

ZEN NOTES



SOKEI-AN SAYS

THE FIVE SKANDHAS Part 2

The last time I spoke of the five skandhas I did not complete the last, *vijnana-skandha*. I shall therefore explain this now.

This *vijnana-skandha* is the foundation of the Hosso School, which was originated by Hsuan-tsang. Another Buddhist sect, the Sanron, originated by Nagarjuna, takes *bhūtatahatā* (Dr. Suzuki translates this 'suchness') as the foundation. *Bhūta* is like "be"; *tatahatā* means "it exists as it is." In the Zen Sect, however, Zen masters do not give any name to that particular thing which is called by the names *vijnana* or *bhutatahatata*. We do not need names because we know what it is.

Vijnana is the subject on which the Sanron School built its stupendous system of Buddhism. Sakyamuni talked about *vijnana*, or consciousness, but in Sakyamuni's time consciousness was not yet subdivided into many classes according to the notions contained in this consciousness. There are many names manufactured by the Hosso people later. *Alaya-consciousness* is one of them, *adana-consciousness* is another, and still another is *amala-consciousness*. There is another group of names given to this consciousness--*citta*, *manas*, and *hridaya*. These names are always used to explain the attributes of this consciousness, so you had better remember them.

Sakyamuni talked about the five skandhas, and he talked also about the twelve *ayatana*s, the twelve gates or entrances. Also he talked about the eighteen *dhatu*s, or spheres. But he did not speak about *alaya-consciousness* and such things. It was spoken about within the word *vijnana*. I think you still remember, or you are already well-versed in, the twelve *ayatana*s, but I shall speak about them briefly.

No one can deny that we have eyes or ears, nose, tongue, or body which feels and mind which perceives. These are, in your words, "the senses": the sense of sight, sense of hearing, sense of smell, etc. We have them; without any theories we know we have them. "Sense" is, therefore, in Buddhism axiomatic. It can be a foundation. No one can doubt about it. This can be the object of meditation. The meditator can meditate upon it, as a substantial cushion upon which he can put his foot. When we begin to think about Buddhism we must grasp something which is substantial and doesn't shake. It can be the basic stone upon which to build our Buddhism.

Particularly Zen is always desirous of finding something which is not shakable. It is very unsubstantial when you sit upon some name such as God or Buddha to meditate upon. It is something like meditating upon a man made of snow. While you are meditating upon it, it will disappear, melt away. When you realize you have eyes and ears, a nose, and so forth, you don't pay attention to, or put any value on, these senses until you become blind or deaf. You pay them no respect. You don't know they are sacred things. You use them as you use an old towel. You don't attach any special meaning to them. But when you meditate upon them you realize many things. If you are a student of the meditation school, they are the first thing you must meditate upon.

The eye is a box, color is the lid of this box. This is one unity, a so-called yoga. Ear and sound are another yoga; nose and smell, tongue and taste, body and feeling, mind and percept. Percepts are things which appear in your mind as shadows of outside. They are not entirely in the outside. They are in the region of your mind (manas). Percepts are the seeds of concepts. Repeating the percepts many, many times we gradually form concepts. We pile concept upon concept and systematize them and make knowledge. Systematized conceptions we call knowledge. These systems are spoken about in the Hosso School and in the Yogacharya School (The Yoga Teachers' School).

Six entrances (ayatanas) are on the inside and six entrances are on the objective side, making twelve entrances. The last one, number six, is a combination of manas and dharma. It is not existing outside, but between outside and inside. I call it percept. Why do we call these entrances? Because vijnana, consciousness, enters into those spheres from inside to outside. Usually we think of entering a gate from outside to inside. But here mind goes into these gates from inside and comes out to the outside. When you give water to a plant in a flowerpot, water is absorbed from the earth and sucked up by the root of the plant. The water enters the stem of the plant and then goes through the plant, out through the stems and leaves. It enters from the inside to the outside. For you this way of observing is perhaps difficult, but for us, it is natural.

Vijnana, not speaking very carefully, is the subject of the percept. It became a more important subject to Buddhist students later, but the name vijnana, or manas, appeared in the Buddha's time. Manas is especially used in this case because it takes only the perceiving activity or part. Like a mirror, it only perceives and does not think. Manas, sometimes written with the "s" and sometimes without, when it is taken as a mirror, is called manas or aklista-manas, meaning the manas which possesses no suffering. But the nature of manas is such that it not only perceives, but also feels. It discriminates between beauty and ugliness, pain and pleasure. In this nature, manas is called klista-manas, manas which suffers. Then the thinking part of manas, which thinks or philosophizes--perhaps the function of the brain--is called citta. Manas which has no

ability at all is simply the soul of an existing being. This faculty is called hridaya.

Hridaya is the soul of trees and weeds which we have within us. Our kidneys and so forth are like potatoes attached to roots, which are the intestines; the lungs are leaves, the heart flowers--there is a vegetable living inside the body of this human animal. This vegetable within our body is called hridaya. It is different from your idea of heart, which is the source of love, feeling, emotion. Our idea of heart is life in a vegetable being. A tree has soul. If you want to know how a tree feels, you have it here.

The realization of this tree-mind is a very important part of Buddhism. It is a samadhi. You will hear people say, "When I attained Zen, suddenly I was the tree standing there." Well, that is enlightenment for those people. Many times we come back to that region. But it is strange we realize it in our region of citta, our thinking mind. As human beings we cannot take off our thinking mind, so we have to do everything in thinking. Just as a baby cannot take milk without a bottle, or direct from the cow. Our thinking mind is this bottle and the cow is this hridaya mind. We cannot make ourselves embody in the cow, but we can make the cow embody in us. So while I am in the region of citta I can prove I am in the region of tree-mind too. This hridaya region is very intimately within us. When citta closes its eyes we go back to the state of hridaya. While hridaya is working in the heart or intestines, and so forth, our citta mind can take a rest.

So our mind is like a tower. There is the first floor, second floor, third floor. Human beings are always living on the second floor. Hridaya lives on the first floor and citta on the second floor. Mostly we are living in a deluded place, in the scum floating on the surface of citta. We must clean up that scum and live in pure citta, for when you find hridaya and meditate upon it and scrape away all queer notions and queer teachings and come back to clear, pure citta and with this pure citta make direct contact with hridaya, that is Buddhism in its old form.

This hridaya is called alaya-consciousness. Alaya can be divided into two: alaya which perceives the outside, like manas, is adana-consciousness; alaya which hides everything, like the earth, and keeps seeds is called alaya. But alaya which hides nothing, which does not hold seeds and into which no seed can filter, is called amala. This resembles the bhutatathata of the other schools.

This is the outline. This is a very important subject for Zen students and one on which you must meditate. The Zen student must know what he sits upon. Pay respect to your mind and worship it day and night. It makes a religion, you know. There was a monk who put a candle in a dark room every night and offered flowers and incense. A novice said, "Why do you offer these when there is no image?" The monk said, "I offer these to my own eyes, for I worship my own eyes." The student must know where citta is.

風 狂
 驟 螢
 鶻 墜
 驚 土
 枝 草

*Kaze kyō shite hotaru kusa ni ochi
 Ame niwaka ni shite kasasagi eda ni odoroku*

A wild gust of wind
 Tumbles the fireflies into the grasses,
 A sudden shower of rain
 Startles the jackdaws on the branches.

Rozan gaijū

Translation by RUTH F. SASAKI

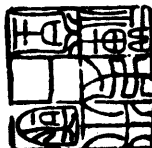
We take advantage of this space to beg the reader's indulgence with our consistently inconsistent romanization of Far Eastern names and terms. Because our Varityper lacks diacritical marks, these cannot be supplied other than by hand. To write words in their foreign way, therefore, is inconvenient at best. Familiar terms we in any case prefer to handle as English words, except when they are referred to in a context of specific translation. More and more, we note, appear in later editions of good dictionaries. Even the most expert usage, however, seems to us to fumble when it comes to modern logical transliteration. To find the best way of spelling these words, therefore, with their vestigial long and other marks omitted, is a task requiring the greatest patience and vigilance. We are not blind to the niceties, but we haven't solved any part of the problem yet, even to our own satisfaction, we regret to inform you. With regard to capitalization, we can only say we have dismally failed to come to any reasonable policy. This particular issue bristled with so many terms it looked "busy" to our eye with them all capitalized. Last time similar terms looked "stronger" with capitals. Suggestions welcomed.

Editor

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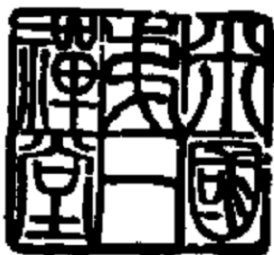
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