

VEN NOTES

INDRA'S DOMINION is high on Mount Sumeru (the world); the heaven called That-Which-Can-Be-Observed-By-The-Eyes. At the very top of the tower of his palace is a beautiful room which has for its ceiling a net decorated with blue diamonds, each reflecting all the others.

IT IS SAID that when Indra created his net to protect the universe, he threw a string straight to the East and another straight to the North and others in all directions at once, and these strings reached the end of the universe and connected off with another. In each link of string with string a jewel shone forth like a star.

INDRA, WHOSE nature manifests both as god and man, is everlastingly at war with Asura, the god of wrath. Once when Asura bested him, Indra, forced to retreat to the tower at the top of his palace, hid in his net. Asura, brandishing his terrible sword, followed. Looking into the net, he saw one million Indras, all aflash with blue fire, and in fear retreated. But the battle continues, endless.

THE METAPHOR OF INDRA'S NET

IT IS SAID IN THE SUTRA: "I am now preaching the sermon of the state of the pure body of Samantabhadra and you are listening to this sermon."

The commentary says: "Samantabhadra (the eye which sights all directions at once) signifies that Dharma and wisdom correspond to one another and that all the dharmas are cognized at once in wisdom. And it signifies also that only in the state of the eye of Samantabhadra is Dharma cognizable and that none of the other states of consciousness is capable of cognizing the existence of Dharma."

The *state of consciousness* means that the state of each dharma appears which corresponds to each stage of consciousness. The states of many dharmas interpenetrate, as the jeweled meshes of Indra's net interweave their shadows. The jeweled Indra net is the metaphor of the endless states of dharma which interpenetrate one another. *The pure body* means that the dharmas mentioned previously as interweaving with one another seem as if unable to unravel their intricacy. Nevertheless this intricacy is the consequence of the operation of the relative law of becoming. And this means that each eye (which sees all the eyes) has no idea of attaching to the objects which it sees.

The net of Indra is composed of many jewels. The jewels illumine one another and all are reflected in each. Their shadows interchange with shadows endlessly; thus in one all the jewels appear at once without succession of time in coming and going; all are within one and one is all.

Now, for instance, take a bead from the southwest corner of the jeweled net and look upon it! You will find in it all the shadows of the net at once. One proves that which appears in the other, and the other proves that which appears in the one. One and another of the jewels reflect the whole net at once. Take another of them! It will be the same. And the rest of the jewels will be the same also.

Thus shadows are reflected in shadows endlessly and these endlessly reflected shadows are in one bead of the net. They are clearly manifested and none of the shadows prevents the others from being reflected. If you seat yourself upon a bead you will find yourself seated upon countless beads in manifold directions.

Why is it thus? Because all the beads are contained within one bead, and because when each bead is contained within all the beads, you will find yourself seated upon every bead. Accordingly, you had better consider how reflection takes place in the other beads.

As it has been repeatedly explained, in one bead all the beads are embraced; therefore all the beads are the property of the one bead. All the beads of the net enter one bead; however, no other bead is created anew, thus increasing the net.

The Questioner says: "As it was said that in one bead all the beads are embraced, all the beads are therefore the property of the one bead. But how can all the beads of the net enter one bead?"

The Answerer says: "Because none of the beads are excluded from this one, therefore it can be said that all enter one. If one of them leaves one bead and attempts to enter all, it will fail to enter all, because without the inside of this bead, no other can exist."

The Questioner says: "If the failure of all the beads to exist without this one bead means that this whole net is created by one bead, why can it be said that the net is composed of many beads?"

The Answerer says: "Because this one bead makes the beginning of the net, which will be composed of many other beads. Why? Because this one bead alone composes the entire net and without it no net will ever come into existence."

The Questioner says: "If there is but one bead which initiates existence, why can it be said that the net is composite?"

The Answerer says: "*The net is composed of many beads* means that the entire existence of this net consists of only one bead. Why? Because one bead represents all the beads. If there were no initiating bead there would be no beads at all. Therefore this net consists of one bead. All are included in one. You must know that any bead can be the representative of the entire net."

The Questioner asks: "If a bead in the southwest corner of the net embraces the beads in all the directions and there can be none which are left, yet if each direction has beads, how can it be said the *entire net consists of one bead*?"

The Answerer says: "When I speak of the beads in all the directions, I am referring to one of the beads in the southwest corner. For this one bead in the southwest corner is itself all the beads of all the directions."

"If you do not believe that the bead in the southwest corner is itself the beads in every direction, put a dot with black ink upon the bead in the southwest corner. Immediately you will see the black dots upon the beads in every direction. And because you have seen the black dots upon the beads of every direction, you will realize that all the beads consist of one bead. If all the beads did not consist of the one bead, you could not put the dots on the beads of every direction at once. Even though you would dot with the black mark the beads of every direction, the net would still consist of one bead."

How this one can be the initial bead of the net has already been demonstrated. For another to be the initial bead would be also just as though the net commenced with that one. The reflections are endlessly repeated and every one of them is alike. No one knows which one is the initial one. When one has been created all have been completed.

According to this exquisite metaphor, you should meditate upon the true Dharma. The true Dharma is not metaphor. It bears some resemblance to the metaphor, because these beads interchange their shadows only, but vary their qualities. The dharmas are different; they interchange their entire bodies.

Zen Notes

Copyright 1955 by the First
Zen Institute of America, Inc.

The Avatamsaka-sutra says: "In order to benefit mankind and enlighten their minds, Buddha revealed the true meaning of Dharma in this metaphor. There is almost no opportunity for mankind to hear such profound Dharma through countless kalpas. Those who always exert their strength for the attainment of wisdom, however, will hear it...

The sutra also says "This Dharma is revealed in the metaphor, though its true aspect bears no resemblance to it." You who practice meditation, contemplate well this metaphor!



When you understand about Dharmakaya, then you will come to Sambhogakaya. In Sambhogakaya you are aware of your own existence, and you prove that your present consciousness and universal consciousness are one and the same.

Zen thinks the eye is the center of this consciousness, its concrete manifestation. In Zen therefore, the physical eye occupies a very important place; it is the keystone to mind and matter; subject and object.

Indra's blue diamond is a metaphor of your consciousness, especially this eye consciousness. When Indra's eye is looking at the top it is also looking at the bottom; when it looks at the center it also looks in all directions. Thus wherever it is is the center. Wherever it moves is still the center.

Indra's net signifies the net of collective consciousness, the consciousness of all sentient beings. When you open your eye and, detached from your egotistic view, look at the other, you will realize the beauty of this wonderful world, for, when you look at the world of consciousness with this eye, this universe is as a net of diamonds. Walking along the street, looking one at another, it is as though diamonds reflected diamonds.

The mystery of Indra's net manifests now, in this moment, here in our own eyes. You are in me and I am in you. Without you I cannot exist. Without me you cannot exist. This relative consciousness is not created, but exists from beginningless beginning to endless end.

From the notes of several lectures given by Sokei-an in 1937

A REMINDER Don't forget to place your orders for holiday gifts early. ZEN NOTES gift subscriptions (even to yourself) for 1956 begin with the December issue, and will be sent with your compliments. Also available: complete sets of ZEN NOTES to date (we had some exhausted issues reprinted) 24 issues for \$3.00, mailed unfolded with unusual Bodhidharma gift card, cover 25 ¢ additional.

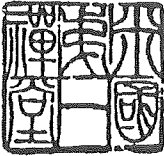


Vol. II, No. 11, November
1 year \$1.00
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Published monthly by
THE FIRST ZEN INSTITUTE OF AMERICA, INC.
156 Waverly Place, New York 14, New York

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