

# ZEN NOTES



# THE SUTRA OF PERFECT AWAKENING

## FIFTY-FIFTH LECTURE

Wednesday October 18th, 1939

"They will eliminate the two kinds of obstacles.

They shall succeed in finding a good teacher

Who will enlighten them in the true Dharma.

In accordance with the vow they have taken for the sake of  
their Bodhi,

They will reside in the Nirvana which they have attained.

Because of the great compassion with which they took their  
vows,

The Bodhisattvas of the tenfold directions reveal them-  
selves

In the state of birth and death to sentient beings.

Those who in the present are disciplining themselves

In the practice of Dharma,

And the sentient beings of the future world

Who shall eradicate their cherished views,

Will surely return to the Great and Perfect Awakening."

Thereupon Bodhisattva Vimalamatih arose from his seat  
among the multitude and worshipped the Buddha, rever-  
ently lifting the Buddha's feet to his brow and going  
round him three times to the right.

### SOKEI-AN SAYS:

This is the last part of the gatha which was given to Bodhi-  
sattva Maitreya by the Buddha. Then another chapter begins. In  
this sutra, ten Bodhisattvas questioned the Buddha and each ques-  
tion is answered by the Buddha. This explains ten viewpoints, or  
principles, of Buddhism.

The first Bodhisattva to ask a question was Manjushri; then  
Samantabhadra; then Samantantra; then Vajra-garbha; then Mai-  
treya; and now Vimalamatih.

Each of these represent a symbolized principle, or doctrine;  
so it is called the "personified" doctrine. In the Orient, in ancient  
times, a writer often used such symbolism to express his philoso-  
phy or religion. It is as Samantabhadra, who appears as a beautiful  
woman mounted upon a white elephant with six golden  
tusks—moving over the clouds! Samantabhadra is a man—but the

perfection of his love and wisdom is better expressed in female form. And when you see the statue of Avalokitesvara—you may think it is the Goddess of Mercy. But Avalokitesvara (in Chinese, Kwanyin; in Japanese, Kwannon) is not a woman; to express his compassion, the artist has made the statue in female form. But observe carefully—he never has breasts! Then there is Samantanetra—the omni-voyant Eye; and Maitreya—the eradication of mental suffering. So, each Bodhisattva has its own expression.

You will never understand Buddhism if you look upon these Bodhisattvas as having some supernatural power, like a demigod who goes everywhere and sees everything without moving from his chair—this is childish!

According to Buddhism, the original nature of man exists innately in the universe; it appears according to conditions. When warm air enters the city, the cold air will cease to exist. Put a kettle on the fire and the water boils; but if we pour the water on the fire, the fire ceases to exist.

This is a law that we call "*jnana*." In Western terms, it is a material law but in the Orient, this *jnana* (in Chinese, *hsieu*) means the mind, soul, spirit, wisdom. You could call it "God's will." This wisdom is omnipresent; it exists everywhere; it exists in everything, having the nature of the All-seeing, Universal Eye. The nature of it is perfect and without bias. It is love, compassion.

When this is based on "sight" it is given the name of Samantanetra and carved in the form of a mature and beautiful woman. She has three eyes in her head and eyes in her fingertips, in her breasts, in her toes, and in all the pores of her skin.

When this is based on sound it is given the name of Kwannon or Avalokitesvara. Avalokitesvara has been seen in all the places of the highest heaven, but this heaven (*akash*) is not up in the sky! It is the heaven of the mind, .. Avalokitesvara is residing in this mind but sentient beings observe him in many different aspects. A woman observes him as a woman; a man observes him as man. When an Eskimo observes him he will appear in a fur coat! When a Hindu observes him he will wear a turban; and, observed by an American he will wear striped pants!

Originally one body, Avalokitesvara appears in thirty-two transformations but all from the omnipresent mind called Avalokitesvara. "Avaloki" means "looking down;" "tesvara" means "king." So European scholars translate this as "the looking-down king." It sounds like a god on a cloud looking down! But this "Avaloki" is not passive but very active. He has been seen from the

bottom but sentient beings look up at him in all different shapes.

Thus, this compassionate nature is explained. But in this day no one explains it. Some Americans will take the little figure of Avalokitesvara holding out a lotus flower, and they will dig a hole in his lap and make a lamp-holder of him—just as they will use the Buddha as an ashtray! Well, Buddhism came into this country in such a way but slowly, the true meaning must be explained by someone. Maitreya is also symbolized as compassion, compassion towards those suffering in their own afflicted minds. He asks the Buddha how this mind can be eradicated and the Buddha tells him how to eradicate the mental sufferings from sentient beings. And then the Buddha, to reaffirm his doctrine, repeated the sermon in a gatha, a short poem. This is the last part:

*"They will eliminate the two kinds of obstacles."* —I have explained these two kinds of obstacles many times in previous lectures but I shall explain it again tonight. The two kinds of obstacles which keep man from enlightenment are: the obstacle in his nature and the obstacle in his mind. The obstacle in his nature is the heaviest; the obstacle in his mind is powerful but shallow. The obstacle in his own nature was originally three: passion, anger, ignorance.

There is a story about an old Chinese king of ancient days who loved a woman who was beautiful but who never smiled. The king desired to see her smile. In those days, when anything threatened the country, they shot fireworks into the sky to alert the people and to call the soldiers to the castle. One day, by some error, a fire-worker erroneously dropped some fire into some dynamite; it burst into the sky and produced one thousand skyrockets! The soldiers were disconcerted; some put on their helmets upside-down, some put shoes on their heads and they rushed into the castle! Now the beautiful woman smiled! The king, wanting to see the smile again, ordered it done another time! The soldiers were again disconcerted taken by surprise and they rushed in any way into the castle. Again the beautiful woman smiled. But the third time, when the real warning came, no one paid any attention and the country was ruined.

Anger as well as passion destroys. And ignorance—it is like a blind man walking the street without a cane. He cannot know where he is going and he will be destroyed, the result of ignorance.

The other obstacle is in the brain, the notions which he has learned from someone or read in some book. "From today on I am a disciple of Engels—I am a socialist!" After three days, he becomes a capitalist — ten more days and he is a nihilist! Some

change day by day: "This evening I will go to the theosophical Society, tomorrow to the Vedanta Society—or shall I go back to my Catholic Church?" Or "I hear there is some Buddhist reading in 70th Street." "Oh yes—let's go!"

*"They shall succeed in finding a good teacher."* —When your brain is arrested by some curious notion, you cannot find a true teacher. And, though you meet him, you will not recognize him.

There is a story in the Zen Records of a certain Roshi living alone in the mountain while his friend lived in the city. It was a cold winter, and this Roshi was building a fire of cow-dung and baking a little potato over it. At this moment, a messenger came from the emperor who had heard of this great Zen master. The messenger found him sniffing the baked potato in the cow-dung! "Roshi," he said, "I have come from the emperor!" Sniff, sniff..."Listen to me! I am the messenger of the emperor!" The Roshi answered, "I have no time to listen to the voice of a layman!" And he went on sniffing and eating his potato. The messenger went back to the palace of the emperor without having given any message.

Another master sat beside a river, fishing with a straight needle every morning for forty years. Everyone said, "He must be crazy, fishing every morning and thinking he can catch a fish with a straight needle!" At the end of the forty years, the emperor heard of this and came to see the fisherman. Bowing down, the emperor said, "I have heard that you have been fishing with a straight needle for forty years. May I ask for what are you fishing?" "Emperor!" was the reply, "I have been fishing for you!"

This crazy fisherman became one of the great teachers of China—but he never fished with anything but a straight needle! His word was straight, his thought was straight, and his manner was natural. When a man's eyes are opened he will know a straight teacher; before that time, his eyes are filled with sand.

*"... a true teacher who will enlighten them in the true Dharma. In accordance with the vow they have taken for the sake of their Bodhi."* —When you eliminate the two obstacles, this is really active, not passive, you will enlighten yourself.

*"They will reside in the Nirvana which they have attained."* I have explained Nirvana many, many times. Some other time I will give further commentary.

*"Because of the great compassion with which they took their vows, the Bodhisattvas of the tenfold directions reveal themselves in the state of birth and death to sentient beings."* "Birth and

death" is of this world. First they must attain Dharmakaya.

*"Those who in the present are disciplining themselves in the practice of Dharma."* By meditation, by following the commandments, by reading philosophy, in some way you will finally awake to the state of Dharmakaya. And do not think that you must fly up to heaven and associate with angels. Your body is still with you; you can attain sitting right here! But I cannot tell you how. If you meditate, you will get there some day.

*"... and the sentient beings of the future world who shall eradicate thus their cherished views."* —Everybody has some cherished view: I am a Buddhist, or, I am a Christian. I will not change. But sometimes they are of a narrow sectarianism, or sometimes they hate religion and adore science or they hate science and adore spiritualism.

*"... will surely return to the Great and Perfect Awakening."* —The Perfect Awakening of Buddhism. From my twentieth year I studied Buddhism. I am now fifty-eight years old. I was educated in the Academy of Art and I have gained a Western and an Eastern knowledge of philosophy. Then I came back to this Perfect Awakening! I shaved my head, threw away my clothes and put on this robe. I made a vow. In some such way, every one will return to the Great and Perfect Awakening.

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## The Buddha Play,

Conceived & Performed by Evan Brenner. Directed by David Fuhrer.  
(Reviewed by Ian Chandler)

*Buddha Play* tells the tale of the Buddha's life as an extended sequence of stories. Evan Brenner is tapping into an ancient tradition of storytelling which runs right back to the time of the historical Buddha and is alive in India even today: "The average Indian farmer may be illiterate, he may not even know who his political leaders are, but ask him to tell you stories about the Hindu gods and goddesses, and he can give you a four-hour-long discourse on the subject." The ancient stories are fantastical tales of the Hindu gods and miraculous events in the Buddhist sutras. Many of these stories have symbolic interpretations, but they also serve as entertainment, with the miracles providing a form of "special effects".

Six long strips of paper each three feet wide by 30 feet long, and covered with Pali script, hang from the back of the stage - a reference to ancient scrolls of Buddhist canonical texts. An arm

chair, perhaps 200 books, many half open, sprawled across the floor in heaps, a reading lamp and a small reading table next to the chair. The books have titles like "Mystics and Zen Masters," "Discourses of the Buddha, etc." The sole actor in the play sits back in his armchair and talks about the Buddha in the 3rd person, but then becomes transformed into the Buddha: "Now, I am old, Ananda. Make the teaching, and no other your refuge. I declare this to you: All that comes into being passes away."

After the opening sequence, the *Buddha Play* backtracks a bit and follows the story of the Buddha's life chronologically. Brenner follows all the major threads of the Buddha's career as it is conventionally presented: Siddhartha's birth and youth, his marriage at the age of 16 to the most beautiful woman in the kingdom; the birth of his son Rahula, his disgust at the life of luxury and pleasure which he has been compelled to live; his renunciation of home, his spiritual teachers Alara Kalama and Udraka Ramaputra; his extended austerities; his battle with the forces of the evil Mara, his triumphant enlightenment, and his teaching and preaching throughout northern India.

Brenner uses a very effective acting device: he alternately presents himself as a modern American discovering Buddhism, and then plays the roles of the Buddha and several other characters in the story. "I grew up decadent - while young, I noticed that most people will not acknowledge that they will die." In the course of telling the story of the Buddha's life, the play presents an amalgam of Buddhist teachings and sayings - culling a paragraph here from one sutra and a paragraph there from another. "Why do I seek after things which get sick and die?" A parade of colorful characters appear in the story: fire worshippers with matted locks, the Devil's three daughters, seekers and ascetics, merchants and kings. At the moment of the Buddha's enlightenment, Brenner gets into a partial half-lotus, and gives a pretty good take on a meditating Buddha. When presenting the parable of the man shot with the arrow, you can almost see the arrow sticking out of the actor's chest. When standing up and preaching as the Buddha, he looks just like a standing Thai or Chinese Buddha statue. This is a complicated and challenging ninety- minute one-man story-telling and acting job. Brenner obviously enjoys playing it, and he holds the attention of his audience very effectively.

Brenner has studied and practiced Buddhism for more than twenty years. He was a drama and religion major at Vassar College, and received a master's degree in Dramatic Writing from Loyola Marymount University. He also wrote and directed the film *Sasha's Riddle*, a Russian language story about a ten-year-old boy from a broken family who ends up in an orphanage.

# **Three-Hundred-Mile-Tiger**

Sokei-an's commentary on

## **The Record of Lin Chi**

### **Discourse XII, Lecture 3**

*"Today, students do not know the Dharma. They are like goats that instantly take whatever their noses touch into their mouths. They do not distinguish between master and slave, host and guest. Because their motives for entering the Way are wrong, they enter clamorous places. We cannot call them world-renouncers. No! They are the worldly ones."*

#### **SOKEI-AN SAYS:**

Once the Dragon King came from the bottom of the sea to offer the Buddha a huge blue stone gong for the Buddha's Jeta-vana Garden. The Buddha built a bell tower for it. Its size can be imagined from the fact that five hundred monks could sit under it at one time to recite *sutras*. The bell's vibrations were so marvelous that when *sutras* were recited beneath it, it resounded to the chanting and recited *sutras* right along with the monks. The gong, of course, is a symbol of our consciousness, our body; so each temple has a large gong as well as smaller ones.

In its natural condition, a gong vibrates clearly; under unnatural conditions, the vibration is impeded. [Sokei-an covered the gong on his table with his hand, then struck it.] If our consciousness is held back by something—false reasoning, superstition, or circumstances—it is the same as when a gong's vibration is stopped.

Buddhism is very simple. In meditation our practice is nothing but how to place ourselves on the natural ground of mind as a gong sits on its cushion. We observe how mind naturally functions in us. To understand this we have to hold this mind temporarily still to find out how it functions. The first practice in meditation is not to think anything, not to give your mind any force with which to move. Then you will see how your subconscious functions. By holding your mind still for a little while, you allow the subconscious to come up into consciousness. You cannot hold all the small movements of mind still for they belong to nature, not to you, so you can observe the way mind moves. Next, take your attention off holding your mind still and give reinforcement to the movement of your mind. You will realize that there is no

ego, no man's mind. All is nature's movement. Carry this into your daily life, observing how you feel, how you react. This is the way to study Buddhism. There is nothing else we can do. It is no use to meditate when we do not know what we are doing. In meditation we learn how our body operates and how our mind operates. We do not think of meanings; meanings are in words rather than in us. Whatever meaning a word carries into your mind is not yourself. All words have one meaning only. One word can transmit all meanings. What is this one word? It is the present situation of our mind, so we concentrate to this present attitude of our mind and welcome the words carrying many meanings. Then all words and meanings are just like the sound of the gong. Let it resound, let your brain think many words. The brain is not a word, not a meaning, as the bell is not a sound. But if the mind is not clear, it does not carry the one meaning.

If you want to know the marvelous work of the mind, you must understand that your present attitude of mind conceives a million meanings at once. When you see another's present attitude of mind, you can read his mind, but only when the attitude of mind is clear as a bell on the cushion. You must keep mind in a healthy condition as you do your body; refrain from all attachment that brings sickness into it. For a little while each day, put yourself into this perfect attitude. Do not beat your mind around from morning to evening. If someone asks you what is Buddhism, what is the practice of Buddhism, there is just one answer—sound a clear bell. The *koan* is a device to take all attachments from your mind—all superstition and illogical reasoning. Dig to the bottom of the mind, make it bottomless. Climb to the highest reasoning and make it topless. You will then know what true *Dharma* is.

When you know what true *Dharma* is, you will know how to discriminate between the true and the false. All true religion gives you some sort of idea of purity: "Be pure as the snow," "Be pure as crystal." Some think that all desire is profane, that to smoke, drink and indulge in sex is impure, so abstaining, to become celibate, will make you pure. But purity is in your mind. You must know all the stages of purity. As a sentient being you are pure. Do not fall into any superstition. Every student must go through these stages of practice. If you study fencing, you begin fencing with straw dolls, not a real opponent. So the Buddhist student practices how to carry out the teacher's commandments with a pure mind. Devices themselves are not Buddhism but only to carry you into true understanding through the many stages.

In Japan some Buddhist abbots put on golden robes and sit upon vermillion chairs, eat no meat, speak no human word, think no human desire, just like living Buddhas, but this is not true *Dharma*. His mind may be just like a layman's if his eye is not

open to Reality. Wrapped in the five senses, he never sees the substance of this existence. There are some who cannot even write a letter. Really, they should go back to grammar school, but there they sit! We do not call them masters; they are slaves of ignorance, undertakers just performing funeral services—yet, they call themselves Buddhists. Do you think because a man is a patriarch of a great temple he must be a great monk? Not so. There are not many real teachers today, teachers who have the Eye to see the *Dharma* of Shakyamuni Buddha. It is not easy to meet a real teacher.

*"Today, students do not know the Dharma. They are like goats that instantly take whatever their noses touch into their mouths. They do not distinguish between master and slave, host and guest."* According to Lin-chi's theory, there are four positions (of subject and object, or, as here, master and dependent): The master is in the master's place; the dependent is in the dependent's position; the dependent is in the master's place, and so on. A master in a master's position is like a wise king on the throne, in the Chinese idiom, "A Dragon in the sun."

But nature hides everything precious; to find a diamond is not so easy. Nature does not produce many precious things--there are not many sages in the world. How many do we know? The Buddha? Christ? Sometimes it takes hundreds of years to convince people of the true position of a great teacher. Even in the Buddha's time, two thirds of the citizens of Shravasti did not even hear his voice proclaiming his *Dharma*. In that great city of India, only a few listened, and how many really heard? Today, nearly all mankind knows the name of Buddha.

*"Because their motives for entering the Way are wrong, they enter clamorous places."* One may live on a mountaintop and be calm there, but if when he enters the city and meets an insult, in an instant he has lost his quietude, how can he save others? Such people do not enter Buddhism through love of mankind, but are actuated by inferior motives. They hate the world. Because everything is against their desires, they feel that everything is impure, when nothing is impure but their own minds. All is made of pure earth, fire, and so forth. Such a person puts himself into a temple and cuts off relations with other human beings. He calls himself sacred, but his mind is not sacred as long as he hates the world. He may hide in a grotto, temple, or mountain, but he cannot hide from his own impure mind. The Buddha entered the Way through love of those in darkness. To enlighten and teach them, free them, he let them know how his mind purely resounded.

*"We cannot call them world-renouncers. No! They are the worldly ones."* Lin-chi thought that one is not a real recluse when

he has renounced just the physical world—as if someone today were to renounce the subway and radio and all restaurants—but who has not renounced the world from his mind. To the real recluse, the mountaintop and the bottom of the sea are just one thing; the whole universe is made of one substance. If one is really settled in that substantial understanding, then everything is reduced to one. But he who runs from the sounds of the city is afraid of desire. By suppressing it, he puts himself on the level of desire. If his desire is pure, then in whatever place he stays he is pure and sacred. Though the nature of his mind may change from morning to evening, he himself does not change. He understands the changes in his body and his vibrations in accordance with others. Whatever he may see with the eye, his Eye is unstained; and this is so with his consciousness.

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## **BANKEI AND HIS WORLD**

by Peter Haskel

*Like Bankei, many of his contemporaries in the priesthood in seventeenth-century Japan believed that the authentic transmission of Zen in their land had been debased and finally destroyed during the preceding two or three centuries. If Zen was to continue, such reformers argued, it had to be thought through again from the beginning, not only revitalized but reinvented. The Zen of Bankei's age, the Tokugawa period, was in many ways a rejection rather than an extension of the Zen that came immediately before. The previous sections, therefore, concerned Japanese Zen during the late middle ages, the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. "Tokugawa Zen" deals with the Zen of Bankei's own period and how it emerged amid the changed conditions of the new age. The Tokugawa period, which lasted from approximately 1600 to 1867, was of key importance in the development of Rinzai and Soto Zen as we know them today, and many of the features of Japanese Zen that we now take for granted evolved during the more than two and one half centuries of rule by the Tokugawa shoguns. Bankei's age, the seventeenth century, is a particular focus of this section. Bankei was an original and highly individual teacher, but as will be seen, he shared many characteristics with other Zen teachers of his day, not least the very originality and individualism of his approach. The concluding section, "Bankei's Story," details Bankei's biography and the manner in which he arrived at his distinctive teaching of the unborn Buddha Mind*

### **TOKUGAWA ZEN (Part III, No. 1)**

The unification of Japan under the Tokugawa, ushered in an era of peace that lasted for nearly two hundred fifty years and left a profound mark on the character of Japanese life. From its capital in Edo, the Tokugawa military government, or Bakufu, presided over a feudal order whose ruling principle was the regulation and control of all levels of Japanese society. Bakufu authority was enforced through a series of interlocking hierarchies, based on a system of collective responsibility that emphasized group discipline and cohesiveness and imposed harsh penalties for disobedience. A strict social order was established, dividing the Japanese people into four principal classes. At the top were the samurai, a hereditary ruling elite comprising less than ten percent of the population. These were followed by the farmers, who made up over eighty percent of the whole and were responsible for production of rice and other agricultural commodities that remained the

staples of the country's economy. Below the farmers were the craftsmen and artisans and, lastly, the *chonin*; the merchants, or townsmen. Though technically relegated to the bottom of the social ladder, the merchant class enjoyed considerable prosperity throughout the Tokugawa period, and its lively urban culture was a conspicuous feature of Tokugawa Japan, particularly during *chonin* society's heyday in the seventeenth century.

Although Bakufu policies were essentially authoritarian in character, they were frequently informed by the outlook of Sung Neo-Confucianism, which had expanded in influence during the sixteenth century and during the Tokugawa period assumed the role of a semi-official orthodoxy. The Confucian virtues of loyalty and filiality were particularly stressed as key elements in maintaining the hierarchy of relations that bound society together at every level and enabled it to function harmoniously.

The hierarchical character of the social order was considered to be ordained by heaven, and any attempt to unsettle it could threaten the stability of not only the human but the natural world. Within this organic whole, each individual was bound to fulfill his particular role or part in insuring social harmony in accordance with his position. He accomplished this by wholeheartedly performing his allotted tasks while acknowledging the authority of those above him and accepting responsibility for those placed in his charge.

Their philosophical grounding aside, the immediate object of Bakufu policies was to assert shogunal authority throughout Japanese society and to eliminate any elements that might threaten or contest the Bakufu's monopoly of power. The government sought to regulate even the smallest details of people's lives. A shogunal edicts from the seventeenth century directs farmers on when to get up to go to the fields, what to eat and wear, and even when to divorce their wives. To a great extent, however, Tokugawa authoritarianism sprang not so much from ideology as from lessons of a more practical nature acquired in consolidating the country during the sixteenth century. Fear of rebellion and a resurgence of civil strife were at the heart of the elaborate network of controls over the various elements of the population instituted by the Tokugawas. The first Shogun, Ieyasu, like his warlord predecessors Hideyoshi and Nobunaga, was a product of the age of civil wars, and his thinking and that of his advisors was inevitably shaped by their experience of the world of the Sengoku daimyo. Consequently, much of Tokugawa policy represented the expression on a national level of late medieval institutions that had existed within the limited contexts of a particular organization or domain and now became administrative tools within a comprehensive feudal system.

## TWENTY-FIVE KOANS:

### **(ELEVENTH KOAN)**

Delivered by Sokei-an, March 19, 1938

*Genyo-sonja questioned Joshu: "What would you say if I did not carry a thing?"*

*Joshu said: "Put it down."*

*The Sonja said: "I said I have carried nothing. How can I put anything down?"*

*Joshu said: "Then carry yourself out!"*

*Upon the word the Sonja was enlightened.*

(Sokeian: There are more stories which are connected with this Genyo-sonja, which I shall translate):

*A monk inquired of Sonja Genyo of Shinko in Koshu: "What is the Buddha?"*

*The Sonja said: "A lump of clay."*

*"What is Dharma?"*

*"An earthquake."*

*"What is Sangha?"*

*"Eat rice porridge!"*

(And there are more stories):

*A monk inquired: "What is the water of Shinko?"*

*"It is the river that flows before the temple."*

*"What is that which appears according to the nature of the object?"*

*The Sonja said: "Fetch me that [rattan] bed."*

*The Sonja always had two pets, a tiger and a boa constrictor. They followed him at his right side and at his left. And they ate from his hand.*

## **Sokei-an:**

This dialogue between Genyo and Joshu is a very famous one. Many people were enlightened when they came to this koan.

In a previous lecture I gave you the details of Joshu's nature and of his Zen, so I shall not speak about it again tonight. Instead I shall speak about this Genyo. You must understand what kind of a Zen Master he was.

Genyo was the name of the place which was in Shinko in Ko-shu (Zhejiang Province?). We cannot find this village today which was close to the capital, Hangzhou. It is near the middle of southern China. The famous mountain is between two lakes, and Shinko was on the north side of the mountain, near some big forest. He was an ascetic called Sonja, which means "Venerable One."

He came to Joshu. Joshu was living on the south shore of the Yellow River. There is a town called Joshu. This town is existing to-day. Joshu was living in a little temple in a small village. We read that his temple was poor and sometimes they had nothing to eat.

This economic poverty of Joshu can be read of, but it is his famous Zen that is still talked about. He was a humorist and his Zen was as plain as a weed on the road or a pebble stone. There was nothing dramatic about it. He was just a farmer living in the little town of Joshu. Joshu isn't so small, it is still the largest town of that province. But his temple seems to have been outside of the town and in the north wind he writes of in his poems. He lived to be over one hundred.

This Genyo in Zen history was one of the successors of Joshu. He was a famous ascetic already when he came up to see Joshu in the town. Through these dialogues between the monks and Genyo, you would think that Genyo was a copy of Joshu. In comparison with Tokuan or Rinzai, Joshu's Zen was as simple as a flower on the roadside. Rinzai would shout and Tokuan would hit monks who asked questions. "What is Buddhism?" It is simple and clear.

In China, in the temple are many clay Buddhas, especially in Northern China. The clay of the Yellow River - we can model it; after it is dry it is very fine; they would paint it in beautiful colors, but very faint.

The monk asked him, "What is the Buddha?" "A lump of clay." was his answer. It is the attitude of Joshu. He does not shout, does not raise his stick, does not entertain people, but he said what he wanted to and casually dropped a word. He never cared whether one understood him or not. If a monk came and asked him: "What

is God?" it would be the same answer. Or "What is reality?" or "What is the highest principle of Buddhism?"

There is such a sound in the koan: "The east gate, the west gate, the north gate, the south gate, is Joshu." A city surrounded by walls had four gates and Joshu has four gates, I would like America to attain such a type of Zen, instead of Rinzai's kind, or Tokuan's. Joshu's insight was very deep. He submerged himself in the earth; he did not show any sign of his individuality on the surface of the earth; he concealed himself; he embodied in nature. So, to the unenlightened eye he was just a man, a farmer. But to those Zen students Joshu was an enormous existence.

He was a disciple of Nansen. Nansen's Zen was sharper, was sharp as a razor, and so clear that any one can see his mind; there was no mote or anything in his mind, so sharp and cold.

Joshu was his disciple, but his Zen wasn't like Nansen's. His Zen was like the water of the Yellow River, so dirty and deep you cannot know how deep it is, no sign of nothingness or anything. In the winter he opened his back door and shook his head outside, so vividly I see him living before me!

No one came to worship him except some old women bringing packages and just sitting there. No one knew who Joshu was in Joshu's time. But pilgrims making their pilgrimages from corner to corner of China, once in their lifetime would go to ask questions of him. Perhaps he did not know he was famous at all. He was very old.

*Genyo Sonja questioned Joshu: "What would you say if I did not carry a thing?"*--When we are in the temple, the monks will pick up our faults. "You dramatize yourself too much." "You carry yourself as an artist!" There is something always that is not real nature. We put on many things, a little powder, perhaps a little rouge; but we put more on our minds than on our face. We put sugar and everything on our mind. People will taste him but he is not sweet at all--is not a real man. Our attitude as Zen students is deadly honest and as real as nature itself.

"What would you say if I did not carry a thing?" If in your mind you realize you haven't any possession - - that is the sign of a good Buddhist.

Buddhism is a queer religion. If you go to a Buddhist country in winter, you wrap yourself; you do not walk the streets like a lion. Buddhism always emphasizes that you are to be yourself, like real nature... such a man is a great man. But to attain that attitude you must pass through many difficult times to train yourself and

culture yourself.

*Joshu said: "Put it down!"*--"I did not carry a thing!"--but he carried that! " I don't carry anything at all" - but he had his bundle! If I say to you, "Be natural" and you try to be natural you are affected, not natural at all – it is acting.

*The Sonja said: "I said I have carried nothing. How can I put anything down?"* *Joshu said: "Then carry yourself out!"*--He said: "I have carried nothing. How can I put anything down?" You know, in this moment he was really naked. "Then carry yourself out!" Of course he came back to himself...

He stepped out for a little while from a little conclusion which was in his brain – a conclusion of nothingness which was in his brain. In that moment he realized all the universe was himself.

This is the important point. Your first koan, "Before father and mother," will come to that point. Not sleeping, not thinking, but between there is a gate and if you have Zen luck you will attain enlightenment in that moment.

*Upon the word the Sonja was enlightened.*--From Buddha's day so-called enlightenment will come in that moment and there is no different moment.

Then Genyo went back to his own Kosho and stayed there.

There is not much of Genyo in Zen history. There is something in a book which I don't have, I have ordered it from Japan and in two to three months it will come and I will speak more of him.

*A monk inquired of the Sonja Genyo of Shinko in Kosho: "What is the Buddha?"* *The Sonja said: "A lump of clay."*--Said it as if you would ask: "Sokei-an, where is the can opener?"..."Oh, in the kitchen" – in that way he answered.

"*What is Sangha?*" "*Eat rice porridge.*"--"What do you prefer, water or tea?." Such an answer! On that plain ground he was living and it was his conclusion of his highest attainment. Real salvation can be attained in this state; it is in this state of everyday plain ordinary moment. If you carry that mind always when you go to the theatre to sing, you will not have stage fright...and on the battlefield...your mind is a shelter.

When I was young, before going into examination, my father told me to drink about three glasses of water and then make a short prayer. "When the fire god rages, please seize the fire, I pray you,

water god!"

This type of koan will give you the plain type daily life.

*A monk inquired: "What is the water of Shinko?"*--The question is plain but it has some hook. "What is the Buddha in yourself?" Some hook to fish out all notions...and in that empty stage you will attain enlightenment.

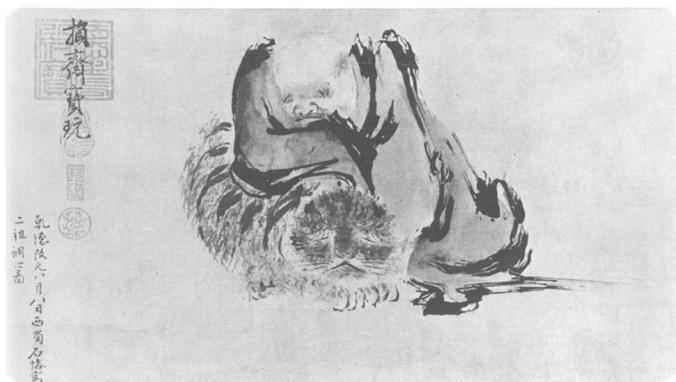
*"It is the river which flows before this temple."* "What is that which appears according to the nature of the object?" *The Sonja said: "Fetch me that rattan bed."*--He made his answer to the monk on the same terms as the question: "What is that which appears according to the nature of the object?" According to the object, your mind appears there. Good answer, wasn't it? He was as plain as Joshu, but it seems to me his daily life wasn't as plain.

*The Sonja always had two pets, a tiger and a boa constrictor. They followed him at his right side and his left. And they ate from his hand.*--He was a queer old monk. I have seen him in paintings several times. Sitting on a rock, with a lion and a snake, giving food. He was a very queer monk, an ascetic. It seems to me he wasn't a Zen monk originally; that he came from another school of Buddhism.

### Rang Bell

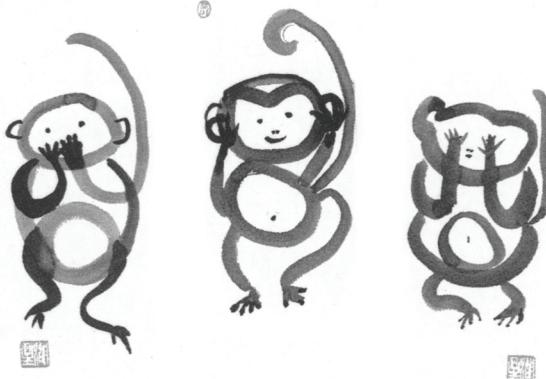
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**Note from Editor**  
Cover picture is courtesy of NASA.



The 2nd Patriarch resting...attributed to Shih K'o

Is it 2012 they see approaching?  
A sleeping dragon upon the back of an aging tiger,  
That lumbers behind the patter of frightened rabbits...



Monkeys by Susan Morningstar

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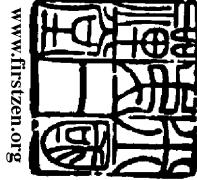
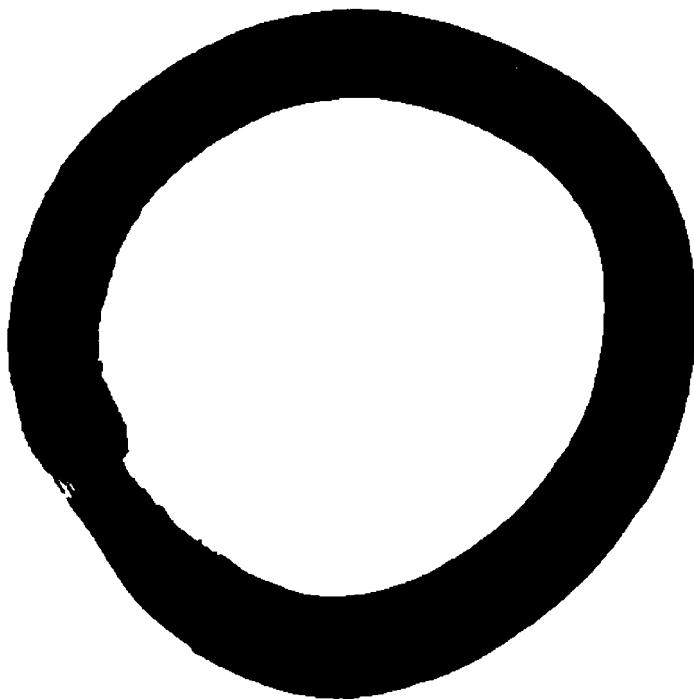
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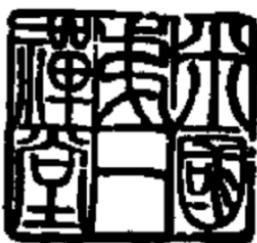


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