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Feb., 1968 Lotus Sutra, #2  
Z.M.C.

(transcription checked, edited by Brian F.)

A ray issued from Buddha's forehead between his eyebrows. Everyone could see many things, and Maitreya Bodhisattva is asking Manjusri why this kind of miraculous sight appears. We have more than ten gathas about those sights. Page 14, number 36 [from *Saddharma-Pundarika* translated by H. Kern]:

Some, again, offer in the presence of the Jinas and the assemblage of disciples gifts (consisting) in food, hard and soft, food [S.R. said "food", but the book says "meat" here] and drink, medicaments for the sick, in plenty and abundance."

Jinas is Buddha. "Food hard and soft" means food or delicacies to sip and to eat, something to chew and something to sip. Soft means something like soup. It says "meat and drink" here, but maybe it is food and drink. He translated it "food hard and soft", and then used "meat" so that he wouldn't use the same word twice. But the first "food" is dishes and delicacies, something to chew, something to sip. And "food and drink" is various foods to eat, and drink, like wine or lemonade. Repetition, you know.

# 37: "Others offer in the presence of Jinas and the assemblage of disciples hundreds of *kotis of clothes, worth thousands of kotis, and garments of priceless value.*"

*"They bestow in the presence of the Sugatas hundreds of kotis of monasteries which they have caused to be built of precious substances and sandalwood, and which are furnished with numerous lodgings (or couches)."*

*"Hundreds of kotis of monasteries," like Tassajara, "which they have caused to be built of precious substances," like various jewels and stones, "and sandalwood," do you know sandalwood? Sandalwood, "and which are furnished with numerous lodgings (or couches)." These are rather important words which appear many, many times in various scriptures. This is one of the five materials to offer to Buddha--a bed. These lodgings include something like a bed. You put mats on something which has four legs, and a cushion which has cotton, or stuffing, in it, and a bed cover, which is some textile, and a pillow. It is something to sit on sometimes, so it is also something like a couch. Monks or priests are prohibited from using expensive ones, you know. We should not use material made of sheep, or sheepskin. In some countries, like Tibet, the use of skin is allowed. But if we changed the rule so soon [in this country], it would be a violation of the precept. At least, we should not change it in six years. And we are supposed to use the same bed for thirteen years. Nowadays we do not strictly observe this kind of rule, but in the old times they had very strict rules about food and beds and lodging. Here [in the sutra] they see various monasteries built of precious jewels and sandalwood, but this is, of course, not real stone.*

*"Some present the leaders of men and their disciples with neat and lovely gardens abounding with fruits and beautiful flowers, to serve as places of daily recreation."*

*The leader of men is, of course, Buddha. "...and their disciples with neat and lovely gardens abounding with fruits and beautiful flowers," like Church Creek, "to serve as*

*places of daily recreation." This translation makes it look very picnic-like, but it is not actually so. After they went begging, in mid-day, when it was very hot, they rested for a while in someone's garden. It is very good to rest, to have something good which is offered by the owner of the house or garden, to put heavy things aside and rest under a tree. This is our custom, you know. In Japan we do this also. When it is very cold, we may be ushered into a warm room with a big charcoal fire, and they may serve mochi with sugar, and, sometimes, New Year's dishes. And for a while we can rest at that home. So this may be a kind of afternoon recreation, or afternoon rest. It does not mean resting and having a good time all day long. Rather, after the practice of begging, for a while, only when it was hot, they would rest at someone's home. They [in this sutra] could see Buddha and his disciples resting at some beautiful home.*

"When they have, with joyful feelings, made such various and splendid donations, they rouse their energy in order to obtain enlightenment; these are those who try to reach supreme enlightenment by means of charitableness."

Most people who met with Buddha wanted to be his disciple, if possible. Those who could not be his disciples would contribute something. They wanted to participate in Buddha's work and to feel better. That is what it really means. "These are those who try to reach supreme enlightenment by means of charitableness." This is more natural, you know. It is something like a special practice for attaining enlightenment. It was so, for the bodhisattva. The bodhisattva has six *paramitas*: *dana paramita*, *sila paramita*, *ksanti* or *patience paramita*, *zeal* or *virya paramita*, *meditation* or *dhyana paramita*, and *prajna paramita*. Those are bodhisattva practices. But they did this kind of practice more naturally; later we counted them, like the six *prajna paramitas* or four practices of the bodhisattva.

"Others set forth the law of quietness, by many myriads of illustrations and proofs; they preach it to thousands of *kotis* of living beings; these are tending to supreme enlightenment by science."

Science? Maybe by wisdom. It says science, but science is very modern. Enlightenment by wisdom. "The law of quietness," we should be quiet, first of all--that is meditation, "by many myriads of illustrations and proofs." If you sit quietly, you will be like this. This is the proof. And how you keep quiet is the illustration. "They preach it to thousands of *kotis of living beings*." *Just to sit is to preach Buddha's teaching to every being.*

*"(There are) sons of the Sugata who try to reach enlightenment by wisdom; they understand the law of indifference and avoid acting at the antinomy (of things), unattached like birds in the sky."*

*By having perfect wisdom, they understand the law of indifference. Indifference means non-action, non-thinking, non-activity. "And avoid acting at the antinomy," dualistic action, "unattached like birds in the sky." We say, "Bird flies like a bird, fish swims like a fish." That is that.*

*"Further, I see,"--"I" means Maitreya Bodhisattva--"O Manjughosha, many Bodhisattvas who have displayed steadiness under the rule of the departed Sugatas, and now are worshipping the relics of the Jinas."*

*We have already seen many things. First of all, we saw many Buddhas entering meditation, and we saw this earth was shaking in six ways, and a ray issued from the Buddha's forehead, and we saw people incarnated in the six states of living beings,*

heavenly, human, animal, asura, hungry ghost, hell. And we also saw buddhas in each world, and heard the Law preached by them. We saw Buddha's four congregations: monks, nuns, male and female devotees, and we saw bodhisattvas who are helping others, and Buddha finally entering Nirvana. And the last vision will be building *stupas* and mounds for Buddha, and worshipping Buddha's tomb. This is the whole story of this sutra.

"I see thousands of *kotis* of *stupas*, numerous as the sand of the Ganges, which have been raised by these sons of the Jina and now adorn *kotis* of grounds."

In each of innumerable worlds there is a Buddha who took final Nirvana and who adorned the *kotis* of lands with this kind of *stupa*. Buddha did not encourage his disciples to make *stupas*, but some of them built one for a nun when she passed away. Mostly, *stupas* were built by Mahayana Buddhists. We have a certain way of building *stupas*. They are round, and underneath the roof is an umbrella for protecting Buddha's mound. [or, the roof is an umbrella for protecting Buddha's mound?] If you go to Japan Center, you will see a *stupa*. The top of the building is a symbol of the center of the umbrella. And in the center of the building there is supposed to be a *sarira* [relic] of Buddha.

"Those magnificent *Stupas*, made of seven precious substances, with their thousands of *kotis* of umbrellas and banners, measure in height no less than 5000 *yojanas* and 2000 in circumference."

"They are always decorated with flags; a multitude of bells is constantly heard sounding; men, gods, goblins, and Titans pay their worship with flowers, perfumes, and music."

Goblins are *yakshas* and titans are *rakshasas*, *devas* who devour human beings, sucking our blood and eating our flesh. There was supposed to be an island south of ancient India where many *rakshasas* were living. That island could be Ceylon--I don't know. There were five hundred merchants who wanted to cross the ocean but were blown by a hurricane or storm to the island of *rakshasas*. The *rakshasas* disguised themselves as decent people and invited the merchants to a beautiful castle. But at midnight the merchants climbed the wall of the castle and saw another castle. They climbed higher and peeked inside the castle, where many *rakshasas* were devouring human beings. Some were still alive. So they were very frightened and discussed how to escape. Fortunately they were able to get out of the castle. This kind of story is told in some Buddhist scriptures, it is said--I haven't read it. When you recite this sutra, *yakshas* and *rakshasas* always get together and frighten us.

"Such honor do the sons of the Sugata render to the relics of the Jinas, so that all directions of space are brightened as by the celestial coral trees in full blossom.

"From this spot I behold all this; those numerous *kotis* of creatures; both this world and heaven covered with flowers, owing to the single ray shot forth by the Jina."

Those things were seen by the people who gathered at Rajagriha when the ray issued from Buddha's forehead.

"O how powerful is the Leader of men! how extensive and bright is his knowledge! that a single beam darted by him over the world renders visible so many thousands of fields!

"We are astonished at seeing this sign and this wonder, so great, so incomprehensible. Explain me the matter, O Manjusvara! the sons of Buddha are anxious to know it.

"The four classes of the congregation in joyful expectation gaze on thee, O hero, and on me; gladden (their hearts); remove their doubts; grant a revelation, O son of Sugata!

"Why is it that the Sugata has now emitted such a light? O how great is the power of the Leader of men! O how extensive and holy is his knowledge!

"That one ray extending from him all over the world makes visible many thousands of fields. It must be for some purpose that this great ray has been emitted.

"Is the Lord of men to show the primordial laws which he, the Highest of men, discovered on the terrace of enlightenment? Or is he to prophesy the Bodhisattvas their future destiny?

"There must be a weighty reason why so many thousands of fields have been rendered visible, variegated, splendid, and shining with gems, while Buddhas of infinite sight are appearing.

"Maitreya asks the son of Jina; men, gods, goblins, and Titans, the four classes of the congregation, are eagerly awaiting what answer Manjusvara shall give in explanation.

"Whereupon Manjusri, the prince royal, addressed Maitreya, the Bodhisattva Mahasattva, and the whole assembly of Bodhisattvas (in these words):"

I must continue this for two or three lectures. Do you have some questions?

Q: Roshi, you said not to stop thinking, but to be free from thinking, and I wonder if you could explain what it means to be free from thinking?

R: What I meant was don't be bound by your thinking. When you reach a conclusion by thinking, you will have some definite idea. Actually, that is why you think: to have a definite answer. But that is not possible.

Q: So what should you do?

R: You can think, and thinking will help you, of course. But you should know, at the same time, that that answer will not be definite. So you think, but you are free from thinking. That is what I meant: to have what we call a double-edged blade. So double-edge-think: don't think and think. It works two ways. This is the double nature, the double construction of Buddhist philosophy: thinking construction and non-thinking construction. Some other question?

Q: Last night you mentioned the world of form, the world of desire, and the world of no form. Would you explain what the world of form is and how that differs from the world of desire?

R: The world of desire is the world of attachment. The world of form is the world as it is, including desires. We have desires; everything has a kind of desire. But if we observe desire as it is, that is also the form world, not the desire world. The world of no form is easily obtained in your deep zazen. When you do not feel your body, you're deep, you know. That is the world of non-form. Those are the worlds where every being exists.

Q: In Hinduism they often wonder about good karma and bad karma and merit. And when the Emperor asked Bodhidharma about the merit in making many temples, Bodhidharma said, "No merit." In what sense is there merit in reading or chanting the sutra?

R: To sit is to read the sutra. We understand in the opposite way. Let me explain this point. This is a very good question. In another school, for instance, they say, "You should read the scripture with your body. You should experience it." When they say

this, it means that even if a person is going to be killed, the sword will be broken in two, piece by piece. If that kind of thing happens to him, it means he reads the scripture by his experience, with his body.

We also say you should read the scripture with your body, but what we mean by that is that not just this scripture only has eternal truth. Universal truth is truly with this scripture, with bodhisattvas, with various kinds of followers of Buddhism, and with rivers and mountains and everything. So to read this scripture with the body means to find the truth of it in everything, in everyday activity. There's a big difference. So the merit of reading this scripture is in finding the truth of it in our everyday activity. We read this scripture so that we can understand more perfectly and become familiar with the truth. This is our attitude toward scriptures.

This kind of statement is in this scripture. So we should observe everything as being the things described in this scripture. The emperor's building of temples is, of course, merit, not because he built temples, but because of his understanding of Buddhism and helping. That is merit. Real merit is not a matter of building temples or not building temples, or a matter of big and small. This is our understanding.

Q: Roshi, when we chant the *Maka [Hannya Haramita] Shin Gyo*, in what sense is there merit? And can we give this merit to others?

R: Yes, to help. When you become familiar with the *Shin Gyo*, what you will do will naturally explain your understanding, your attitude. Even though you don't realize it, there is a big difference between the people who can recite sutras and those who cannot. So, of course, that you can recite sutras will help others. From my cabin, when I am resting, I can see out of the window in front of my sink. Before you enter the restroom, you bow. And I think you are just doing it, you know, like this, maybe, because you get accustomed to it. But I thought, if people saw someone bowing to that place, what kind of feelings would they have? The people might not know what it meant, but I think you would give them some feeling. You just do it, you know. And that's a very valuable thing. This is the same thing as reciting the sutra.

Buddha's disciples converted many learned scholars to Buddhism, like Sariputra, who converted when he saw a monk walking on the street with a very steady feeling. So, we say that each one of the 250 characters of the "Prajna Paramita Sutra" is a bodhisattva, is Buddha. This is more than just how we understand it. That is this merit for us and for others.

EZT – early SFZC transcript – 68-02-00-B

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