

ZEN notes



LIFE-AND-DEATH, III

That which is called Tathagata is the one whose rupa (physical appearance) has been completely annihilated and whose mind has attained perfect emancipation. If anyone should say that Tathagata has a future life-and-death, the view would not be correct. If anyone should say that Tathagata has no future life-and-death, that he has either a future or no future, that he has neither future nor has he no future, these views would also not be correct.

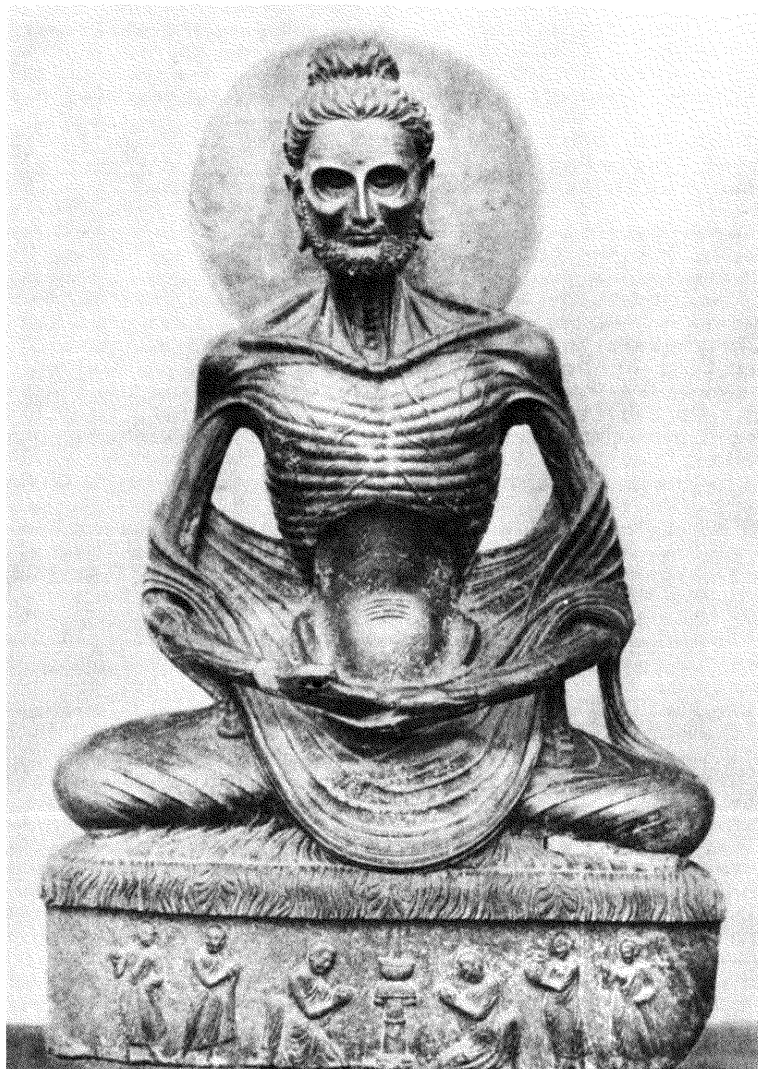
Tathagata is the one whose rupa has been completely annihilated, whose mind has attained perfect emancipation, whose mind is fathomless, boundless, ageless, and who dwells in Nirvana, the state of absolute annihilation.

O Shariputra, if Tathagata had said that Tathagata has life-and-death in the future, he would have acknowledged the vedana (sense-perception), the samjna (thoughts, including dreams and images), the samskara (invisible thoughts like your subconscious state of mind), and the vijnana (consciousness itself): he would have acknowledged motion, reasoning, deception, purpose and attachment.

To speak further, if Tathagata had said that he has neither future nor no future, it would be exactly the same as what has been stated above. Tathagata has annihilated attachment (Trishna); he has attained emancipation. Thus, if he had said there is a future, the view would not have been correct. If he had said there was either a future or no future, or that there was neither a future nor no future, the view would not have been correct. Tathagata has annihilated attachment and has attained emancipation. His mind is fathomless, boundless, ageless, and dwells in Nirvana, the state of absolute annihilation. O Shariputra, this is the cause and this is the reason why, if anyone should inquire whether Tathagata has a future or whether he has no future, whether he has either a future or no future, or whether he has neither future nor no future in respect of life-and-death, Tathagata's answer would be *avyakrita*.

After this discourse both Mahakashyapa and Shariputra returned to their original places.





LET'S NOT GET CARRIED AWAY, II

By Mary Farkas

Georges Ohsawa was (along with some of the other proponents of his system, he is dead) a phenomenon unusual in American life but common enough in Japan to represent a certain pattern. Of the many "new religions" of Japan, as they were recently dubbed in a book of that name, the greater part have been founded by individuals with histories not unlike that of Georges Ohsawa, that is, said to begin with a period of great distress, mental or physical, which was resolved, at which point they became teachers or leaders and, by the promotion of a formula for acquiring health, wealth, or happiness, better still all three, induced many seekers to pursue those ends by the following of the formula.

"Family tragedy and near-fatal illness came to Ohsawa," Dufty

Handwritten text in a vertical column on the left margin, possibly a signature or title, enclosed in a decorative border.

writes, "at an early age and began his compulsive search for the ancient secrets of Oriental medicine. His mother was a nurse and midwife trained in the techniques of Western medicine who, like so many families in Japan at the beginning of the 20th century, broke with ancient tradition and accepted Western ideas of medicine, nourishment, technology and even religion. When his mother died--abandoned as incurable by the Western medicine she had espoused--when two sisters and a brother died the same way, and when the ten-year-old Sakurazawa was told he was incurably ill of tuberculosis and ulcers at the age of ten, he rebelled and began the study of ancient Oriental medicine which had been officially outlawed by the Japanese government under the impact of modernization. After he had worked out his own salvation, he decided to dedicate the rest of his life to the study of the medicine which had saved him." Presumably this was Sagen Isiduka's "discovery of the biochemical validity of the ancient Unique Principle of Yin/Yang when he uncovered the complementary antagonism between sodium (Na) and potassium (K).

The theory of the Unique Principle of Yin/Yang equaling the "scientific" Na/K was the peg on which much of Ohsawa's system was hung. But he did not stop with his interpretation of Yin/Yang philosophy and Isiduka's "science"; Zen enlightenment was also included; and with faith (I'd guess of a mixture of Christian and Shinto origin although it was labeled Zen) one could be healed of anything. Faith, in Ohsawa's dictionary, was defined as "understanding of the Unique Principle (divine justice) that governs the universe."

On Page 105 of *You are all Sanpaku* he says: "Disease is not necessary, not God-ordained, therefore the efforts of Western medicine, no matter with what scientific zeal they are conducted, to analyze its nature and its specifics are wasteful, superfluous and often misleading. Adherence to a macrobiotic regimen would not only ward off all human ailments, but could arrest, and even cure, these ailments, no matter how seriously advanced the condition..."

"If I were free to do so, I could prescribe specifically for such ailments as heart disease, kidney trouble, cancer, diabetes, venereal diseases, and even the ailments in the area of psychiatry--schizophrenia, paranoia--with assurances of cure within an astoundingly short time. I could then recommend that the patient empty the contents of his medicine chest, dispense with his doctor, and--save in the most

extreme emergency--deny himself the dubious salvation, particularly in the case of cancer, of drastic surgery..."

"In the meantime, I can only feel free to suggest, for those unfortunates whom medical science has rejected as 'hopeless cases' or those sick people who for one reason or another are not under medical care, that they would do well to follow the regimens that I shall list... (Chart previously included.)"

"Regimen Number 7--consisting of 100% cereals--is the easiest, simplest, wisest and swiftest way back to health."

"...You can continue with any regimen higher than Number 3 as long as you like without danger...if you are not aware of constant improvement in your health return to the Number 7 Regimen for a few weeks or months."

In spite of the self-imposed limitation just stated Ohsawa actually did advise and prescribe for all sorts of people who sought his advice. Perhaps he thought of himself as another Isiduka, "saving" thousands of people unreached by Western medicine and religion. Certainly at least some of his followers regarded him as a savior.

"In the Orient, since the beginning of history, the grain of rice," according to Geroges Ohsawa, "has been identified with God." In the case of some of the persons who followed Ohsawa's No. 7 regimen (100% grain, liquid sparingly) the decision to live on it alone, in what came to be something like a sacramental spirit, was to prove the most momentous event of their lives.

As interest in Ohsawa's "way" grew, in the early 60's the Institute received daily telephone calls asking where the macrobiotic products could be purchased. More shops and restaurants opened. One of our former members called to tell me that Ohsawa had offered to enlighten her personally. Public promises of a similar nature were made. People who had undertaken the macrobiotic way never ceased to extoll its virtues. The "diet" had become a cult, the people who followed it its best promulgators.

One's only possible conversation with the Ohsawans was their way of life. As Duffy said: "My physical transformation propelled things into an unending seminar on macrobiotics." "Doctor" Ohsawa prescribed for everyone and, although he referred to his prescriptions as advice, it became something like a "sin" if the follower did not do as he was told. A woman member of his organization, described in an early publicity release as a former actress (someone told me she had actually been a waitress) is reported to have put on

a nurse's uniform and given medical advice also. If things did not go well with someone who had been "advised" to follow a certain regimen, the rationalization would later be: "I merely advised him, but it was his own responsibility if he did what I suggested." Sudden shifts in advice would clearly place the blame for any mishaps on the follower. The followers supported and exhorted one another, watching each other's behavior for any weakening in the practice. Eating the rice, (recommended chewing practice, 50 times for each mouthful) was the main ritual.

"Personalities" of the stage and screen began to be mentioned in connection with the diet. Paragraphs appeared in the gossip columns. A Zen camp was drawing hordes of people.

Whether Ohsawa believed in himself as a savior of humanity is unknown to me but his lieutenants were an assorted lot.

The advice given Duffy by Irma Paule, the secretary of the Ohsawa Foundation, when he was in jail where he could not get macrobiotic products, is an example of the type of "advice" given by Ohsawa leaders.

"That's marvelous," she said with a laugh when I told her where I was. "You've been macrobiotic for almost four months, you can go without food for thirty days at least with no danger at all. Sure, you'll get a little thin, but listen, sweetie, if there's anything wrong with you there's nothing like a good fast. That will cure everything."

About the camp, a note in our monthly minutes records that a Mr. Chapman visited the Institute one Wednesday evening and was telling about the camp, with which he had something of a promotional nature to do. Secki Shapiro asked him: "Why do you call it a Zen camp?" Mr. Chapman's reply finally and unequivocally came: "It's good business."

A different sort of note began to creep into the news we heard of Ohsawa's disciples. Someone called to ask why her friend, a musician, who had been on the "Zen diet" for some months, had turned greenish yellow of complexion. Why was he so nervous? Wasn't rice supposed to be calming? he was delighted with the results of the diet, but he looked pretty peaked. Could it be his incessant smoking? Curiously enough, though Ohsawa condemned white sugar as a poison, tobacco was regarded of questionably damaging properties. We were informed that the Dr. Sastri who had so indefatigably attempted to induce us to sponsor Ohsawa's lectures had died of cancer (one of the diseases the

diet was supposed to cure).

Public interest in the Ohsawa affair reached new heights when Newsweek telephoned us about the Zen camp. Could we give them Dr. Suzuki's address so they could ask him about some of the statements Ohsawa had made that tied up his diet with Japanese Zen? Who was the old roshi who was reputed to have reached an extreme age by living on the macrobiotic diet alone? Was it Dr. Suzuki? Had we heard what was going on at the camp? What were we doing about it? Had we heard about the deaths there?

One day a man named Emil Meersand stormed into our office. He is a building contractor, but it wasn't about construction that he had come. He had seen the sign on the front of our building saying Zen Institute and wanted to work someone over about the Zen diet. A friend of his, a vigorous man of forty in excellent health, had been in a severe accident while horseback riding that had left him with a crushed leg. Antibiotics were slowly giving him hope of saving his leg from the gangrene that had set in when he somehow came into contact with Ohsawa and was advised by him to adopt the No. 7 (brown rice exclusively) regimen. He was also ordered to give up all medication, standard practice with those who followed Dr. Anti-Doctor's spiritual successor. In twelve days the man was dead. What was Ohsawa's responsibility in this case? According to him, none.

A curious development of recent years is the repetition of a very old Buddhist error, the going too far to the right of the Middle Way. In spite of the Buddha's own example of giving this up after he had reached the extreme of denying himself all but one grain of millet a day (so the story is told) with the result that he became weaker but not wiser, it is ironical that the name of Buddhism is still being borrowed for the grain monodiet that has become the fad of the extremists who are willing to pursue it to the very end.

The Buddha nearly paid the price of death for his error when fasting had brought him down to the bone. Several followers of the Ohsawa diet have carried the prayer and fasting he recommended to the extreme counseled against by the Buddha 2500 years ago. Beth Ann Simon, whose story was reported in the New York Herald Tribune, Jan. 23, 1966, was such an extremist who, when the Diet No. 7 did not bring her to the health claimed for it, carried out the fasts that were its escalation. She died in November, 1965.

Early in 1966 I was invited to a hearing of the Grand Jury of New Jersey

to testify that the macrobiotic movement had no relation to Zen. There, Secki Shapiro, who accompanied me, and I learned of other cases of deaths directly attributable to following the No. 7 diet. The brother of one such victim, a Union City man, claimed that when his brother had become bedridden and could not care for himself after nine days of the diet, a woman who claimed to be a nurse from the food-store cared for him and would not let a doctor be called in. On the same day that she told the brother the patient was fine he lapsed into a coma and died.

Dr. Paul Sherlock, of the Cornell University School of Medicine, testified that he had treated a woman who developed scurvy on the diet, a disease caused by a Vitamin C deficiency that is almost unheard of in the Western world in modern times. The doctor said that he had read of this ancient disease in his textbooks, but that this was the first case he had ever encountered. Some of the symptoms were a grey color, loose teeth, softened gums, and anemia. Permanent joint injuries did not respond to treatment.

The assistant prosecuting attorney asked me: "What can be done about this problem? We are trying to find a legal way to deal with it. How can gullible people be saved from their own folly? Will it help to prove that Ohsawa was thrown out of several countries because of his activities?"

"An unusual feature is that many of the people interested in this thing are intelligent, well-educated people looking for a better way of life. How is it that they are so blind as to endanger their lives with such an obviously inadequate regime?"

For interest in the diet did not end even though the fatalities were given considerable publicity.

Now we hear that students in universities and schools are beginning to take up the Ohsawa diet. It is still "chic" enough for an article to have appeared in one of the high fashion magazines a few months back. On the "more taste than money" level its extreme inexpensiveness attracts. On the No. 7 diet you could live for perhaps 28¢ a day. Among the dissatisfied young, this alone is a tremendous appeal. Also, no skill in cooking is really necessary. The modern can include the "new" Japanese wife's one necessity, the electric rice-cooker.

Drug addicts and LSD voyagers are also attracted to the diet. The World Journal Tribune of Oct. 17, 1966, reporting the story of Celeste Cren-

shaw, dead from an overdose of heroin, quotes a letter she wrote her half-sister a year before her death. "I am on a wonderful diet. It is a Zen macrobiotic diet. It consists mainly of rice and is against meat and sugar products... I feel wonderfully healthy and don't miss my usual food at all... it helps me just by giving me a sense of purpose, however temporary... What right have I to seek enlightenment? I don't even know what it really means. But I feel a sense of conviction above all else. I can't shake the belief in belief that makes me seek..."

Why "seekers" like Miss Crenshaw and Beth Ann Simon, that is, emotionally disturbed persons, lump together Zen, macrobiotics, psychedelic and other drugs, and hypnotism as the only workable ways to what they think of as "religious experience" must be carefully scrutinized for the sake of future generations as part of our modern dilemma. Why people continue with Ohsawa's system even after it has been proved other than the Macro (great) bio (vitality) tic (technique of rejuvenation) his definition of its name promises must be put up to the psychologists as well as the authorities and nutritionists.

Of course not all the followers of Ohsawa were seekers. Some were dissidents. Dufty astutely observed that Ohsawa's book gave a clue "to another existentialist riddle: Suppose one wanted to resign from American civilization---where would one send the letter?--A macrobiotic disciple would turn in his resignation at the neighborhood supermarket."

The U.S. Government has made a move to protect our people from their own suicidal folly, but, as in the case of LSD, the guardians of public welfare find themselves ill-equipped to deal with the problem. I doubt that discrediting Ohsawa or seizing the products, of no more or less value than many others on the market, will put an end to the matter. Nor will Ohsawa's death ten years short of the life-span he had predicted for himself.

My hope in writing this account is to induce some, who might be hesitating, to use their common sense and follow the middle way in eating as well as everything else.

Let's not get carried away.

By the way, don't get me wrong about brown rice. I often eat it and recommend it as part of the meals we prepare at the Institute.



ZEN NOTES Vol. XIII
No. 10, October, 1966

Copyright 1966
Published by

The First Zen Institute of America, Inc.
113 East 30th Street, New York, NY 10016

SOKEI-AN SAYS

I have given two commentaries on this sutra and now this third is the last.

The Samyukta Agama is one of the oldest Buddhist scriptures. It was composed about two hundred years before Christ. Of course these lines were not preserved immediately by the Buddha's disciples. They were transmitted orally from teacher to disciple. According to the Indian custom of ancient days, they felt it sacrilegious to write them; they should be remembered by heart. About two hundred and fifty years after the Buddha's death these Agamas were described in some vernacular, then transcribed into Sanskrit and Pali. These sutras are very short; some are only four lines. This one is considerably longer.

The whole story is this: The Jainas came to see the Buddha--the Jainas, from the Buddhist view, are heretics--and they asked a question of the Buddha about the Buddha's future life-and-death: "Has Tathagata a future life after death, or has he no future life after his death? Has he either a future life or no future life after his death? Has he neither a future life nor no future life after his death?"

This is the construction of Hindu logic. When a Hindu asks a question he always puts it four ways: yes, no, either yes or no, neither yes nor no--"the question on four bases." We say yes, no--two bases.

The Buddha's answer to these four questions was this SILENCE. This was his answer. And this answer that the Buddha made is written *avyakrita*. It means "no-description," "no-word." It is silence, but it is not silent. It speaks eloquently the Buddha's profound understanding. It is not non-description, but there is no word to describe it. It is no-word. But all gods and goddesses and sentient beings, cats and dogs, trees and weeds, understand this word SILENCE. This state of the word was existing before the first word, which was "Ah-h-h." And this word will exist after the last word, which is "Ha-a-a." If I use English words and phraseology, this SILENCE exists before Alpha and after Omega. The state of this SILENCE is omnipresent, and its wisdom is omniscient, and its power is omnipotent. In Buddhism everyone enters into the Buddhistic faith through this gate. And everyone will attain enlightenment by this practice called meditation. So this *avyakrita*--the reality

of it--is a great word. Before I open my mouth in this lecture, I and you and everyone simultaneously, in the same nature of mind, make a complete unity in *avyakrita*.

The Buddha answered these heretics in SILENCE. The heretics said: "He is an idiot. He is a fool. He is like an infant. He has no self-understanding, he has no enlightenment." And they left.

Later they came to visit the Buddha's disciple Shariputra and asked the same question. Shariputra answered in exactly the same way as the Buddha had answered. Later Shariputra came to Mahakashyapa, another of the Buddha's giant disciples, and talked about it to him.

The point of this part of the sutra is that it gives emphasis on the five skandhas, and if the Buddha said there is a future life, or there is no future life, or there is either a future life or no future life, or there is neither a future life nor no future life, his answer must come from his acceptance of the five skandhas: rupa, vedana, samjna, samskara and vijñana. The Buddha's basis on which he built his religion was not on those five foundations. I must speak about these five foundations to make the foundation of Buddhism very clear. These five foundations are not the foundation of Buddhism, but I must make them clear in order to make the foundation of Buddhism clear, and then I shall briefly comment on the text.

The literal meaning of the Sanskrit word skandha is "shoulder." It means to pile one after the other, as the neck is piled on the shoulder and the head is piled on the neck--as though heavy bundles piled on the shoulder. The basis of human mind--I mean human mind, not Nature's mind, or Universal mind, but human mind--the foundation of human mind is consciousness. Consciousness is like a mirror. It has three natures: to reflect, to preserve, and to react. Everything is reflected upon consciousness, like a mirror; everything is kept in it, like seeds in the earth in the winter time; and it reacts according to the circumstances, as, when the warm winds blow in, the air will go up. Consciousness has reactions.

Consciousness flickers like a candle flame, by itself. It is a living, vibrating thing. It moves swiftly, like electricity--pure consciousness. And this swift electric-like consciousness will develop in some form of emotion, formula of balance, formula of crystallization of shape, like a

tree with branches. The mind is also good, bad; it has front, back--it is always trying to take a balance. If anyone shouts at you, you will do the same thing. Or if someone sneers you are frightened and silent, or later sneer back. It appears as reasoning, logic, and many ways in mind development.

Later it comes to the five senses--to hear, smell, taste, touch--and its crystallization is completed, as a tree has branches, leaves, blossoms. Then there is the body--hard, soft, green, red--all made of the same substance, the same material, consciousness. This object seems hard, but if my hand is hard as a diamond, it will be soft as water. There is no particular hardness or softness; it is all relative. Red is red, isn't it? But if I get a fever, it will become purple, then green. No special color exists. All depends upon the effect of the vibrations on the retina of the eye. But the eye will find this color. And thus our consciousness creates the outside. It is our creation. All human beings have the same consciousness, so we see the same thing and create the same world. I don't know how cats and dogs see; it is demonstrated in the Natural History Museum.

Then what will happen? Then the outside comes into the inside like a photograph on memory, and it stains the inside, this pure consciousness, with color. When human mind makes contact with outside it reacts, and we create a name, calling things good, bad, pure, impure. If we stick to the word pure we make a mistake. The outside soaks the inside, and pure mind is corrupted.

All things have a particular way. According to the place they change their shape. A willow tree always growing beside water becomes like water. A water-shape moves like water. It has a water-nature. It has the samskara of water. The pine tree growing on the rock is stone-minded. Its nature is like stone, so it acts like stone. The human being also changes his nature according to the nature of the circumstances. So the five skandhas do two things: come out, and take in. Both change the nature of human beings. And according to his nature the human being looks outside, and takes the outside as he thinks.

As long as you dwell in these five skandhas you will never be free from agony. You must find some still deeper place to dwell in. You must reach further--no word can reach there; there is no sound, no color. No mind can

think about this. There is neither past nor present nor future. It is beyond space and time, ageless, boundless. No one can see it, no one can imagine it, but it is existing.

How can we prove this existence of nothingness? We can prove it only through intuition. The Buddhist can speak up to this point, but words cannot explain deeper than this. But when you meditate you will learn there is a state that is deeper, that has nothing to do with our five senses. It is neither color nor thought nor state of consciousness. Consciousness takes life-and-death. But the state beyond consciousness does not take life and death. It is the state of Nirvana.

I have given a general survey of this part. Now I shall summarize.

That which is called Tathagata; Buddha's name. Tatha means "That," original essence of this body, akasha, ether; Tathagata--he comes from there and will go back there, he came thus and will go thus.

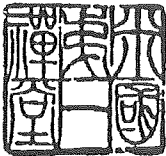
Is the one whose rupa has been completely annihilated: This word "annihilated" makes much trouble in Buddhism. You think annihilated means when the body is cremated and reduced to ashes, or dead. We do not think such a way in Buddhism, do not take it that way. "His body has been completely annihilated" means that his conception of body as his physical body has been completely annihilated. This body is ether. It appears to the eye as body, but it is ether. Without cremation our body is in reality not existing. It exists only to our five senses. This body consists of fire, water, air, earth, the four great elements, basically one element, akasha. No one knows what it is, but in Buddhist literature it means that the conception of body is completely annihilated.

Tathagata is the one whose Rupa has been completely annihilated, whose mind has attained perfect emancipation, whose mind is fathomless, boundless, ageless, and who dwells in Nirvana, the state of absolute annihilation. This is positive. Nirvana is the state of absolute annihilation; but the whole world is, in Nirvana, completely annihilated. So do not take this sentence as meaning the state of death.

Whose mind is fathomless, boundless, ageless, and who dwells in Nirvana, the state of absolute annihilation. Now in the world there are battles. Every one is killing, shouting, dying. But observed from the state of absolute annihilation they are all in the state of akasha. No one is shouting, no one is dying.

Copyright of Zen Notes is the property of the First Zen Institute of America, Inc. and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download or email articles for individual use.

Founded 1930



www.firstzen.org

First Zen Institute of America
113 E30 Street
New York, New York 10016
(212-686-2520)

(Open House Wednesdays: 7:30-9:30 PM)
Meditation and tea: 8-9:30 PM

美國第一禪協會