

Wherever You Stand 24: Yoka daishi's (Yongjia) Shodoka: Song of Liberation part 13

by Ven. Shikai Zuiko O-sensei

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Previously on "Wherever You Stand",
we looked into more verses from
the "Shodoka: Song of Liberation" by Yoka daishi
in which he talked about the Indian records, starting with Mahakasyapa
the "Transmission of the Lamp"
and down through the 28 Ancestors
to the first Chinese Ancestor, Bodhidharma
who brought the Teachings of Reality to the Middle Kingdom.

The Six Ancestors received the robe.

One verse:

*One does not stand alone
The false doesn't exist alone.
When ideas and non-being vanish, all is empty*

and

Yoka Daishi points to the fact that
well,
we human beings really have very strong tendencies
to entangle ourselves
in all sorts of beliefs
in all sorts of teachings
which we may not understand
but they're so complex that we think they must have an inherent meaning
that if we just study them,
well, we're going to wake up
and we will understand.

He spoke of the Teachings about twenty emptinesses
the twenty emptinesses,
which are intended to disentangle you
these twenty emptinesses
were written about by an Indian scholar,
Chandrakirti
born in 600, died in 650
and he was an Indian scholar at Nalanda University.

He was a disciple of Nagarjuna
and a commentator on his works
and those of his main disciple.

He was born into a Brahmin family in Samanta in South India.

He was quite famous for his approach to his interpretation of the Madhyamika
(and you've heard that word before),
and in his writings, Chandrakurti defended Teachings of the Buddha
and he also offered refutations of a number of early Buddhist views,
and he came up with the Twenty Emptinesses,
which were in verse form and he put forward as entrance to the Middle Way.

There's "Emptiness of the Inner":
refers to dharmas belonging to the subject.

*Since it has no inherent nature,
The eye is empty of being an eye.
The ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind are the same way.
They are all described in a similar way.*

*They are not stable nor forever lasting,
Nor do they remain for a short time and decay.
The eye and the rest that are the six inner ones
Are things that have no essential nature at all.
This is what is meant by "emptiness of the inner."*

"Emptiness of the Outer":
refers to object-related dharmas.

So dharmas Emptiness of the Inner seems to be talking about
dharmas which are the experience of the bodymind.

Emptiness of the Outer:
dharmas or moments of experience which are outside the bodymind.

*For these reasons, form's nature is emptiness;
Therefore form is empty of being form.
Sounds, odours, things that are tasted, and what the body feels too,
All these phenomena are exactly the same.*

*Form and so forth have no essential nature:
This very lack of essence is called "emptiness of the outer."*

The third:
"Emptiness of the Inner and the Outer".

The fourth

"Emptiness of Emptiness"

*All phenomena lack the essential nature, and
The wisest of all call this "emptiness."
(...)*

*The emptiness of what is called "emptiness"
Is the "emptiness of emptiness."
The Buddha taught it to counteract
The mind's tendency to think of emptiness as something truly existent.*

We are such jerks, really, we human beings. We want to make things out of everything.

Five:

"Emptiness of the Great".

*The "great" is what the ten directions encompass:
All sentient beings and the entire universe.
The "immeasurables" prove the directions' infiniteness:
They pervade the limitless directions, so they cannot be measured in extent.*

*That all ten directions in their whole vast extent
are empty of essence is the "emptiness of the great."
The Buddha taught about its emptiness
to reverse our conception of the vast as being real.*

So we do and may notice moments of experience,
dharma,
and recognize that they are transitory,
but somehow or other when we look at the so called "larger picture"
we can start to make things seem to be very concrete,
we come up with cosmologies
and take them to be real.

"Emptiness of the Ultimate":

*Nirvana, the Truth Body, is empty of itself,
And this is what the emptiness of the ultimate is.*

So we want to make objects,
(this is me talking, not Chandrakirti),
we want to make everything into a thing
so that we can conquer it,
so that we can have it,
so that we can own,

so that we can hang onto it.

Well, there is nothing
nothing, kids,
that you can hang onto.

Basically, this of course,
includes the very bodymind that's sitting there
practising.

"Emptiness of the Composite of the Conditions"
"Emptiness of the Uncomposite".

"Emptiness of That Which is Beyond Extreme":

*That to which extremes do not apply
Is expressed as being beyond extremes.
Its emptiness of its very self
Is explained as the "emptiness of that which is beyond extremes."*

"Emptiness of That Which Has Neither Beginning nor End".

"Emptiness of What Should not be Discarded":

*To "discard" something means
To throw it away or to abandon it.
What should not be discarded is
What one should never cast away from oneself
"the great vehicle".*

So don't discard your practice.
Don't discard this activity of the bodymind in this moment
of noticing anything whatsoever,
practising that moment of noticing the Reality,
this activity
is very important.
This activity points to the Reality of experiencing.

"Emptiness of the True Nature".

"Emptiness of All Phenomena".

"Emptiness of Defining Characteristics".

"Emptiness of the Imperceptible".

*The present does not remain;
The past and future do not exist.*

Ain't that the truth?
And somehow or other we want to make the present extend,
we want to believe the truth exists,
that the truth of the past exists somewhere,
that our memories,
these thoughts that come up about something that happened in the past,
are true,
that we can create a future
by thinking about it.

Now there's vast industries built on that.

"Think the future that you want to have and it shall happen."

BS.

You have to DO something.

"You can be anything that you think you want to be."

Not true.

But these are fairy tales upon which we make decisions.

"Emptiness that is the Absence of Entities".

Now these sixteen Emptinesses are condensed into four.

These four are a summary of the previous sixteen.

1. Emptiness of Entities.

*In short, "entities" are
everything included in the five aggregates.
Entities are empty of being entities,
And this is the "emptiness of entities."*

2. Emptiness of Non-Entities.

3. Emptiness of the Nature.

4. Emptiness of the Entity that is Other:

*Whether or not buddhas appear in the world,
The natural emptiness of all entities
Is proclaimed to be
The "entity that is other."*

*Other names for this are the "genuine limit" and "suchness."
They are empty of themselves and this is the "emptiness of the entity that is other."*

So,

all experiences,
all dharma,
all moments of experience
rise and fall.

That's a fact.
And that is what you are practising.

This is history that we're listening to
and that I'm presenting,
it's the history of the influences
that have led to much discovery
and
much confusion.

So let's view this as ways to clear confusion
just as Huineng spoke of cleaning dust from the mirror.
Actually, he said "there's no dust, there's no mirror, all is empty".

So you can remember this at the noticing
of each moment of experience.
There's nothing there to get involved with,
and when you're feeding attention into experiences,
you are making them bigger than they actually are
and this is unfortunate,
this is sad
because we cause ourselves a lot of grief when we do this.

Now onto new verses...

*The time of the Buddha is long gone and confusion is deep.
Delusion is strong, practice is weak,
fear and hatred increase.*

Sound familiar?
Hmm?

Well that was written 1300 years ago
and Yoka daishi wrote that 1300 years after the Buddha was alive
so we're sort of kind of in the middle with his writing,
in the middle of that 2600 year expanse in which practice,
in which the process of waking up to Reality
has been practised
and passed on
from Ancestor to Ancestor to Ancestor.

*Hearing the Direct Way of the Thus Come,
some regret not being able to smash it to pieces.*

Now we've come across, in the course of the "Shodoka"
many instances, many mentions
of the animosity that was occasioned by those who were practising Bodhidharma's practice,
who were practising just sitting
and may have said things
that may have been construed by some
to be critical of what they were doing.

Scholars and so forth may not have been necessarily happy
and may have in fact engaged in witch hunts of those who were speaking of
actual practice
actual zazen.

Chandrakirti did come up, apparently,
with a very nice quote:

*If, by trying to understand the truth, you dispel the misunderstandings of some people and thereby some
philosophies are damaged—that cannot be taken as criticizing the views of others.*

Nicely said.

*Craving gives rise to suffering.
Don't blame others for your own actions.*

We do like to do that
because self-image,
this contraction into a sense of self
that has beliefs about how it is and how the world is
ALWAYS wants to be right,
and
will push
and
shove
and
lie
and
cheat
and
steal
to maintain its essential rightness
because

after all,

“if I’m right,
then everybody else is wrong
and it is their fault if I’m not feeling so terrific
because in my vast wisdom
and shining luminosity
I would just be happy all the fracking time
except for these others who get in my way!”

Of course
not any of you,
I’m SURE
have EVER had any thoughts like that...

*If you don’t want to live in suffering
do not slander the Teachings turned by the Thus Come.*

So, the Teachings of Reality,
the Buddhadharma,
which is very simple,
practise at the moment you notice anything at all,
feel the breath
feel the whole bodymind
sit up straight.

What’s to slander?
Just because you may not like it
just because you feel uncomfortable
is no reason to point the finger at the Teachers and the Lineage
because when you do practise
you will notice that
what is bothering you,
be it physical discomfort
or the anguish of roasting yourself on your own spit
will open.

That’s just true
and each one of you have experienced moments of this
or why would you even bother showing up?

So the truth is that
the Teachings of Reality are true,
they do what they deliver.

It takes time, though,

and you have to actually do it
because there's nothing to believe in.

*Only sandalwood
grows with sandalwood.*

*Lions rest in dark groves, wander alone and at ease
where no other birds or animals are found.*

*Lion cubs follow the elders
and even a three year old can give the roar.*

So it doesn't matter how long you've been practising
or how little,
a moment of Reality presents itself
and there can be that "lion's roar"
of feeling the breath
sitting up straight
opening the eye gaze and practising what is true
and as you do that
as you continue to do that
you will find that
more and more often
you are actually saying what needs to be said
saying what you mean
meaning what you say
and being a real human being
rather than a fabrication
assembled from the hopes and dreams of self-image.

*The radical Direct Teaching is beyond sentiment;
there is no room for doubt or hesitation.*

*This monk doesn't say this to create divisions;
it's just that you should know
about the trap of permanence and its opposite.*

*Right isn't "right", wrong isn't "wrong";
yet an inch of deviation leads a thousand miles off.*

*A girl of the dragon people who didn't stray from the source,
at once realized Buddha,
while Sunaksatra was reborn in the hells.*

Now, the dragon king's daughter,

a girl of the dragon people or the naga girl,
was apparently the eight-year-old daughter of Sagara,
one of the eight dragon kings–
and here we're into mythology of course–
said to dwell in the palace at the bottom of the sea.

In a chapter of "The Lotus Sutra",
the dragon girl decided she wanted to become enlightened
when she heard Manjusri preach "The Lotus Sutra".

Manjusri said that she's capable of quickly attaining Buddha-wisdom.
Manjusri was challenged,
saying that even Sakyamuni attained enlightenment
only after fulfilling the bodhisattva practice for many kalpas–
(for a long long time, that's what a kalpa is)–
and that she cannot become a Buddha so easily.

Just then the dragon girl appears in front of the assembly and praises Sakyamuni Buddha. Sariputra then speaks to her, saying that women are subject to the five obstacles and are incapable of attaining Buddhahood. At that moment, she offers a jewel to the Buddha, transforms herself into a male, and instantaneously perfects the bodhisattva practice. She then appears in a land to the south called Spotless World and manifests the state of Buddhahood without changing her dragon form. She preaches the Lotus Sutra to all living beings there. The dragon girl's enlightenment has important implications. First, it refutes the idea of the time that women could never attain enlightenment.[fn]The Soka Gakkai Dictionary of Buddhism[/fn]

Somehow, conveniently, it seems to have been overlooked
in the space of a few sentences
that she turned herself into a male...
but we can ignore that
we can recognize that this description came from the Soka Gakkai International Library.

Soka Gakkai is a lay sect
which practises their practice based on the teachings of Nichiren
who was born in 1222.
Dogen was 22 at the time,
and Nichiren devolved practice into only study of "The Lotus Sutra".
It devolved even further until
one chanting of "Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo"
one line of "The Lotus Sutra"
was "guaranteed" to bring enlightenment.

So it's kind of suspect,
but 1222,
it was obvious as Yoka daishi was writing in 713

that he had not heard the teachings
or the story of the dragon king's daughter from Nichiren
because Nichiren wasn't born yet,
so obviously it was a much older story
than that which Nichiren was using,
apparently from "The Lotus Sutra".

Then we have Sunaksatra.

Now who is that?

Sunaksatra was the Buddha's half-brother
who apparently served him for 24 years.
He saw the Buddha as deceitful

...No different than I am except for the six-foot-wide light around the body.

[O-sensei and students laugh]

He left and that's when, apparently, Ananda became the Buddha's attendant.
Sunaksatra died within a week and was reborn as a preta or hungry ghost.

Karma's a bitch. [laughing]

This is from "The Words of My Perfect Teacher" by Patrul Rinpoche.

So what we have is all sorts of stories
that are mentioned by Yoka daishi.

Now we will close today with the verse which we will look at next time
where Yoka daishi says

*In my youth I collected knowledge,
reading the Discourses and commentaries.*

So have fun with all of this!

There's certainly a lot available
if you look.

Certainly a lot of information that will help you
(if you're interested)
expand your knowledge of the history of Dharma,
expand your knowledge of how people are and how they've always been,
and might provide you with some entertainment.

Thank you for listening.