

ZEN NOTES



SOKEI-AN SAYS

THE TRIUNE BODY OF BUDDHA

Actually there are not three bodies of Buddha. The so-called three bodies exist in the one body of Buddha. However, Buddhists have made an allegory to explain the Three Bodies of Buddha, in Sanskrit Tri-kāya. Using the moon, Buddhists speak of the body of the moon, the light of the moon, and the reflection of the moon on water.

The first body is called Dharmakāya. I do not like talking about Buddhism in Christian terms because the two religions are in some ways analogous, and in some ways not. But one could say Sambhogakāya is like Christ, Nirmānakāya like Jesus, and Dharmakāya like God. Sometimes it is said that Nirmānakāya is the Holy Ghost. This whole Buddhist doctrine is too difficult for any audience to understand so I am not too enthusiastic about explaining it, but I will try.

SAMBHOGAKĀYA BUDDHA Monier Williams, the Sanskrit scholar, translates Sambhogakāya as "enjoyment body" but we cannot translate Sambhogakāya as the "body of enjoyment." It is literally the "body of unity" or the "body of yoga" because Sambhogakāya stands between all outside phenomena and all inside noumena. Of course I don't mean phenomena and noumena are outside and inside, but only use the words to explain Sambhogakāya.

There is a Buddhist metaphor, "the mirror in the sky." When this mirror hangs in the center of the sky, nothing is reflected on its surface. The mirror fails to perform its function and fails to be conscious of its own existence. When this happens the mirror disappears. Without the outside, there is no inside for there is nothing between the outside and the inside. This consciousness which is called the mirror between the inside and the outside is like a door hinge or the link in a chain connecting two existences. We call it Sambhogakāya--the body which joins two edges.

When you listen to a Buddhist sermon you must think that you are listening to something about yourself, not about something in the sky or some pit in the earth. It is about the consciousness of the mind of man; not mind stuff as we know it, but Mind which is as clear as crystal, which is consciousness. You must remember the Buddhist God is not living in the sky or within the earth but in your own mind.

要

This Sambhogakāya, of which I have been speaking, has two functions; (1) to provide itself to the other; (2) to provide itself to itself. To provide itself to the other is to see the outside. To see the beautiful mountains and lakes, to feel the changing temperatures of weather, to recognize one's hunger or need of sleep. The other function, to provide itself to itself, is to look into its own existence, to meditate upon its own existence as I meditate upon my own mind.

When I came to this country I learned of a Christian sect, the Quakers, who meditate upon themselves and use their mind to receive the revelations of God. When your mind is filled up with something, you cannot receive the revelation of God. When Quakers are inspired, they stand and talk about their inspiration. It is something like Buddhism, but I observe they talk as a duty. They must wait for inspiration and, then, inspired by the light of God, speak something. The Buddhist's way is just to meditate on himself and to penetrate the depths of his own consciousness.

This Sambhogakāya is like a mirror which has two surfaces, one turned to the outside and the other to the bottomless inside. The surface facing the outside reflects all. The surface facing the inside reflects nothing, infinite emptiness; but this infinite emptiness is not empty. It possesses infinite power. It is not like an empty bottle. It is full. Its inside is pure and immobile, making it look empty. When you mistake this emptiness as truly empty, you fall into agnosticism or nihilism. It is not void emptiness. It is solid emptiness. Sambhogakāya itself is your present consciousness. You are aware of it now. You have it.

Sambhogakāya is its own truth by itself. Without any debate or demonstration, you certainly can believe that you have your own consciousness. While his consciousness is sleeping, the baby who has just come from its mother's bosom is not aware of its existence. Once that baby is awake, it is aware of its own existence and also the existence of another. The mother's face, the grandmother's face and the milk bottle are seen; the rattle is heard and the milk tasted.

We have this awareness in Buddhism. We call this awareness God. Buddha Gautama attained this awareness; therefore we call him Buddha. This awareness is God. This present consciousness is called Sambhogakāya. Do not think I am talking about something else up in the sky. I am talking about this consciousness which now is talking, now is burning incense, now is drinking water. Western people

call this "I"--like a tall telegraph pole standing there! We don't need "I." It is Sambhogakāya. It is Buddha's second body.

When Buddha is Buddha himself, not in the physical body but the power of knowing, he exists alone. We call IT the Sambhogakāya Buddha. It has no human body; it has the body of consciousness. The body of consciousness is abstracted from this physical body of ours. We can point out these senses and our perceiving powers: conceiving, discriminating, discerning powers. They are the so-called powers of consciousness. IT exists alone, abstractly.

Sambhogakāya Buddha has all potential power in its own consciousness. When it enters the body of a cat it saves the cat. It enters me according to the body of me, and it saves me. Alone, abstract, it is called Sambhogakāya Buddha. Sambhogakāya is often symbolized as an asexual god astride a white elephant with six tusks or six consciousnesses. "White elephant" stands for uniformity -- in one color. It is neither male nor female, but it has a very naive face.

As I have stated above, the Sanskrit scholar, Monier Williams, translates Sambhogakāya "enjoyment body." It means rather "reaction," and "enjoyment" is but one of many reactions. I touch fire -- hot! Consciousness is reaction without any object. Although we have consciousness, we cannot prove it. This reaction, this realization of outer existence, is called Sambhogakāya, or reaction. It means contact; in the Indian Sanskrit word, yoga, or as I have said above, "body of unity," "body of yoga," or "the body which has two edges."

Every sentient being has this. You have it. I have it. But, according to our knowledge, we invent God in Heaven. That is a hypothetical God. It is not the true God. Most people cannot go beyond this hypothetical kind of God. According to their knowledge, monks of ancient times denied this personal God on a golden throne -- all taken originally from the monarchism of that day and made visible by artists who created forms. Of course, this is sufficient for the unawakened mind. To the awakened mind these pictures haven't much significance.

This consciousness comes between two things. When this mirror in the sky forgets its own existence nothing reflects upon it. If anything appears before it, it realizes whatever figure has appeared there. We have phenomena outside and, therefore, the mirror made of ether appears as consciousness. If the phenomena cease to exist, this consciousness also ceases to exist; it is wiped out. Buddha called it, in one word, Nirvāna. "The

form of it is nothing." Form is empty. And then somebody created a legendary person and this Sūnyatā ("Nothing") became "Invisible God," or Dharmakāya.

DHARMAKĀYA BUDDHA The invisible body of Buddha, non-consciousness, is Dharmakāya Buddha--the foundation of all law. It has the potential power of creating all law. This is Dharmakāya, the highest form of Buddha. It is that bottomless emptiness, omnipresent, which fills the universe, fills time--past, present, and future. It is pure Time, pure Space. There is no time and space. It is wisdom, omnipotent power, but there is no way of looking at it from the human side. Dharmakāya often is symbolized in the form of a child, as Manjusri in child form because it doesn't realize its own existence.

In Dharmakāya we possess everything at once--it is Dhārani. In our chant which is called a Dhārani there is no special meaning, but it upholds every feeling in it. As steam can be liquid and also solid. A gas pocket under the earth--under great pressure for a thousand, a million years--becomes water, then precious stones. Likewise, the Dharmakāya state can become liquid or Sambhogakāya.

Buddha's Trikāya, the Triune Body, has been explained in many various ways. One way is with the analogy of water. Everything has three phases. For instance water: its first phase, analogous to Dharmakāya, is gas or atmosphere; second, analogous to Sambhogakāya, liquidity; and third, analogous to Nirmanakāya which we have yet to discuss, solidity--the transforming body, its everyday body.

The atmospheric condition of water corresponds to Dharmakāya, the omnipresent or non-existent body. This (Aug. 21, 1938) is the first time that I have translated Dharmakāya as non-existence.

There is still another way of talking analogously about Sambhogakāya. The heat which is in many different bodies--in this, that--is all in different degrees of heat. This heat will equalize itself, being affected by that body which stands next to it. The heat in this will never be higher than the heat in that, and the higher heat will become lower and be equalized. The equalized heat (between these two bodies) will, then, be transformed to the next body and so on. In such a way the heat of all existence will be equalized. When all heat is equalized, that would be called zero, no heat at all, Dharmakāya. Heat is of a higher degree. It should be equalized. Sometimes a thing is very hot but in the air it is equalized. We usually say that in interstellar space there is no heat at all, but the heat which is the energy of the sun permeated through interstellar space,

entered our atmosphere, and became hot. In interstellar space there is no heat.

In Sambhogakāya all these different parts of existence are equalized and become one consciousness. If it comes to Absolute One, One does not exist. This is the law, the so-called existence law. When all is fused into one Absolute, this One fails to exist and becomes zero; Dharmakāya. Buddha said, "HERE exists because there is THAT. If there were no THAT, HERE would be No-existence."

The sun is always vibrating furiously with energy. This vibration should be a sound to our eardrum, but human beings never feel it because it fills space and we were born in space. In such a case we say "Omnipresent sound fills all the sky."

In Dharmakāya we possess everything at once. Existence in Dharmakāya is all together in the same moment. When we study Buddhism we study all its departments one by one. But once we attain, we observe it all at once.

In Zen we observe both ways at once, analysis and synthesis together. Dharma in Zen means this: all will be reduced into Dharmakāya and we are all one--as a tree comes back to the root, to the seed. Dharmakāya holds everything at once. Samādhi and Dharmakāya are that. That seed embraces three states--seed, tree, fruit. Dharmakāya is the seed; Sambhogakāya is the tree; Nirmanakāya is the fruit. In that seed is everything. It embraces a forest of oak trees.

In Dharmakāya all those individual bodies take transmigration--then there is individuality. Why is the Ego in Buddhism different from the Ego in all other faiths? Because this Dharmakāya Ego is Non-Ego. Other religions have Ego in Dharmakāya. But from the standpoint of Dharmakāya, all is arranged beautifully. We have Ego, but it is not individual Ego. Therefore we take transmigration, incarnation--all different angles--according to the law of Karma.

When you observe that omnipresent body from this physical life, you are observing the Three Bodies of Buddha and you should attain, therefore, Dharmakāya omnipresence. Then from this omnipresent body, you observe the existing condition of bodies. You can observe them all. The Three Bodies are synthetical.

NIRMANAKĀYA BUDDHA And these two consciousnesses--Dharmakāya Buddha and Sambhogakāya Buddha--appear in a person. This person performs his daily life. The consciousness which works, which performs his daily life, is Nirmanakāya Buddha--the body of transformation. It transforms itself into the body of a woman, a man, a beast, bird, incense, earth, water.

Furthermore, it transforms its body into the body of a butcher, a grocer, a fishmonger, an emperor, a president, a shopkeeper, a soldier. It transforms its body into all occupations and all instruments. This body of transformation, Nirmānakāya, is symbolized as Avalokitesvara with its thousand arms, thousand eyes, thousand different instruments; each fingertip has eyes and each pore of the body is an eye. If you go into some oriental art shop or a museum you will find the image of Kwannon or Avalokitesvara, usually a woman, very quiet--a symbol of Nirmānakāya Buddha.

Buddha has three different stations or dominions. According to the dominion in which Buddha dwells, we give these three different names. This Buddha is Nirmānakāya. Sākyamuni Buddha appeared on this earth, took human form, spoke human words, and saved human forms everywhere. If he had been born elsewhere in the universe, perhaps his form would not be of this matter. Perhaps only ether, fire or light--invisible to the human eye. We may not be able to think of sentient beings taking such forms, but sentient beings will take all forms.

When I was young, I went to a temple where a young monk was preaching to nobody--only to broken-down dolls, stones, and in one corner his mother who sat alone. He spoke enthusiastically about the philosophy of Buddha to broken-down dolls, stones, and his mother. To an invisible audience. Ten years later I returned. His audience was one hundred persons. It was the same monk. The invisible had become the visible audience.

Visible being will transform into invisible being. As water is transformed into steam and steam into mist and clouds only to fall again as rain, so men will be transformed into women and women into men.

When I was a child, I would lie down immediately after supper. My mother would say, "You will be transformed into a cow in the next incarnation!" I replied, "But the doctor said to lie down after supper." I was puzzled then by these two views, my mother's and the doctor's.

We prove our consciousness, become aware of our own consciousness because we see things from five different angles, five different senses. First, all these five "consciousnesses" are functions by themselves. Then they recognize other existences. Finally they prove their own consciousness. I have a hand. If this hand exists alone, I cannot touch. The sword cannot cut itself! But when the hand contacts the sword, it feels the sword and the sword can cut it.

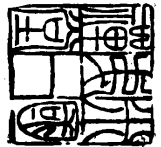
In Sambhogakāya this difference of the consciousnesses ceases and becomes or merges into just one uniform consciousness. This uniform consciousness does not exist. Consciousness fails to exist, forgets to be a way of itself. When we observe this amalgamation from Nirmānakāya to Sambhogakāya, we think our causal state is Dharmakāya and must go back there. If there is a causal state, there must be a result. If you observe this result from the causal state, the view will be synthetic. Dharmakāya holds everything at once.

Reconstructed by WILLIAM BRIGGS

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

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
New York, N.Y.
Permit No. 528

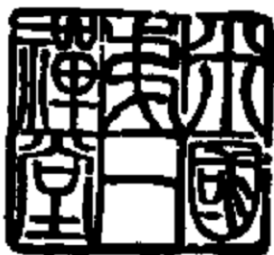
zen notes
Copyright 1959 by The First
Zen Institute of America, Inc.



Vol. VI, No. 11, Nov. 1959
1 Year \$1.00
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Copyright of Zen Notes is the property of the First Zen Institute of America, Inc., and its content may not be copied or e-mailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download or e-mail articles for individual use.

**Founded in 1930 by
Sokei-an Sasaki**



**First Zen Institute of America
113 E30 Street
New York, New York 10016
(212)-686-2520
www.firstzen.org**

會 協 禪 一 第 國 美