Zen Notes

In Buddha's Footstep

RECORD OF THE GREAT PRIMORDIAL
(TAIAKI)

by Takuan Sôhô [1573-1645]

(Part II, conclusion)

"This sharp sword, Great Primordial, is intrinsically possessed by everyone. In each of us it is completely realized. One who illumines it will be feared by heavenly demons.[1] *One who obscures it will be deceived by heretics. When two skilled [warriors] cross swords and fight to a draw, [it is like when] the world-honored one held up the flower and Mahakashyapa smiled. It is also like, when one thing is spoken of, understanding three things, or with one glance detecting the slightest difference in weight.*[2] *These are manifestations of our ordinary marvelous acuity. If there is one who has completely realized this matter, then even before one thing is spoken of, before three things are understood, [his blade] has already cut, and he has achieved victory in three moves.*[3] *How much more so when meeting face-to-face."*

This sharp sword, Great Primordial, is intrinsically possessed by everyone. In each of us it is completely realized. This means that in all the world there is nothing able to withstand its blade. The famous sword Great Primordial is not in anyone else's possession; everyone, whoever it is, intrinsically possesses it. No one is missing any part of it at all, because it's completely realized [in every person]. It is none other than mind. This mind isn't born at the moment of birth, nor does it die at the moment of death. That's why it's called one's original face. Even heaven can't cover it, even earth can't support it; fire can't burn it, water can't wet it, wind can't pass through it. That's why it's said that there's nothing in the world that is able to withstand its blade.

One who illumines it will be feared by heavenly demons. One who obscures it will be deceived by heretics. Nothing in the vast universe can impede one who has realized this original face. Even heavenly demons have no way to use their supernatural powers on him, but instead, quite the reverse, are themselves seen through by him, exposing their innermost thoughts and intentions, so that they fear him and dare not go anywhere near him. On the other

[1] *Tenma:* Heavenly beings who seek to obstruct the Dharma and inhabit the Paranirmitavasavartin Heaven.

[2] Phrases appearing in Case One of the Blue Cliff Record, Bodhidharma's 'Empty, nothing sacred.' T.48:140a. They are used here as metaphors for the Zen master's instantaneous intuitive response.

[3] The meaning of the phrase translated here as "victory in three moves" (*J: sandan*) is unclear. It may possibly refer to the three-part movement by which an opponent can be swiftly dispatched with the sword. The translation of the passage is tentative.

hand, one who obscures the original face and so goes astray accumulates every sort of deluded thought and notion, and taking advantage of those deluded thoughts and notions, heretics can easily fool and deceive him.

When two skilled warriors cross swords and fight to a draw... What happens when two warriors who have both realized their original face confront one another, simultaneously unsheathe their Great Primordial swords, cross blades and fight to a draw? It's just like the encounter between the World-Honored One and Mahakashyapa. *...The world-honored one held up the flower and Mahakashyapa smiled.*[1] It's like at the assembly on Vulture Peak when the Buddha was about to pass away and he held up a golden lotus and showed it to the great gathering of eighty thousand monks. All of them remained silent. Only Mahakashyapa smiled. At that moment, the World-Honored One knew that Mahakashyapa had realized enlightenment, and he sanctioned his realization, declaring, "I confer upon you my true Dharma, the special transmission outside the scriptures that does not depend on words and letters." From Mahakashyapa this true Dharma was transmitted in India across twenty-eight generations to Bodhidharma;[2] in China, it was transmitted from Bodhidharma across six generations to the Sixth Patriarch, the Ch'an Master Ta-chien.[3] Since this Ch'an master was a bodhisattva in the flesh, thereafter the buddhadharma flourished increasingly in China, as well, so that its branches and leaves spread luxuriantly, and the Five Houses and Seven Schools[4] prospered, continuing up through Hsu-t'ang,[5] from whom the teaching passed to our land's masters Daiô and Daitô.[6] From that time to the present the blood-line has remained unbroken.

Thus, the Dharma of "holding up the flower and smiling" is only achieved with the greatest difficulty. It is not something to be readily grasped through thinking or imagining. The Buddhas themselves fall silent and become speechless. So although this principle can't be expressed in words, if one is forced to liken it to something, it resembles one container of water being poured into a second container of water, so that the first water and the second

[1] The statement that this occurred just prior to the Buddha's death does not appear in the usual versions of the story, and seems to be an original addition by Takuan.

[2] (d.532). The semi-legendary first Patriarch of Ch'an, who is said to have brought the teaching to China from India.

[3] Ta-chien Hui-neng (J: Daikan Eno (638-713). The Sixth Patriarch of Ch'an, celebrated in the Platform Sutra.

[4] The Five Houses were five Zen lines said to have coexisted during the late T'ang dynasty and named after their founding teachers. They are Lin-chi, Kuei-yang, Ts'ao-tung, Yun-men, and Fa-yen. The Seven Schools refers to the five houses plus two prominent Sung-dynasty branches of the Lin-chi school, the Huang-lung and Yang-ch'i.

[5] The Sung Ch'an master Hsü-t'ang Chih-yü (1185-1269).

[6] Daiô Kokushi (Nanpo Jômyô, 1235-1308) and his heir Daitô Kokushi (Shuhô Myôchô, 1282-1337).

water are mingled together, with no distinction between them. This is the oneness of the eyes of the World-Honored One and Mahakashyapa. There's absolutely no difference between them. Whatever sorts of masters of the art of war there may be, you won't find even one in one hundred thousand who's realized the truth of holding up the flower and smiling. Nevertheless, if there's a man with the capacity to study the very highest vehicle and he wants to realize this truth, he must practice for thirty years or more. Should he go wrong, however, he will not only fail to master the art of war, but will fall into hell swift as an arrow shot from a bow. Take care! Take care!

...When one thing is spoken of, understanding three things means that when someone shows you one thing, you instantly understand three... *With one glance detecting the slightest difference in weight (mokki shuryô)... Mokki,* detecting at a single glance, refers to the eye's inherent skill, or measuring by eye. *Shu* indicates measuring weight by eye. A *shu* is a weight of ten *shi*. Ten *shu* equal one *bu* and ten *bu* constitute a *ryô*.[7] So this means that no matter how much gold and silver there is, you can judge the exact amount by eye and won't be off by even as much as one *shu* or one *ryô*. This signifies a person of keen perception and marvelous acuity. *These are manifestations of our ordinary marvelous acuity...* means that for one who is endowed with such marvelous acuity, this sort of keenness of perception is an everyday matter; it's nothing at all extraordinary.

If there is one who has completely realized this matter, then even before one thing is spoken of, before three things are understood, [his blade] has already cut, and he has achieved victory in three moves. For one who has completely realized the great matter of buddhadharma, even before one thing is spoken of, even before three things are understood, without revealing any sign of his intentions he has already thrust and achieved victory in three moves. So should you encounter this man, whatever you do will be useless. *How much more so when meeting face-to-face.* When one who has achieved such swift mastery of the art meets an opponent face to face, he can slay him so easily that his opponent's head will be severed before he even knows what's happened. That's how skillful he is!

> *"The point of such a man's sword is never revealed. It is swifter than a streak of lightning, faster than a sudden storm. Lacking this sort of skill, the moment you attach anywhere, or intentionally direct the mind toward anything, you ruin the point of your weapon and injure your hand and will never be fit to achieve mastery. Do not use your deluded mind to speculate about this. It is*

[7] Thus one *ryô* equals one hundred *shu*. *Shu, ryô, shi* and *bu* are the Japanese readings of old Chinese units for measuring weight, used for precious metals and so forth.

not something that can be transmitted in words. Nor is it to be taught through forms. It is the Dharma of the special transmission outside the scriptures."

The point of such a man's sword is never revealed. Such a master never shows the point of his sword. *It is swifter than a streak of lightning, faster than a sudden storm.* Even a streak of lightning that's gone in a flash isn't fast enough to catch his hand; even a hurricane spewing sand and rocks can't match his speed. *Lacking this sort of skill, the moment you attach anywhere, or intentionally direct the mind toward anything...* If, without such ability, you attach even the slightest bit to raising your sword, or attach even the slightest bit to what you have in your mind...*you ruin the point of your weapon and injure your hand and will never be fit to achieve mastery.* You're certain to mar the point of your weapon and cut your own hand, and so never be worthy to be deemed a master.

Do not use your deluded mind to speculate about this. Deluded mind is the discriminating consciousness within the human mind. Speculating about things is conjecture. What's meant is that no matter how much you try to speculate [about this] using the deluded mind, it will be to no avail. So try to go beyond speculative discrimination! *It is not something that can be transmitted in words. Nor is it something to be taught through forms.* This true art of war can't be passed on through speech. And it also can't be learned through forms, by teaching things like what postures to take or where to strike. *It is the Dharma of the special transmission outside the scriptures.* Since it's an art that can't be transmitted with words or taught through exercises, it's called the Dharma of the special transmission outside the scriptures. The special transmission outside the scriptures is the Dharma you have to realize and attain for yourself, apart from any teacher's instruction.

"The great function manifesting itself immediately before you has nothing to do with fixed rules.[1] *Moving freely in all directions, even heavenly beings cannot fathom it.*[2] *What, then, is this principle? A man of old said, "My home has no picture of the pai che.*[3] *Goblins like that do not exist." If one is able to discipline himself and arrives at this principle, he will pacify the entire kingdom with a single sword. You who study this, do not take it lightly!"*

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[1] A phrase from Case 3 of the Blue Cliff Record, "Ma-tsu is unwell," T.48:142c

[2] A phrase appearing in verse thirty-five of the *Cheng-tao ke* (*Shôdôka,* Song of Realizing the Way) by Yung-chia Hsuan-chiao (Yôka Genkaku, d. 713). T.48:396b.

[3] JAP: *hakutaku.* A legendary Chinese beast, variously said to speak in human language, to have eight eyes on different parts of its body, and to appear in an age of virtuous rulers.

The great function manifesting itself immediately before you has nothing to do with fixed rules. When the function of the specially transmitted Dharma is manifesting here before you, it's completely free, so it doesn't depend on fixed rules. We call this "great function" because it pervades everywhere throughout the worlds in the ten directions, not missing so much as the tip of a rabbit's hair. Fixed rules, here, refers to laws and regulations. Laws and regulations that are like molds have nothing whatever to do with the great function immediately manifesting before you. *Moving freely in all directions, even heavenly beings cannot fathom it.* One for whom this great function is immediately manifesting is free and without obstruction whether he goes this way or that. Even heavenly beings can't figure it out! *What, then, is this principle?* What sort of principle is this?, the writer asks.

A man of old said, "My home has no picture of the pai che. Goblins like that do not exist." This is the answer to the preceding question. The *pai che* is a mythical creature said to have a body like an ox and a head like a man. It devours dreams and calamities, so that in China pictures of it are made and affixed to gates or stuck onto the pillars of homes. So putting up images of the *pai che* is a means of warding off domestic calamities. But someone who's never had any goblins in his house has no interest in putting up the *pai che's* pictures. What this [saying] means is that even heavenly beings can't plumb the mind of someone who's able to function freely wherever he goes, so [such a person] leaps clear of every sort of pain and joy; he has no calamities either in himself or in his home, and as a result has no interest in images of the *pai che*--his life is something utterly wonderful!

If one is able to discipline himself and arrives at this principle, he will conquer the entire realm with a single sword. If you are a free man, having practiced in this way, disciplining yourself [like] gold that's repeatedly and exhaustively tempered and refined, so that you're able to attain the highest mastery of the sword, you will surely resemble the eminent founder of the Han, who with a single blade subjugated the whole land.[4] *You who study this, do not take it lightly!* Those of you who are learning the marvelous principle of this sword should not carelessly give rise to vulgar thoughts, but polish your virtue, and never be negligent, not for even an instant!

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[4] Kao-tsu (literally, "Eminent Founder"), the posthumous title of Liu Chi (d.195 B.C.E.), who established the Han Dynasty in 206 B.C.E.

The Historical Buddha

Introduction

For some time, I have been curious about the historical Buddha. Who was he, what did he preach, and how did he out of innumerable Indian Gurus become such an important historical figure as the founder of one of the worlds great religions? What follows is a synopsis of the book Gotama Buddha (Buddhist Books International ,Tokyo, Japan 1977) by Hajime Nakamura, Professor Emeritus at Tokyo University and President of the Eastern Institute in Tokyo, along with information from a few other sources and my own personal observations. While the book is concise and insightful, it has a dry, academic quality to it. It may have suffered somewhat in translation from the Japanese, and the Publisher has not listed any name for the translator. --Ian Chandler

Birth and Youth

The Buddha was born in the town of Lumbini in the Kingdom of the Shakyas in the foothills of the Himalayas in what is present-day Nepal. Historical sources differ with each other by as much as 100 years as to the exact year of his birth, but Hajime Nakamura puts it at 463 B.C.E., dating it based on the years of the reign of King Ashoka. It is likely that the Buddha's mother died shortly after childbirth. The Buddha's father, King Suddhodana, was king of the Shakyas, and took his former wife's sister, Mahapajapati, as a second wife. She bore him a second son, Nanda, the Buddha's half-brother.

The Buddha described his youth as a life of incomparable luxury and comfort, with servants, horses, lotus ponds, fine clothing and incense from Benares, and all the accouterments of wealth. Despite some accounts found in later biographies, he was probably not skilled in military affairs. He married at the age of 16 and his wife (likely name-Yasodhara) bore him a son, Rahula, who later became his disciple.

Renunciation of the World

The Buddha left his father's kingdom at the age of 29 to take up the life of a wandering religious ascetic. What made the Buddha's renunciation unusual is that he abandoned all of his fathers wealth, power and prestige in order to live the life of a homeless monk. Obviously, if you don't have any wealth or possessions to begin with, giving it all up so that you can become a monk is an easy thing to do. In classical accounts of the Buddha's life, it is said that he realized the vanity of worldly affairs, the certainty of death, and felt a compelling need to take up the religious life in order to search for the Truth. To that we might add another motivation: his political career as a prince of the Shakyas appears to have been marginalized. The more powerful state of Kosala, to which the Shakyas had paid tribute for years, and some of whose members were relatives of the Shakyas,

had designs on the Shakya kingdom. At the time of the Buddha's renunciation, his family's real power was seeping away. Eventually, most likely during his lifetime, and many years after he had become a monk, the kingdom of the Shakyas was invaded and absorbed into the state of Kosala.

According to Hajime Nakamura, after deciding to become a monk, the Buddha first went to Rajagriha the capital of the powerful state of Magadha near Vulture Peak. King Bimbisara of Magadha, the same age as the Buddha and a personal friend of his, offered Gotama an elephant army and other patronage if he would return to his royal position.[2] The kingdom of Magadha was at that time in a rivalry with the state of Kosala, located between Magadha in the south and the Shakyas in the north. If Gotama had accepted his offer, it would have placed King Bimbisara in a position to attack Kosala from two sides at once. Gotama turned down his offer, since he had already chosen the path of renunciation.

What were Shakyamuni Buddha's years as an ascetic really like? The Buddhist Tripitaka includes the Vinaya, which contains the rules of monastic discipline. The old Chinese tradition regarding the Tripitaka was that each monastery would have one copy, and that it was not to be given to the laity. The monks, it is said, were afraid that they would lose support if it was found how far they strayed from the standards of monastic discipline as outlined in the Vinaya. The rules of monastic discipline appear to have had their origins in the way of life of the wandering religious ascetics of India.

Although the tradition in India is not what it once was, and has partially broken down in the major cities, it is still the case in parts of the countryside that a wandering sadhu can stop at the home of a traditional family complete strangers to him and be offered food at their table along with the other members of the family. In order to do this he has to be ordained, celibate, versed in the traditional liturgy and show disdain for material possessions. The ancient standard of one robe, one bowl has been expanded in modern times to one robe, one bowl, one umbrella The umbrella keeps away rain and sun. However, worldly possessions really don't go much beyond that.

In India today there are said to be around 12 million sadhus; Hindu, Buddhist, Jain or Muslim religious (compared to an estimated 58,000 Catholic Priests in the United States).[3] During my visits to India I received one implicit invitation to join the Sadhus, and that was from Swami Shankardas at the Tat Walle

[2] The Middle Way. Journal of the Buddhist Society. Volume 76, No. 3. November 2001. Conditions in India after the Passing of the Buddha. Translated from the Japanese by Trevor Leggett., Page 149.

[3] Essential Catholicism. Dynamics of Faith and Belief. By Thomas Bokenkotter. Image Books, Garden City, New York, 1986. Page 259

ashram on the outskirts of Rishikesh. This one-man ashram was situated in a pair of caves located in the jungle in some cliffs a couple of hundred feet above and overlooking the Ganges. The lower cave was dry and large, perhaps 8 feet wide by 8 feet high by 15 feet deep. The upper cave provided just enough clearance for a Sadhu to lie down in, and was used for sleeping. The upper cave had steel bars across it solidly anchored in the rock. These protected earlier inhabitants from tigers which roamed wild in this part of the Himalayas as recently as the 1920's. The ashram had been expanded to include a shack in front of the lower cave, which provided considerable additional space. The cave had a convenient water source and was located in a government forest preserve just a few hundred yards outside of Rishikesh a small city with a large population of devout Hindus. (In Rishikesh a city ordinance actually makes it illegal to eat meat.)

Swami Shankardas had no electricity and few amenities. His time was devoted to yoga and meditation. He offered spiritual guidance and advice, and probably performed weddings, funerals and other rites of passage. He was a skinny, earnest, middle-aged man who inherited this ashram from his teacher, Tat Walle Baba. Tat Walle means burlap, and Tat Walle Baba got his name from the fact that he wandered the Himalayas for years in garments made of burlap.

The Buddha's doctrine of the Middle Way was a direct outgrowth of his ascetic practices. In theory, the Middle Way was a path between indulgence and extreme asceticism. However, by the standards of the average middle-class American or Japanese, what the Buddha termed the Middle Way was probably an arduous and disciplined type of life. As Swami Shankardas put it to me, a Sadhu's life is a hard life. I don't know if the Buddha wandered India in garments made of burlap, but I suspect that one robe, one bowl, an ideal rarely realized in practice, was probably closer to his life at the time of his renunciation than what most middle-class American and Japanese Buddhists think of as the Middle Way. The Buddha's six years of asceticism made him a monk in the true sense of the word, gave him automatic entree into the world of India's religious ascetics, and prepared him for his future role as a spiritual king of India.

The Buddha's Teachers

According to Hajime Nakamura, around the time he met with King Bimbisara, the Buddha met up with two spiritual teachers, Alara Kalama and Uddaka Ramaputra, each with a number of disciples. According to the Sutras these teachers rapidly accepted Gotama as a peer. They have been associated with various philosophical perspectives, such as searching for the state of nonexistence, deliverance from thought or the state of neither thought nor non-thought. The teachings of Alara Kalama and

Uddaka Ramaputra are variously reported in different Buddhist writings, many of which imply that they were inferior teachings. However, it is not clear what their real teachings were. As Hajime Nakamura writes:

> "*Unfortunately, the thoughts of the hermits Alara Kalama and Uddaka Ramaputra are almost unidentifiable today. However, judging from the fact that none of the Buddha's biographers could eliminate these two men, there is no doubt that prior to his enlightenment, Gotama Buddha visited them and received profound spiritual influence.*"

Geography

The accompanying map shows important Buddhist sites in ancient India. During the Buddha's life, the territory in northern India was divided into several small states, some of them tribes, some oligarchies and some monarchies. The approximate locations of several of them are shown on the map. The Shakyas were in the north, in the foothills of the Himalayas. The Cities shown on this map include many of the sites mentioned in the Buddhist sutras.

Lumbini, the birthplace of the Buddha, in present-day Nepal, was in the kingdom of the Shakyas. Still standing in Lumbini is a pillar erected by King Ashoka commemorating the Buddha's birth.

Bodh Gaya, is the site of the Buddha's enlightenment, and the location of one of the most famous and ancient Buddhist temples, parts of which date from the first century BC. This temple was restored in the 1880s.

Sarnath, is the location of the Deer Park where the Buddha gave his first sermon, and is the site of a large stupa commemorating the event.

Benares, the modern city of Varanasi, was the ancient capital of the state of Kashi, and was said to have been one of the spiritual epicenters of ancient India and the site of innumerable Hindu and Buddhist temples. Benares was the first destination of the Buddha following his enlightenment.

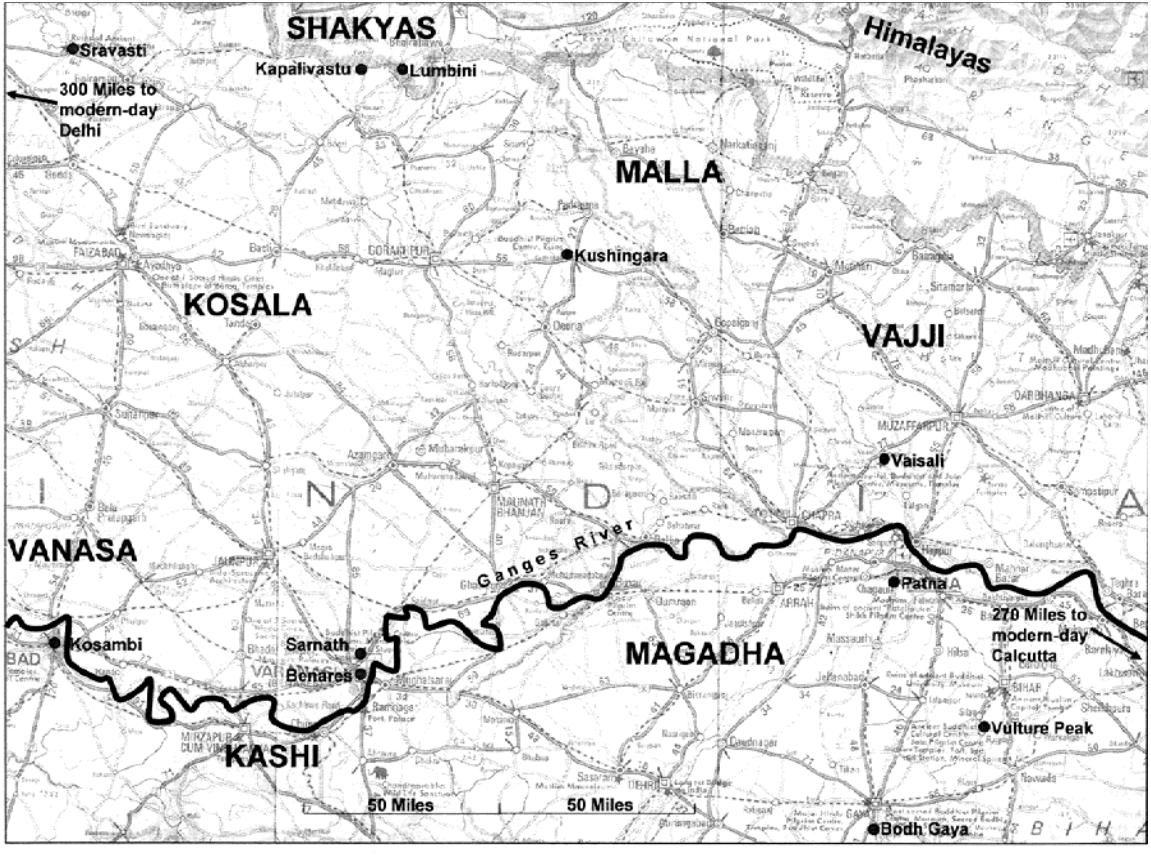
Rajagriha. the modern city of Rajgir, was the ancient capital of the powerful state of Magadha. It was located near Vulture Peak, the setting for the *Lotus Sutra*. Rajagriha was the site of the Bamboo Grove donated to the Buddha by King Bimbisara.

Vaisali, the residence of the Buddhist layman Vimalakirti, and the setting for the *Vimalakirti Sutra*.

Kushingara. A city located in the ancient state of Malla, Kushingara was the site of the Buddha's death.

Kapalivastu. Recently under excavation, Kapalivastu was a large provincial town, and the capital of the state of the Shakyas.

Sravasti. Capital city of the ancient kingdom of Kosala, Sravasti was also site of the famous Jeta Monastery, and was the setting for the *Surangama Sutra*.


SHAKYAS
Himalayas
Sravasti
Kapalivastu
Lumbini
300 Miles to modern-day Delhi
MALLA
Kushingara
KOSALA
VAJJI
Vaisali
INDIA
VANASA
Ganges River
Patna
270 Miles to modern-day Calcutta
Kosambi
Sarnath
Benares
MAGADHA
Vulture Peak
KASHI
50 Miles
50 Miles
Bodh Gaya

Temptations of Mara

Near the great Stupa at Sarnath, is a modern Buddhist temple painted with a mural depicting various incidents in the Buddha's life, including the temptations of Mara, the evil one. Here we see the Buddha in seated meditation assaulted by demons, devils and naked dancing girls, all of whom are trying to distract him from his meditation practice. At the final moment, the Buddha gains supreme enlightenment, and touching the middle finger of his right hand to the ground calls upon the Earth Goddess to witness his victory over the hosts of Mara. Hajime Nakamura writes:

> "*In most biographies of the Buddha of later periods, the temptation and conquering of Mara are presented directly preceding his enlightenment. This is done in order to accentuate the dramatic effect of the Buddha's enlightenment. Although late biographies adopted such a view, it was far from historical reality. In contrast, the Early Buddhists must have considered the ceaseless endeavor and struggle of seven years of Mara's temptation as the major aspect of Shakyamuni's religious practice.* "

Enlightenment

What was the Buddha's enlightenment? Was it the sort of thing that the modern Indian saints such as Ramakrishna and Ramana Maharshi experienced where they would go into trance states sometimes for days at a time remaining oblivious even to people in the same room, and unconscious of the World? Or, was the Buddha's enlightenment something closer to the more sober experiences of the 13th century Japanese Zen master Dogen Zenji, who described altered perceptions of time and existence and their relationship to the Self, but without any loss of consciousness? By all appearances, Dogen Zenji could have driven a car while in a state of enlightenment; Ramakrishna could not.

What type of experience constituted the Buddha's enlightenment? Hajime Nakamura writes:

> "*Among the Sutras there is considerable divergence regarding the nature of the contents of Shakyamuni's Enlightenment. Which can be regarded as true?... Gotama personally did not wish to preach the contents of his Enlightenment as a set formula but depending on the occasion and opportunity, in accord with his audience he chose different styles of preaching... This attitude of Buddhism as a practical philosophy offers infinite intellectual potentiality for evolution and thus we can discover the basic reason for the development of numerous varieties of Buddhist thought during later periods.*"

The Literary Record

Unlike Jesus, whose teaching career lasted only 3 years until his Crucifixion, the Buddha taught from the age of 36 until he was 80, approximately 44 years. An enormous quantity of literature

resulted. The Chinese Tripitaka is approximately 28 times the size of the Bible, and it contains hundreds of sutras and related works. The Bukkyo Dendo Kyokai (Society for the Promotion of Buddhism), which has shouldered the daunting task of translating the entire Chinese Tripitaka into English, has estimated that translating the first 139 classics from the Tripitaka will take them over 100 years.

Who were the authors of the sutras? Who was the I in Thus have I heard? Unlike the Gospels, each of which is attributed to a different author, the Sutras have no particular author -- a weak point from the perspective of historical and literary analysis. However, many of the Sutras are highly inspirational and well written, and in any case, the real Buddhist tradition is to pick and choose from among this large collection of texts and study the ones of greatest interest.

Preaching and Proselytizing

From the time he started teaching until his death at the age of 80 the Buddha gave an enormous number of sermons and gathered to his side the most talented spiritual leaders in India. The Sutras give us a fragmentary record of the growth of the Buddha's Sanga, but according to Hajime Nakamura, after returning to Bodh Gaya following his initial stay in Benares, the Buddha acquired three new disciples, Uruvela Kassapa, Nadi, Kassapa and Gaya Kassapa, having five hundred, three hundred and two hundred hair-bound followers, respectively. King Bimbisara also became a convert and donated to the order the park of Veluvana (Bamboo Grove) near the entrance to Rajagriha, capital of Magadha. The Buddha then acquired 250 new disciples from the Brahmana Sanjaya, including two of his most eminent disciples, Sariputra and Modgalyayana. Sariputra and Modgalyayana took the remainder of Sanjaya's two hundred and fifty disciples and went to the Bamboo Grove, where Shakyamuni was staying, and there they became his disciples.

Approximately eight or ten years after leaving his kingdom, the Buddha returned to Kapalivastu, his home, and capital city of the Kingdom of the Shakyas. According to Hajime Nakamura, Shakyamuni was welcomed with great respect in Kapalivastu. His half-brother Nanda and his own son Rahula were ordained as monks, while his father the King and Rahula's mother came to pledge homage. It is also reported that Upali, the son of a barber, and the Buddha's young cousin Ananda became monks.

Sudatta, a wealthy merchant from the city of Sravasti, capital city of Kosala, donated to the Buddha the Jetavana (forest of the Jeta) and money to build the first Buddhist Monastery. Of Sudatta, Hajime Nakamura says:

> "*Every reference to Sudatta in the Buddhist scriptures portrays him as being an extremely zealous follower of Shakyamuni. This*

was probably factual. It is said that when he was visiting Rajagriha on business, he was impressed by the venerable congregation of monks led by Shakyamuni and became a follower."

The Buddha also converted Prasenajit (Pasinadi), the King of Kosala. He later converted the Brahmana Bavarin and all 16 of his disciples, each of whom had several disciples. According to Hajime Nakamura: Bavarin's disciples were all converted to Shakyamuni, as a group just as earlier Sanjaya's disciples led by Sariputra and Modgalyayana had been converted as a group.

The *Lankavatara Sutra* claims that the Buddha visited Sri Lanka,[1] but most historical evidence suggests that his travels were confined to the Ganges river valley and its tributaries, the areas shown on the attached map. The Buddha spent the better part of his life laying the foundation for his loosely knit religious organization in North India. Loosely knit is important. While some of the Buddha's disciples were more prominent or talented than others, the Buddha did not create an ecclesiastical hierarchy. The multiple layers of priests found in some Buddhist lineages are a later historical development.

By converting the kings of the states of Magadha, Kosala, the Shakyas and Vanasa, and by attracting much of India's top spiritual talent and gaining the enthusiastic endorsement of wealthy patrons, the Buddha was able to forge an organization which gave him within his own lifetime a pre-eminent position among spiritual leaders in North India. Rather than confining his activities to a single state or seeking the endorsement of a single patron, he traveled widely and was able to acquire disciples in virtually all of the important states in North Central India.

The Buddha died and was cremated at the age of 80 near the city of Kushingara. Judging from the content of the Sutras, he was an inspired spiritual leader. The Buddha appears to have had an element of St. Paul in him: he did an enormous amount of legwork, traveling widely over north India, giving hundreds of sermons, and converting innumerable disciples, including kings and other spiritual leaders. He appears to have been a vigorous, disciplined, ambitious and engaging individual. He was able to move among all walks of society from the poorest mountain yogis to the most powerful kings of India, some of whom, such as King Bimbisara, were personal friends.

Several years after the Buddha's death, under the leadership of Bimbisara's son, Ajatashatru, the powerful state of Magadha swallowed up most of its neighbors, including Kosala, Kashi, and the Vajji Federation. Several generations after the death of the Buddha, Magadha remained unconquered by Alexander the Great, whose penetration into India did not go much beyond the

[1] The Lankavatara Sutra A Mahayana Text. Translated into English by D.T. Suzuki. SMC Publishing Inc. Taipei, Republic of China. Pg 3

Indus river valley. Following the withdrawal of Alexander's armies from northwest India, Chandragupta of Magadha formed the first empire spanning North India and founded the Mauryan dynasty. The third ruler of the Mauryan Dynasty, the Buddhist emperor Ashoka, around the year 260 B.C.E., extended Mauryan conquests to include all of India, and sponsored and fostered the growth of Buddhism throughout his empire.

Chronology of Events in the life of the Buddha

Date (B.C.E.)	Location	Event
463	Lumbini	*Birth of Gotama*
434	Kapalivastu	*Renunciation of the World*
433	RajaGriha	*Meeting with King Bimbisara*
433-427	State of Magadha	*Meetings with his teachers Alara Kalama and Uddaka Ramaputra; 6 years of asceticism.*
427	Bodh Gaya	*Enlightenment*
427	Sarnath and Benares	*First sermon and first conversions*
426	Bodh Gaya	*Conversions of additional disciples*
425	Kapalivastu	*Return to the Kingdom of the Shakyas .Conversions of his son Rahula and cousin Ananda.*
424	Sravasti	*Conversion of King Prasenajit of Kosala; Foundation of the Jeta Monastery*
424-383	North Central India	*Further teaching and preaching throughout North* Central India
383	Kushingara	*Death of the Buddha*

From the editor

The cover is a charcoal on paper rubbing of Buddha's foot carved in stone at Bodh Gaya acquired by Ian Chandler when he was in India at the Himalayan Insitute ashram in 1996. The stone carving was aproximately two and a half feet long, probably done in the early part of the twentieth century.

Interestingly enough, Sokei-an in his early days as an artist also aspired to create Buddha's footsteps:

> *My original idea was to worship the Buddha's footprint. I carved one. My original idea was to carve two footprints on one board, side by side. There is a beautiful story: Someone found a footprint and said, "It is not the footprint of a man or of a deva or of an animal." And he followed the footprint and he came to a wood and found the Buddha. He asked, "Who are you? A deva [a god] or a man? " The Buddha said, " I am Buddha" (awake).*

* * * * *

THE SUTRA OF PERFECT AWAKENING

TWENTY-THIRD LECTURE

(Delivered by Sokei-an , Saturday, December 10, 1938)

"For this reason I speak about the illusory phantoms of body and mind and point out, contrariwise, how to dissever yourself from illusory phantoms. I call him who dissevers himself from illusory phantoms a Bodhisattva. When you have annihilated filth and confront what remains, you will find no one who confronts filth or who designates another as a Bodhisattva.

O Obedient One! Because this Bodhisattva and the sentient beings of the future world prove by their attainment that all is illusory and that all illusory images vanish, they then vanish, they then attain the state of boundless purity, and in the state of infinite emptiness they discover the state of awakening. Because they complete their awakening, they discover the pure condition of mind. Because their mind is pure, they see dusts as pure entities."

The Buddha is answering the question asked by Samantanetra. Of course this Bhodisattva is not a historical man; he is a personified doctrine.

The Buddha gave his lectures to the disciples in three different fashions. He spoke as a man -- a example of one who manifested the Dharma; he spoke in terms of philosophy and he spoke in allegorical terms. Sometimes he made different combinations of the three.

This Samantanetra is allegorical -- meaning "All-seeing Eye." With this All-seeing Eye we observe the phenomenal world and the inner world. The phenomenal world exists as sun, moon stars, and all other objects; the inner world is observed in dream, thoughts -- and names such as systems of philosophy. These are semi-phenomena. We observe both inside and outside by the use of this All-seeing Eye -- the knowledge of Samantanetra! The Buddha gave this name to this observing wisdom, this Omnispective Eye. This is the conclusion of the Buddha's answer to Samantanetra's question as to the attainment of enlightenment:

"For this reason I speak about the illusory phantoms of body and mind ..." --The Buddha was speakingof the illusory phantoms which are our sense perceptions, and the objects of our sense perceptions. He called them illusory phantoms -- for they are not Reality, by itself. The body consists of the four great elements --

earth, water, fire and air -- and it will return to original akasha, ether. The state of akasha is emptiness -- so the four great elements are illusory.

The Mind also consists of four great elements: Vedana -- sense perception; Samjna -- thoughts and dreams, and our consciousness of them. Samskara -- all the elements of thoughts and dreams. That is, the impressions carried in through sense perceptions, accumulated and ingrained; the seeds carried by consciousness through kalpas, eons of time, from father to child, child to grandchild or teacher to disciple, through ear, eye, body. This invisible concomitant of seeds is called Samskara, the conglomerated elements of mind faculty. In modern terms, they could be called "subconscious elements." At the bottom of these is the fourth consciousness, the Alaya-vijnana -- the everlasting consciousness. This Alaya-vijnana disappears in amarga-jnana, the consciousness of insentient beings. It does not carry the seeds which are ingrained in this consciousness.

How this insentient consciousness produces sentient consciousness is a great question in Buddhism! It was much debated in ancient days: How the consciousness of the four great elements produces the consciousness of Wisdom. But the production of sentient being by insentient being is a fact! Air, fire, water, and earth are living. They are not dead entities; their consciousness will be submerged in sentient consciousness. Amarga-consciousness is the state of Reality -- in terms of your philosophy, it is the region of God!

"*... and point out, contrariwise, how to dissever yourself from illusory phantoms.*" -- When you understand this, you can dissever yourself from this illusory body!

"*I call him who dissevers himself from illusory phantoms a Bodhisattva. When you have annihilated filth and confront what remains, you will find no one who confronts filth or who designates another as a Bodhisattva.*" -- Observing both mind and the outside, you will come into the state of Reality. Then you can separate yourself from illusory phantoms. It is not necessary to go away to some other place! You can do all things right where you are. And one who does this is called a Bodhisattva.

"*O Obedient One! Because this Bodhisattva (he is Samanta-netra, standing in the circle) and the sentient beings of the future world prove by their attainment that all is illusory and that all illusory images vanish, ...*" -- All these bodies of so-called material existence will be reduced to Akasha and mind will be reduced to Alaya consciousness.

"*... they then attain the state of boundless purity, ...*" -- "Boundless purity" means the state of alaya-consciousness. You really must attain this state! You can attain it by observing your

consciousness and the body of the four elements -- you cannot attain. The true Buddhist does not teach that you must cut off all things, practice endless meditation, and bury yourself in the earth! On a comfortable cushion, you can meditate -- analyze your mind. No need to go to a psychoanalyst. Observe your dreams. With this prajna (wisdom) you can reach to the very bottom of your consciousness.

This "boundless purity" is translated by some Western scholars as "transcendental wisdom." We just call it "wisdom" -- there is nothing "transcendental" about it. There is no thought in it, no symbol of awakening or Buddha. If you give it a name, you are not in it. Give up all the names but keep the senses! The usual trouble is that you try to attain Reality without using the senses. Then you find Reality only in your imagination! Reality is not a dark pit; you will learn what it is in Zen, through meditation.

"*... and in the state of infinite emptiness, they discover the state of awakening.*" -- This is a very important line! You cannot find another line which speaks more plainly of the Buddhist teaching. According to some people, they enter awakening first, and later they will enter the real ontological view. Others will just attain emptiness, and then -- all of a sudden -- awaken into the state of prajna (wisdom), called "epistemological state" in Western terms. But this Occidental meaning is really an intellectual study.

I attained Emptiness first --after six years of study. During this time, I was living like a hobo. One day I was walking on the street and realized that everything was empty. And I asked myself: "If all this is empty, from where did I get this present consciousness?" I had been stuck for those six years while I was studying koans. Of course, when this realization came to me, I went back to my teacher, made a demonstration -- and it was not an error.

"*Because they complete their awakening, they discover the pure condition of mind. Because their mind becomes pure, they see dusts as pure entities.*" -- Some attain a false purity of mind and become blind; they see the world as filthy, close their eyes and go to the mountain caves. This is not a true attitude; they are still in the alaya-consciousness. Alaya-consciousness has both objective and subjective states, but such a one is clinging to the subjective -- and is still in duality. When your mind really becomes pure, nothing is wrong in the world. Water, air, earth, fire, and everything made of these four elements is pure. The so-called dusts -- your body, sense-perceptions, etc. -- nothing is impure!

The Buddha spoke very clearly but some Buddhists do not understand these true words! I hope that some of you will.

* * * * *

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Now do I have Buddha Nature?
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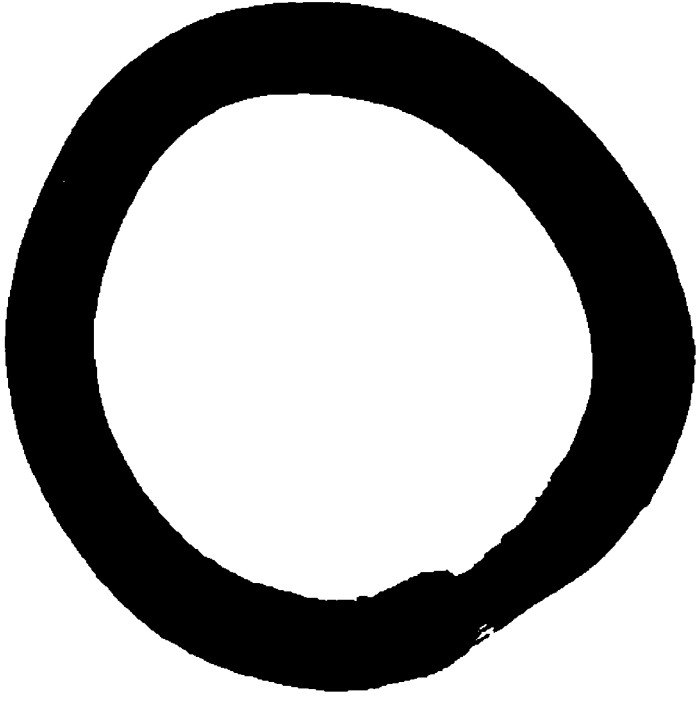

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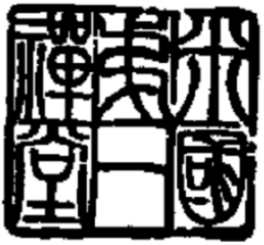

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113 E30 Street
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(212)-686-2520
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