

ZEN notes



Body of Sixth Patriarch at Ts'ao Ch'i

THE GREAT SIXTH PATRIARCH'S TEACHINGS

FINAL INSTRUCTIONS

Chapter X, No. 22

In the eleventh month, the officials of the three prefectures, Kwang, Shao, and Hsin, and the Master's disciples, both monks and laymen, quarreled over who should receive the Master's body, unable to agree where it was to be buried. Thereupon they burned incense and prayed: "Let the incense smoke show where the Master will be interred." The incense drifted directly to Ts'ao-ch'i. On the thirteenth day of the eleventh month, the sacred coffin, together with the robe and bowl that had been transmitted to the Master, was returned [to Ts'ao-ch'i]. In the seventh month of the following year [714 C.E.], [the body] was removed from the coffin, and the Master's disciple Fang-pien smeared it with fragrant clay.

SOKEI-AN SAYS:

I have been translating the Sixth Patriarch's Record for almost four years. Now, it has come to an end, except for one or two more lectures.

This record is the origination of the Southern School of Zen, which is the teaching of sudden enlightenment. A prince of Southern India, a rajah who became a monk, brought the meditation sect of Buddhism into China by way of the southern ocean, landing in what is today Canton. This was in the middle of the sixth century. The monk's name was Bodhidharma. He handed down this Zen school to the Buddhists of China.

Hui-neng, the Sixth Patriarch, followed in the sixth generation from Bodhidharma. He emphasized his own mind, the one mind through which one can realize one's own original nature. Original nature is the nature that we are aware of, the state that is within the five senses and is blended with the outside.

We have forgotten the state of our original nature. We are like travellers who have gone astray and forgotten the way home. Even if such a traveller returns to his own village, he cannot find his own house. Therefore, the human being who is born in this deluded state, will die in delusion unless he awakens and returns to his own original nature. This original nature is one's own Buddha. By attaining this nature, one will attain buddhahood.

This school is called "Zen" because its students do not read sutras or worship images of Buddha. As disciples of Shakyamuni Buddha, they practice meditation. That is why it is a school of meditation.

When the Sixth Patriarch died, his disciples did not cremate his body but buried it in the valley of Ts'ao-ch'i. In that place is the main temple of the Sixth Patriarch, where he lived for quite a long time. This temple is still existing today, but it has become a nest for bandits. We have seen photographs of it, and money has been donated to repair it, to rebuild the dilapidated buildings.

The Ts'ao-ch'i valley is beside one of the streams that pour into the Yellow River and Canton Bay. There are three streams that pour into the Yellow River. This one is the northern stream which leads the traveler into the territory where the Sixth Patriarch lived, Ts'ao-ch'i - in Japanese, "Sokei". My name came from this Sokei, the hermitage of the Sixth Patriarch.

In the eleventh month, the officials of the three prefectures Kuang, Shao, and Hsin and the Master's disciples, both monks and laymen, quarreled over who should receive the Master's body, unable to agree where it was to be buried. Kuang is the prefecture in which Canton exists, and Shao is on the northwest side of Canton. Hsin is on the left side of the shore of the Pearl River, where the Sixth Patriarch was born.

So the disciples, both monks and laymen, came scrambling to meet the body of the dead master. I am not sure that this "scrambling" is a good word, but they came in a rush because they wished to hold the Sixth Patriarch's dead body in their hands. At the time the Sixth Patriarch died, his old disciples had long before left his temple, and only the younger disciples stayed with him.

Laymen of the three prefectures also came to meet the body of the dead master. But the Sixth Patriarch did not leave any word as to where to bury his body. He was in Ts'ao-ch'i, and when he became sick, he went back to his mother's house, which had been given to him by the Emperor. (It was repaired by some rich man who made a temple out of it.) Here he died. But his body was carried into Shao by boat. Although there is no description of how the body was transported, there was no other way to carry it. As you know, the Yellow River has a tremendous mouth, so they had no idea where to bury the Sixth Patriarch.

A Zen master's body was never cremated in China nor in India because the monks believe a master never dies, but he rests in eternal meditation. The Indian fakir buries himself under the ground for about twenty days and hibernates in meditation. When

his spirit returns to his body, he comes out of the ground - or out of his cave - and is massaged. Then he eats light food and drinks water. Within a week, he has recovered. He is the same as he was before he entered his long meditation. This strange custom was the reason why the monks did not bury their Zen masters.

Where is the Zen master? They put him under the ground, without cremation, and dug holes on both sides of the tombstone. Then they put a bamboo pole into the grave, and the disciples would go every morning and call - "Hello! Hello!" - through the bamboo.

Thereupon they burned incense and prayed: "Let the incense smoke show where the Master will be interred." The incense drifted directly to Ts'ao-ch'i. The smoke indicated the way. This was also an old tradition.

The river becomes very narrow and the land is almost like a desert. On the yellow earth at Pao-lin are little forests and there was also the temple of the Sixth Patriarch.

On the thirteenth day of the eleventh month, the sacred coffin, together with the robe and bowl that had been transmitted to the Master, was returned [to Ts'ao-ch'i]. In the seventh month of the following year [714 C.E.], [the body] was removed from the coffin and the Master's disciple Fang-pien smeared it with fragrant clay. According to this description, the Sixth Patriarch's body was preserved for a while in his temple at Pao-lin.

Usually a dead master's body is packed in vermilion earth, that is, earth mixed with some kind of quicksilver. This made a kind of cement or putty that keeps things preserved. The same material was used in Egypt. Wherever mummies are uncovered, red clay is always found clinging to the corpses and draperies. The Chinese, too, use this material to preserve dead bodies.

The sacred robe and bowl had been transmitted from Bodhidharma to Hui-k'o, to Seng-ts'an, to Tao-hsin, to Hung-jen, the Fifth Patriarch, and on to the Sixth Patriarch, Hui-neng. But the Sixth Patriarch told his disciples, "Hereafter, I will not transmit my robe and bowl to my disciples." So Fang-pien mixed the incense mud and spread it upon the corpse of the Sixth Patriarch, and then placed it back inside the sepulcher.

There are a few more lines, which I will translate for next Wednesday's lecture. After next Wednesday, I shall speak about primitive Buddhism. But if you wish some commentary on Lao-tzu, I shall be glad. I have read many translations of Lao-tzu, but have not yet read a satisfactory one.

THE SUTRA OF PERFECT AWAKENING

EIGHTEENTH LECTURE

Saturday, November 5th, 1938

"I entreat you, in the name of benevolence, to bestow upon us and the sentient beings of the future world, your sermon on your ideas of the devices by which awakening is attained."

Thus he entreated the Buddha, repeating these words three times over, casting himself upon the ground and touching it with his head, hands and knees in profound salutation.

Then Lokanatha spoke to the Bodhisattva Samantanetra (All-Seeing Eye):

"Very well, very well, Obedient One! You have made these requests in the names of all the Bodhisattvas and for the sake of the sentient beings of the future world, that I tell you how to practice gradually the proper way of contemplation and how actually to live and remain in that state of awakening and that I tell you also those devices by which enlightenment may be attained. Now listen attentively. I shall impart to you my knowledge in regard to these questions."

This is the third question asked by a third Bodhisattva. The first question was Manjushrî's; the second was Samantabhadra's; the third was Samantanetra's.

In the first chapter there were many names of Bodhisattvas. This Samantanetra I translate as "Omnispective Eye." (I wish to make a note here: In the last lecture I made an error and translated it as Samantabhadra who was the second Bodhisattva). This "Omnispective Eye" is not good for the name of a Bodhisattva, so I call it "All-Seeing Eye."

"Samanta" means "uniform," and "netra" means "eye." This is another name of Avalokitesvara (of the thousand eyes). When you go to the Roerich Museum you will see pictures of this Bodhisattva with eyes all over the body. But Avalokitesvara has another name -- Samantanetra.

Manjushrî is the personification of Dharmakaya; Samantabhadra personifies the doctrine of Sambhogakaya and Avalokitesvara (Samantanetra) personifies Nirmanakaya.

Dharmakaya is universal emptiness -- the causal state. Sambhogakaya is uniform consciousness and Nirmanakaya is the transforming body. All the transformation is performed by those "thousand eyes"; the organ which corresponds to the shapes and forms is the eye.

Avalokitesvara observes from beneath. "Isvara " means "king," who was observed by sentient beings beneath -- from the earth. European scholars translate this, "The Looking-down Lord," but this is in the passive sense so we cannot use it. It is active. "Ava" is "beneath", "lokala" is "to look." So this Bodhisattva is the God of the Eye.

Manjushrî, in the statues, is of the male sex -- but he is a "a-sexual"; Samantabhadra is female, but is also "a-sexual". Avalokitesvara is sometimes one and sometimes the other, but the original nature is always "a-sexual".

Eyes signify the appearance of consciousness -- in man and woman its function is the same. But in the lower Kamadhatu sex distinctly appears, though eyes and ears -- the higher sense organs -- are in the state of "a-sex".

In Buddhism there are three worlds: Kamadhatu -- the world of "two sexes"; Rupadhatu -- the world of "no opposite sexes" and Arupadhatu -- the world of "no-sex."

The gods on the higher plane of Rupadhatu are never in a "sexual form" -- Brahma, Ashura and Shiva -- but the lower devas are sexed. These are of the "Devaloka" which are explained very carefully in the early sutras.

The Buddha's position is always in Rupadhatu -- never in Kamadhatu or Arupadhatu!

Bodhisattva All-seeing Eye said: "I entreat you, in the name of benevolence, to bestow upon us and the sentient beings of the future world, your sermon on your ideas of the devices by which awakening is attained." -- Manjushrî had asked the Buddha how to practice the causal state of awakening -- Dharmakaya. Samantabhadra asked the Buddha how to practice awakening in deluded consciousness --- that is, from the standpoint of consciousness. And Samantanetra asked the proper way of observation and method of consideration and the proper devices to attain awakening.

All the "devices" of Buddhism are hypothetical and are not the state itself!

The Buddha was born immaculate! How can any human being be born immaculate? -- as Christ! Such words are an invented device to make one think on this!

The "word" is "body," flesh, the Mother's womb. When we speak a word -- it "conceives" a meaning; it is already earth-bound -- not immaculate.

The real spirit of Buddhism is not conceived by the senses or by the body (which is world). "He was born without words!" This is the real meaning of immaculate conception. All religions -- West and East -- have this.

Blind adherents believe that the Buddha came in the right side and went out the left, kicking Maya's ribs! But you cannot teach religion without using devices! The following is a question about the right way of observation.

Thus he entreated the Buddha, repeating these words three times over, casting himself upon the ground and touching it with his head, hands and knees in profound salutation. -- It is always told in the Orient that if you ask a question of your Osho, you must ask it three times. On the first question, the Osho looks at the sky; on the second, he looks at your face; on the third question, he will say: "Are you asking me something?" This is the usual attitude, and I think it has been the custom from the Buddha's time.

We do not need to answer the question if it was not asked honestly! We respect the Buddha's Dharma very deeply -- and we don't answer your question if it is not asked respectfully.

In these days, you buy information from some school -- pay 25 cents, and the teacher will cut off about 25 cents' worth and give it to you! Somewhere in this country, a Japanese can buy a doctor's diploma for \$400.00 -- you need not to pay respect to such things!

"Salutation" -- in Chinese, You cast your body on the ground. I have never found any European translation of this; perhaps they don't know what it means. It means trunk, hands and feet -- five parts of the body -- cast to the ground in profound salutation.

Then Lokanatha spoke to the Bodhisattva All-seeing Eye (Samantanetra): -- "Netra" means "eye" but "netro" means

"opening between two horizontal eyes." Through this organ of mind we conceive the form of sentient beings, and the form which is "mind." Our body is the body of our mind -- the mind of Manudeva. This is the gate of conception!

"Very well, very well, Obedient One! You have made these requests in the names of all the Bodhisattvas and for the sake of the sentient beings of the future world, that I tell you how to practice gradually the proper way of contemplation and how actually to live and remain in that state of awakening and that I tell you also those devices by which enlightenment may be attained." -- The Buddha repeated the question asked by All-seeing Eye, in three parts.

First, the proper way of contemplation. The Buddha spoke the Four Noble Truths and Right View. From the Right View of Buddhism, we see that everyone's view is biased: When an artist looks at a field, or a mountain, he thinks how to sketch the scene; the real-estate man looks at it with a view to sell; a farmer has the view of cultivation, etc. Everyone's view is biased -- not a true view! From the human standpoint, there is no proper view -- you cannot attain it with a deluded mind!

You must know the proper way of thinking of contemplation.

When I was very young and studying hard in the monastery, an old monk said: "Look at all things at once!" When I asked my teacher how -- he laughed.

Next is the proper way of thinking, the proper attitude to life. There are the Eightfold Paths and the Commandments and the proper occupation.

And third, to actually live and remain in the state of awakening -- not thinking of philosophy but of Zen. All the sutras and mantras are just devices to attain enlightenment.

So the Bodhisattva All-seeing Eye asked the Buddha, really, about the Eight Noble Paths.

"Now listen to me attentively. I shall impart to you my knowledge in regard to these questions."

Two month page of Unknowing...

Blank page, Blank mind
Open page, Open mind...
Somewhere between can one sneak in
To empty a cluttered place...

...Your Turn...

*(And while you ponder,
have a fresh, 15th century turnip...)*

(?)



unknown artist
(late 15th century, Jofukuji, Kyoto)

Zen Stories

Shih-kung Hui-tsang before he became a disciple of Ma Tsu Tao-i (709-788) had been a deer hunter and disliked the sight of Buddhist monks. While chasing deer one day, he happened to pass by the temple where Ma Tsu stayed and, as Ma Tsu was standing by the temple gate, asked him if any deer had gone by. Ma asked him who he was, if he could shoot, and how many deer he could shoot with one arrow. Shih-kung replied that he was a deer hunter and could shoot only one deer with one arrow.

Ma Tsu then told him he did not know how to shoot, for he, himself, could shoot the whole herd with one arrow. Shih-kung was taken aback and asked why shoot the whole herd as they possessed life. Ma Tsu then asked,

"If you know this, why don't you shoot yourself?"

Shih-kung replied,

"If you want me to shoot myself, I really do not know how to do it."

Ma replied,

"The whole aeon of this fellow's troubles caused by ignorance is now dissipating."

On hearing this Shih-kung broke his bow and arrows, discarded them and became a monk to study with Ma Tsu.

Later, as a Zen Master, Shih-kung received his students with a loaded bow pulled back ready to shoot. In this story from the *Transmission of the Lamp* (chapt.14), San-p'ing, a novice of Shih-kung's, had come to see him:

When San-p'ing came to see him, Shih-kung shouted,

"Watch out for the arrow!"

San-p'ing bared his chest and replied,

"That is the arrow that kills men.

Where is the arrow that brings them back to life?"

Shih-kung removed the arrow and twanged the bow string three times, whereupon San-p'ing bowed three times.

Shih-kung then replied,

"For the past thirty years I have been using this same bow and two arrows, and all I've managed to shoot is one half of a saint."

He then broke his bow and arrows.



Shih-kung and San-p'ing
Kano Motonobu (1476-1559)
(Tokyo National Museum)

The Surangama Sutra

Book Review by Ian R. Chandler

The Surangama Sutra, Translated from the Sanskrit by Paramiti of Central North India at the Chih Chih Monastery, Canton, China 705 A.D. Translated into English by Charles Lu K'uan Yu. Rider & Company, London. 1966 (Re-issue 2000).

Ananda and the prostitute

The Buddha's disciple Ananda sets out to beg for food in the city of Shravasti. He is quite careful to observe the rules of the Order and not to favor well-to-do patrons. He methodically begs from door to door without discriminating between young and old or wealthy and poor. Eventually, he comes to a house of prostitution. Being a handsome young man, of course he is invited inside. He is just on the verge of breaking his vows when the Buddha learns of his predicament and sends Manjusri to the rescue. So begins the Surangama Sutra, which stands alongside the Lotus Sutra, the Diamond Sutra, the Vimalakirti Sutra, the Lankavatara Sutra and the Prajnaparamita Sutra as one of the foremost Mahayana Buddhist texts.

Philosophy of the Surangama Sutra

Ananda's begging for food in the company of prostitutes is immediately juxtaposed with a great banquet for the Buddha and his disciples, hosted by King Prasenajit. Once the banquet comes to an end, the King, the elders, princes, great Arhats and Pratyekabuddhas all assemble to receive the Buddha's teaching. What unfolds is a complex and subtle presentation of Buddhist philosophy cast in the form of an extended Socratic dialogue. Ananda is the Buddha's main questioner, with significant contributions from other disciples, including Manjusri, Purnamaitrayaniputra, Mahakasyapa and many others. They discuss the nature of the mind, the revelation of Samadhi and how the inverted mind causes human beings' thinking to be governed by their karma. They discuss the seven different grades of consciousness; the false views of worldlings, Hinayanists and heretics; the sources of delusion and enlightenment; the nature of false perceptions arising from the senses, including the perception of an ego-self and how eradicating attachment to the ego reveals the true nature of things. Other topics include the self-evidencing quality of the Alaya consciousness, individual versus collective karma, the six forms of consciousness, the different types of meditation, the importance of self-discipline, the nature of Samsara

and Nirvana, and the various stages of a Bodhisattva's progress in the practice of meditation.

Shall I risk a summary of this philosophy? The Universe is like the vast ocean, and human beings like waves on the ocean. The waves are part of the ocean and in a brief, tentative way, have an existence independent of the ocean. Similarly human beings are part of the Universe, but because of delusion-creating karma perceive themselves as independent entities confronted by a universe external to themselves. The experience of enlightenment eliminates this false perception and they come to perceive their own consciousness as "mountains and rivers and the great wide earth, the sun the moon and the stars." The small, mortal, insignificant human self is replaced by a vast, immortal, magnificent Self. The experience of enlightenment is linked to the development of Samadhi -- the power of concentration which develops with the practice of meditation, and the perception of Sunyata, a kind of dynamic "emptiness".

I cannot do justice to the complex philosophy in the Surangama sutra by reducing it to a one-paragraph summation. If I were present in the assembly of elders, I would probably receive the Buddha's rebuke! However, I like this sutra for another reason, and that is that it contains a description of the afterlife similar to Dante's Divine Comedy.

Heaven and Hell

Toward the end of the Sutra, we are given a whirlwind tour of the delights of heaven and the tortures of hell -- in twenty-five pages a colorful impressionistic painting of the Karmic consequences of various deeds. Dante put certain Popes and other of his contemporaries in hell, but the Surangama Sutra does not give any concrete examples. In particular, we are not shown any scenes of the Buddha's enemies or members of rival sects suffering in hell. Rather, the process of karmic transmigration is a natural consequence of certain types of actions. For example:

"When karma ripens at the time of death, the evil effects of wrong hearing cause one to see rising waves that submerge heaven and earth. His spirit then follows them to fall into the unintermittent hell where he will experience both unbearable noises that confuse and disturb him and dead silence that makes him dispirited. So these waves flow into the organ of hearing to transform it into rebuke and interrogation; into the organ of sight to turn it into thunder, roars (of animals) and jets of poisonous gas; into the organ of smell to change it into rain, fog and showers of venomous

insects that cover his whole body; into the organ of taste to transform it into pus, blood and all sorts of filth; into the organ of touch to turn it into animals, ghosts, excrement and urine; and into the organ of intellect to change it into lightning and hail that strike and break up his spirits."

One important difference between the Surangama Sutra and the Divine Comedy is the Buddhist doctrine of reincarnation. Unlike Dante's hell, the sinners are not consigned to their fates forever, but may reincarnate in a complex variety of transformations. For example, in the realm of ghosts:

"Strange ghosts, after expiating their misdeeds in their realms, are mostly reborn as owls. Animal Ghosts, after expiating their misdeeds in their realms, are mostly reborn as foxes. Noxious Ghosts, after expiating their misdeeds in their realm are mostly reborn as venomous creatures. Cruel Ghosts, after expiating their misdeeds in their realm, are mostly reborn as tapeworms. ..."

Animals in turn may be reborn as low-caste, servile human beings. Servile human beings may be reborn as householders, and so forth. At the opposite end of the spectrum the delights of heaven are reserved for peaceful, devout, chaste, pure-hearted individuals. For example:

"Those who live in tranquillity at all times but are still not yet immune to disturbance, will after their death, be reborn in the subtle region which is beyond the reach of men and lower devas and which remains unaffected by the three calamities (of fire, water and wind) during the kalpa of world-destruction. This is the Tusita heaven. "

Ananda's Repentance

Ananda was lucky to have escaped the tortures of hell. He had entered a house of prostitution and was nearly seduced. Even though he didn't actually break his vows, he came close. The Surangama Sutra describes an embarrassed Ananda in tears arriving late to the Buddha's assembly, prostitute in tow. However, his encounter with the prostitute did not render him unacceptable to the Buddhist Sangha. The young Ananda is the Buddha's main questioner in this Sutra and many years later (according to the Zen school) he became the Buddha's successor. The prostitute Matanji became a Buddhist nun.

The Sutra implies that the Buddhist Sangha is composed -- at

least partially -- of sinners. There is an old Chinese saying that Buddhist Monasteries are places where "Dragons and Snakes mingle together" -- Dragons being the highest human beings and Snakes the lowest. If you have committed a sin, that does not make you an outcast from the Buddhist community. If, like Ananda you repent sincerely then you can still rejoin the Sangha. If you are truly diligent in your meditation, you may even experience the ecstasy of enlightenment, become a successor of the Buddha and enjoy the acclaim and approbation of mankind.

Further Reading

Sizable portions of the Surangama Sutra are found in Dwight Goddard's [A Buddhist Bible](#). The copy of the Sutra which I am reviewing here is Charles Luk's translation, originally published by Rider & Company in 1966. Charles Luk, born in 1898 was a disciple of the Chinese Ch'an Master Hsu Yun, and also studied under various Tibetan teachers. His translated works are generally of very good quality, and include the Heart Sutra, the Diamond Sutra, the Sutra of Complete Enlightenment and the Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch. A brief search of BN.com reveals a hardbound, re-issued copy of Charles Luk's [The Surangama Sutra](#), published in 2000, is available for \$55.00 through Barnes & Noble's network of rare and out-of-print booksellers.



RECORD OF THE MARVELOUS POWER OF IMMOVABLE WISDOM

by Takuan Sôhō [1573-1645]

(Part 2)

*There is the expression,
"A response instantaneous as a spark struck from
flint." ¹*

At the very instant you strike together [two pieces of] flint, a spark appears. And since the moment the flints are struck, the spark is produced, there's no interval or gap anywhere between. So this, also, expresses the idea of there being no interval in which the mind can attach [to anything]. It's an error to understand this solely as a matter of speed. It's a matter of not attaching the mind to things, a matter of the mind not even attaching to speed. When your mind attaches to something, your mind will be captured by your opponent. So if you act quickly with the deliberate *intention* to act quickly, your mind will be captured by that deliberate intention.

Among Saigyô's² collected poems is the following verse composed by a courtesan of Eguchi: ³

*I had heard that you were one
who loathed the world
Do not, then, I pray, let your thoughts abide
in this temporary lodging*

The final line, "Do not, then, I pray, let your thoughts abide...", can be said to correspond to the ultimate mastery of the art of combat. The main thing is not attaching the mind.

¹ A familiar simile in Buddhist writings. In pre-modern East Asia, fire was commonly produced by striking together two pieces of flint to create a spark.

² (1118-1190) A celebrated Medieval poet monk, known for his travels throughout Japan. According to legend, Saigyô sought lodging at a house whose tenant turned out to be a prostitute. Feeling her home would be an inappropriate stopover for a monk, the prostitute tried to dissuade Saigyô from staying the night, but he assured her the situation posed no difficulty for him. In response, the prostitute is said to have offered the poem quoted here by Takuan.

³ Site in present-day Osaka. In Medieval times it was a river port on the water route connecting Kyoto with the ocean, and like many active ports of our own day, was reputedly home to many successful prostitutes.

And yet no one realizes just what this mind is; so they all remain *deluded* by the mind.

In the world, people who don't understand the mind are the norm, while those who understand it well are almost impossible to find. One hardly *ever* comes across people who both understand and practice [the mind]. Just because you're able to talk about this one mind doesn't mean you're able to realize it. Explaining about water won't wet your lips, and even speaking vividly about fire won't burn them. Without coming into contact with actual water or actual fire, you won't be able to know what they are. Just because you can interpret *books*, doesn't mean you know. If someone tells you all about food, it's not going to cure your hunger. You can't realize [the mind] from someone else's explanation.

In the world, the Way of Buddhism and the Way of Confucianism both teach about the mind. But if people don't practice those teachings themselves, the mind isn't going to be realized. Unless you thoroughly penetrate and realize the one mind originally existing in each and every person, it's going to remain unclear to you. That even the minds of people studying Zen remain unclear [shows that] although there are lots of people studying Zen, it doesn't mean a thing, since the attitude of every one of them is false. The only way to illumine this one mind is from your own profound understanding.



Statue of Takuan at Sukyoji temple in Hyogo Prefecture, Japan

In the Zen school, if someone asks, "What is Buddha?" you should make a fist. And if someone asks, "What is the ultimate significance of Buddhadharmā?" before the words are even out of his mouth, you should reply, "The plum flowers on the branch,"¹ or, "The cypress tree in the garden."² The point is not to pick and choose between these answers, but to revere the mind that isn't attached. The mind that isn't attached isn't drawn either to color or to smell. The substance of this mind that isn't drawn to things we worship as the kami, revere as the buddhas; we speak of it as Zen mind and ultimate mastery. However, when you have first to form your thoughts, and then afterward speak them, even golden words and marvelous phrases will be [nothing more than] delusion as the abiding ground of ignorance.

The expression "A response instantaneous as a spark struck from flint" describes the swiftness of a flash of lightning. For example, when someone calls, "Uemon!"³ and you instantly answer, "Yes!" that's what's meant by immovable wisdom. On the other hand, if someone calls, "Uemon!" and you start to think, "What does *he* want?" and so forth, the mind that then wonders, "What does *he* want?" and so forth, is delusion as the abiding ground of ignorance. The mind that attaches to things and is then pushed around and deluded by them is called delusion arising from attachment. This is the mind of ordinary beings. On the other hand, when someone calls, "Uemon!" and you answer, "Yes!" that's the wisdom of all the buddhas. Buddhas and sentient beings are not different. Nor are kami and humans. That which accords with this mind we call kami or Buddha. The Way of the kami, the Way of poetry, the Way of Confucius--there are many different Ways, and yet all express the brightness of this one mind.

If you are only capable of interpreting the mind using words, then that's the kind of mind in which you and others [like you] will live, day and night. And then, following your karmic destiny, whether you do good things or bad things, you'll end by abandoning your family and destroying your country. Good things and bad things both result from the karmic activity of mind.

¹ The phrase appears as part of a couplet in the *Zenrinkushū*: "The [white of the] plum flowers on the branch/ Merges with the snow, [intensifying the blossom's] fragrance." Shibayama Zenkei, ed., *Zenrinkushū* (Kyoto:1952), p.99. The *Zenrinkushū* is a seventeenth-century collection of phrases in Chinese and is frequently used in Zen study in Japan.

² Reference is to Wu-men kuan case 37: A monk asked Chao-chou, "What about the Patriarch's purpose in coming from the West?" (That is, what is the ultimate truth that bodhidharma, the semi-legendary founder of Ch'an, brought to China from India.) Chao-chou said, "The cypress tree in the garden." (T.48:297c)

³ The early name of the daimyo and fencing master Yagyū Munenori, to whom the "Record" is addressed.

I spring while summer has sprung...
a fluttering speck-mote
full of catworlds unborn...



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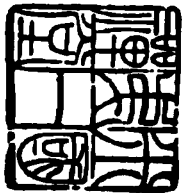
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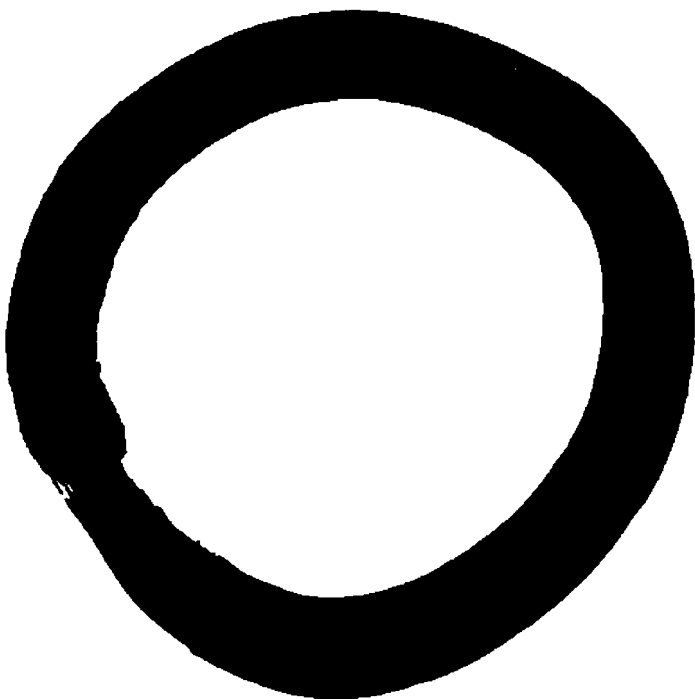
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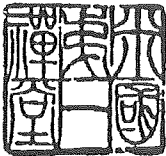


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