

ZEN notes



Summerwhere...

THE GREAT SIXTH PATRIARCH'S TEACHINGS

FINAL INSTRUCTIONS

Chapter X, No. 23

Recalling the Master's prophecy about the taking of his head, the disciples protected the base of the Master's neck by wrapping it in cloths soaked in lacquer and coating it with sheets of iron before replacing it in the stupa. Instantly a white light came forth from the stupa, reaching straight to the sky and remaining for three days. The governor of Shao province reported this to the emperor and received an imperial decree, commanding him to erect a memorial stele recording the details of the Master's religious life. The inscription states: "The Master lived for seventy-six years. When he was twenty-four, the Dharma was transmitted to him. When he was thirty-nine, he shaved his head. For thirty-seven years, he promulgated the Dharma to benefit others. His Dharma heirs numbered forty-three, and he had countless other disciples of high attainment. The robe transmitted by Bodhidharma, the Mo Na Robe and crystal bowl bestowed upon the Master by Emperor Chung Tsung, the image of the Master modeled in clay by Fang-pien, and the sacred implements the Master used are permanently preserved in Pao-lin Temple. The Sutra from the Earthen Altar remains to testify to the essential principle of the Master's teaching, to perpetuate the Three Treasures and to benefit sentient beings everywhere."

SOKEI-AN SAYS

Recalling the Master's prophecy about the taking of his head, the disciples protected the base of the Master's neck by wrapping it in cloths soaked in lacquer and coating it with sheets of iron before replacing it in the stupa. I think you remember in the previous lecture the Master predicted that after five or six years someone would come and take his head. The disciples realized the Master's foreboding and separated his head from his body, and preserved it.

There is no description about this preservation in any other place, but his disciples remembered the prediction. Perhaps the Master was saying: "After my death, do not preserve my body, but preserve my head." According to his teaching of sudden enlightenment, he certainly placed more emphasis on his intellect

than on any other part of his body. While the students in the Northern School of Zen were practicing intense meditation, the Sixth Patriarch emphasized the realization of one's original nature. Realization belongs to the intellect, not to the exercise of meditation.

The stupa is a pagoda-tower. In China, in every Zen temple, there is a stupa built of stone, tile, and clay.

Instantly a white light came forth from the stupa, reaching straight to the sky and remaining for three days. This is the usual description of a miracle when you describe the death of a wonderful man.

The governor of Shao province reported this to the emperor and received an imperial decree, commanding him to erect a memorial stele recording the details of the Master's religious life. There were three officials who came and attended the funeral service of the Sixth Patriarch. These were the officials in whose territory the Sixth Patriarch's stupa was built. Ts'ao-ch'i was a territory in the prefecture of Shao-chou. The monuments belong to each Zen temple. The objects in the temple are quite excellent and beautiful.

The inscription states: "The Master lived for seventy-six years. When he was twenty-four, the Dharma was transmitted to him. He stayed in the Fifth Patriarch's temple only eight months, pounding rice in the barn. These incidents are described in the first chapter of this record. The Fifth Patriarch called him at midnight and transmitted the Dharma which had been transmitted by Bodhidharma. The Fifth Patriarch handed down the Diamond Sutra and commented on it for him, and perhaps he gave him the principles of the Buddhist Ten Commandments when he transmitted the Dharma to his disciples. I never came across any description of this, but I think it is true. All descriptions of how to transmit the Dharma are still very obscure.

These days in the Zen school, we transmit the Dharma through koans. The student makes his own solution to the question, which is hidden in the koan, and the Master uses this solution as a measure to prove the student's attainment. Finally, the complete Dharma is transmitted.

The Sixth Patriarch was twenty-four years old when the Dharma was transmitted to him - quite young. The Dharma was transmitted to me, from my teacher, when I was forty-seven [1928]. I began to study Zen in your America at the age of twenty. (Twenty-one in the Japanese way of counting.)

The Sixth Patriarch came from Nan-hai to the Fifth Patriarch's temple and stayed for eight months, pounding rice in the barn. There he attained the highest enlightenment. He was not an ordinary man.

I think I will give you a few remarks about Buddhism which you must not forget as long as you live. The Buddha talked about "right view." What is right view? You must first decide what your main faith is. You must decide this. Christians say: "Faith in God." God is in heaven, not in man. The other school of meditation thinks the principle view is in deep samadhi, not in *this present moment*, that one must *transcend* this present moment and enter deep samadhi, close one's eyes, close one's mind, and abandon all the world. They concentrate their minds in bottomless samadhi.

This indicates the two different faiths. The Christian has faith in God who lives outside of himself in heaven; the other school has faith within himself, in deep samadhi. He steps out of himself into a different faith - he refuse to be a human being. He refuses to abide in this human consciousness, which is guarded by the five senses. He refuse to *return*. Now you realize that there are these two different views.

The true Buddhist takes neither of these views. He thinks that neither of these two views are the true view, that these two views are the production of their own thoughts.

The states of "outside" or "inside" are imaginary. They are not real; they are hypothesis. They are not proven. When you enter bottomless samadhi, you are outside of yourself, you are not conscious, you are sleeping. When you try to seek something outside in heaven, it is not demonstrated, not proven by your sight or by your intellect. It is your faith through your feeling that this must be the state of perfection and for a person who is perfect. It is inferred by your knowledge, but it is not *tested* by you.

The Buddha's right view is at this moment, in this place. The Buddha called it "the king of all samadhis." In this state, as a human being, guarded by these five senses and ornamented by this marvelous outside, supported by bottomless consciousness, we are now, at this moment, existing here thus. Without winking our eyes, without puzzling our minds, at this moment our spine is the pillar of our body, and as we cross our legs, they form the base of that pillar. We cross our two hands on our lap, and we see everything at once, hear every sound at once. With penetrative wisdom and a tranquil mind, we are aware of our own state. We never puzzle, though a million gods appear before us, and we are never lured or tempted though the shining, bottomless consciousness appears behind us. This is our decision at this moment, in this human

body, as we are sitting here in this right view. This is the foundation of Buddhism. This is our faith. Standing on this faith, we enter all directions of human activity. If you do not know about this, you do not know Buddhism. And if anyone were to ask you, "What is your faith?" you would puzzle hard to answer. This is the Buddha's decision; it is twenty-five-hundred years old.

Studying many other religions, I came to him. I took obeisance to him, saying: "You have attained the highest knowledge and from now on, you are my teacher." Thus I decided to follow his Dharma because I realized the truth of his right view. Of course, Buddhists will go through many states in meditation. Sometimes they sleep and sometimes they exalt the mind. They go through many states of mind and consciousness to find this central view, the Buddha's right view.

Before the lecture, to commemorate the Buddha's decision, we sit in meditation from one minute to five minutes. We sit in the Buddha's position before every lecture because we are his disciples. There is no other religion in the world that does this, that takes this view. If you doubt my word, study the sutras. If anyone says no, he is not a Buddhist. I assert, therefore, my authentic knowledge, and I insist that my view is true by transmitted Dharma. Transcribe this in your notebooks, and in the future, if anyone starts to argue about the Buddha's true standpoint, you must uphold this view, and with this knowledge you must teach them. If there is any biased view mentally or materially, it is not the true view.

When you form your physical body, put your hands on your lap, fold your legs and keep your mind clear and bright. This moment is Buddha's Buddhism. Do not fancy becoming some other sentient being, or some demi-god in the sky, and do not fall into the dark view of the cave dweller. Do not cherish any thought in your mind.

To prove this is the right view, as the Buddha spoke it for forty-nine years. To prove this real view, the disciples of the Buddha, from generation to generation, have written the sutras - five thousand forty-eight in number. To prove this present condition of our consciousness, from the Buddha to Bodhidharma, and from Bodhidharma to us, this is Zen. It is impossible to describe in words, but it is transmitted from mind to mind. Thus the Dharma must be transmitted. Do not be disturbed by other teachings, which talk about heaven or hell. You have your position in your present moment.

When he was thirty-nine, he shaved his head. He shaved his head to take the order of the sangha when he was thirty-nine years old. After the Dharma had been transmitted to him, he went to the southern country and hid himself. One day in the temple, he was sweeping the garden while two monks were arguing about a flag

that was waving above their heads. One said the banner was waving, and the other said the wind was waving. The Sixth Patriarch forgot his present position - that he was hiding himself as a common laborer - and said: "It is neither the banner nor the wind that is waving; it is your souls that are waving."

The Abbot of the temple shivered when he heard this. He knew that this was no common man. He bowed to this man sweeping the garden. Then the Sixth Patriarch disclosed himself as the heir of the Fifth Patriarch. It was this Abbot who shaved the head of Hui-neng and made him a monk. Until that day, he had been a lay disciple. So this Dharma is transmitted to anyone, high or low, monk or layman. To those who have the head or brain, to them, the Dharma will be transmitted. The robe or the shaved head do not make Dharma. Your enlightened mind makes Dharma, makes a true Buddhist.

For thirty-seven years, he promulgated the Dharma to benefit others. His Dharma heirs numbered forty-three, and he had countless other disciples of high attainment. The robe transmitted by Bodhidharma, the Mona Robe and crystal bowl bestowed upon the Master by Emperor Chung Tsung, the image of the Master modeled in clay by Fang-pien, and the sacred implements the Master used are permanently preserved in Pao-lin Temple. The Sutra from the Earthen Altar remains to testify to the essential principle of the Master's teaching, to perpetuate the Three Treasures and to benefit sentient beings everywhere." The Sixth Patriarch was a small man, and he stood on an earthen platform to give his teachings.

We are working to perpetuate these Three Treasures. I, too, am working to promulgate these teachings in this world, and to bless all sentient beings.



Editor's Note:

With this installment, Sokei-an's translation and lectures on the Sixth Patriarch come to an end. The Institute is hoping to put all these lectures together in a book form and will look closer at the feasibility of such a project next year. Meanwhile, a couple of loose leaf copies of the entire work are available in our library.

The Sixth Patriarch working a pestle



(Kano Tan'yu, 17th Century)

RECORD OF THE MARVELOUS POWER OF IMMOVABLE WISDOM

by Takuan Sôhô [1573-1645]

(Part 3)

Where to Focus the Mind

Where should you focus the mind? When you focus on your opponent's movements, the mind is captured by your opponent's movements. When you focus on your opponent's sword, the mind is captured by your opponent's sword. When you focus on trying to kill your opponent, the mind is captured by trying to kill your opponent. When you focus on your sword, the mind is captured by your sword. When you focus on not being killed, the mind is captured by not being killed. When you focus on your opponent's stance, the mind is captured by your opponent's stance. All in all, there *is* no particular place to focus the mind.

Someone said to me, "If you have a tendency to let your mind go elsewhere, your attention will be captured at the place your mind goes and you'll be defeated by your opponent. So keep your mind below the navel, not allowing it to go anywhere else, and let it respond according to your opponent's movements."

This makes sense so far as it goes. But in terms of advancing in your study of Buddhism, to keep the mind below the navel and not let it go elsewhere constitutes an inferior stage, not a way to advance. It's the stage of a beginner just learning to practice. It's the stage of reverence, of Mencius' words, "Recover the lost mind."¹ It is not a stage from which one can advance, but the state of mind of reverence. I have written of this "lost mind" in other places, and can refer your Lordship to these discussions.

When you keep [your mind] below the navel and don't let it go elsewhere, your mind is captured by the thought of not letting it [stray], so that losing your immediate ability to respond, you become quite inflexible in your movements.

¹ Referring to Mencius' belief that virtue, exemplified by an attitude of reverence (CH *ching*, J: *kei*), is innate in people and later lost.

Mencius said: "Humanity is man's mind and righteousness is man's path. Pity the man who has lost his mind and does not know how to recover it. When people's dogs and fowls are lost, they go to look for them, and yet when they have lost their minds, they do not go to look for them. The way of learning is none other than finding the lost mind." *Meng Tzu* (The Book of Mencius), 6A:11. Translated by Wing-tsit Chan in his *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (NY:1969), p. 58.

Someone asked me, "If keeping the mind below the navel leaves one unable to move and inflexible, without the ability to respond freely, then where in the body should one focus the mind?"

I told him, "If you focus on your right arm, your mind will be captured by your right arm, and your body will lose its ability to function freely. If you focus on your eye, your mind will be captured by your eye, and your body will lose its ability to function freely. If you focus on your right leg, your mind will be captured by your right leg, and your body will lose its ability to function freely." Wherever it is, when you focus your mind in one place, you completely lose your free functioning everywhere else."

"So, where *should* one focus the mind," [he persisted].

My answer: "Don't focus it anywhere at all; then the mind will spread to fill you completely, extend throughout your entire body. That way, when you need your arm, your mind is there to let it do its work. [The mind] flows to be wherever you need it, so that whatever part [of the body] you need, the mind will be there to let it do its work."

When you focus the mind on one particular place, that's called being imbalanced. Imbalanced means having fallen to one side. *Well*-balanced means [a mind that] pervades everywhere. Balanced mind means to spread the mind through the whole body without attaching to any one part. To be stuck in *one* place and absent in *another* is what we call imbalanced mind. I have no use for being imbalanced. To be stuck in any particular thing is to be imbalanced, something of no use at all in the Way.

If you're not thinking, "Where shall I focus [the mind]?" the mind will spread to fill your whole body. Without focusing your mind anywhere at all, you should deploy it according to your opponent's movements from one moment to the next, wherever he is. Since [the mind] is pervading your whole body, when you need your arm, you should use the mind *in* your arm; when you need your leg, you should use the mind *in* your leg. If you focus the mind so that it's fixed in one spot, when you go to transfer it [someplace else], it becomes attached *there*, and your free functioning in the first place will be gone.

When you treat the mind as if it were a cat on a leash, keeping it confined within your body, your mind will be imprisoned *by* your body. [On the other hand,] in your body, if you just turn the mind loose, [you'll find] it won't go anywhere else! Not keeping the mind in any one place is what practice is all about. Not attaching the mind anywhere at all is the main matter, what really

counts. When you don't focus the mind anywhere, it will be everywhere! Even when you direct the mind outside, if you focus it in *one* place, you'll miss all the rest. [On the other hand,] when you *don't* focus the mind in any one place, it permeates *every* place.

We speak of original mind and deluded mind.

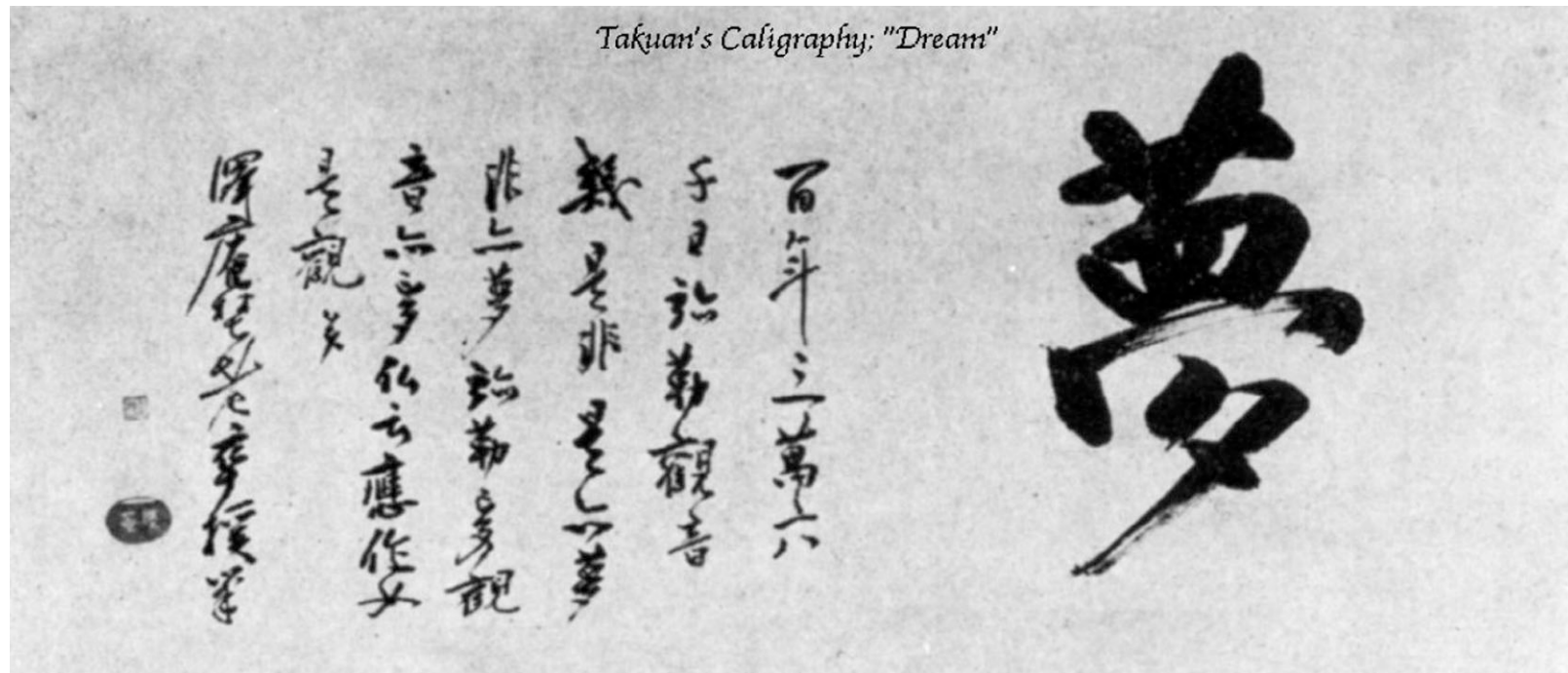
Original mind is mind that doesn't attach to any *one* place but spreads to fill the entire body. Deluded mind is mind that, preoccupied by something, is *stuck* in one place. So when original mind is stuck in one place, it becomes what we call deluded mind.

When original mind is lost, your free functioning everywhere is lost, so you must strive above all not to lose [original mind]. Let me give you an example. Original mind, like water, never stays in one place. Deluded mind is like ice, in that you can't use ice to wash your hands and face. [But] when you melt ice, you turn it to water, so that it flows everywhere and you can then wash your hands, your feet, and anything else. When mind is stuck in one place or attached to one thing, it congeals like ice and it can't be freely used. Just as you can't use ice to wash your hands and feet, you should allow the mind to function by melting it and letting it flow through your whole body

water. You just let [the mind] go to wherever you want it , and use it there. That's what's meant by original mind.

We speak of the mind of intention and the mind of non-intention.

The mind of intention is the same thing as deluded mind. The characters for intention read literally "having mind," [that is,] being preoccupied with any particular thing. Once a thought is present in the mind, discriminations and calculations arise, so we speak of the mind of intention. The mind of non-intention is the same thing as original mind, referred to before. The mind that isn't fixed, that is without discrimination or calculation, the mind that spreads to fill you completely, that pervades the whole body, is what we speak of as [the mind of] non-intention. It's the mind that isn't focused anywhere at all. Yet it isn't like stone or wood. *Never* being inert is what's meant by non-intention. When there's inertia, there's something in the mind; when there's constant free-flowing activity, there's *nothing* in the mind. Having nothing in the mind is what's called the mind of non-intention. It's also called "without intention and without thought." When you've thoroughly mastered this mind of non-intention, you don't attach to anything and you don't lack anything.



Like water continually brimming over, it fills your body, so that whenever you need to use it, it's there at hand and does its work.

The mind that's become fixed and attached in one place isn't able to function freely. The wheels of a cart can turn because they're kept loose on the axle. When they're too tight anywhere they're unable to turn. The mind, too, won't function once it's stuck [in some place]. When there's anything you're thinking about in your mind, you hear what people say but you don't [really] hear them. That's because the mind is attached to what you're thinking. With the mind stuck in those thoughts, it becomes sidetracked in one place; and being sidetracked in one place, even if you hear something, you won't hear it, and even if you see something, you won't see it. That's because you have something in your mind. By "have," here, I mean you have some *thought*. When you get rid of those thoughts you have, your mind will be without intention and will simply function when you need it, just as you need it. [However,] deliberately *trying* to get rid of these thoughts in your mind only becomes something *else* in your mind! When you're not trying to do so, [these thoughts] go away on their own, and you'll spontaneously realize [the mind of] non-intention. Always have your mind like this, and you'll naturally arrive at this stage. [But] if you try to do it in a hurry, you'll [never] get [there at all]. As an old poem says:

*Trying not to think of a thing
One still thinks of it
So even though I tell myself I won't
Can I help thinking of you, my beloved?*

*Plunge a gourd into a stream, try to hold it down,
and it immediately escapes.*

"Holding down a gourd" means to press it down with your hands. When you plunge a gourd into a stream and then hold it down, it immediately slips away to the side. Whatever you do, it won't stay in one place. The mind of someone who's attained [perfection] doesn't attach to things for even a moment. It's just like the gourd in the stream, [which always escapes the hand] that's pressing it down.

Translated and copyrighted by Peter Haskel

THE SUTRA OF PERFECT AWAKENING

NINETEENTH LECTURE

Delivered by Sokei-an on
Saturday, November 12th, 1938

Thereupon Bodhisattva All-seeing Eye was delighted by the Buddha's consent and the multitude prepared to listen to the sermon in silence.

"O Obedient One! Those Bodhisattvas recently initiated into Dharma and the sentient beings of the future world who desire to attain the purely and perfectly awakened mind of Tathagata, must drive all illusions far away and must keep the right attitude of mind (samiyak-smṛti). First, in accordance with the practice of the Tathagata's samatha (the intense meditation in the state of complete immobility of mind), you must observe the Tathagata's sila (commandments) steadfastly. Remain in one place with the group of monks; meditate in the sitting posture in a quiet room and reflect always upon this: that this physical body consists of four elements. The hair, nails, teeth, skin, muscle, bones, marrow, mucus, and filth are to be reduced to the elements of earth."

The Bodhisattva Samantanetra asked a question of the Buddha, about the contrivances by which the student may attain awakening. Among the many questions asked by the many Bodhisattvas, this Bodhisattva All-seeing Eye asked this particular question: "How to observe scrupulously the Buddha's Dharma."

"Dharma" means the law of religion. All religions have their particular systems -- theological systems -- and in accordance with this system, students analyze their illusions. By means of this analysis, the student may attain awakening to the state of Reality.

And the Buddha gave this answer to Bodhisattva Samantanetra.

By this description, you will understand that the philosophies of your religion, or the analysis of the illusory mind are not religion! They are devices to awake to the state of Reality.

These three passages are the one avenue to reach the state of religion: First, you pass Park Avenue; next Lexington Avenue; then Third Avenue; and finally you reach the Bowery -- the bottom!

Many Christian teachers came to us in the Orient and said, "Buddhism is not a religion, it is a philosophy." They went to China and said the same thing. The Chinese monks made no reply. But those who criticize us in such terms sometimes realize that their own religion is very shaky!

Philosophy is always the first step; one reasons by this philosophy -- and by this reason, one analyzes his mind and the law of existence. Finally, he attains the state of Reality -- and by virtue of the nature of Reality -- he awakes to the state of Religion! Then this Religion is his life.

You must understand this very clearly: A philosophical attitude, an analytical attitude -- or just being himself in the state of Reality does not give him the state of Religion. It is in the Reality that he finds the state of religion, and the attitude and the activity of religion. So -- in the end -- action is religion!

Samantanetra questioned the Buddha's law in detail, and the Buddha promised to speak about it.

"Samanta" means "uniform" and "netra" means "all-seeing." I observe this glass, you observe it and he observes it -- and this proves that this glass is a glass.

A horse or a cat may observe this glass differently -- I am not quite sure how they see it -- but I am speaking of the "All-seeing Eye." These "eyes" are the body from the top of the head to the tip of the toes! You have seen the queer images in the museums, having 1000 hands and in each finger 1000 eyes. It is Chakrasuranetra -- the god who is not living in heaven, but in our own body! This is the All-seeing Eye!

Thereupon Bodhisattva All-seeing Eye was delighted by the Buddha's consent, and the multitude prepared to listen to the sermon in silence. -- They cast away their biased minds and critical attitudes. To "listen in silence," the mind must be pure! In the scriptures, when the multitude listens to the words of the Buddha, it is written thus: "They listened in silence."

"O Obedient One!" -- Why is he obedient? Because he knows the law of the universe, the law of nature, and the law of man. He obeys these laws -- takes the "obedient" attitude towards life.

"Those Bodhisattvas recently initiated into Dharma ..." -- This signifies the Bodhisattvas who were new students of the Buddha's group. In answer to Manjushrī's question, the Buddha did not say this -- but here he says it of the new students. First, they must follow the Buddha's law and then meditate upon it. These new

students do not know the Buddha's law -- but if he reads carefully this law, he will learn how to observe it in his own life. To read the Buddhist's Bible, the Buddhist scriptures, is the routine work of new students.

"... and the sentient beings of the future world who desire to attain the purely and perfectly awakened mind of Tathagata, ..." -- Tathagata means Buddha. Why do we call him "Tathagata?" Because he, the Buddha, was one who came from the state of Reality to this illusory state and from this illusory state he went back to the state of Reality. "Gatha" means "go." "Comes and goes."

"... must drive all illusions far away." -- In Buddhism, illusion comes from "Maya." The word itself means the illusion created by a magician. A magician can produce a running horse with a white cloth -- or fire with a red handkerchief! We use this cloth or handkerchief as an allegory to explain our phenomenal world. We see all these things on the earth and in the sky -- and we think they are real! But they are not real -- they are illusory! We look at the rainbow in the sky with its seven different colors -- beautiful! But there is no color in the sky; there are just waves of light producing color on the retina of the eye -- green, purple, orange -- all are nothing but vibrations of ether. There is no color on the outside -- and it is the same with the other sense perception.

We are living in an illusory world, so naturally we cannot see Reality! We have never seen the real world, and, in accordance with our illusory minds, we act as deluded men. We judge without foundation and, therefore, drive ourselves into agony and war. We must drive away these illusions!

"... and must keep the right attitude of mind (samyak-smṛti)." -- This samyak-smṛti is one of the Eight Noble Paths.

(Last Sunday Dr. Goddard came here and asked me this question: "What is samyak-smṛti?" I had no time, then, to give him the answer. Samyak-smṛti is the "right attitude of mind." With this right attitude of mind, one will attain samadhi -- profound tranquility!)

In meditation, you must have a particular attitude of mind; you cannot meditate lying down -- it does not create the particular attitude of mind.

"First, in accordance with the practice of the Tathagata's samatha, ..." -- "Samatha," I translated "the intense meditation in the state of complete immobility of mind."

When you meditate, you think something -- then something else: "She borrowed 25 cents from me five years ago. She did not

pay it back. I will call her up!" You cannot attain tranquillity! So you must contract your mind -- stay entirely away from your queer ideas. From your birth, your mind has been like a merry-go-round -- chung-a-la-chung! This is the cause of your impure attitude; this brain-activity must be removed! Your brain must be kept near to the state of Reality. So this Samatha is the practice to attain immobility of mind.

In the army, the soldiers are lined up and the officer will give the order -- "Attention!" The soldiers will stand up straight in the right attitude of body and mind. When you meditate, you must give yourself that order -- "Attention!"

"... *you must observe the Tathagata's Sila* (commandments) *steadfastly.*" -- In commandment there are two divisions: Sila and Vinaya. Vinaya are the written laws -- "You shall not smoke, shall not speak to a woman standing in high-heeled shoes!" If I observed the latter -- I should not be speaking to any woman in New York City! Sila means attitude; when you find the attitude, you do not need to observe all the written laws; do this, do that! According to time and place, you will act.

Sila is subjective and Vinaya is objective.

There are three different grades: The first is the Buddha's commandments to the monks; the second is the commandments for laymen; and the third is commandments for monks in relation to laymen.

If you visit a layman's house and the mistress of the house forgets about vegetables and perhaps has chicken soup -- you do not ask, "Is this chicken? I can't eat chicken!" Ask no question and, if need be, break the commandment!

But the Tathagata's Sila is a commandment for monks alone.

"*Remain in one place with a group of monks;*" -- It is better to stay with monks and increase your knowledge by asking questions. Do not sneak away to a restaurant for beefsteak -- you will be discovered!

"... *meditate in the sitting posture in a quiet room* (to preserve this samyak-smṛti attitude) *and reflect always upon this: that our physical body consists of four elements.*" -- "Who am I? What is my body? What is my mind?" The body consists of the four great elements -- and of how many elements does the mind consist?

"*The hair, nails, teeth, skin, muscles, bones, marrow, mucus, and filth are to be reduced to the element of earth.*" -- Reduced to

the last element -- earth! This is ancient chemistry -- very primitive! Today, our chemistry is more advanced: Spirit is fire, flesh is earth, blood is water, breath is air. So this body is not death, but a composition of life!

The profound questions must be asked: "What are you? Whence have you come? Where do you go?" And, when you are well versed in these answers -- you will meditate upon your original mind; you will enter the original, causal state -- and find Reality!

Zen Stories

THE PASSING OF LAYMAN P'ANG

Layman P'ang was a well known lay zen man of the middle Tang period; a well-to-do, yet religious family man who, one day, tired of the encumbrances of his possessions, gave up his house to be made into a temple, loaded all his possessions on a boat and sank it in the middle of a river. After this, his family sustained themselves making bamboo ware while Layman P'ang devoted the next few years to self realization, visiting and studying with several famous zen masters.

The first was master Shih-t'ou whom he studied with for a year and experienced enlightenment at their first meeting. He then went to master Ma-tsu, soon attained great enlightenment under him, stayed for two years, and became one of his heirs.

After that he divided his time between his family and his travels about various zen monasteries to test and deepen his zen. Most of the anecdotes about him as well as his poetry occurred during these years as did, apparently, the profound self-realization of each member of his family as depicted in his verse:

*I've a boy who has no bride,
I've a girl who has no groom;
Forming a happy family circle,
We speak about the Birthless.*

This verse describes quite a departure from Layman P'ang's Confucian upbringing where the worst form of filial piety was for children to remain unmarried.

The story begins when layman P'ang finally feels it's his time to go: --ed

When the layman was about to die, he said to his daughter Ling-chao: "Illusory transformations lack reality. I comply with whatever comes. Go out and see how high the sun is and report to me when it is noon."

Ling-chao went to the door and quickly reported: "The sun has already reached the zenith, and there's an eclipse. Do come and see it."

"Is that so," remarked the Layman.

"Yes, indeed," replied Ling-chao.

The Layman rose from his seat and looked out of the window. Thereupon Ling-chao took her father's chair and, sitting crosslegged, in an instant passed away.

The Layman turned and smiling said: "My daughter has anticipated me." Whereupon he gathered firewood and concluded the matter.

When seven days had passed, Mr. Yü came to inquire how he was. The Layman, putting his hand on Mr. Yü's knee, gazed at him intently for a long time and then said: "I beg you just to regard as empty all that is existent and beware of taking as real all that is non-existent. Fare you well in the world. All is like shadows and echoes."

As his words ended, a strange fragrance filled the room and he sat upright as if meditating. Mr. Yü called to him but he had already gone on a long journey....

A messenger was then sent to report the news to his wife. When she heard it she said: "That stupid girl and ignorant old man have gone away without telling me. How unbearable!" Then she went and spoke to her son, whom she saw hoeing in the field, saying: "Mr. P'ang and Ling-chao are both gone." Laying down his hoe, the son exclaimed "Sa!" in reply. After a while, he also died standing up. His mother said: "Stupid boy, how awfully foolish you are!" He was also cremated. Everyone marveled at this [occurrence].

Sometime afterwards Mrs. P'ang visited her friends throughout the countryside bidding them farewell, then went into seclusion. Later, all trace of her was entirely lost. No one knew where she had gone.

This excerpt, as well as the general information on layman P'ang is from the book A Man of Zen published by Weatherhill in 1971 and translated by Ruth Fuller Sasaki, Yoshitaka Iriya and Dana Fraser. If you haven't read this old standby, I would highly recommend it as a well-written, fascinating and very lively account of a layman's zen in the Tang dynasty. --editor

(?)



A limited number of complete sets of **Zen Notes**
(from Vol. I, 1954 to Vol. XLVII, 2000)
are available for sale. Price - \$300.00.
If you are interested, contact the Institute at the phone
number below.

zen notes

Copyright 2001

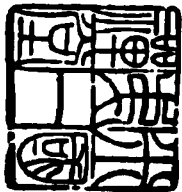
PUBLISHED BY

FIRST ZEN INSTITUTE OF AMERICA, INC.

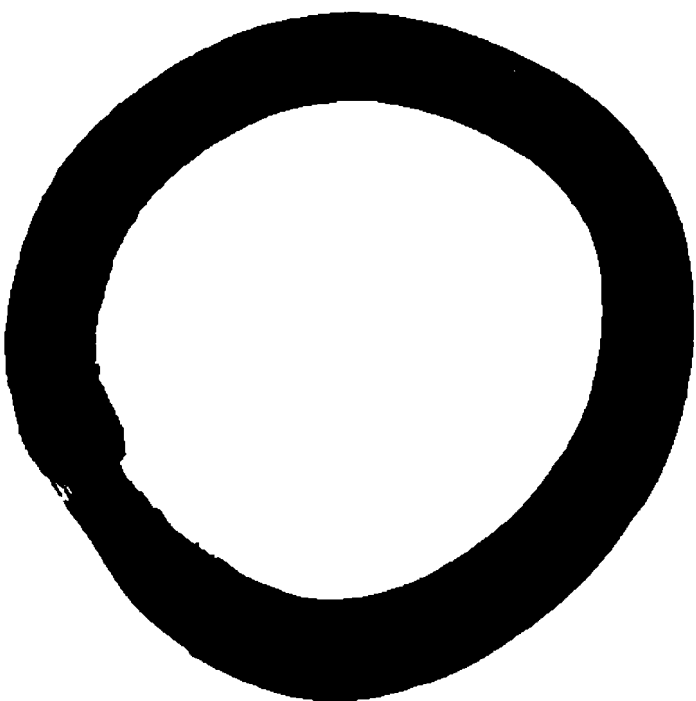
113 East 30th Street
New York City, New York 10016
(212) 686-2520

VOLUME XLVIII, NUMBER 3 SUMMER 2001
Editor, usually anonymous artist, poet... Peeter Lamp

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

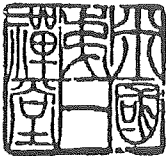


First Zen Institute of America
113 E30th Street
New York, New York 10016



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