# Zen Notes


THREE-HUNDRED-MILE TIGER
THE RECORD OF LIN-CHI
Translation and Commentary by
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# Three-Hundred-Mile-Tiger

Sokei-an's commentary on

# The Record of Lin Chi

## Discourse XIV, Lecture 3

*"Brothers, do not cling to your attendant the body. It is a phantom and a dream. Sooner or later it will fall into insubstantiality. Why are you searching in this world for emancipation? Instead of searching for a mouthful of food and wasting time repairing your garments, find a teacher! Do not day after day pursue your ease. Be provident of every moment; every moment of life is full of uncertainty. The coarser part of your body is being controlled by the four great elements of earth, water, fire, and air; the finer part of your body is being controlled by the phases of birth, growth, decay, and annihilation. Brothers! Today you must understand these four states of formlessness. Stop being dragged about by circumstances!"*

SOKEI-AN SAYS:

Zen Master Lin-chi is calling this body the "attendant" because wherever the soul goes the body follows, just like a shadow in the moonlight. He says the body is a phantom, a dream created by the senses. In other words, all phenomena are the perception of our five senses; yet, something exists. But how do you prove it? And as reality, how does it exist?

Lin-chi is telling us that all will return to the void where you cannot see, feel, smell, or hear. That is our home. We came from that void as a seed grows and consciousness develops. At birth, you do not know your mother, day or night, time or space. Then your eyes see colors but not distance, just flat space without perspective. Day by day you make contact with the outside, and gradually you create your own universe according to circumstances.

The whole universe, you know, has been really created by your own experience and is seen from that one angle, one dimensionally. If one is a being in hell, then the whole world is a hell. And if one is a *deva* then everything is seen from that stage. So the world is created by consciousness, by soul, and the body is its attendant. However, one who sees original substance and views the world from that standpoint does not make the distinction between life and death; to him they are the same. One who recognizes just one soul in the universe is never trapped in transmigration. There

is no life or death or reincarnation. He transcends the egoistic viewpoint and lives from the stand-point of eternal life. We detach from the physical and individual viewpoint, yet observe mutability. So how can you call anything that you find in this world emancipation? God is just a name. In Japan you can go to a shrine and get the name of God written on a huge beautiful piece of paper. This is then pasted on a wall and worshipped. You can't call this salvation!

*"Do not day after day pursue your ease. Be provident of every moment; every moment of life is full of uncertainty."* A monk was once asked what he thought the most important line in a certain *sutra* was. He answered the one about spontaneity. An old woman, overhearing the conversation, decided to follow his example to do nothing artificially but to act spontaneously. So she started to recite the line again and again. Well, the real observation of that line is not on this earth and cannot come from a wandering mind. But if you truly understand spontaneity, you need no observation.

*"Why are you searching in this world for emancipation? Instead of searching for a mouthful of food and wasting time repairing your garments, find a teacher!* There are sometimes two tendencies or two extremes in Buddhism. The first extreme or tendency is to live like a string-slender and long. This Buddhist eats very little and does not use his body for perception but stays in solitude and lives as a hermit, sometimes for two hundred years! But what use is that?

The second tendency is to see life as *just* a phantom or a dream: you can do anything you want; there is no difference between good and bad. Some wonderful men have thought like this. They shine like lightning and die like air bubbles. Why should I care? I'm one with the universe. I am everybody, and I am myself. Punishment or reward? I don't care! (A bad bodhisattva may take this view that there is nothing wrong, but I am sure he is uncomfortable.)

These two tendencies are called "the thick and short way."So there must be some harmony and beauty while living in this phenomenal world. You can live like music or like thunder, live as you want, but there is one thing that you must know: This life *is* a dream and a phantom, and if you are wandering, you will find no emancipation, even though you keep the laws and commandments. You have to get real understanding. You must transcend phenomenal existence. Life and death in a moment of your mind is really this essential mutability. Even consciousness cannot conceive of such changeableness of mind.

Really, Lin-chi looks at all students as fluffy chicks. His type

lives only to seek enlightenment, and do not understand why people live only to make money, or eat a nice beefsteak, or become famous. The one who seeks truth wants nothing, neither wealth nor fame. All he wants is to be true to himself and he needs a teacher!

*"The coarser part of your body is being controlled by the four great elements of earth, water, fire, and air; the finer part of your body is being controlled by the phases of birth, growth, decay, and annihilation."* When we see this existence with the physical eye, it is in seven colors, and it has three dimensions; depth, width and length. But if we use the ear, it is nothing but sound. To the tongue, it is nothing but taste, and so forth. All these difference universes are the result of the different sense organs, or the result of many grades of consciousness. When we see this existence with the mental eye, it is nothing but light, without space or time, or, pure space and time.

From our standpoint in Buddhism, there are three aspects to this substantial existence: dharmakaya, sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya. But in the Zen understanding, reality and consciousness are just one. Sometimes we express it with the eyes or the voice, but all comes from oneness, which is expressed by the different functions in answer to different points of view. We do not usually separate body and soul, or matter and spirit, but sometimes we make a temporary separation between the coarse and the finer parts of this body, the physical and mental. So when Lin-chi is talking about the coarser and finer parts, he is talking according to the ancient, natural science. Today we use different terms like oxygen, nitrogen, hydrogen, and so forth. Today you are enjoying, fighting, sympathizing, agonizing; tomorrow you are up in smoke, cremated in Long Island! Just a streak, nothing left. If there is no body, there is no soul. Just as there is no hotel without a guest.

*"Brothers! Today you must understand these four states of formlessness."* In these four states there are no characteristics, having no signs or marks.

*"Stop being dragged about by circumstances!"* We do not use, but are used by circumstances. We have to change that inverted view. That is Buddhism. *You* are the Master, not your circumstances!

There was a great bandit in Japan. He pitied the poor and stole from the rich to give to the poor. One day he revisited those whom he had made rich, but they were still poor! And the rich were still rich! He realized that riches are in the nature of man and not in his property.

# 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," will detail Bankei's biography and the manner in which he arrived at his distinctive teaching of the unborn Buddha Mind*

## TOKUGAWA ZEN (Part III, #10)

(Continued from the Summer '13 Zen Notes)

### The "Popularizers"

If the Zen monks of the early Tokugawa period were often skeptical about the quality of the Zen priesthood, many evinced a powerful optimism about the ability of ordinary Japanese men and women to grasp and put to use the essentials of Zen practice. Indeed, many of those masters most critical of the Zen establishment of their day became active purveyors of Zen to the populace at large. Their teachings were presented in sermons or written works that could be easily understood by lay men or women. Largely avoiding Chinese phrases, difficult allusions or Buddhist technical terms that were not readily familiar to their audiences, these teachers made use of clear, everyday Japanese to express their frequently idiosyncratic views of Zen. Though such priests were lim-

ited in number, many attracted a large following, and this type of popular instruction became a hallmark of early Tokugawa Zen.

The teachings of these seventeenth century monks were "popular" in the same sense as were the teachings of Bassui, discussed previously. That is, they attempted to present the fundamentals of Zen in a way that could be understood by ordinary persons, rather than to offer a distinct "layman's Zen" that dispensed with the difficulties of enlightenment and Zen practice by substituting traditional elements of popular worship, such as the performance of Esoteric Buddhist rites or devotions. As Bassui's example attests, this approach was not entirely new. But it developed more markedly during the early Tokugawa period than at any time before in Japan. During the late Middle Ages, popular Zen signified a vulgarized, syncretic teaching designed to attract the support of the rural populace and the new military, mercantile, and artistic classes emerging in the provinces. By contrast, the popular teachers of the early Tokugawa period sought to simplify and disseminate Zen, not by forsaking or diluting its teachings in favor of more traditional forms of Buddhism, but by clarifying them, reducing them to their essentials and presenting these in a manner that was at once familiar and direct. The popular Zen of the early Tokugawa period was thus an active, creative development, unlike the imitative or merely adaptive popular Zen of the late Middle Ages, with its passive merging of the teaching with older forms of Japanese religion and culture.

Though the reasons for the emergence of this particular brand of popular Zen in the Tokugawa period are uncertain, several likely explanations can be conceived. Along with the other sects of Buddhism, Japanese Zen in the seventeenth century was on the defensive, assailed by the Confucians for being a parasitic growth that bled the common people for support but offered them nothing in return but empty metaphysics, or, at worst, crass superstition. Much of the popular Zen teaching of the period seems a response to such accusations, focused as it is on the dailylife circumstances of ordinary people and on the practical ways in which Zen can enable one not only to surmount his personal dilemmas and spiritual problems but to become a better neighbor, parent, farmer, tradesman, samurai and member of society generally. To some extent, the "popularizers" appear to be responding to the Confucians' challenge, justifying Zen by demonstrating its concrete value not only for priests and nuns but for ordinary people in every walk of life.

At the same time, Japanese culture generally in the seventeenth century was experiencing a dynamic transformation and itself becoming more accessible, open and "democratic." The works we now view as the cultural highpoints of the early Tokugawa pe-

riod were also the popular culture of the day, enjoyed, supported and created by the common people themselves.

The dramas of Chikamatsu Monzaemon (1653-1724), the tales of Ihara Saikaku (1642-1693) , the poetry and prose of Matsuo Basho (1644-1694) and his disciples, the prints of Hishikawa Moronobu (d. 1694) were all representative of this new popular culture. It is not unreasonable to suggest that this atmosphere extended to the area of religion, and that Zen, previously confined, like poetry and the fine arts, to the appreciation of an intellectual and social elite, was now being "democratized" as well. In addition, early Tokugawa culture manifested a strong sense of pride in Japan and Japaneseness, and new developments like haiku and ukiyoe reflected this trend toward the emergence of distinctively Japanese forms of cultural expression. In Zen too, despite its traditional association with Chinese language and culture, many of the popular Tokugawa teachers sought new modes of expression, specifically suited to mainstream Japanese audiences. Such teachings tended to be lively, down to earth expositions of Zen, presented in an intimate, even homely, colloquial idiom. Religion, like theater and poetry, was an important leisuretime activity in Tokugawa Japan, and teachers like Bankei might lecture to capacity crowds who arrived early to find seating, jostled for space, and at times even had to be admitted in shifts.

Bankei is perhaps the most celebrated popularizer of Zen in the early Tokugawa period, but he was only one of a number of such figures, several of whom preceded him by at least a generation. Among the earliest of these is the Daitokuji master Takuan Soho (1573-1645), mentioned earlier. Takuan was born in Tanba (Hyogo Prefecture) to a samurai family and entered the priesthood as a child. He enjoyed a broadbased education, studying both Chinese and Gozan literature, Buddhism and Confucianism, and acquiring expertise in tea, calligraphy and poetry. He studied Zen under various Daitokuji masters including Shunkaku Soon (1529-1611) and, later, Itto Joteki (1539-1612), whose inka he received in 1604. As Itto's heir, he became abbot of Daitokuji in 1606 but left in disgust after three days for his own small temple in Sakai, declaring Daitokuji Zen to be something less than authentic.

After four years in exile as punishment for his role in the "purple robe incident" of 1628, Takuan was sent to Edo in 1632, but was not allowed to return to Kyoto until two years later. In 1635, at the urging of several influential supporters, Takuan traveled to Edo to meet the third Shogun, Tokugawa Iemitsu, and while in the capital stayed at the mansion of Yagyu Tajima no Kami, a Tokugawa retainer and noted fencing master who became Takuan's patron. Imeitsu became devoted to Takuan, and in his interviews with the Shogun, Takuan was allowed the unusual privi-

lege of being seated facing Iemitsu, only two *shaku* (approximately two feet) from the latter's knees. Although Takuan repeatedly sought to withdraw to a secluded country hermitage, Iemitsu refused to allow him to leave the capital and erected a temple for him in Edo's Shinagawa district, a temple that Takuan named Tokaiji.

Despite the favor shown him by Iemitsu, Takuan's character seems to have remained resolutely plain and independent. He declined the title of Kokushi, or "National Master," refused to appoint a successor, and forbade elaborate funeral services after his death a request honored by his disciples in defiance of Iemitsu's order to mount more elaborate proceedings.

Takuan's intimate relationship with Iemitsu and the favor he enjoyed at the Shogunal court did not prevent him from becoming an active exponent of popular Buddhism, writing a number of vernacular works. Among the latter are *Tokaiyawa* and *Ketsujoshu,* two collections of writings touching on miscellaneous topics, including Buddhism, Confucianism and Yin Yang thought, and *Fudochi shinmyo roku*, a treatise on Zen and swordsmanship composed as a letter to Yagyu. Characteristic of Takuan's popular approach to Zen is an emphasis on enlightened mind as a dynamic principle to be put to work in one's actual daily affairs. Takuan particularly stresses immediacy and spontaneity of response, the active functioning of mind freely pervading one's whole being, always flowing unhindered. It is only when a person interferes with this natural flow, artificially constricting the mind by "stopping" (*tomeru*) or "fixing" (*oku*) it in a particular place that he loses his original freedom and becomes deluded, turning original mind (*honshin*) into ignorant mind (*mojin*).

This is the substance of Takuan's advice on the Way of the Sword, presented in the *Shinmyo roku*. In order to respond instantly and accurately to his opponent, the swordsman must keep from stopping his mind at any place and constraining its free functioning. Like a wheel which will not turn if it is attached at any point, the mind of the swordsman must not be fixed anywhere.

*"...If you fix your mind on your opponent's sword, it will be captured by your opponent's sword; and if you fix your mind on the thought of killing your opponent, it will be captured by the thought of killing your opponent. In the same way, if you fix your mind on your own sword, your mind will be captured by your own sword; and if you fix your mind on the thought of not being killed, it will be captured by that thought of not being killed...."*

The swordsman's mind, Takuan says, must not stop at any

point, mental or physical; if it does, he is "immediately robbed of his free functioning (*hataraki*) and can be killed." On the other hand, "*When you come to the ultimate, to the realization of No Mind (*mushin*) and No Thought (*munen*), you arrive at the stage where the arms, feet and body 'know' of themselves, and the mind becomes unnecessary....*"

Takuan illustrates this with the example of the Senju Kannon or "Thousand-Armed" Kannon, a popular form of the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara characterized by multiple heads and arms:

"*Consider the Senju Kannon with its thousand arms. If its mind became fixed on the one arm that holds the bow, the other nine hundred ninety-nine arms would be unable to function. It's precisely because its mind doesn't become fixed on any one point that all its arms are able to function freely.... Let's suppose you're looking at a maple in autumn, covered with crimson leaves. If your mind becomes fixed on one particular leaf, you miss all the rest; but if your mind doesn't get fixed on any one leaf, you'll see all the thousands of leaves that cover the tree. So any person who has realized Mind is himself a Kannon with a thousand arms and eyes! An ordinary, unenlightened person believes blindly that it's a marvel, having a thousand arms and eyes in a single body; the skeptic refuses to accept it. But neither belief nor denial are the point. What's to be revered is the principal behind this. Buddhism expresses this principle through a particular image. One who takes the image literally is an unenlightened being; and one who denies it skeptically is worse still!*"

A person will naturally attain No Mind, Takuan says, when he doesn't arouse thoughts, when the mind is free of all conscious intentions. However, like Bankei, Takuan cautions that to try to deliberately effect this state by driving out all thoughts is again to be attached to things, to "stop" the mind. To willfully try "not to think" or to artificially restrain the mind through constant vigilance only stiffens and constrains the mind, obstructing its intrinsic freedom and spontaneity. Again reminiscent of Bankei, Takuan's solution to this dilemma is a complete "letting go":

"*It's just as if you had a pet sparrow, and [in order to keep your cat from eating it,] always kept the cat tied to a leash. When you restrain the mind like the cat, making it unfree, it can't function as it would naturally .... In using your mind, just let it go free, as if you were letting loose the cat to go where it pleased, and don't stop it.*"

Such practical explanations of concepts like No Mind and No Thought are distinctive features of Takuan's popular writings. The principles that underlie the functioning of the "Zen swords-

man" in *Shinmyo roku* are general ones, related to the workings of the mind itself, and can be applied in any situation. In *Ketsujoshu*, for example, Takuan offers the following observations on dealing with the familiar human problems of anger and emotional distress:

"*If you're overcome by violent anger, you should look up at the moon, or turn your attention to birds or animals. Then, when your mind is absorbed by the things around you, even while you're trying to dispel your rage, it will just disperse, and the* ki *tied up with it will be released and naturally settle out. But if you stubbornly hold to your anger, mired in your gloomy attitude, there's no way your* ki *can freely expand. Your mind is stuck there, it can't get away, and the harder it tries, the worse things become. Right then you've got to shake yourself free, take in a cloud, or a mountain, and your mind that was tied up with being angry will instantly shift to the cloud or the mountain, so that you can detach yourself from your angry frame of mind.*

"*Take a man trying to seize the reins of a biting horse. To get the horse away from its set of mind, he thrusts a flower before it, has it look at that, and it's freed from the mind it was stuck in. That way, even the horse is then in the state of No Mind, and without any bother you can saddle up.... This is the device of absorbing the mind in things. When you chant dharani or recite prayers to avert misfortune..., all these are simply to calm the wayward mind, and their principle is to disengage the Mind that is fixed at some point. Even spells and things of that sort all have some reason behind them. There was a woman whose* ki *was stuck in her chest, who was suffering with no inkling of the reason for her distress. A certain doctor remarked: 'This woman is ill from love, and the cause of her sickness is her partner in adultery.' The woman flew into a rage. 'I'd never do such a thing!' she protested. 'This doctor is imputing to me vile acts I've never had anything to do with!' But as her fury rose like a black cloud, the* ki *lodged in her chest suddenly dispersed, and her illness was cured. This doctor cured her illness without using medicine. He had a device by which with just one word he snatched away the gloom in her mind."*



## Cover

The cover is from the FZI's latest book "THREE-HUNDRED-MILE TIGER" published by iUniverse, Bloomington, Indiana. It is Sokei-an's translation and commentary on the Rinzai Record which we also have been publishing in Zen Notes. It is available on Amazon as paper back for $23.35 and e-book for $3.99.

# The Pond

By Molly Rigby, an aspiring young student...

Breathing in and out, my lungs pull in the sweet summer air. I Concentrate on the breath and the breath only. Okay, that's a lie. Multiple thoughts drift in to steal my concentration. They buzz around my mind like a swarm of flies. With copious focus and effort, I take note of each demanding thought, and let them fly away into the gentle breeze. Back to the breath, always the breath. Concentrate. Breathe.

How long has it been? An hour? A minute? Time works differently at the pond. I open my eyes in sudden panic and check the time. My crammed schedule always looms over me; a shadow of reality. I still have an hour to spare. A sigh of relief escapes my lungs, releasing any remaining toxins from my day. I am pulled back to my senses and notice the peaceful world around me.

I feel the grainy wooden dock beneath my skin. It protrudes over the pond's edge. Firm and surprisingly stable, it supports me. My feet dangle over its edge just a few feet above the calm water. A safe pocket of dangling branches thick with green leaves surrounds me. It's almost as if they're reaching out for a warm hug. Curious dragonflies have come to inspect my bright white toes. Their colorful metallic skins reflect the sun as they jut about, seeming to teleport from one space to the next. The sun radiates underneath my skin, filling me with warm satisfaction. A gentle breeze flows through the surrounding trees, like air through a flute, creating a comforting familiar song. Reeds stand tall on the pond's edge, extending firmly towards the heavens.

A fallen tree branch lies on the far side of the pond. It hovers just above the water, welcoming any weary-winged travelers to perch upon it. From time to time, a blue heron takes refuge atop this branch. As the illusion of time passes, we share this sacred place. . . the moment passes and he flies off into the neighboring forest.

Strong gusts of wind swirl around, chasing each other, they play and tease in the summer air. One gust spins down and brushes the water's surface, causing ripples to break across the pond. The sunlight reflects off the crest of each ripple and creates a brilliantly dazzling pool of light. It dances before me, shimmering and transforming from one shape to the next. I look on in awe. The universe can create such magnificent beauty in everything. . .

Reality comes back to haunt me when I realize that I must leave. I stand up and feel the brief yet painful sensation of my sore muscles moving. I've been sitting for far too long. As I step off the dock and into the coarse grass, the swarm of thoughts come back to cloud my mind, each one begging for my attention. But one of these thoughts always gives me assurance: the pond will always be here, waiting, suspended in time.

# TALES OF HAKUIN'S FOLLOWERS

Hakuin Ekaku (1686-1769) is generally acknowledged as the key figure in formulating the Japanese Rinzai school of Zen as we know it today. The following anecdotes are taken from *Hakuin monka itsuwasen* (*Tales of Hakuin's Followers*), a translation into modern Japanese of *Keikyokusôdan* (*Tales From the Forest of Thorns*), composed in 1829 by Hakuin's fourth-generation disciple Myôki Seiteki (1774-1848) and published in 1843. *Tales of Hakuin's Followers*, which along with the modern Japanese-language version includes notes, the original Sino-Japanese (*kanbun)* text and its reading into classical Japanese (*yomikudashi*), was prepared by Nônin Kôdô and issued in 2008 in Kyoto by Hanazono University's Zen bunka kenkyûjo (Institute for the Study of Zen Culture).

**(Part 5)**

Master Tôrei was lecturing on the *Blue Cliff Record* at Tôhokuji[1] in Edo, when he took up the collection's third case, "Sun-Faced Buddha, Moon-Faced Buddha."[2]

Among those in attendance was Shibata Genyô's[3] mother, then over sixty years of age. No sooner had she heard Master Tôrei's words than her mind seemed suddenly and spontaeously to open. After the lecture, she went to see the master and present her understanding. Tôrei was overjoyed.

As she lay dying, this woman instructed her granddaughter, "Though you are young, you should strive to take refuge in the Buddha's teaching. Why? Because from the moment long ago when I heard Master Tôrei present "Sun-Faced Buddha, Moon-Faced Buddha" and suddenly experienced enlightenment right up till now, there hasn't been even a speck of dust in my mind, which has remained bright as a mirror. Now I'm dying, but I feel quite

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[1] A Myôshinji-branch temple in what is now Tokyo's Shibuya district. According to his biography, Tôrei lectured there on the *Blue Cliff Record* in 1775.

[2] Case 3 of the *Blue Cliff Record*, "Master Ma is Unwell."

"Master Ma was unwell. The temple's treasurer asked, 'Your Reverence, how are you feeling lately?'

The master replied, "Sun-faced buddha, moon-faced buddha.'" T48:142.

Ma is the Tang dynasty master Ma-tsu Tao-i (709-788).

[3] Shibata (n.d.) was awell-known children's doctor of the eighteenth century, the author of several early works on pediatrics.

peaceful just as if I were going home. What is there to trouble me? Should you fail to take refuge in the Buddha's teaching," she admonished, "you are no granddaughter of mine! Remember!"

With these words, she simply passed away.

(*P.62-63, No.24, 196-197*)

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Master Gasan Jitô was a native of Mutsu.[2] He bacame a monk under Master Gesshû Zen'ne of Kôke-in in Miharu.[3] On reaching the age of sixteen, Gasan undertook an extensive Zen pilgrimage. He traveled first to Bungo (Ôita Prefecture), where he did koan study with Korei Soô[4] of Manjûji and attained a small realization. But even after knocking at the gates of more than thirty other Zen masters, he found none a worthy match for him. Gasan returned to see Gesshû, who approved his realization and told him, "Don't go anywhere else; just stay here. "

"I've completed the great matter of enlightenment!" Gasan thought to himself.

Gasan had frequently passed by Hakuin's temple, but had lacked any interest in interviewing the master. One day, however, he considered, "I went to see Zen masters all over Japan and couldn't find even one able to show me the way. Hakuin is the only man left, the one master whose worth I still don't know." He therefore determined to set off to meet him.

When Gasan went to tell Geshû, the latter said, "There's no need for you to go. Why do you have to meet Hakuin?"

Gasan followed Gesshû's advice and remained with him for one more year. Then he happened to learn that Hakuin was to lecture on the *Blue Cliff Record* at Tôrinji[5] in Edo. Gasan thought, "If I fail to meet this old fellow, I can't truly call myself a man of determined spirit." He therefore resolved to go.

Gesshû once more sought to stop him, but this time Gasan would not be dissuaded. Traveling directly to Tôrinji, he saw Hakuin and presented his understanding.

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[2] 1727-1797. Mutsu is an old province, now Fukushima Prefecture.

[3] Gesshû's dates are 1702-1781. Kôke-in is a Myôshinji-line temple in what is now Fukushima Prefedcture.

[4] A Myôshinji-line Zen master. His dates are 1697-1776.

[5] A Myôshinji-line temple in what is now Tokyo's Daitô district.

ing out all this evil breath and smelling me up!" Hakuin railed at him. He then beat Gasan and drove him out.

Gasan, however, would not be put off, and returned three times to interview Hakuin, but each time he was beaten and driven out. "I really *have* experienced enlightenment," Gasan thought to himself, "but he's deliberately undermining me."

One evening, after Hakuin had concluded his lecture and Gasan had resumed his place in the meditation hall, he considered, "Hakuin is known to be among the greatest and wisest teachers in the land. How could he simply beat someone for no good reason? Surely he must have superior attainment." Thereupon, he entered the master's room and expressing profound contrition, declared, "The other day, in error, I gave offense to your Reverence, and now humbly beseech your forgiveness. I beg you, bestow upon me your instruction."

Hakuin told him, "You're still young, but you'll spend your whole life hauling around a bellyful of lifeless Zen![1] However much you jabber, when you arrive at the moment of death you'll find yourself completely helpless. If you want to be joyful your whole life long," Hakuin concluded, "you must hear my 'sound of one hand.'"

Gasan prostrated himself in gratitude before the master and departed. From that day on he became Hakuin's devoted follower.

(*No. 30, 210-213*)





[1] A phrase from case 98 of the *Blue Cliff Record*, criticizing the false attainment of students. "...What a joke! Intelectually, they've mastered a whole bellyfull of Zen, but they can't actually *use* it!" T48:222a.

# THE SUTRA OF PERFECT AWAKENING

## SIXTY FOURTH LECTURE

Wednesday December 20th, 1939

*Desiring to reaffirm what he had said, Lokanatha then recited the following gatha:*

*"O Vimalamatih!*
*You must know that the nature of perfect Bodhi*
*Is that it can neither be attained nor proven.*
*There is neither the nature of the Bodhisattva*
*Nor that of sentient beings in the nature of perfect Bodhi.*
*The attainment of sentient beings, however,*
*Varies in degree from imperfect to perfect awakening.*
*Sentient beings hinder their awakening by their own reasoning.*
*A Bodhisattva lingers in the state to which he has awakened.*
*When he enters the true state of the Bodhisattva, however,*
*All hindrances will cease forever.*
*To abide in no forms is the evidence that one has perfected*
*One's attainment of all the stages of awakening.*
*Such a one is called*
*'He who has awakened*
*According to the complete nature of awakening.'"*

**SOKEI-AN SAYS:**

This is the gatha in which the Buddha reaffirms his answer to Vimalamatih. The name of this Bodhisattva means "Pure Wisdom." This wisdom is as pure as transparent water or empty sky; it is not deluded by any concepts—by color, sound, space or time or movement. This wisdom is therefore your original nature.

"*O Vimalamatih! You must know that the nature of perfect Bodhi is that it can neither be attained nor proven.*" —This part was very carefully explained in a passage of a previous lecture—but I shall repeat it again.

The light does not shine itself; the sword does not cut itself; the eye cannot see itself. Therefore, consciousness cannot have a conscious existence. When you attain the nature of Perfect Bodhi—Perfect Awakening—you realize that Perfect Bodhi has two reaching points:

First, you attain the absolute nature of emptiness, which is

your original aspect. And then you find yourself in the center of this phenomenal existence. In Zen, we say, "You have found yourself in the midst of the true Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha!" This immediate existence is the center of the three Treasures; Buddha, Dharma, Sangha. You accept not only this existence but you accept all action disinterestedly. This is to accept the action of the six Gati: the way of hell-beings, of the preta, the Tiryagyoni, the Ashura, Manu, and deva. And you accept these actions according to the nature of eight kinds of lower beings: Nagas, Yakshas, Rakshas, Gandharvas, Asuras, Kimnaras, Garudhas, Narokas; the real beings who are existing visibly and invisibly. Those existing visibly appear before us; those existing invisibly appear in our minds.

It is queer these lower beings and ghosts helping Buddhism! There is but one Satan who does not help—the deva Malapapima. His nature is absolute materialism; he was always arguing with the Buddha who always won the argument and the deva disappeared in the sky. When you awake to the phenomenal world, you awake to all these strange beings. Then your awakening is Perfect Awakening.

But the Buddha tell us "*that it can neither be attained nor proven*." When you realize the oneness of conscious existence, this conscious existence does not exist and so it cannot be proven. As long as there is something which you can attain you are still in a dualistic state. If we say that we have attained "absolute truth," then we imply that there is something which is not true—and this is dualistic. The Buddha called it "Mushin," Non-truth, in the Agama sutra. There is a famous law of Non-truth. This is very important. It is particularly difficult to reach there because one who has attained it does not believe it. It is, therefore, necessary to have a teacher who verifies you.

When Zen study is over—there comes such a time—one has attained but cannot believe it. It is written, "*At every moment, everywhere, it is here but no one believes it*." That is Zen. If the Zen master looks like a man in the world, a man on a streetcar, a butcher, a shoe-black, no one believes him. But one hundred years later... "He was a great Zen master!"

It is said that someone called a Zen master to translate some Chinese calligraphy: "*What is the house of meditation upon emptiness? It is the house of meditation upon emptiness. That is all*." Not satisfied with this translation he called another Zen master who said, "*It is the house of meditation upon emptiness, and empty men meditate upon emptiness*." The second Zen master was driven out and the poor man was left.

"*There is neither the nature of the Bodhisattva nor that of the*

*sentient being in the nature of Perfect Bodhi.*" —We are all in the nature of Perfect Bodhi!

"*The attainment of sentient beings, however, varies in degree from imperfect to perfect awakening.*" —From the true standpoint, there is no difference in the real nature—there are no two natures—but there are degrees of awakening. In a previous lecture this was handled very carefully.

One may think, "I am living very comfortably—I don't need any religion." This is the first state. But life is not so comfortable! The mind is always disturbed—and one tries to escape both physically and mentally from that agony and disturbance.

Then, perhaps, one will awaken into emptiness. This is Nirvana. "Before father and mother" —all comes from emptiness, nothingness. It is called "Nothingness" —but it is something, isn't it, if it is a thought in the mind? Some put so many thoughts about emptiness in the mind that it is like solid ivory! But he thinks this is emptiness.

Then, the feeling of emptiness will disappear; there is no past, present, or future; one's mind mirrors all existence. This is a true awareness. The whole world becomes a grain of rice—as in Egon's famous koan: "*A grain of rice jumps out of the finger-tips and disappears.*"

"Awareness" is a very important part of this awakening but people misunderstand it. You get into the emptiness, but you must destroy this emptiness. Then you enter the second emptiness and you must destroy this before you can enter the third, the true emptiness.

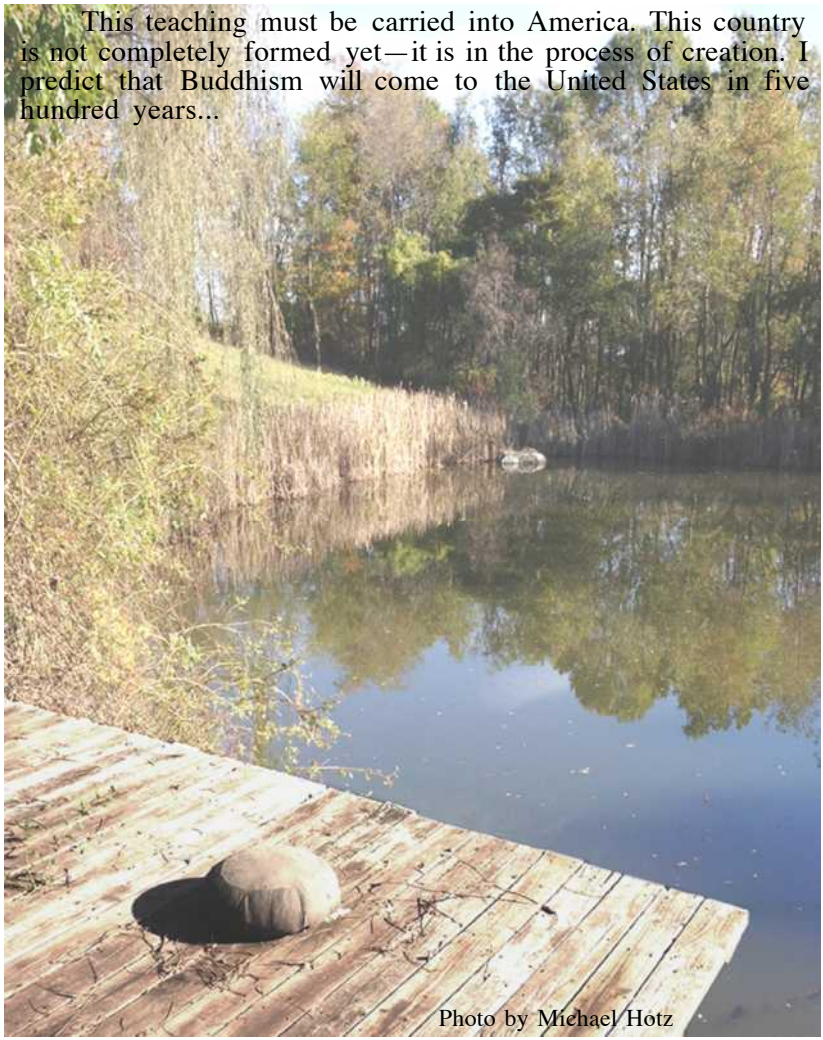
There are many people who try to do this without a teacher and they will, inevitably fall into the pit. This is a great ocean of thought, not a creek or a little river! How can one create his own Buddhism in 60-70 years? This is a great vehicle not a small boat. I struggled for a long time—I gave up—and I am satisfied.

"*Sentient beings hinder their awakening by their own reasoning. A Bodhisattva lingers in the state to which he has awakened.*" —It is said that to attain awakening one must jump off from the corner of a cliff. There is the famous koan: "If you are hanging by your teeth to a tree over a deep precipice and someone comes along and asks you what is the main principle of Buddhism—what will you do?" You will have to drop down—and you will hit yourself hard!

"*When he enters the true state of the Bodhisattva, however, all*

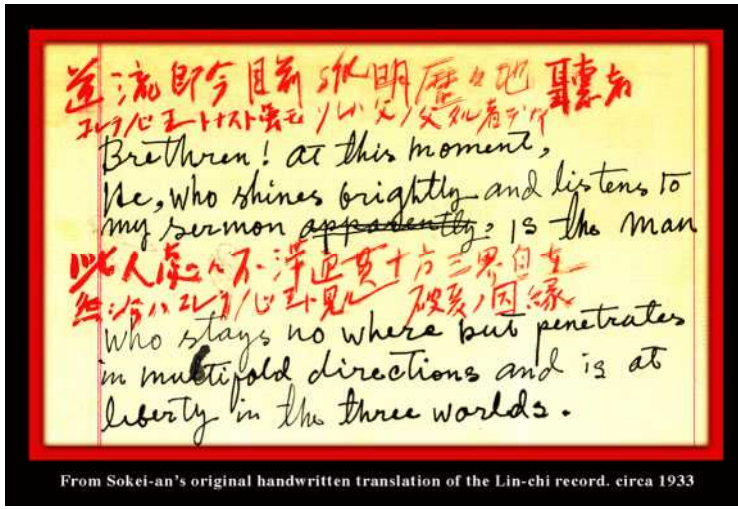
*hindrances will cease forever.*" —The "notion" of emptiness is a form; do not abide there. The "notion" of awareness is also a form; do not stay there.

"*To abide in no forms is the evidence that one has perfected one's attainment of all the stages of awakening. Such a one is called 'he who has awakened according to the complete nature of awakening.'*" —When I read this sutra, I realize that Zen can be explained by words. And I realize that the Buddhism of today and that of the Buddha are not two different Buddhisms. Sometimes, when I read the Agamas I feel as if I am meeting my grandfather. No, we are not following him—we are independent as he is—but when we understand him, we will follow him.



This teaching must be carried into America. This country is not completely formed yet—it is in the process of creation. I predict that Buddhism will come to the United States in five hundred years...

Photo by Michael Hotz



From Sokei-an's original handwritten translation of the Lin-chi record. circa 1933

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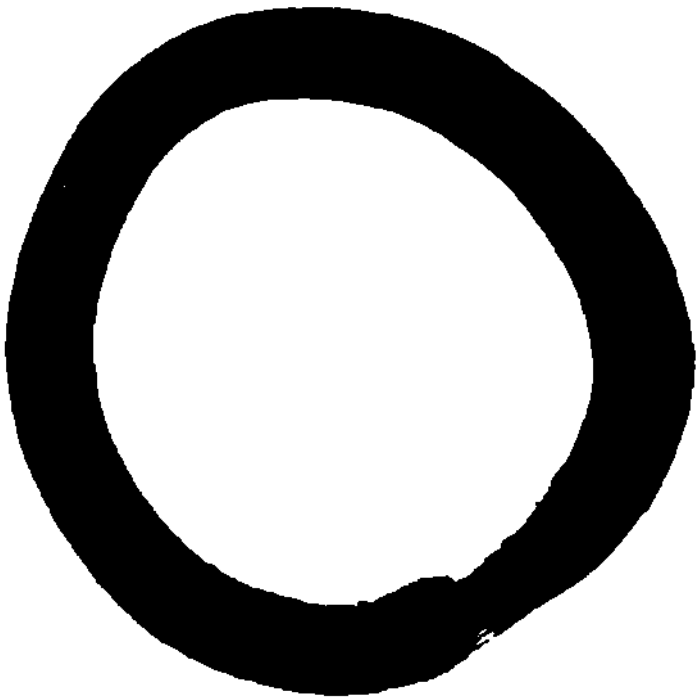
PUBLISHED BY

FIRST ZEN INSTITUTE OF AMERICA, INC.

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

VOLUME LIX, NUMBER 4 FALL 2013
Editor, usually anonymous artist, poet... Peeter Lamp

First Zen Institute of America
113 East 30th Street
New York, New York 10016
( ZN Vol 59, No. 4)
www.firstzen.org



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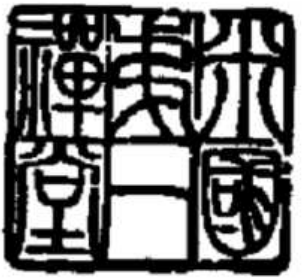

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