

ZEN notes



SOKEI-AN SAYS

THE THREE WORLDS, IV

This is the last lecture on the Tridhatu, indicating how we may apply this doctrine to our own concepts.

When we think of the world, it is endless space and it exists through endless time. It consists of two different natures. One we call bhajana-loka (bhajana means utensil; loka is location). The other is called sattva-loka, or the place for sentient beings. The world of the four great elements--fire, earth, air, water--forms the world of utensil, in which sentient beings reside. The world of sentient beings does not consist of these immaterial elements. The bodies of sentient beings are made of our mind elements--called skandhas--aggregated mental entities.

When we apply the Three Worlds theory to ourselves, we think we are living in a microcosm of the universe, in a miniature world, like the miniature gardens you see in glass jars, reduced to a small size. This microcosmic idea of the three worlds is erroneous from my own experience. It comes from our adherence to our physical body. Our physical body is comparatively small. Therefore we push these three worlds into the small size of the human body. We must abandon entirely the idea of the form and size of the human body in order to explain this. When we fill a glass jar with water and put this glass into a big tub filled with water and then put in another such glass jar and then another until a thousand or more glass jars are in this sea of water, each glass filled with water is in the great sea of water. The water in each glass jar is not different from the water in the tub. The water in the glass jar cannot insist that it is individual water or microcosmic water.

When we see a cliff we see the strata of the old earth, the later earth and the new earth. We see all the strata. These three worlds are the strata, the layers of all sentient minds. When we dive into the water we feel the surface of the water is warm, the middle part of the water is lukewarm, and the bottom is cold, so chilly that sometimes we are surprised. These are the layers of water--cold, lukewarm and warm.

When a swimmer is standing in the water, his feet feel cold, his stomach is lukewarm and his shoulders very warm. We may apply this illustration to the three worlds, for all sentient beings are standing in the three different layers of the world. So we do not need to squeeze all of the worlds into ourselves. We must expand ourselves into these three worlds.

The kamadhatu--world of desire--is that part of the world that composes the bottom of the sentient world, like the basement of a big building where are to be found the engine room, furnaces, gas meters, and electric switches.

The rupadhatu is the main part of the building, the main sixteen or eighteen floors, so to speak.

Arupadhatu comprises the top, three or four floors on the top of the main building--the pent-house, the attic, the roof.

All sentient beings are living in this perpendicular world. Do not think these are planes. You must think of a perpendicular. And we are standing in it. So when our activities function in arupadhatu, when our center is in arupadhatu, we are in arupadhatu. When our activities function in rupadhatu, we are living in rupadhatu. When our activities function in kamadhatu, then we are living in kamadhatu.

There is no particular abode for our mind. Our mind moves from one sphere to another, from one layer to the other, like a man on an elevator who can go from the top to the bottom, from the basement to the pent-house. Our mind always moves up and down through the strata of these three worlds. Wherever the mind stays, that is the center of the person. If he

lives in the basement he is a "basement" man. If he lives in the pent-house on top of the seventh or eighth floor he is a pent-house man. If he lives on the seventh or eighth floor he is a man of the seventh or eighth floor. It is his option to live where he wishes. There is no rule that kamadhatu or rupadhatu must be the center of man. But the sphere that is always familiar to the enlightened man is the fourth dhyana of the rupadhatu, the sphere from which the Buddha entered Nirvana.

I can apply this theory to the system of the five skandhas. The world of samjna is not limited to one's mind. The world of mind is one of the layers throughout all sentient mind. What someone else thinks is what you think. The words that you use are the words used by all others.

The human body lives a short time, but the world of mind exists eternally. The world in which the Buddha was living was the world of thoughts that will exist forever. Of course the thoughts of Buddhism will come to an end some day in the world of human thought, but the world of human thought will not die. So Buddha will advent again in that world of human thought. The world of human thoughts that exists between consciousness and the phenomenal world is called antara-bhavika, the interval that exists between consciousness and phenomena.

I remember that I was talking about this in the last lecture, saying that perhaps it corresponds to the Christian purgatory. So the world of thoughts is in the antara-bhavika. When thoughts appear in this world they take the shape of written words (or utensils): glass, buildings, clothes. And all these

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Sokei-an's Lives

WHEN I WAS A CHILD

The person described as "mother" by Sokei-an appears mostly in dialogue. Occasionally, "father" is with her. In the earliest days, there are also "aunts", though these never display any individual characteristics.

My first memory was of crying--and in this crying voice I awoke to this world. I don't know how old I was--perhaps two years of age. And then I slowly realized--I remember it clearly--"Why am I crying? Because my mother is in the kitchen. She is not beside me; therefore I cry."

I found myself in this crying attitude long after I was grown!

When I was a child, I asked my father where I came from. My mother had told me she had picked me up from somewhere and carried me into the house. I worried--so I asked my father. "I found you in that tree branch." Everyone has this question. It is the gate, the entrance to Buddhism.

When I was a baby, I was passing from lap to lap of my aunts. I had many aunts in houses outside. At first I did not recognize the faces of my aunts--it was always my mother. But later I made distinctions among them. The Sixth Patriarch said: "Man recognizes the distinction between one thing and another without being conscious of recognizing them. This function is naturally given to us--it is very mysterious."

When I was a child, my aunt would

often come and bring me candy, so I was always eagerly awaiting her coming. One time when she arrived it was very late. It seemed to me that I woke up and ate that candy, for in the morning I found some of it squashed on my pillow and my mouth was all smeared. But I did not remember eating it. Why? Could I not taste that candy in my sleeping state? I could not remember because I did not taste it with my waking mind.

As a child, I asked my mother; "Why is this red?" She answered; "Because it is red." Then why is this green?" "Hush, child--because it is green!" I was not contented with my mother's answer.

When I was a child, crying and nagging my mother, my father would say, "Keep your mind in shape."

To the child, the mother's care is food. Without this care, the child does not grow.

When I was a child, my father always put me to bed. From three years old I remember he told me Chinese bedtime stories, so Chinese was familiar to me from my earliest memory. When I was five years old he began to teach me characters, and writing those characters was my life work as a child.

When I was a child I didn't like to keep my bird in a cage. When my mother brought me any bird I always opened the cage and let it go. And when my father brought me another sparrow--"It came back, father!" But today I think that all those sparrows were not the same sparrow.

In my home town I kept a canary in a cage. The roof of the cage was made of straw. In this country there were many weasels snitching chickens and eggs. As I was very keen about this canary, I made a cage of very strong wire. But one evening I came home and found him holding a stick tightly in his beak and with closed eyes. I shook the cage and found that he was dead.

I could visualize the weasel running around the cage, sniffing and trying to pry open the wires until the bird died of fear.

I think all beings long for freedom.

When you give a toy to a baby--there are many interesting toys in Japan, such as a toy tiger--the baby has a tendency to do something about it, so he pulls its neck off and looks inside. Some men cannot do anything until they understand the mechanics of the mind--a big job! As a philosopher or as a scientist or as an artist, a man may start from one corner and analyze to all corners--and in his old age he becomes a monk and dies. Not everyone does this, but if unfortunately he has this nature he must do it this way. I was one who had the tendency when I was a child to pull off the tiger's neck, and now I am peeping inside. If you desire to do this, do it thoroughly!

My mother often imitated the fox crying. She placed her hands upon her chest and cried in a cute way, "Cong, cong!"

When I was about twelve years old, I went to the country and on a snow-night I heard a fox crying outside the door. It was not so cute-- "Wahu! Wahu!" Very gruesome.

When I was a child I never saw a cow. I saw many oxen on the street, drawing very heavy carts. There were ox carts and horse carts. Usually the oxen drew the carts carrying very heavy stones or iron. I don't see any species of that ox in this country. They are very fierce, with shining eyes and straight horns like swords on both sides, and very strong. Today that species has vanished.

The Japanese never ate pork or cow until my father's time. The first time I ate cow--sukiyaki--in my own house, my mother drove me outside. I was very brave. "Some things should not be cooked in a house. Go to a restaurant."

When I was a child I was crazy about catching shrimps and crazy about eating them too! Every day I was down by the water catching shrimps to bring home at all hours, for my mother to cook.

One day when nobody was home, I discovered that from observing my mother very carefully I already knew--without knowing I knew it--how to cook shrimps. So I took a pot of my mother's and boiled some water in it; and I cooked those shrimps. They were delicious to me as I ate them!

When my mother came home-- "What! You have cooked shrimps in my best pot! You've made it smell of shrimps. I must take that smell out! *There* is my shrimp pot! Nothing but shrimp ever cooked in it!"

I was only a child and, like any child when it does something big, enjoyed doing it again! I was only a child, like any child when he wants a cooking pot--any pot is just a pot. So several times when the kitchen was empty or nobody was home, I took any pot and

cooked my shrimps.

One day my mother came home with something in her hand. "Here, Yeita," she said, "is a shrimp cooking pot for you. Do not make all my cooking pots smell of shrimps any more. After you cook shrimps, wash the pot and put it away--here. It is yours. Nobody will touch it."

I was very delighted with that small cooking pot that was mine. I always used it and washed it too. I think by that pot I first realized the meaning of "personal property."

When I was a child, my father was living in the country. I went to a farmer's house and helped him often--it was very interesting. When I was eight or nine years old it was my work to help harvest rice one hour every day after I came home from school.

When I was a child, eating supper with my mother and thinking deeply, my mother would ask, "What were you thinking?"

"I don't know."

"What were you eating?"

"Oh mother, was it soup or potatoes?"

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."

When I was a boy I read a pamphlet about how to swim. It came regularly for some months. Then I went to practice and sank down very quickly.

When I was young, I sometimes had a nightmare. There had been an earthquake and I had lost my parents. With the earth vomiting fire, they call, "Yeita, Yeita." Then I would wake up.

When I was a child of about thirteen or fourteen, I was walking a country road alone. I met a boy. He looked at me. He looked about like me. It was a wonderful experience. I felt I was not alone.

When I was fifteen or sixteen years old, English missionaries abused Buddhism by calling it "Godless and nihilistic." I used to come home and mimic them before my father and mother--asking many questions to which they could not give me a clear answer.

When I was a child I went to a Christian church that appeared on my street, Waseda Street.

All the children of Waseda Street went there. They helped make the garden, cleaned the well, and brought kindling wood to keep the house warm in winter.

Finally the children had some quarrel with the pastor's wife and left the church. For three months the church had no adherents.

I was about eleven years old when we children decided to attend some lectures there. Among those children I can count many famous army officers, politicians, and university professors of today--for instance the naval commander at Shanghai in the last war.

We as children could not ask the minister any questions, but there were many young men who did. I still remember those questions and their answers.

From the pastor's answers, we realized that everyone on earth is a sinner. Whether we know it or not, we are sinners!

There was a child who was the son of a Confucianist. His father was teaching Confucianism to a prince. This child went home and told his father that he was a sinner. The father, feeling that his family had been disparaged (in which case he must either commit harakiri or resign from his teacher's position), went to the pastor.

We children laughed and finally asked: "We come from good families; our conduct is good, our fathers are gentlemen and our mothers are ladies--how can we be sinners?"

The answer: "Those who do not know God are sinners. Confess your ignorance to God, and He will forgive your sins."

We carried the pastor's answer to the temple in our street. The Osho was there, and said: "The Christian view is right. Ignorance is sin."

I came back home and asked my father, a Shinto priest, about this. My father just laughed--"It is false. Everyone on earth is pure!"

utensils are not mere material existences; they are the symbols or signs of the world of antara-bhavika appearing in this world in which we are living. Coming into a different country, seeing different buildings, we apprehend the people of this country living in their particular antara-bhavika. For instance, the clothes you wear are the sign of your mind and the words you speak are the sign of your mind.

The old disciple of the Buddha whom I mentioned in the previous lecture, at the end of his life, in his meditation in the fourth dhyana, discovered this antara-bhavika, the middle shadow. He thought that here he was already in Nirvana. In his deep meditation, calm as the center of the sky or at the bottom of the ocean, he felt this middle shadow appear. It is like a gossamer. It shakes with invisible waves, glowing, as in the New Jersey swamps, like water; or as a mirage in the desert, and when you reach there it disappears. You feel this gossamer vibration-like web in your deep meditation and when it takes shape it transforms into a horse face or an ox face, mountains or sea, and creates your dream. This is so-called antara-bhavika. The old monk saw this, so he was discouraged, and he said, "Buddha lied to me. There is no Nirvana!" And he died in this state. He died in purgatory.

This antara-bhavika appears in the fourth dhyana. But from the standpoint of an enlightened mind this antara-bhavika is a natural occurrence in meditation. It will lead the meditator to awake to his intrinsic Buddha-nature.

In rupadhatu, this stage of clear awakening is called sudarsha and su-

darshana--magnificent appearance and magnificent sight.

In rupadhatu, the first stage, the sphere of mahabrahma, is very important. Next, sudarsha and sudarshana are important.

By means of the wisdom eye (prajna) you see Reality. When you are born in Reality, you will discover the law of Reality. When you see the law of Reality, you will attain the Dharma-eye. Then when you reach sudarshana, you will attain the eye to see the Dharma (Law) as it operates in the manifested world. So this is a very important stage in rupadhatu.

To one who attains the virtue of this eye, everything that he sees becomes pure. All impure things will be changed into pure things. So this one is called the king of healers. Sudarshana is the healer. He cures every impure sinful sickness by his sight. When he sees impure things they change into pure things. For while you possess an unenlightened eye everything is filthy and sinful. But when you see the light of Nirvana, with an enlightened eye, you will attain the clear and pure sight of sudarshana. You will see everything in pure form. There is nothing impure in the world anymore.

The state of sudarsha (magnificent appearance) is the result of the long virtuous karma that has been accumulated by a sacred being, a bodhisattva. It is said in a sutra: "If anyone were to see the king of the sudarsha heaven, the prescriber of medicine, the eye of the one who has seen him would be purified. Then whatever he would see, those things would become pure." For instance, the earth will become pure, water will become pure. Thus everything will become pure."

Perhaps sudarsha is the objective side and sudarshana is the subjective side of this state. The beings in the sudarshana heaven have excellent tranquillizing power, the power of samadhi, and see everything with penetrating sight...

In the Avatamsaka Sutra the novice Sudhana visited fifty-three sages. There was a monk named Sudarshana living in the country of Emancipation, living in the land that is called Earth Saving, in the country of the Three Eyes. His appearance was as magnificent as that of the deva Sudha-avasa. He preached about Buddha's Eye of Dharma (Dharma-netra). He said: "When I walk in meditation, in one flash all things in the multifold directions appear completely." This is the explanation of that clear wisdom that pervades the multifold directions. This wisdom is the vehicle of Samantabhadra. Of course this does not correspond exactly with the sudarsha of the rupadhatu, but the names are the same and the viewpoints are the same, especially since Suddha-avasa is the place on which sudarshana is dependent.

Mahabrahma is the fire-natured heaven and abhasvara is the water-natured heaven. Abhasvara is translated into Chinese as "the heaven of shining sound" because the beings in that heaven speak in light--vomiting light from their mouths in different degrees. Since light begets light, the light is always the same but the power is different. But this light is not the light of fire, but the light of water. In old sutras like the Parinirvana and the Agamas, this second heaven is translated as "water-sound heaven." It is said that in the end of the world the wind will blow the water up

into this heaven and support the water in the heaven and this water will cover the entire earth. The heat of the fire of the lower heaven sends mountains of black clouds, steam, up above the water heaven and destroys this bridge of water and sends it down to the earth and all the lower heavens and the earth are completely washed away by this boiling water. Then air supports this water and makes an entire bridge over it. Then the wind blows and destroys it. When the water falls down it isn't water but fire, and it destroys the whole heaven.

In Shingon, Vairochana Buddha is the consciousness of the sun, of the fire. Manas consciousness is the consciousness of water, of the moon. By the sun consciousness we observe the shape of the original Buddha in the deeper consciousness. And by the consciousness of the moon, manas consciousness, we observe the state of this present consciousness. So by the present consciousness we observe the subconscious, and so forth. Thus by exchanging one with the other we observe the whole nature of our consciousness.

In Japan the Three World theory was studied in the early period of Japanese Buddhism. There are two songs about this:

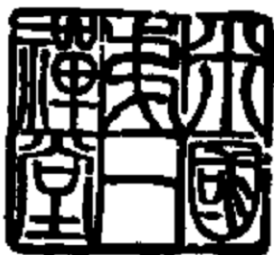
Though the cherry blossom blooms
in the fourth heaven
Without your eye how can you
observe it?

This is the song of the jimonbo, the monks who were observing the Hinayana. The monks of the sammonbo, the Mahayana, answered with this song.

If the cherry blossoms were to
bloom in the fourth heaven
We would borrow the eye of the
lower heaven and observe it.

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