

OPENING THE EYES OF WOODEN OR PAINTED IMAGES

MWND: vol. 4, p.27.

The Buddha possesses thirty-two features. All of them represent the physical aspect. Thirty-one of them, from the lowest, the markings of the thousand-spoked wheel on the sole of each foot, up to the unseen crown of his head, belong to the category of visible and non-coextensive physical existences. They can therefore be depicted in tangible form, such as pictures or statues. The remaining feature, the pure and far-reaching voice, belongs to the category of invisible and coextensive physical existences. It therefore cannot be captured either in a painting or in a wooden image.

Since the Buddha's passing, two kinds of images, wooden and painted, have been made of him. They possess thirty-one features but lack the pure and far-reaching voice. Therefore, they are not equal to the Buddha. They are also devoid of the spiritual aspect. The Buddha in the flesh is to a wooden or painted image what the heavens are to the earth or clouds to mud. Why, then, does the *Nehangyo Gobun* state that both the living Buddha and a wooden or painted image made of him after his death bestow equal benefit? Indeed, the *Daiyoraku Sutra* absolutely declares that a wooden or painted images is inferior to the living Buddha.

When one places a sutra in front of a wooden or painted image of the Buddha, the image becomes endowed with all thirty-two features. Yet, even though it has the thirty-two features, without the spiritual aspect it is in no way equal to a Buddha, for even the beings in the world of Humanity or Heaven may possess the thirty-two features. When the *Gokai Sutra* is placed before a wooden or painted image having thirty-one features, the image becomes equal to a wheel-turning king. When the *Juzen Ron* is placed before it, the image becomes equal to Taishaku. When the *Shutsuyoku Ron* is placed before it, the image becomes equal to Bonten. But, in none of these cases does it in any way become equal to a Buddha.

When an *Agon* sutra is placed in front of a wooden or painted image, the image becomes equal to a man of Learning. When one of the common *prajna* teaching, which were preached at the various ceremonies held during the Hodo and Hannya periods, is placed before it, the image becomes equal to a man of Realization. When one of the specific or perfect teachings preached during the Kegon, Hodo, or Hannya period is placed before it, the image becomes equal to a bodhisattva. Yet in none of these cases either does it in any way become equal to a Buddha. The *mudras* and *mantras* of the Buddhas Butsugen and Dainichi who appear in the *Dainichi*, *Kogochō*, and *Soshitsuji* sutras are useless, for, although their names *Butsugen* and *Dainichi* respectively mean the Buddha-eye and Great Sun, in reality they do not possess these qualities. Similarly, even the Buddha who appears in the *Kegon Sutra* is not the Buddha of the perfect teaching though his name suggests that he is.

When the Lotus Sutra is placed before an image possessing the thirty-one features, the image never fails to become the Buddha of the pure and perfect teaching. It is for

this reason that the *Fugen* Sutra, referring to the Buddha of the Lotus Sutra, explains, "The three enlightened properties of the Buddha's life arise from the Hodo." "Hodo" in this phrase does not mean the sutras of the Hodo period; it indicates the Lotus Sutra. The *Fugen* Sutra also states, "This Mahayana sutra is the eye of all Buddhas because, through its teachings, they acquire the five types of vision."

The written words of the Lotus Sutra express in visible and non-coextensive form the Buddha's pure and far-reaching voice, which is itself invisible and co-extensive. They therefore possess the two physical aspects of color and form. The Buddha's pure and far-reaching voice, which once vanished, has reappeared in the visible form of written words to benefit the people.

A person gives utterance to speech on two occasions. On one occasion, he does so to tell other people what he himself does not believe in an effort to deceive them. His voice in this case "accords with others minds." On the other, the person gives voice to what he truly has in mind. Thus his thoughts are expressed in his voice. The mind represents the spiritual aspect, and the voice, the physical aspect. The spiritual aspect manifests itself in the physical. A person can know another's mind by listening to his voice. This is because the physical aspect reveals the spiritual aspect. The physical and spiritual, which are one in essence, manifest themselves as two distinct aspects; thus the Buddha's mind found expression as the written words of the Lotus Sutra. These written words are the Buddha's mind in a different form. Therefore, those who read the Lotus Sutra must not regard it as consisting of mere written words, for those words are in themselves the Buddha's mind.

For this reason, T'ien-t'ai in his commentary states: "When the Buddha expounds the Law only after repeated entreaties from his listeners, he expounds the heart of his teaching. The heart of his teaching is the Buddha's mind, and the Buddha's mind is itself the Buddha's wisdom. The Buddha's wisdom is extremely profound. Therefore, the Buddha refuses three times to proceed with his preaching, and his listeners entreat him four times to continue to preach. The preaching of the Lotus Sutra was accomplished by such difficulties. Compared to the Lotus Sutra, the preaching of the other sutras was an easy matter." In this commentary, T'ien-t'ai uses the term "Buddha's mind" to indicate that the sutra, itself a physical entity, actually embodies the Buddha's spiritual aspect.

Because the Lotus Sutra manifests the Buddha's spiritual aspect, when one embodies that spiritual aspect in a wooden or painted image possessing thirty-one features, the image in its entirety becomes the living Buddha. This is what is meant by the enlightenment of plants.

It is for this reason that T'ien-t'ai states, "All things having color or fragrance are manifestations of the Middle Way." Commenting on this, Miao-lo adds, "However, although people may admit that all things having color or fragrance are manifestations of the Middle Way, they are nevertheless shocked and harbor doubts when they hear for the first time the doctrine that insentient beings possess the Buddha nature." Ch'eng-kuan of the Kegon school stole T'ien-t'ai's doctrine of *ichinen sanzen*, using it to interpret the *Kegon* Sutra. Then he wrote, "Both the Lotus and *Kegon* sutras reveal the doctrine of

ichinen sanzen. However, the *Kegon* Sutra is the teaching of enlightenment for people of the sudden teaching, because it was preached earlier, while the Lotus Sutra is the teaching of enlightenment for people of the gradual teaching, because it was preached later. The *Kegon* Sutra is the root, because it preceeded all the other sutras. The Lotus Sutra consists of nothing but branches and leaves. He puffed himself up like a mountain, thinking that he alone had mastered the true teaching. In reality, however, he did not know about the enlightenment of plants, the heart of the doctrine of *ichinen sanzen*. Miao-lo ridiculed the ignorance Ch'eng-kuan showed in the above-quoted statement.

Our contemporary scholars of the Tendai sect think that they alone have mastered the doctrine of *ichinen sanzen*. Yet they equate the Lotus Sutra with the *Kegon* Sutra or with the *Dainichi* Sutra. Their arguments do not go beyond even Ch'eng-kuan's views but remain on the same level as those of Shan-wu-wei and Pu-k'ung. In the final analysis, when the eye-opening ceremony for a newly-made wooden or painted image is conducted by Shingon priests, the image becomes, not a true Buddha, but a provisional one. Indeed, it does not even become a provisional Buddha. Even though it may resemble the Buddha in appearance, in reality it remains the same insentient plant from which it originated. Moreover, it does not even remain an insentient plant; it becomes a devil or a demon. This is because the erroneous doctrine of the Shingon priests, expressed in *mudras* and *mantras*, becomes the mind of the wooden or painted image. This is like those instances in which a person's mind causes him to alter and turn into a rock, as happened with Uluka or Kapila.

Unless one who has grasped the essence of the Lotus Sutra conducts the eye-opening ceremony for a wooden or painted image, it will be as if a masterless house were to be occupied by a thief or as if, upon a person's death, a demon were to enter his body. When, in present day Japan, eye-opening ceremonies for the Buddha images are conducted according to the Shingon rite, demons occupy them and deprive people of their lives, for a demon is also known as a "robber of life." Moreover, devils enter those images and deprive people of their benefits, and another name for a devil is a "robber of benefit." Because the people worship demons, they will bring the country to ruin in their present lifetime, and because they revere devils, they will fall into the hell of incessant suffering in their next existance.

When a person dies and his spirit departs from his body, a demon may enter in its place and destroy his descendants. This is what is meant by a demon called *gaki*, a hungry spirit that devours even itself. However, if a wise person extols the Lotus Sutra and with it inspirits the dead person's remains, then, although the deceased's body remains human, his mind will become the Dharma body. This accords with the doctrine that one can in his present form attain the stage where he perceives the non-birth and non-extinction of the phenomenal world. A wise person who has mastered the perfect teaching of the *Kegon*, *Hodo* or *Hannya* can bring a dead person's remains into the state of realizing the non-birth and non-extinction of all phenomena. This is what the Nirvana Sutra means when it states, "Although the body remains human, his mind will become

equal to that of the Buddha." Chunda set an example of attaining in his present body the realization of the non-birth and non-extinction of all phenomena.

If a wise person enlightened to the Lotus Sutra conducts a service for a deceased person, the deceased's body, just as it is, will become the Dharma body. This is what the phrase "in one's present form" means. Then the wise man will retrieve the dead person's departed spirit, bring it back into his remains and transform it into the Buddha's mind. This is what the phrase "attaining Buddhahood" indicates. The words "in one's present form" represent the physical aspect, and "attaining Buddhahood," the spiritual. The deceased person's physical and spiritual aspects will be transformed into the mystic reality and mystic wisdom of beginningless time. This is attaining Buddhahood in one's present form.

Thus the Lotus Sutra states, "... This reality consists of appearance (the body of the dead person), nature (his mind), entity (the true entity of his body and mind),..." It also reads, "Having profoundly mastered the aspects of offense and benefit,/ Universally illuminating all ten directions,/ The subtle and pure Dharma body/ Has perfected the thirty-two features..." In this last quotation, the first two lines indicate the realization of the non-birth and non-extinction of all phenomena, and the latter two, the attainment of Buddhahood in one's present form. The model of the latter is the dragon king's daughter, while that of the former is Chunda.