

GEN NOTES



LIFE-AND-DEATH, II

At that time Sthavira Mahakashyapa and Sthavira Shariputra were both practicing the customary noon meditation under some trees which were not far distant. When Sthavira Shariputra realized that the heretic monks had departed he went to visit Sthavira Mahakashyapa. They saluted each other and exchanged inquiries about each other's health. Then Sthavira Shariputra withdrew to one side, and, having seated himself, gave Sthavira Mahakashyapa an account of the discussion he had held with the heretic monks.

"O Sthavira Mahakashyapa, for what cause and for what reason has Lokanatha never said one word on the point whether Tathagata has life-and-death in the future; whether he has no life-and-death in the future; whether he has both a future and no future; or whether he has neither future nor no future?"

Sthavira Mahakashyapa answered Sthavira Shariputra:

"If Tathagata had said the Tathagata has life-and-death in the future he would have acknowledged the Rupa. If Tathagata had said that he has no life-and-death he would have acknowledged the Rupa. If he had said that he has both a future and no future he would have acknowledged the Rupa. Or if he had said that he has neither future nor no future he would have acknowledged the Rupa."



This sutra is written in a very simple form, but it is a very important one, for it points out the real pivot of Buddhism. This pivot is *avyakrita*. *Avyakrita* means "no-described word," or "no-word." But "no-word" is also a word. So really one cannot speak about it using words. *Avyakrita must be demonstrated: it is SILENCE.*

When Shariputra was in the temple on the top of Vulture Peak, some heretic monks visited him and asked the following four questions: "Does Lokanatha have life-and-death in the future? Does the Tathagata have no life-and-death in the future? Does he have both life-and-death and no life-and-death in the future? Does he have neither life-and-death nor no life-and-death in the future?"

The first question is a positive question: "Does the Buddha have life-and-death in the future?" It means, does he have life-and-death after his death? Shariputra answered the heretic monks: "Lokanatha's answer on this point was *avyakrita*." The Buddha's answer on this point was SILENCE.

Some time ago, before this, a heretic who was a Jaina asked the Buddha a question. These heretics were called skyclad, because they wore nothing, not even a string -- the sky was their clothing. The northern Jainas wore a piece of cloth, but the southern Jainas wore nothing. One of them came and asked the Buddha: "Do you have life-and-death after your death?" The Buddha answered SILENCE. This was the Buddha's answer. Someone said that Zen Buddhism was invented in China. But this answer the Buddha made was a real Zen answer.

The second question was: "Does the Buddha have no life-and-death in the future?" This was a negative question. The Buddha's answer on this point was SILENCE.

The third question was asked. The Jaina affirmed both existence and non-existence, therefore this question was neither positive nor negative. The Buddha's answer was SILENCE.

The fourth question completely denied all existence: Does the Buddha have neither life-and-death nor no-life-and-death in the future? The Buddha's answer was SILENCE.

The Jaina bowed low and said: "O Tathagata, by your benevolence, by your mahamaitri, mahakaruna, you have made my mind open its eye. I have attained Buddha's knowledge." And he went away.

The Buddha's disciple Ananda was there, listening attentively. After the Jaina left, Ananda said to the Buddha: "Lokanatha, you did not say a word to him. Why did you not speak a word? I fail to understand how, when you did not speak a word, that Jaina could say that he has opened his eye of mind because of your mahamaitri and mahakaruna. Please reveal your secret to me."

This poor Ananda always failed to understand the Buddha's mind and asked many questions of the Buddha. And the Buddha always answered, ridiculing him a little. "O Ananda, he was like a good horse. He saw the shadow of the whip and he ran!" A good horse runs when he sees the shadow of the whip before it reaches his rump. That Jaina was like a good horse. The Buddha acknowledged that Jaina.

When another Jaina asked Shariputra this question, he repeated exactly what the Buddha had said to the first

Not long ago, the TV news showed officers from the Federal Food and Drug Administration in the act of seizing the contents of a shop selling Japanese food-products along with books and literature advocating the "Zen macrobiotic diet." Some days later the Institute received a telephone call from a Japanese who stated that he had been asked to report on the incident to a Tokyo newspaper but that he was puzzled what to say. As the food-products that had been tabooed by the Government were recommended by the people selling them as part of the so-called "Zen" diet, what did the Zen Institute have to say about this? Why should the U.S. Government interest itself in the sale of brown rice, seasalt, seaweed and similar food-products?

Why indeed? What could be the danger in a bag of brown rice? No matter what its label, how could eating it be harmful and selling it a crime?

The first I heard about "macrobiotics" was in 1961 when an Indian woman, Dr. Shakuntala Rao Sastri, the author of a scholarly translation of the classic *Bhagavadgita*, telephoned to inform us that a Japanese scientist would be willing to give some lectures at the Institute on the subject of food and Zen philosophy. "Very interesting," she assured us. "We don't sponsor lectures at the Institute," we told her. "But these are free," she insisted. And the conversation went on and on, more and more vehemently on her part. Our policy was explained. Anyone might come to our public meetings (then at Waverly Place) and if they had something they wished to say, an opportunity would be given at teatime. Also, anyone might put an announcement on our bulletin board. But no lectures. This was not at all satisfactory to Dr. Sastri. However, after several more telephone calls, it became clear to her that further insistence or salesmanship was useless.

After this and sometime prior to July, 1961, on a Wednesday, our open meeting was attended by a Japanese accompanied by a younger man who introduced his senior as Georges Ohsawa. The younger man announced that Mr. and Mrs. Ohsawa were giving lessons in Japanese cookery. Everyone would be welcome to learn and also to eat. They would be able to learn some of the secrets of Japanese cooking. Ohsawa had had several restaurants in France and now he was starting in New York. Not only were the recipes delicious but also one could improve one's health by eating his special Zen macrobiotic (long-life) diet. There would be some lectures about philosophy also.

Georges Ohsawa, who presented himself to me at the informal part of our meeting, was a self-made man in his sixties, he told me. He was also self-assured, of medium height, spare build, and had noticeably poor teeth, perhaps stained with the nicotine from the cigarette always in his hand. Rather than rely on my memory, I shall quote my report of our ensuing conversation about his relation to Zen which was recorded as part of the minutes of our monthly meeting for July. The reason for its recording was the troublesome fact that Ohsawa was putting forth his views

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under the name of Zen philosophy. In such cases I always try to find out from the person, if possible, the validity of the grounds he claims for his statements, so I can pass this information on accurately to the many people who turn to us for information.

"I asked Mr. Ohsawa," my report read, "if he ever was connected in any way with Zen, if he had ever practiced Zen, if he had ever gone to a Zen university, if he had ever studied Zen, or if he was connected with any Zen Buddhist organization. He told me no, that what he was doing was based on his own ideas of Zen, that he had no connection with Zen of any kind."

The statements I shall now present as his are largely taken from the book *You are All Sanpaku* credited to him under the name of Sakurazawa Nyoiti, English Version by William Dufty, a former Daily News reporter. The catchy title refers to a condition of the eyes in which the whites are visible on three sides, signifying a dangerous imbalance according to the "science" of Physiognomy, an Eastern study not yet in vogue with which Ohsawa claimed to have been able to predict the assassination of President Kennedy, among other things.

Ohsawa's relation to "science," from his own words in this book, published and sent to me for review in 1965 by University Books, a company interested in offbeat oriental subjects, (they also asked me for suggestions) seems to be based largely on his being "practically the only successor" to "a famous Japanese doctor by the name of Sagen Isiduka who, shortly before my (Ohsawa's) time, had re-discovered and re-interpreted the theory of the Unique Principle, which goes back four to five thousand years in Oriental history. Dr. Isiduka established the medical and bio-chemical validity of the Yin/Yang principle in the light of modern biochemistry when he discovered the complimentary (sic) antagonism between sodium (Na) and potassium (K)--a re-discovery actually of a principle that plays such a basic role in all human life.

"Sagen Isiduka cured hundreds of thousands of patients--poor souls condemned and abandoned as incurable by doctors with modern Occidental medical training. He was so famous in Tokyo that any letter addressed to 'Dr. Anti-Doctor' was automatically delivered to him."

Ohsawa, according to the biographical note in this same book submerged himself in years of research and study of ancient Indian and Chinese medicine.

He also "undertook the study of Western medicine and science at the Sorbonne and the Pasteur Institute in Paris," meanwhile supporting himself by the private practice of acupuncture and teaching judo.

One of our members who was interested in nutrition attended the cooking lessons and told us about them. The food prepared by Mrs. Lima Ohsawa was very inexpensive and instruction was given in how to prepare various basic Japanese dishes such as *miso-shiru* as well as those specially emphasized in the "macrobiotic way." Emphasis was placed on grains of considerable variety, but particularly unhusked brown rice ("the perfect food") and sea salt. A number of the dishes were very tasty and combined Indian and French expertise as well as Japanese methods of preparation. Of course, to prepare them properly, special Japanese products were requisite. For the convenience of those who wished to experiment, arrangements could be made to get the products for them from special shops or centers that handled them. These came from a receiving station in Belgium, I was told.

I visited a small Ohsawa eating place that was located on Tenth Street, half a block from the Institute at Waverly Place, said to be typical of those that later mushroomed around town. As a number of our members are interested in better nutrition, it would have been a great convenience to have a satisfactory nearby restaurant. The most noticeable thing about this place was its messiness. "It's just opened," we were told. "The man who runs it (a Japanese named Alkon) is overworked. The helpers are amateurs." We could see this was so. But used chopsticks? Garbage piled high in inadequate containers? No napkins, even paper ones? A dirty table standing in the middle of a dirty floor? We complained when a cockroach wished to inspect our plates.

It was some weeks before we visited again, in order to guide an interested out-of-towner. Perhaps it would be better organized by now, we told ourselves. We heard it was very popular with the intelligent, inquiring students who were by now flocking around Ohsawa. This time, as known critics, Secki Shapiro and I were given special attentions. Our places at the table were sponged off, leaving them obviously cleaner than its other areas. A few persons were sitting at the table, most noticeably a young woman whose baby was crawling about the floor. As it kept whining for something, the mother gave it a piece of some foodstuff which it promptly dropped on the floor, then

picked up and stuffed back into its mouth, repeating the process a number of times.

On both occasions we were served what was described as the regular fare, a portion of brown rice with some slivers of unidentifiable vegetables covered with a sauce we took to be soy. No liquids were offered, though a special Japanese tea could be ordered. The portion was small, its price correspondingly reasonable. There were, as I recall, some food products displayed for sale in a corner of the room. Also there were pamphlets and some small books by Ohsawa.

We learned from the literature that the diet had seven degrees. The easier stages, our friend who had been investigating it, along with other diets, considered had merits but were lacking in some respects, notably Vitamin C, but the preponderance of unhusked brown rice (which the Japanese rarely eat) provided adequate Vitamin B. A chart indicated the recommended proportions of various nutrients.

No.	Cereals	Vegs	Soup	Animal	Drinking Liquid
7	100%				Drinking Sparingly
6	90%	10%*			"
5	80%	20%			"
4	70%	20%	10%		"
3	60%	30%	10%		"
2	50%	30%	10%	10%	"
1	40%	30%	10%	20%	"

*Refined vegetables. In other regimens vegetables are not refined.

Space does not permit more than a sketchy statement about the Ohsawa Yin/Yang or K/Na theory of foods but a rough idea of it follows.

The best proportion of Yin/Yang or K/Na is five to one. Natural unpolished brown rice is the perfect food because it contains in itself the perfect balance of five to one. All those foods whose K/Na ratio is greater than five to one are Yin.

In detail, everything in the universe can be classified as either Yin or Yang from its three fundamental characteristics--shape, weight and color--and this classification can be confirmed "scientifically" by reference to the Potassium/Sodium or K/Na ratio.

Of course, practically speaking, this method of classification is quite slippery. As was pointed out by a Japanese Zen Roshi we questioned: "Even the two sides of a leaf would differ from moment to moment."

Now we come to the manner in which this Yin/Yang system was related to Zen. Page 93 of *You are All Sanpaku* reads:

"In Japan... those who live longest as a group are the Buddhist monks. The

traditional ways of eating and drinking, which still survive intact in Zen Buddhist monasteries, continue to confound the scientific seekers after long life and eternal youth.

"In Zen Buddhist monasteries, the most superior disciples are always selected for the singular honor of becoming cooks. Theirs is the most important position in the spiritual life of the community. They are selected so that their superior knowledge and experience in the selection and preparation of food, according to the teachings of the Unique Principle of Yin/Yang, may support and sustain the developing judgment of the other disciples.

"In Zen Buddhist monasteries this traditional manner of selecting, preparing and serving food is called *Syozin Ryori*. The closest translation would be: 'cooking which improves the supreme judgment.'

I shall not attempt to compare Ohsawa's Yin/Yang-K/Na theory with Isiduka's or the original Chinese, but shall restrict my comments to the aspects of his statements with which I am familiar. First, I shall quote Dr. Suzuki's *Training of the Zen Buddhist Monk* in an almost parallel statement about the function of the cook and the nature of the food in a Zen monastery.

"Eating is a solemn affair in the Zendo life, though there is not much to eat. The best meal called *saiza* or *otoki* which takes place about ten o'clock in the morning consists of rice mixed with barley, miso soup and pickles. The breakfast is gruel and pickles, while the supper is what is left of the *saiza*.

"As for the cook," Dr. Suzuki says: "To serve as a cook in the Zendo life means that the monk has attained some understanding about Zen, for it is one of the positions highly honored in the monastery, and may be filled only by one of those who have passed a number of years here. The work is quite an irksome one, and, besides, a kind of underground service which is not very much noticed by superficial observers... The meaning of service is to do the work assigned ungrudgingly and without thought of personal reward material or moral..."

"The main problem with the cook will then be to make the best possible use of the food material given to him for the maintenance of health among the members of the Brotherhood. There is naturally nothing very appealing to the sense of a gourmand in the Zendo pantry, but cooking may to a great extent be improved by a judicious use of *shoyo* or *miso*. The high-browed ones are gen-

erally apt to despise this kind of work as below their dignity whatever the term may mean. But with the monks there is nothing high or low in their work."

To check the curious statements Ohsawa made about *Syozin Ryori* in Zen monasteries (he also stated that "without *Syozin Ryori* there is no true Buddhism") I inquired first about the use of a Yin/Yang system of selecting, preparing and serving food. A Japanese Zen Buddhist roshi currently visiting confirmed my information that no such system as described by Ohsawa is employed in Japanese Zen Buddhist monasteries. Another roshi I consulted on this point who had been head cook at a famous Zen Buddhist monastery for a number of years said he had never heard of a Zen diet or system of food selection.

Generally speaking, the diet in the monasteries is considered a poor one by Japanese, which is dictated by necessity. It is true that Zen masters of the past devised improvements in it. Some of the foods used bear their names. The poverty of the monasteries, diet included, has been thought to be a factor in the high incidence of tuberculosis among Zen Buddhist priests. Their long life is more often attributed to quiet mind and breathing habits.

As the original Yin/Yang theory comes from China, we also questioned Reverend Lok To, a seasoned Chinese Buddhist monk now building a temple in the Bronx, whether any such principle as the Yin/Yang was a part of Chinese monastery practice. His reply was in the negative. *Syozin Ryori* (usually rendered into English as "pure food") is a familiar part of Buddhist practice but has no relation to Ohsawa's theories I can discover. The term stems from the originally Indian "sattvic" foods.

According to the Bhagavad Gita, there are three types of food: namely, sattvic food (pure food), rajasic food (stimulating food), and tamasic food (impure and rotten food).

Milk, butter, fruits, vegetables, and grains come under the category of good or sattvic foods. Spices, hot substances, meat, alcohol, fish and eggs, which stimulate the nervous system, come under the heading of stimulating or rajasic foods, while food that is rotten, putrefied, and overripe comes under the tamasic or impure food category.

... Pure food brings purity and calmness to the mind and is soothing and nourishing to the body. Quoted from YOGA, by Swami Vishnudevananda, The Julian Press, 1960, p. 209.

In Chinese Buddhism, the following quotation from *The Life of Hsuan Tsang* (seventh century) gives the most com-

prehensive picture of the meaning of "pure food".

"Special pure food was prepared for the Master. It included cakes, rice, butter, milk, sugar, honey and grapes."

"On the following day, the king invited the Master to his palace and offered him food. But the food consisted of the three kinds of "pure meat" (The meat of which one has not seen the killing of the animal, has not heard of its being killed for him, and has no doubt thereon.) and the Master would not accept it. The king thought it strange, so the Master explained that it was allowable according to the Gradual Teaching (according to Mahayanism the Buddha's teaching is divided into the "gradual" and "immediate" teachings, the former beginning with the Hinayana and proceeding to the Mahayana, while the latter immediately starts with Mahayana) but he followed Mahayana Buddhism which prohibited the eating of meat. "The Japanese sense follows the general Buddhistic meaning.

The Zen of Ohsawa's macrobiotic diet is, therefore, "purely his own idea" as he said in his original remarks to me in 1961.

Of course it is not unheard of for Japanese people to use the word Zen in relation to anything they have in mind. Sometimes Buddhists put up with this sort of thing as was the case when a "Buddha Bar" serviced by scantily clad waitresses was located at the approach to the Great Buddha Statue. Others object, as witness the current complaints against the Shiseido use of the name Zen for its perfume that sends you to Nirvana.

As Ohsawa came to New York at the time Zen was at the height of its popularity, his use of the word Zen in his promotion is as understandable as it is objectionable.

Zen Buddhist monks, it is true, eat (white) rice and some of them live long. Unfortunately this does not, in my opinion, prove their diet is conducive to long life.

To be continued.



ZEN NOTES Vol. XIII
No. 9, September 1966

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Published

The First Zen Institute of America, Inc.
113 East 30th Street, New York, NY 10016

Jaina.

These four questions are, in short, one question: "Does the Buddha have life-and-death after death, does the Buddha have life-and-death after Nirvana?" It is a great question.

We are many times asked: "Is there life after death?" And we answer: "Oh yes, eternal life!" "How long is it?" "Oh eons, endless kalpas." Kalpa means a long time. An angel comes from the sky and sweeps the kalpa stone with its gossamer sleeve once in a hundred years. Finally the stone is swept away. That is the end of the first kalpa of time, an endless period.

The Buddha did not answer in any such way. The Buddha answered SILENCE. To this SILENCE the name raja-yoga-samadhi is given. Among many yoga-samadhis this is the highest. The four views--"has," "has not," "either has or has not," "neither has nor has not"--these four views are completely united, so it is called raja-yoga. Yes and no are completely fused; theoretically speaking, these four points are completely united and expressed.

Of course, if one were to speak of it in such a way in a Zen temple, he would be beaten. This explanation is not Zen. Don't follow such an explanation. Follow the Buddha's answer.

Mahakashyapa answered Shariputra's question about why the Buddha had never said one word on the point whether he had life-and-death in the future or not: "*If Tathagata had said that Tathagata has life-and-death in the future he would have acknowledged the Rupa.*"

This is a wonderful answer. To make it clear I must speak about the five skandhas--rupa, vedana, samjna, samskara, vijnana. If the Buddha had

said that he *has* life-and-death in the future he would have acknowledged his body. He would have acknowledged that he lives endlessly with the physical body. If he had said, "No, there is no future," he also would have acknowledged his physical body because his "no," his negative answer, would have come from the previous affirmation: "I have a body now, but there will be no body in the future." Therefore he did not say a word.

Because, to the Buddha, THIS is neither existence nor non-existence. THIS has no beginning, therefore THIS was not created. But if there were no beginning in the whole universe, nothing would have been created. THIS is existence--we cannot talk about it, but THIS is existing. We cannot say that THIS is not existing. In this case the words yes or no are absolutely useless. We do not need to deny this existence; we do not need to affirm this existence. Denial and affirmation belong to man's mind. Man's mind has nothing to do with Great Existence. THIS has been existing before everything--before man's mind, before man's word, before man's reasoning. So we don't need to speak a word about it. We come down to *avyakrita*. This is the beginning of Buddhism and this is the middle of Buddhism and this is the end of Buddhism.

When Shariputra made this answer the heretic monks said, "Your teacher is like an idiot, like a fool. like an infant. He has no knowledge. He doesn't understand our question. He doesn't know what to say."

The Buddha's answer is still existing.

Mahakashyapa put this answer into five different states and carried out the Buddha's word clearly in five

Journal

different states. My old students know these states, but I shall speak now for my new audience.

This body is called rupa, appearance. Rupa is usually translated as color. Sound and so forth are rupa. Rupa appears on our sense organs. It does not exist there, but it appears there. Modern scientists say existence is purely etheric vibrations. These etheric vibrations take the form of heat and light. When light vibrates sharply it gives us blue color; when it vibrates slowly it appears as green. When in the long waves there are short waves, then it appears as purple. The X-ray is a long red wave, but in it are very sharp, swift, blue vibrations. Then the outside is nothing but vibration of ether. There is no color there. The universe is nothing but vibration. What is vibration? Vibration is also the law that is felt by our consciousness. It also is created by our consciousness. Our consciousness formed the outside thus, by its power on such motion. In reality no motion exists outside. We cannot say that everything exists here, doesn't exist there. It doesn't provide an answer. The answer is this SILENCE. This is rupa.

Vedana is our sense-perception. Our perception of this existence is vedana. Rupa is the reflection upon the mirror; vedana is the mirror itself.

In the center is vijnana. Vijnana has two appearances, finer mind and coarse mind. Samjna is: we think, we cry, we laugh--that is coarse mind, reasoning. Samjna is the coarse mind. And samskara is the finer mind. You call it subconscious mind. We call it samskara. And then in the center there is consciousness, vijnana.

These are the five skandhas.

Everyone denies rupa and denies sense-perception, denies thoughts, denies the subconscious, but everyone affirms the consciousness in the center. Everyone affirms this consciousness. It is the soul.

Then why didn't the Buddha say: "Certainly, after my death consciousness exists?" Why did the Buddha not confirm this consciousness?

That would not make Buddhism. No, consciousness doesn't exist after death. Consciousness exists because consciousness perceives the reflection. Consciousness appears because there is reflection. If there were no reflection consciousness would not appear. Consciousness appears when the physical body appears. When the physical body disappears we don't need consciousness. When we have no physical body we have no consciousness. When consciousness loses its own awareness it isn't consciousness any more.

We cannot talk about either existence or no-existence. When we try to think something we always try to make a base of talk and we build something on talk. Therefore we fail to lay the real foundation. Buddhists lay their foundation upon SILENCE. People spend millions of words to find the definition. We speak no word, but the definition is here--SILENCE. In real life this is also the foundation of the Buddhist life and this is also the definition of life. We start to move from here.

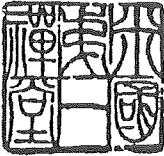
If you are trying to entertain yourself, of course you can indulge yourself in thinking. But in Zen this is the starting point--SILENCE. Not only in Buddhism, but in the five skandhas, *avyakrita* is the foundation.

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Vol. XIII, No. 9, Sep., 1966
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