

# ZEN notes



C. F. Sherry

Although C.T. Shen's "The Five Eyes" was originally prepared for the celebration of the Buddha's birthday at the Temple of Enlightenment, Bronx, New York, it is equally appropriate for Bodhi Day, December 8th, which commemorates the opening of the Buddha's Eye. We take great pleasure, therefore, in reprinting it at this time with the permission of the author, who also very kindly supplied us with the colorful charts. So far as we know, this is the first time a modern eye has taken a good look at the heavenly eyes and brought them right down to earth.

## WHAT ARE THE FIVE EYES?

Buddhism classifies the eye into five categories; namely, physical eye, heavenly eye, wisdom eye, dharma eye and buddha eye. It should be pointed out first that the term "eye" used here is by no means the ordinary human eye. The human eye is only one kind of physical eye. As a matter of fact, the human eye is not a superior one. An eagle has eyes which can see much farther than a human's can. An owl has eyes which are more sensitive to light than our eyes, so the owl can see things in the darkness that we cannot see.

In order to illustrate the limitation of the human eye, I am introducing a chart which is prepared by modern scientists and which is called an electro-magnetic spectrum (Chart 1). This chart tells us that our naked eye can only see this very narrow strip of the universe which we call visible light. We cannot see the infra-red wave lengths and beyond nor the ultra-violet wave lengths and beyond. Therefore, before man had invented other instruments to assist his naked eye in detecting the universe beyond the visible band, the world that man saw and considered complete, true and real, was actually incomplete and a very small portion of the whole universe. It is really amazing to realize that 2500 years ago the Buddha had drawn this same conclusion without the assistance of any of the instruments we now have.

Here a simile may help us to understand more clearly how inferior our human eye is and how the human eye compares with the heavenly eye.

Just imagine there is a totally

enclosed dark house in the middle of a big city with only a very small window from which one can see only the crowded tall buildings with a little blue sky above and limited human activities. Suppose a child is born and grows up in this house. What would be his impression of his world? His impressions of his world are no doubt based on what he sees through this small opening. No matter how eloquently you describe to him the beauty of the vastness of the seascape and the wonder of the view at sunrise and sunset, he can hardly understand and appreciate them. That is precisely what our human eye offers us. We are actually in a dark house and see the universe through a very small opening which is our physical eye; yet we insist that what we see is the complete, real and true world.

Now there is another totally enclosed house on top of a mountain with a large picture window from which one can see the unlimited sky and infinite horizon. Maybe we can make it even more romantic by saying that numerous flower gardens and dancing girls are all over the place. Again a child is born and grows up in this house. Isn't it conceivable that the world he envisions is much greater and more beautiful than the one seen through the small window facing a crowded city? As an analogy, the second child possesses the heavenly eye as compared with the first who has only the physical eye.

Usually we say that the heavenly eye is possessed by gods or goddesses in heaven. According to Buddhism, however, this statement is not entirely correct because we human beings can also obtain the heavenly eye. There

are two ways to achieve it. One is through Dhyana, a Sanskrit word which is commonly but incompletely translated as meditation. The other way is to add an instrument to the naked eye which in itself is also a kind of instrument that today can even be transplanted. Although the first way, Dhyana, is a much superior way, the second way is probably easier for modern man to accept. Modern man is able to see into remote space by employing a powerful telescope. Modern man can watch the activities of bacteria by using a microscope. Today, one can see events happening thousands of miles away by means of satellites and television, and modern man can see many other wonders which in Buddha's time were exclusive to the heavenly eye. In Buddha's time, Dhyana was probably the only means of enabling a human being to transcend the boundary set forth by the physical eye. It is clear that the Buddha has mastered the truth that man's ability to see is unlimited but that man's physical eye actually limits that ability. The Buddha, through years of Dhyana, discovered that the barrier of the physical eye can be broken and that the original ability of man to see can be fully developed. When a man has developed his original ability to see he will have no difficulty in extending his vision as far as the heavenly eye can offer.

Up to now I believe that you understand without difficulty what the physical eye is and what the heavenly eye is. It was much more difficult for man in Buddha's time to understand the heavenly eye, but today from a practical point of view everyone possesses to some degree the heavenly eye. It is, therefore, easier for us to

comprehend.

Now we come to the wisdom eye.

To describe the wisdom eye we have to introduce a very important and fundamental concept in Buddhism which in Sanskrit is called Sunyata and which is translated as voidness. This teaching is unique and one can hardly find it in any other religion.

Voluminous scriptures in Buddhism were devoted to the study of Sunyata. What I can offer you today is really a drop of water taken from a vast ocean, but I will try my best. Hereafter, I am going to introduce to you three analytical methods which the Buddha employed on many occasions. Each method leads to Sunyata.

1. The first approach may be called the analytical method of disintegration.

Let me use a radio as an example. This is called a radio. If I take out the loud speaker, do you call the loud speaker the radio? The answer is no. You call it the loud speaker. Now take out the transistor. Do you call the transistor the radio? Again no, it is the transistor. How about the condenser, the resistor, the plastic case, the wire, etc.? None of these parts is called the radio. Now note carefully. When all the parts are separate, can you tell me where is the radio? There is no radio. Therefore, radio is simply a name given to a group of parts put together temporarily. When one disintegrates it mentally it loses its existence. A radio is not a permanent entity. The radio is Sunyata.

Not only is the radio Sunyata; the loud speaker is too. If I take the magnet out of the loud speaker, do you call it a loud speaker? No, you call it a magnet. If I remove the

frame, do you call it the loud speaker? Again no, you call it the frame. When all the parts are taken apart where can you find the loud speaker? So, if we disintegrate the loud speaker, it loses its existence. A loud speaker is not a permanent entity. A loud speaker is Sunyata.

Now this analytical method of disintegration is very important because you can apply this method to everything in the world and draw this same conclusion that everything can be disintegrated and nothing is a permanent entity. So, no matter what name we call it, it is Sunyata. Buddha has applied this method to himself. In his imagination he projects his head from his body and asks if the head would be called human body or "self"? The answer is no. It is a head. He takes his arm out of his body. Would this be called human body or "self"? The answer is again no. It is an arm. He takes the heart out and asks whether this is human body or "self". It is again no, and we understand now even more precisely that a heart can be removed from one body and transplanted into another without changing one man into another man. He takes every part of his body apart and finds that none of the parts can be called human body or "self". Finally, after every part is removed, where is "self"? He therefore concludes that not only is the physical body Sunyata, but the very concept of "self" is also Sunyata.

2. The second method may be called the analytical method of integration.

Although we see hundreds of thousand of different things in the world, man is able to integrate them into a few basic elements. For example, based upon chemical characteristics, man has

classified gold as a basic element. We are able to name thousands of golden articles ranging from a complicated golden statue to a simple gold bar, but all these articles can be melted and remolded into other forms. They are changeable and impermanent. The things which remain unchanged are the common chemical characteristics, and because of these common characteristics we call all these articles gold. In other words, all these articles are integrated into a single element which we call gold.

In Buddha's time Indian philosophers integrated everything into four basic elements--namely; solids, liquids, gas and fire. Buddha went farther and declared that the four elements could be further integrated into Sunyata. Again using gold as an example, Buddha means that although we have integrated all those golden articles into their common characteristics and call it gold, can we show where is the gold? Whatever we can show is a specific form of gold, such as a gold bar which is basically changeable and impermanent. Therefore, gold is simply a name given to certain characteristics and is intangible. Gold is therefore Sunyata. By the same reasoning, the Buddha concludes that all solids are Sunyata.

Not only solids are Sunyata, liquids are too. The characteristics of fluidity are also formless, ungraspable and are Sunyata. 2500 years ago the Buddha concluded that everything in the universe can be integrated into Sunyata.

It is certainly interesting to note that Western scientists achieved a similar conclusion or analogy. Before Albert Einstein discovered the theory of relativity, the Western sci-

entists integrated everything in the universe into two basic elements--namely, matter and energy. Einstein unified the two elements and proved mathematically that matter is also a form of energy. By doing so, he concluded that everything in the universe is simply a different form of energy. But what is the original nature of energy? Although I would not venture to say that energy is the same as Sunyata, at least I would like to say that energy is also formless, ungraspable and is an analogy of Sunyata.

3. The third method may be called the analytical method of penetration.

The Buddha carried out this method by means of Dhyana. We are not able to do so but fortunately today's scientific accomplishments furnish us with certain analogies which can greatly improve our understanding.

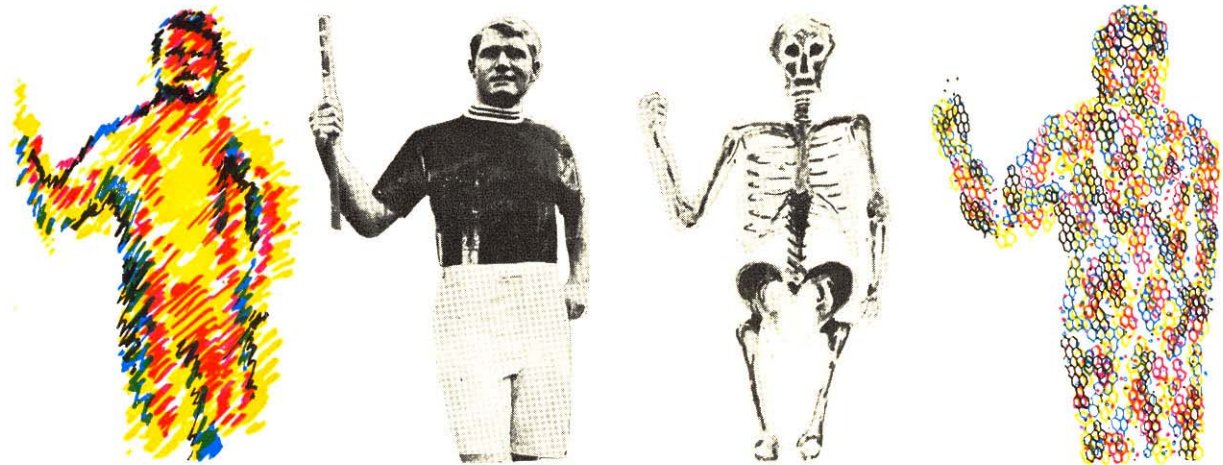
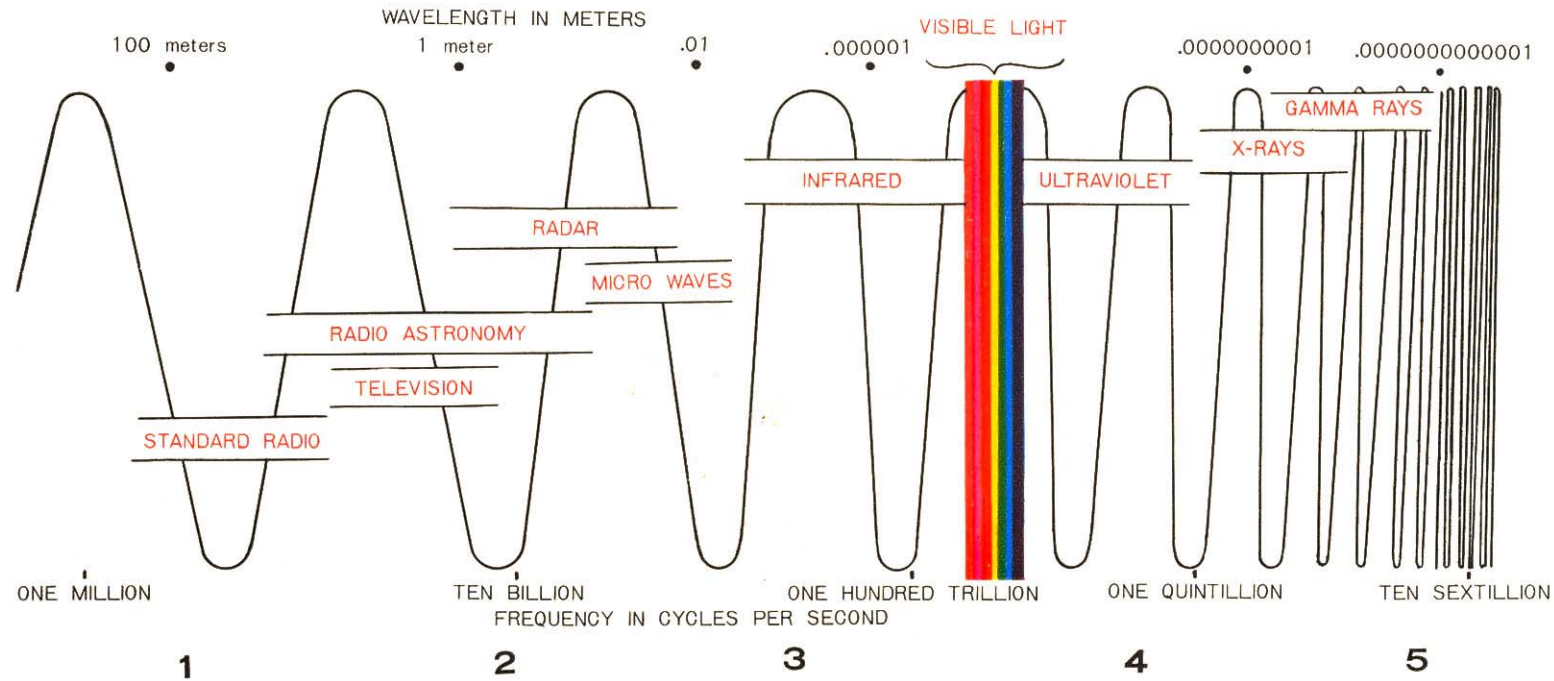
Let us refer back to the electromagnetic spectrum. We know that our naked eye can see only this small realm of the universe which is visible, but with the aid of certain instruments, such as an infra-red device, x-ray, microscope, etc., modern man is able to see other realms of the universe. To understand it more thoroughly, I shall introduce another chart (Chart II). This chart shows a man in the ordinary sense as detected by different instruments at different wave lengths. Here on the chart I have marked one to five. Under one you see an image mainly consisting of red, yellow and green colors which is a man as detected by an infra-red device. Under two is a man seen by our naked eye. Under three is a man seen through an x-ray apparatus where the skin and flesh disappear but the structure of bone remains. Next to it marked

four is the picture of the molecular structure of a human body seen microscopically. To the extreme right there is an empty space marked five.

Please don't be misled by this chart and say that these four forms and the empty space are different entities. They are the same man. Also don't be misled and consider that they occupy different space from left to right. Actually they are in the same place. To make it more clear, please consider I am as the man we are talking about. Now just imagine that your eyes are able to detect infra-red. So what you see standing here is a red, yellow and green colored image. Now shift back to your daily-used instrument. To your naked eyes my physical body appears. Again imagine that your eyes can see the x-ray. So the skin, flesh and blood disappear and what you see now is the bone structure of my body. Changing to another instrument, the microscopic eye, the man standing here is now a complicated chain structure of molecules. Now penetrate it farther. Modern science teaches us that molecules consist of atoms and atoms consist of particles, and ultimately all mass can be converted into energy the original nature of which is something that we cannot see or hold. Let's call it formless form and this is represented by the empty space under five.

Your attention is invited to the fact that I am the same man in the ordinary sense, but appear to you now in different forms: a colorful image, a physical body, a structure of bone, an assembly of molecules, and many other forms if you see me through different realms and finally the formless form.

# ELECTRO-MAGNETIC SPECTRUM



Again, this third method, the analytical method of penetration, leads to the same conclusion that everything in the universe can be penetrated to its foundation which the scientists call energy and which the Buddha calls Sunyata.

Now please note a very important point: all of what I have described before is intellectual, but Sunyata is a state of direct experience. May I repeat it: Sunyata is a state of direct experience. It is said that when one reaches that state he experiences tremendous bliss which is hundreds of times stronger than any kind of bliss ever experienced by ordinary man. Furthermore, Sunyata is a state in which one loses the sense of change and impermanence.

Now let me go a step further. As you know, the realization of human suffering was the direct cause which led the Prince Siddhattha to renounce the palace and to become an ascetic in search of the way to the emancipation of mankind. The Buddha listed eight kinds of human suffering which in Sanskrit is called dukkha and which really has a more complete meaning than the word suffering. The eight dukkhas are birth, old age, sickness, death, the loss of loved ones and pleasant conditions, the association with unpleasant persons and conditions, the failure to obtain what one wants, and impermanence. I do not have time to explain the eight dukkhas to you in more detail, but if you carefully analyze them you may conclude that all the eight dukkhas are related to or have originated from the physical body which we and our fellowmen possess and the consciousness which we call "self". The physical body and

the consciousness of "self" are therefore the foundations upon which all human sufferings are built.

Now, if the physical body and the consciousness of "self" are no longer in existence when the state of Sunyata is achieved, how can the dukkhas still exist? When one reaches that stage, he sees everything in the universe including himself as Sunyata. All human sufferings disappear and he is said to possess the wisdom eye.

It's like sudden relief from a deadly heavy burden. It's like the unexpected reunion of a mother with her son who had disappeared for years. It's like sudden discovery of a land horizon while sailing desperately on a stormy sea. These are a few descriptions of the great delight when a man has gained the wisdom eye.

Many disciples of Buddha reached this stage. They were called Arhants in Buddhism. They were saints. Buddha nevertheless issued a stern warning to them. Don't stop at the wisdom eye. Buddha said that with the physical eye or the heavenly eye one sees the incomplete, changeable and unreal world as complete, permanent and real. One becomes attached to it and that is why man suffers. This is one extreme. With the wisdom eye one sees that everything in the universe is impermanent, unreal and Sunya, and one likes to stay in the state of Sunyata. This becomes an attachment to Sunyata and is another extreme. Once there is an attachment whether to a substance or to Sunyata, the consciousness of "self", which is the root of all ignorance and dukkhas, cannot be completely eliminated. To obtain the dharma eye is, therefore, the ultimate teaching of Buddha.



What is the dharma eye? That man is said to have the dharma eye who, having gained the wisdom eye, does not stay in Sunyata, but recognizes that, although whatever he may see in different realms is only a manifestation, yet it is nevertheless real with respect to that realm.

Now let's refer to the second chart. One who has only the physical eye will insist that only the physical body is real and so he lacks the knowledge of all other realms. One who possesses the heavenly eye will say that the infra-red image, the physical body, the bone structure, the molecular complex, etc., are all real and he attaches to all of them. One who possesses the wisdom eye sees that all these forms on the chart are phantoms which are impermanent, insubstantial and unreal, that Sunyata is the only state which is real and permanent, and therefore he attaches to Sunyata.

Now one who possesses the dharma eye will say that although it is true that all such forms are manifestations, they are not separate entities from Sunyata and that they are real with respect to the realm they are in. The direct experience of Sunyata provides one with wisdom, but the realization that, although everything is a manifestation, it is nevertheless real with respect to its own realm, generates automatically an unconditional, nondiscriminative, universal love and compassion. Such a person is said to possess the dharma eye and is called in Buddhism Bodhisattva.

The unconditional, nondiscriminative love and compassion arising spontaneously from a direct experience of Sunyata once one overcomes the attachment to Sunyata is really a wonder of man-

kind which makes Buddhism the most unique and profound practical teaching.

Let me tell you a story to illustrate the difference between an Arhant who has achieved the wisdom eye and a Bodhisattva who possesses the dharma eye.

A huge mansion is on fire. There is only one door which leads to safety. Many people--men, women and children--are playing in the mansion and only a few of them are aware of the danger of the fire. Those few who are aware of the danger try hard to find a way out. The way is long and tricky. They finally get out of the mansion through the heavy smoke and while breathing in the fresh open air again, they are so delighted that they just lie on the ground and do not want to do anything more. One of them, however, thinks differently. He remembers that many people are still in this mansion and are not aware of the danger of the fire and that even if they were aware they do not know the way that leads to the door. So, without considering his own fatigue and risk he goes back into the mansion again and again to lead the other people out of this dangerous place.

This man is a Bodhisattva.

There is another famous story which has been introduced to Western readers by Prof. Huston Smith in his distinguished book, "The Religions of Man". It goes as follows: three men are travelling across a desert in search of a treasure at a remote destination. They have walked a long distance under the hot sun and are tired and thirsty and need desperately some shaded place to rest and some water or fruit to quench their burning thirst. Suddenly they reach a compound surrounded by walls.

One of them climbs to the top of the wall, cries out joyfully, and jumps into the compound. The second traveller follows him and also jumps into the compound. Then the third traveller climbs to the top of the wall where he sees the beautiful garden shaded by palm trees and with a large pond of spring water. What a temptation! While about to jump into the compound, he remembers that many other travellers are still wandering in the horrible desert without the knowledge of this oasis. He refuses the temptation to jump into the compound, climbs down from the wall, and goes back into the immense, burning desert to lead other travellers to this resting place.

I believe that everyone here will have no difficulty in understanding that the third one is a Bodhisattva.

It should be pointed out here that such compassion is not superficial but is deep and fathomless. It has no prerequisite such as "because I like you" or "because you obey me". It is nondiscriminative and unconditional. Such compassion and love arises from the direct experience of Sunyata, the state of perfect harmony, of perfect equality, and of no attachment of whatever nature.

To help you appreciate the dharma eye more correctly, I must mention two very important points. First, the dharma eye sees the infinite aspect of the truth. Just as in vast space astronomers point out numerous galaxies, stars, planets, etc., in Sunyata the Bodhisattvas visualize countless realms, countless heavens and earths, countless sentient beings and countless activities. Second, the dharma eye sees no attachment. In the Diamond Sutra the Buddha says repeatedly that

while a Bodhisattva is leading sentient beings to emancipation, he has no attachment whatsoever to the subject, such as "self", to the object, such as "you", to something else, such as action and to the concept of time. For if a Bodhisattva has the slightest attachment to anything, he cannot be called Bodhisattva.

Up to this point I hope that you already have a good idea about the four kinds of eyes. Here are two famous verses in Zen Buddhism.

The following is the story.

The Fifth Patriarch in the Tang Dynasty of China once asked his disciples to write a verse to present their understanding of Buddhism. The head monk Shin Shau presented one as follows:

The body is a wisdom tree;  
The mind a standing mirror  
bright.

At all times diligently wipe it,  
And let no dust alight.

The Fifth Patriarch commented that Shin Shau had only arrived at the gate and had not entered the hall.

A layman called Hui Neng was also in the monastery. Although he had not yet received instruction from the Fifth Patriarch, he was nevertheless a highly gifted person. When Hui Neng saw this verse he disagreed with Shin Shau and said, "I have one also". So he gave his verse:

Wisdom is no tree,  
Nor a standing mirror bright.  
Since all is void,  
Where comes the dust to alight?

Later Hui Neng became the Fifth Patriarch's disciple and achieved enlightenment. He became the most famous patriarch in Zen history. He gave different teachings to persons of dif-

ferent capacities. Although there is no such record, I would venture to say that the Sixth Patriarch would have no hesitation in telling a beginner who requested instruction that--

The body is a wisdom tree;  
The mind a standing mirror bright.  
At all times diligently wipe it,  
And let no dust alight.

Now, with what kind of eye did Shin Shau present his verse? With what kind of eye did Hui Neng disagree with Shin Shau and present his verse? And why, after he had become Sixth Patriarch would he use the one with which he had disagreed before? What kind of eye was the Sixth Patriarch employing now? I will not answer these questions and would like to leave them with you so that each of you may find your own answer.

Now we come to the buddha eye.

So far I have managed to say something to you about the four kinds of eyes, but about the buddha eye there is really nothing I can say because whatever I say I will miss the point.

But I also know very well that I cannot just stop here, say nothing and raise a golden flower like the Buddha did. Not only do I not have the kind of radiation to convey understanding through silence, but also you will not be satisfied. It is understandable that just as we all have the physical eye, we all have the physical ear and the physical mind. We have to satisfy them. I therefore have to say something.

1. You will notice that when we talked about the first four kinds of eyes, there was always a subject and an object. For example, with the physical eye we have a human being as subject and a worldly phenomenon as ob-

ject. With the wisdom eye we have Arhant as subject and Sunyata as object. Bodhisattva is subject and various realms of the universe are objects when we refer to the dharma eye. When we talk about the buddha eye, however, it would be dead wrong to say that Buddha is the subject and the universe is the object because the distinction no longer exists between Buddha and the universe. Buddha is the universe and the universe is Buddha. It would be equally wrong to say that Buddha possesses the buddha eye because there is again no distinction between the buddha eye and Buddha. The buddha eye is Buddha and Buddha is the buddha eye. In short, any dualism you can mention is not in existence under the buddha eye, even Sunyata, because Sunyata is Buddha and Buddha is Sunyata.

2. The second point I wish to say about the buddha eye is the nature of infinite infinity. What do I mean by infinite infinity? If we say that the human concept of cosmology is an infinity then such a concept of cosmology is just like a bubble in the vast sea if you compare it with Buddha's experience of cosmology. Is it incredible? Yes, it is incredible. But let's think of what we have in mathematics. You know that the first degree of power is a linear line. The second degree of power is a plane or area. The third degree of power represents a cube or space, which could be already infinite in size. Now how about the fourth degree of power? The fifth degree of power and up to the nth degree of power? If you are able to explain to me what the nth degree of power represents, you will have some understanding of Buddha's cosmology.

The infinite infinity.

3. The third point I wish to say about the buddha eye is the nature of instantaneity and spontaneity. This is again a concept that is very difficult for human beings to understand. To us the duration of time is a solid fact. Because of this time factor, man grows up from an infant to a youth, to a matured man and to old age, etc. It is beyond our comprehension to say that time is not in existence under the buddha eye, but that is what the buddha eye is. Billions of years are no different from one second. A world which is measured as billions of light years away from the earth according to our cosmology can be reached just in one instant. What a wonder this is!

4. The fourth point I wish to say about the buddha eye is the nature of totality and all-inclusiveness. Some of you might have seen a movie called "The Yellow Submarine". A monster which is a vacuum sucker sucks in everything it encounters. After it has sucked in everything in the universe, it begins to suck in the earth on which it is. The vacuum sucker is so powerful that it sucks the whole earth into itself and finally it sucks itself in. This may give you some idea about all-inclusiveness.

Now let me summarize. I have mentioned four points about the buddha eye:

1. no subject and no object, that is, no relativity;

2. infinite infinity, that is, no space;

3. instantaneity and spontaneity, that is, no time; and

4. all-inclusiveness and totality, that is, no nothingness.

These are the four essential con-

cepts of the buddha eye.

Before I conclude today's talk I would like to tell you another story.

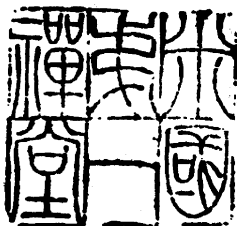
A couple were always at odds with each other. Then they learned the five eyes. One day they began to quarrel. It looked as if it would be one of their usual arguments with both husband and wife so upset, angry and frustrated that they wouldn't speak to each other for days. Suddenly the husband said, "I am using my heavenly eye now. You are just a skeleton. Why should I argue with a skeleton?" The wife kept silent for a while and then burst into laughter. The husband asked, "What are you doing now?" The wife said, "I am using my wisdom eye and you've disappeared. Now there is nothing bothering me. I am in Sunyata." Then they both laughed and said, "Let us both use our dharma eyes. We are all manifestations, but let's live happily together in this realm."

Today we are celebrating the birthday of this great man, Buddha Shakyamuni. Reverend Chi Hoi is going to deliver a big birthday cake to you. I am only giving you some birthday candy. My birthday candy is this advice. Don't always use your physical eye, but broaden your view. Do not let your mind always be carried away by what you see in this narrow band. Break this narrow band. Broaden your view. Develop and open your heavenly eye. Gradually develop and open your wisdom eye. At this point please remember the numerous fellowmen and other poor creatures struggling in the immense burning desert of birth and death. Open your dharma eye. Eventually I hope that all of you will have the buddha eye, that you become Buddha. Thank you very much.

*zen notes*

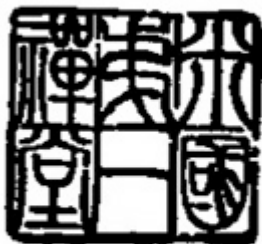
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