



## TRAVEL NOTE by Valeria Vasilevski

In THAILAND you can eat sizzling silk worms and crispy grasshoppers in pepper sauce. You can ride elephants alone in the jungle. You can be shot at on high flat plains around refugee camps. And you can observe the dominant feature of the culture--Hinayana Buddhist practice.

Temples are left open during the day and we strolled into hundreds to avoid the heat and visit all the Buddhas licked with gold leaf. Along with the reclining Buddhas were many reclining monks. Sleeping, watching TV, reading comics and wrestling. Every boy in Thailand must experience monastic life for a minimum of at least three months. So there are plenty of monks. At sunrise they flood the streets with flowing saffron. People run out to meet them and fill their round begging bowls from special silver containers. People offer and bow. The monk is motionless and silent--then paddles on.

On holidays or for special favors men and women crowd into the temples (Wats) carrying tubs of rice and vats of chicken, vegetable curry, meat and sweets. The monks are garlanded with flowers and fed sumptuously.

Some temples need a sweeping, a repair or some paint but it seems that unless someone comes to do it, it just stays undone. Gardens have been replaced by concrete slabs or just plain earth. Even the monks' robes are not sewn by them but by women who stay awake one night of the year earning merit sewing saffron.

In Thailand you can give a monk money for a tap-on-the-head prayer. You can give a monk fabulous possessions so he will take on the karma of a dead loved one or offer certain rituals on that person's behalf. Big gifts bring bigger favor. There, Buddhist practice exists outside of life. Monks do not marry, do not have contact with everyday life and do not work.

Then one day 6 air hours outside of Bangkok we boarded a westbound train for Shimizu City, Japan. Not a big-time town. We thought we were on our way to a Zen monastery famous for its English-speaking Rishi who accepts foreigners, for its *shojin ryori* (Zen vegetarian cuisine) and for its hot springs! We were headed there for instruction and practice in preparation for the New Year . . .

Lugging two big Thai pineapples as offering, we

approached our "monastery" on foot and from below saw the sloping roofs of the 450-year old site. Close up it was no monastery at all but a small local temple in the middle of the tangerine-growing hills between Fuji and the sea.

No monastery. No monks. Not even a zendo. No Roshi. No hints of sweet-smelling shojin ryori cooking. And the hot springs turned out to be icy mountain water! We had planned to stay a week.

We were taken to the guest house which we had all to ourselves. Each room serene with tokonoma, fine scrolls, Go boards, silken pillows, freezing winds and not much between you and the frost. From our sitting verandah we viewed clumps of green hills lit like Xmas trees with bright, bright tangerines. Closer were the meticulously groomed gardens and trees of the temple. Just outside our sleeping room was the portable bed in which dead bodies are stretched out for Buddhist funerals, an impression of the most recent occupant still visible. The entire temple was crowned with a huge cemetery. Vast silence.

Soon we were family. We ate together, drank sake, played with grandchild, prepared for the New Year, and all the while the resident Zen priest teaching us not about ZEN but about work. Through work he transforms everything around him into an expression of the most awesome beauty. He really pays attention. He cares for every tree and fallen leaf, he strokes the moss, he coaxes the stones, he combs the pebbles in the rock garden with the same mind as he performs tea ceremony or changes the angle of the garnish on the sushi. He always worked looking not like working.

Sometimes he instructed us directly on the Hannya Shingyo or on the reason why the gong is rung 108 times at the end of the old year. "It's because we must hit away all bonno. The first three bonno (discrimination or desire) are sex, sleep and food--all the rest sprout from these three."

The work of the temple was the life of this Zen priest. In the middle was his family. He had a strong and intelligent wife, a bright daughter eager to study abroad and an exceptional 3-year old grandson who followed him everywhere! He also had the heartaches and sadnesses of any earthly being while he worked at his work.

THE GREAT SIXTH PATRIARCH'S TEACHING, Chapter VI,  
*Virtuous scholars, the Dharmakaya of Buddha has the intrinsic faculty of the awareness of the self at every moment. This is the Sambhogakaya Buddha. Sambhogakaya has the faculty of discrimination and it is the Nirmanakaya of Buddha. When you realize that you have inborn ability to be aware of your own meritorious nature, it is the true refuge that you are taking. Your flesh is a material form and your body is a house. You cannot say you are taking refuge in it. When you realize your own Trikaya you will acknowledge the Buddha of your own nature.*

SOKEI-AN SAYS

In this passage, Dharmakaya is the first word you may question. Dharmakaya, Sambhogakaya and Nirmanakaya are very important terms in Buddhism. Buddha has three bodies in one body. This "Buddha" does not mean Shakyamuni Buddha, who lived about 2500 years ago. This "Buddha" is the knower, the one who has wisdom. The one who has awakened to his own wisdom is the buddha of human flesh, but the Buddha which is the omniscient wisdom of the universe exists from the beginningless beginning to the endless endlessness. In one word, it is your God. The Shakyas had the god of their tribe called Buddha. The Moslems call it Allah. So if your religion is Zennism, Buddha means wisdom and this wisdom has three different names--that's all. The idea is expressed in different languages according to your race, but all refer to the same thing. Dharmakaya is the omnipresent body through space and time, or beyond space and time, beyond our five senses. Buddha exists forever. This is very easy to understand immediately in Zen.

Sambhogakaya is awareness--One knows that it exists. A baby doesn't know he exists in the mother's body, but you know your own existence with your awakened intellect. This is something like the term epistemological.

Nirmanakaya is the performance of this knowledge of self-knowing, the transformation body. You transform your state of mind from heaven to hell according to your wisdom and mind. Transformation itself is nirmanakaya.

Virtuous scholars, the Dharmakaya of Buddha has the intrinsic faculty of the awareness of the self at every moment. Some scholars say "good friends" but I prefer to use "virtuous scholars."

Dharmakaya is equivalent to Reality, existence itself. What we call existence is not existence itself. It is external to us through our five senses: the sky is blue, the water is green, the fire is red, man speaks and birds sing. This is not existence itself; it is experience with our five senses, experience of phenomena which appears optically or which vibrates in one's ear-drums. This is an illusion--not the real form of existence. But our intellect directly knows true existence because, according to Emmanuel Kant, our "intellectual intuition" knows it at once. He distinguished between intellect with will and empirical intuition. In Sanskrit, this intuition is called "Prajna." The transcendental school of New England called it "transcendental wisdom." It is direct knowledge.

In Dharmakaya, this intuitional faculty is kept latent and unknown, but it appears in Dharmakaya itself. It is in the father and it will come in his child as existence. Dharmakaya is awareness itself; knowledge comes by association.

Religion is quite clear, you know, and as you come closer you will meet it as you would go through a small gate. Water, too, has the faculty of awareness.

*This is the Sambhogakaya Buddha. This Sambhogakaya has the faculty of discrimination and it is the Nirmanakaya of Buddha.* Sambhogakaya is the consciousness common to all. Monier Williams translates this as "enjoyment of Yoga." The consciousness of the inside and the outside consciousness meet each other and realize they are one existence. If you stand in absolute emptiness with your eye opened to the infinite, you will not realize your own ego. Your consciousness of this will come by contacting Yoga.

Science is a good friend to Buddhism. Sambhogakaya is the consciousness that is common to all--not as all the souls of all fish, let us say, but as the one soul common to all fish--one consciousness from beginning to end. And this one conscious-

ness was given to all of you as the body of water is given drop by drop to each of you, and then it is transformed into different forms of development, but all is from one.

This Dharmakaya of Buddha means that, according to one's construction of body, he takes his part, as a cat says "Meow" and a dog says "Bow-wow."

In the beginning of my lectures I always recite: "I take refuge in Buddha, in Dharma and in Sangha." Dharma means "principle." Sangha means "community" --laymen, monks--the Nirmanakaya. Dharma is the awareness principle itself, the law that is written on your consciousness. But on this awareness two laws are written: take refuge in Buddha and take refuge in Dharma. In Sanskrit, to "take refuge" means "be converted to."

Well, I take refuge in my three bodies--my Buddha, my Dharma and my Sangha. As the Quakers say, "Take refuge within."

Why did Hui-neng not say that you take refuge in your physical body? Because there are three phases of your physical body which is God.

The only way to make access to Buddha is to contemplate within yourself without words. Make contact with your own soul. It is not even necessary to make contact; you realize that you are IT. You must take off all that mind-stuff from your soul.

We have come to the end of the Sixth Patriarch's lecture on the commandments, the three commandments: Take refuge in Dharmakaya, in Sambhogakaya and in Nirmanakaya.

A commandment is a particular form for a time. In modern times the old commandments do not suit... The real nature of any commandments must be something like a river running between two mountains, and then going over the fields. It is said the Buddhist must not eat meat--all right...In Japan there are many vegetables. Then we come here--there are potatoes and cabbage--very few vegetables compared to Japan. I came to Seattle where one potato cost 10 cents. That's more than meat. You cannot say that one must go hungry, that the Buddhist cannot eat meat. I said a while ago (1937) that here in New York no young girl may go into a church in a bathing suit; but I hear now that two or three weeks ago one did.

BOOK NOTED by John Storm

If contemporary, flesh-and-blood Zen masters seem more set in their ways than the fabulous free spirits of the classical literature, the late Nakagawa Soen was surely an exception. He was, people who knew him recall, unpredictable, intuitive, fluid in moods, habits and methods, a sometimes-whimsical, sometimes-stern impresario of the unexpected whom even his closest associates could never wholly figure out.

"The way of Soen Roshi was truly unconventional," Eido Roshi writes of his teacher in "The Soen Roku: The Sayings and Doings of Master Soen." "He was a most unusual and atypical Rinzai Zen master."

Eido Roshi's recollections, in this handsome, affectionately prepared memorial volume published by the Zen Studies Society Press, are amplified by those of more than two-dozen American students and friends of the roshi, who died on March 11, 1984, just before his 77th birthday. Out of all the anecdotes a portrait gradually emerges of a man full of warmth and humor, on one hand, but cuttingly elusive on the other. Eshin Brenda Lukeman writes: "He could be an elf and he could be formidable. He could be so close to me, and he could disappear one day. Soen would disappear a lot. We would all be expecting him and he wouldn't come. If you wanted to hold onto him, you were in trouble!"

There are also glimpses of his teaching techniques, especially his use of the Mu koan. Seizan Eva Klingman writes: "One day, we talked about koans and I asked, 'Soen-san, what is the best way to work with one's koan?' We were in the kitchen, drying the lunch dishes. He picked up a glass and said, 'Mu,' put the glass down and said, 'Mu,' then dried it and said, 'Mu.' I said, 'Soen-san, in other words, no matter what one does, he carries his koan into everything.' He replied, 'Yes, Seizan-san, that is right.'

In addition to the recollections, the book provides six teishos given by Soen Roshi at Dai Bosatsu Zendo during the summer of 1982, a dozen photographs of him and his calligraphy, and more than 40 of his haiku. The roshi was an accomplished poet, and it was his interest in poetry, as it happens, that

forged the first link in his relationship with Nyogen Senzaki and the American Zen movement.

Yamada Koun Roshi recalls, as others do, the severe injuries Soen Roshi sustained--a skull fracture and broken leg--when he fell while walking alone in the mountains of Japan. The roshi is said to have lain undiscovered and untreated for three days. "As a result of the after-effects of this fall, he would sometimes go into seclusion for periods of time," Koun Roshi says. "I wonder if this especially was not one of his severest trials as a Zen master."

"The Soen Roku" may be a sampling of a larger work to come. In his introduction, Eido Roshi says that "if time permits and the Dharma so arranges it," he would like to publish a complete anthology of Soen Roshi's sayings and doings, drawing on the many letters and lectures preserved at Dai Bosatsu. One hopes that time, the Dharma and Eido Roshi make a point of cooperating in this project, for clearly the more of Soen Roshi's Zen teachings are available the better.

EIDO SHIMANO ROSHI ON BREATHING, from teisho, 10/7/78

In order to do good, deep, clear zazen, we need to have smooth regular breath. In order to have smooth, regular breath, our diaphragm must drop. And in order to drop our diaphragm, we have to either do many times of complete exhalation practice--squeeze out all oxygen which we might have--or to chant, or to shout, or to respond like "Hai!" "Yes" is fine, but "hai" is more related to the diaphragm dropping, and this is the key, truly the key. And if that is opened, the breath becomes smooth. When the breath becomes smooth and clear, we cannot help but to have real zazen. This is information and I think you understood, but your diaphragm may not yet understand, so in order to let your diaphragm understand, please respond with "hai" when I say "hai," everybody respond with "hai" with all your might.

Eido: "HAI!"

Students: "HAI!"

Eido: "HAI!"

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Eido: "HAI!"

Students: "HAI!"

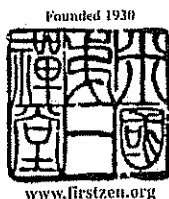
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