do not worship these external objects."

We keep them so that we can think of the Buddha in gratitude for what he did for us, for what he left and for his teaching."

The early images of the Buddha, for example the Gandharan types, seem to be idealized portraits of an impressive individual. The Mathuran, developed at about the same time, represent the Buddha as the living teacher. In both of these types, the reality of the man who had found the way to enlightenment is apparent. His hand points to the earth. His feet are on the ground. When his memory is worshiped, it should be borne in mind that it is in gratitude to the specific teacher who was the pathfinder, it is the historical Buddha who is remembered and revered. This is the Buddha of the Hinayana, the man whose actual words are repeated. "In all the images," Sokei-an said, "The Buddha is represented as meditating; he is teaching his religion, his attitude of attaining enlightenment."

With the passage of time the idea of the realistic individual Buddha was abandoned for what has come to be the final image of the perfect type or state of being, Buddha. As the Mahayana emerged through the popularity of the great apocryphal sutras which elaborate and embroider the simple facts of the Buddha's existence, a new Buddha that represented the Absolute, of which the man who became a Buddha was the real manifestation on earth came to the fore. The image of the Buddha became the image of Buddha. The nature of the public's attitude toward the image was drastically altered and aspects of the Buddha's doctrine as well as of the Absolute were visualized and personified. A proliferation of stories of the past incarnations of the Buddha added a variety of subjects to be depicted. The allegorical decorations of supernatural powers and otherworldly speculation were eagerly seized upon by artists. Drama, verbal and visual, proved a fertile ground for the





artist as the "reasonableness" of the historic Buddha gave way to the imaginary. As every good word was now potentially a word of Buddha, the *teachings* of the Buddha were increased to gargantuan proportions. The unintelligible and unimaginable "Real", the unspeakable Word, gave birth to so many writings that the cataloguing alone would occupy many lifetimes.

The greatest height of mystical speculation was reached with the Kegon sutra in which the most complete interrelationship of everything is described. The follower in developed Buddhism was not only to revere or unite with Buddha but to become Buddha. And the image of Buddha must be the Ultimate. To create the image of this Buddha was not merely art but a religious act. This point of view was quite clearly expressed in the Proclamation of the Japanese Emperor Shomu on the Erection of the Great Buddha Image in the year 743. "We have resolved to create this venerable object of worship ... Therefore all who join in the fellowship of this undertaking must be sincerely pious in order to obtain its great blessings, and they must daily pay homage to Lochana Buddha, so that with constant devotion each may proceed to the creation of Lochana Buddha."

The function of the image of the Buddha was now twofold, to serve as an object of veneration and to furnish support for the visualization, or actualization, in meditation, of Buddhahood.

An interesting side avenue of lesser aspects of deity and personifications deserves some note. In *The Art of Indian Asia* Heinrich Zimmer tells us, an "image is intended to be the residence of the divinity with whom the devotee, in meditation, is to become one. Its beauty is not intended for the aesthetic enjoyment of the secular beholder, but is to entice the benevolent aspect of the god to enter it. An ugly place of residence can excite his wrath, and so

create a situation beyond the control of the devotee; the image, in that case, becoming as dangerous as a powerhouse out of control. "The function of the image maker of this type takes on dimensions rarely explored in the West. Not satisfied with acts of mere self-expression, or even expressions of Great Nature, the artist is attempting to create actual deities. Indian painting, too, was for magic purposes, we are told, about which many interesting stories are told." According to the Indian ideal, art should not copy models; it should be a projection into susceptible materials of a mental vision."

Throughout the history of Buddhism, the miraculous has been attributed to images and paintings. Many stories are told of rescues at sea, rain-production, animals that climb or fly out of their painted worlds, and good and bad luck of all degrees, due to the efficacy of particular images. Many of these are of Avalokiteshvara, whose powers are almost as much publicized as those of the Virgin in Christianity. Sokei-an's Fisher, Girl, photographed in CAT'S YAWN, portrays one of these stories.

Various answers have been made to the questions raised by modern Zen students as to the value of images. In an interesting chapter of the autobiography of Hsu Yun, currently running in World Buddhism, the commander of the provincial troupes who hated monks and was on a mission to destroy the monasteries of Yunnan in 1911 asked the Venerable Master, then 72, "What are clay and wooden statues good for? Are they not a waste of money?" The Master replied: "The Buddha spoke of Dharma and its expression; the latter reveals the doctrine which, without symbols, cannot be known and will never arouse feelings of awe and reverence. A man devoid of these feelings is apt to commit evil and so cause trouble and misfortune. Clay and wooden statues in China and bronze ones in foreign countries serve to arouse feelings of admiration and their effect on the masses is incalculable. The ultimate pattern of the Dharma is: 'If all phenomena are not regarded as such, the Tathagata will be perceived.'"

When Buddhists are asked if in bowing before the image of Buddha they are worshipping God, they are most likely to answer as has Reverend Kubose, of the Chicago Buddhist Church, in the March, 1965 Bulletin. "Many people believe that Buddhists worship Buddha. This is because people think of Buddha as God (objectified and a personal Being who does things for men) as un-

derstood in many of the Christian denominations. There are others who say that Buddhists worship idols. This is a most wrongly conceived statement. It refers to the statues and images of Buddha which are not idols but symbols. A statue is a symbol in the same sense as the American flag is the symbol of our country. Our flag, made with stars and stripes and three different colors, stands for our nation as a symbol, and because it is so we Americans are taught to respect and honor it. We do not have to have a flag in order to be the fine, strong and wonderful country we are today, but I believe it is nice to have it. So, in Buddhism we have many different kinds of Buddha statues showing Gautama or his virtues and qualities. Some statues are Gautama Buddha himself while others such as Amida Buddha and Vairocana Buddha are the symbol of the ideal Buddhas. The Amida Buddha is the symbol of compassion and wisdom and the Vairocana Buddha is the symbol of boundless light. Artists create them in the most artistic way so that the serenity, compassion and wisdom are felt by the observers. These statues are used as a point of focus and as a reminder of the quality they symbolize and are placed in temples, homes, parks and many other places; some people carry small images with them. The statues that are made in Japan are of the ideal type of Japanese and those made in India are of the ideal type of Hindu. Just looking at the statues creates a feeling of serenity, compassion and wisdom. Of course, we do not have to have statues, but, like our flags, they are nice to have."

The Buddhist monk, Nyogen Senzaki, when asked about the statues and paintings of a religious nature he had in his zendo, told how each had been acquired, then added: "Thus we have a sort of family. They are very quiet as they join us. Fortunately, I don't have to feed them! These 'dolls' are nothing but devices to help our meditation. However, we do not need these devices. We do not need anything. All that is necessary is the awareness of our breathing."

Koichi Tohei, Chief Instructor visiting the New York Aikikai, on being asked about bowing before the originator's photograph at the beginning and end of practice, replied to the effect that the bow is really made to Great Nature. For us to express our gratitude, remembering our parents and teachers is not to bow to them personally but to their functioning as part of Nature.

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NIRMANAKAYA We take water, and water becomes part of us; we take alcohol, and we become part of alcohol. When we take food, it becomes part of ourselves; if we take poison, it destroys us. This is our simple everyday experience, but it is also a wonderful example of the great universal law. If you wish to understand the law of human beings, you must think of this very carefully and very deeply.

To live as human beings, we must put ourselves into all that is around us. When we keep a tulip in a flower-pot, we water it and give it sunshine, taking it away from the chill wind and frost. Looking into the blue sky on a spring day, we put ourselves into it and drop our worries--we embody ourselves in the object with which we make contact.

In Buddhism there is the doctrine of the transformation of the body, physically and materially. It is called Nirmanakaya. We put ourselves into, we transform ourselves into, another form. Water and food transform themselves into our form. This is the secret of how to make contact with one another in daily life. If you understand it, there will be no more puzzles in your life. If you practice this, you are perfect as a human being.

When you put yourself into another, do not keep your own form. You must become one form with the other, transform yourself as the water that changes form when it enters your body. If you wish to help another, you must understand transformation. Then you can help him as he wants. If you wish to help him by trying to change him, that is not the real way to help. To help a dog, you transform yourself into him, do exactly as he wants. If you wish to help a canary, you do not put a hat on his head and boots on his feet. Yet when you try to help a man, you do just such things. You carry your own idea into the other, extend yourself into him. This always leads to conflict. If you were eating a potato and the potato would say "Change yourself or I will give you no nourishment," would you like this? The potato changes willingly--that is universal law. It is very clear, but the human being is too stupid to understand this great law. I transform myself into the other and the other transforms himself into me. This is perfect unity, perfect harmony.

Let us look at this from another angle. When I take water, it transforms itself into me. But if I take fire, I must transform myself into fire. At this point, it is clear that

everything that is transformable is good and that anything untransformable is bad. We take wine and it changes us. Our attitude changes and we speak loudly. We begin to feel great. And then the wine leaves us and we feel small. If you wish really to change another, you would have to do so entirely and not let him wake from it. Can you do this? It is possible for someone with great power and understanding to use man as he wants, but when one becomes ten, the other must be zero. That is the law. Fifty-fifty is not harmony. To carry your idea into another is like planting dynamite underground.

Buddhism in the Buddha's time emphasized that man must be emancipated from the physical body, but this is not a true doctrine. The Buddha taught this in order to take his disciples away from everyday life into monastic life. "Forget the physical body and physical life." His emphasis was on the spiritual body. But Zen teaches that we make contact through this physical, this transformable body. If one wants to help someone who is lying on the ground, he must lie down beside him. He cannot say, "Here you, get up." This is using the transformable body, Nirmanakaya. Nirmanakaya is symbolized by Avalokiteshvara with a thousand eyes and arms. Every day he transforms himself in every way.

The Buddhist practices non-ego. He can transform himself as a grain of incense transforms itself into fire, smoke, ashes. It is told in one of the great Buddhist sutras how the sacred lotus flower, the spiritual body, opened and saw the transformable body. This is non-ego. All the simple things of the earth are teaching us from morning to evening, but we cannot see. It is no wonder that there is no end to trouble on this earth. The sacred lotus must open and see this transformable world. This is the outline of the Avalokiteshvara Sutra, and it comprises the whole teaching of Mahayana Buddhism.

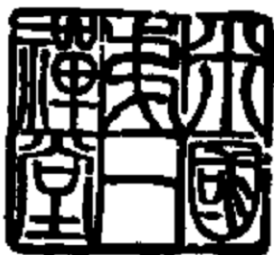
You must open your eye and see the wonderful, sacred, transformable body--Nirmanakaya.

Reconstructed by Vanessa Coward and Mary Farkas from the notes of Audree Kepner.

For other articles on The Three Bodies, see ZN VI/11, and IX/3.

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