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Introduction:

Shakyamuni Buddha, seeing the morning star, gained enlightenment, and said, “I and all sentient beings of the great earth have in the same moment attained the way.”

Poem: One branch from the old plum tree
 Extends splendidly forth.
 Thorns become attached to it
 In time

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Case 1

The First Patriarch, Mahakasyapa Arya (Dai-isso Makakasho Sonja)

When the World-Honored One twirled a flower and twinkled his eyes, Mahakasyapa broke into a broad smile. The World-Honored One said, “I have the Treasure Eye of the true Dharma and the wonderful mind of Nirvana. I entrust this to Mahakasyapa.

Poem: Lonely and deep, in the cloudy valley,
 Still the sacred pine tree
 Has passed through the cold of many years.

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Case 2.

The Second Patriarch, Ananda Arya (Anan Sonja) # See

Mumonkan 22#

Ananda asked Mahakasyapa, “The World-Honored One gave you the kasaya (kesa) of golden cloth. Did he give you anything else?”

Kashyapa said, “Ananda.”

Ananda said, “Yes, Master.”

Kashyapa said, “Knock down the flag-pole at the gate”

Poem: The wisteria has withered, trees have fallen down;
 Mountains have crumbled level with the plains.
 Flooding cascades have overflowed their banks;
 Fire flashes forth from the flint boulders.

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Case 3.

The Third Patriarch, Shonawashu Sonja (Samakavasa Arya)

The Third Patriarch, Shonawashu, asked Ana Sonja, “What is the essential nature of things which is intrinsically not born?”

Sonja pointed to the corner of the Master’s kesa. Again the master asked him, “What is the essential nature of the supreme way of all buddhas?”

Sonja tugged at the corner of the Master’s kesa. Washu at once had great enlightenment.

Poem:

From ten thousand foot crags, waters of no source;
They bubble and boil, scattering clouds, penetrating rocks;
Snow flies and flowers scatter at random;
One strip of white silk transcends dust and rubbish.

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Case 4.

The Fourth Patriarch, Ubakikutu Sonja (Upagatu Arya)

The Fourth Patriarch, Ubakikuta, attended Washu Sonja for three years. Finally he shaved his head and became a priest (*literally, 'left the house.'*)

Washu asked him, "Has your body left the house, or your mind?"

The Master said, "Truly it is my body that has left the house."

Sonja said, "The subtle Dharma of all Buddhas! Why! It has nothing to do with body or mind."

Kikuta directly underwent great realization.

Poem: The house was destroyed;

 The man was extinguished;

 There is neither inside or outside;

 Where do body and mind manifest their form?

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Case 5.

The Fifth Patriarch, Daitaku Sonja (Dhrtaka Arya)

The Fifth Patriarch, Daitaku Sonja, said, “A priest has no subject and no object, because the mind is not born or extinguished. This is the unchangeable way. All Buddhas are unchangeable in this way. The mind has no form. The body too has no form.

Sonja said, “You must realize this fully through your enlightenment.” Daitaku had deep realization.

Poem: You must realize by gaining the marrow that your enlightenment is clear;

Lim-Pen still has a secret which he cannot transmit.

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Case 6.

The Sixth Patriarch, Mishaka Sonja (Mikkaka Arya)

The Fifth Patriarch, Daitaka Sonja, told Mishaka the following teaching of the Buddha: “If you practice the supernatural or study the lesser way, it is as though you are bound by a rope. You must know yourself. If you turn from the lesser streams and at once enter the great ocean, then you will surely attain realization of no-birth.

Hearing this, Mishaka was enlightened.

Poem:

Though we find clear waters ranging to the vast blue sky in
Autumn;

How can it compare to the hazy moon on a spring night?

Most people want to have it pure white,

But sweep as you will, you cannot empty the mind.

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Case 7.

The Seventh Patriarch, Bashumita Sonja (Vasumitra Arya)

The Seventh Patriarch, the venerable Bashumita, placed a wine vessel before Mishaka Sonja, made his vows, and stood before him.

Mishaka asked, “Is that my vessel or your vessel?”

Mita pondered.

Mishaka said, “If this is your vessel, that is your own essential nature. If this is your vessel, then my dharma should be transmitted to you.”

Hearing this, Mita deeply realized the essential nature of no-birth.

Poem: As the bell in the frosty dawn
 Echoes at the moment it is struck,
 Thus from the beginning
 There is no need for an empty vessel.

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Case 8.

The Eighth Patriarch, Butsunandai Sonja.

The Eighth Patriarch, Butsunandai, met the Seventh Patriarch, Bashumitta Sonja, and said, “I have come to argue the real fact with you.”

Sonja said, “If you argue, it is not the real fact. The real fact is not argument. If you want to argue, it cannot be an argument of the real fact.”

The Master realized that the Sonja’s argument about the real fact was superior to his own, and realized the fact of no-bin.

Poem:

Even Subhuti and Vimalakirti cannot preach complete

Wagalama and Sariputra see like blind men.

If one wants to realize this truly,

Isn’t salt suitable for all food?

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Case 9.

The Ninth Patriarch, Fudamitta Sonja, (Buddhamitra Arya)

The Ninth Patriarch, Fudamitta, heard Butsunandai Sonja preach these words: “Intimacy with one’s parents does not compare with that words and mind. Your actions become one with the Way, and that is none other than the mind of all Buddhas. If you search elsewhere for Buddha with form then it is not like you. If you wish to know your essential mind it is neither in unity nor in separation.

With this, Fudamitta was deeply enlightened.

Poem: Don’t ever say

Speech and silence are connected with subject and object.

Ah, essential mind cannot be stained by subject and object.

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Case 10.

The Tenth Patriarch, Ayo Sonja (Barishiba Sonja, Parsva Arya)

The Tenth Patriarch, Ayo Sonja, attended upon Fudamitta Sonja for three years. During that time, he did not once lie down to sleep.

One day, Sonja recited sutras and preached about no birth. Upon hearing this, the Master realized the way.

Poem:

Rolling out, rolling back,

How many scrolls of sutras does it recite?

It dies here, it is born there;

It has several kinds of chapters and verses.

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Case 11.

The Eleventh Patriarch, Funayasha Sonja (Funyayasas Arya)

The Eleventh Patriarch, Funayasha, stood before Kyo Sonja, with gassho. Ayo Sonja asked him, “Where do you come from?”

The Master said, “My mind is non-coming.”

Sonja said, “Where do you stay?”

The Master said, “My mind is non-staying.”

Sonja said, “Are you unfixed?”

The Master said, “All Buddhas are that too.”

Sonja said, “You are not all Buddhas. Buddhas are not that too.”

After hearing these words, the Master practiced Zazen for three weeks, and attained complete realization of non-birth, and absolute peace of mind. He told Sonja, “That is not Buddha, that is not Sonja.”

Poem: My mind is neither Buddha nor you;

Coming and going are within it until now.

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Case 12.

The Twelfth Patriarch, Memyo Sonja (Asvaghosa Arya)

The Twelfth Patriarch, Memyo, asked Funayasha Sonja, “I wish to know the Buddha. What is that, after all?”

Funyasha said, “If you wish to know the Buddha, he is the one who doesn’t know.”

The Master said, “If the Buddha does not know, how can he know that?”

Sonja said, “He does not know Buddha from the first. How does he know that is not?”

The Master said, “That is the fact of a saw.” Sonja said, “That is the fact of wood.” And he asked, “What does ‘the fact of a saw’ mean?”

The Master said, “It comes out equally between us.” And he asked, “What does ‘the fact of wood’ mean?”

Sonja said, “You have been analyzed by me.”

Hearing this the Master at once had broad realization.

Poem: The peach blossoms in the village field
 Are not aware of their own crimson;
 But they still freed Reibun
 From all his doubts.

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Case 13.

The Thirteenth Patriarch, Kabimora Sonja (Kapimala Arya)

Once Memyo Sonja preached about the sea of Buddha nature, and said, “The mountains, rivers, and the great earth are all established by this. The three wisdoms and the six extraordinary senses all arise from this.”

Hearing these words, the Master attained belief and realization.

Poem:

Through waves of the vast ocean spread over the entire heavens,
How will their pure and clear waters ever change?

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Case 14.

The Fourteenth Patriarch, Ryuju Sonja

When Kabimora Sonja was received by the Dragon King, he was given the Cintamani (talisman pearl.)

Ryuju asked him, “This pearl is the most valuable pearl in the world. Is it form or non-form?”

Sonja said, “You only know about its being form or non-form. You don’t know that this pearl is neither form nor non-form. Still more, you don’t know that this pearl is not a pearl.”

When the master heard this he was deeply enlightened.

Poem:

The solitary light shines wonderfully, it never darkens,

The talisman pearl, glittering, taking part in it.

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Case 15.

The Fifteenth Patriarch, Kanadaiba Arya

The Fifteenth Patriarch, Kanabaida Sonja, went for an interview with the great personage, Ryuju Sonja. Sonja knowing this was a wise man, had his attendant place a full bowl of water before the Master's seat, just as the Master reached the gate.

Seeing this full bowl of water, the Master at once took a needle and put it into the bowl, and then on to meet Sonja formally, with great joy of realization.

Poem:

With one needle, all the waters of the universe are fished up and exhausted.

The fierce dragon has no place to hide.

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Case 16.

The Sixteenth Patriarch, Ragorata Sonja

Kanadaiba Sonja came to the country of Kapila on angya. He was entertained by a certain wealthy man, named Onma Jodoku, who told him the following story:

“One day I found an edible fungus shaped like an ear growing in my garden. It was very delicious. As soon as I picked it, another grew in its place, and when I picked the new one, still another grew in its place, and so on indefinitely. Only my second son, Ragorata, and I are able to find it. Other family members cannot find it at all. What could be the reason for this?”

Kanadaibada Sonja said, “Once in the past, a priest stayed at your house. You and your second son Ragorata served him generously, but as he had not yet opened his Dharma eye, he received your kindness without being qualified for it. So, after his death, in compensation for this lack, he becomes an edible fungus. As you and your second son served him most kindly, you can accept the edible fungus.”

The Sixteenth Patriarch, Ragorata Sonja, served Kanadaiba Sonja. Hearing about the causation of a former life, he was moved to realization.

Case 16 cont...

Poem: How sad the realized eye is not pure and clear;
Astray within, compensating others for his lack;
The cycle of cause and effect
Has not yet come to an end.

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Case 17.

The Seventeenth Patriarch, Sogyandai Sonja

Ragorata Sonja preached to Sogyandai with a poem:

Because I have no I,
You must see your I-and- m -place.
Because you take me as your teacher,
You must know your I is not I;
You're my-place is not my-place.

Poem: The function of mind rolls around in accord with its phase;
Many times I-and-my-place manifests the parts of its face.

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Case 18.

The Eighteenth Patriarch, Kayashata Sonja

Kayashata attended upon Sogyanandai Sonja. Once, when he heard the copper bells at the corners of the hall sound in the wind, Sonja asked the Master. “Do the bells ring, or does the wind ring?”

The Master said, “It is not the wind; it is not the bells. It is only my mind that rings.”

Sonja said, “Well then, who is that mind?”

The Master said, “Only because the mind is solitary and calm.”

Sonja said, “Good, good. Who can succeed to my Dharma, other than you.” With that he transmitted the Dharma treasure to the Master.

Poem:

Solitary and calm, the mind rings in the thousand different tones;
Sogya, Kayashata and the wind bell.

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Case 19.

The Nineteenth Patriarch, Kumorata Sonja

Kayashata Sonja said to Kumorata, “In ancient days, the World Honored One predicted that there would appear in the country of Geshi (Tukhara) a great personage who would make the subtle culture prosper. Now you have met me. This corresponds to that happy prediction.

Hearing this the Master was awakened to the wisdom of the cycle of life.

Poem: Overturn the body that appeared in past lives;

I now meet the old fellow.

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Case 20.

The Twentieth Patriarch, Shayata Sonja

One day, the 19th Patriarch, Kumorata Sonja, taught Shayata, saying, “Although you believe in the three kinds of karma, it is still not clear to you that Karma is born of delusion; delusion comes into existence because of consciousness; consciousness depends upon non-realisation; and non-realization comes from the mind. Mind is pure and clear from the beginning. In this mind there is no life or death, no doing or reaction to doing, no victory or defeat. It is solitary and exquisite. If you enter this dharma gate, you are the same as Buddha. All good and bad, all doing and no-doing will just be a dream, or a vision.

The Master on hearing this, understood the meaning of the teaching, and attained the wisdom about the past lives.

Poem: Intrinically the Yoshō is produced in emptiness;
Branches, leaves, root and trunk flourish beyond the clouds.

N.B. The Yoshō according to Chuang-tzu does not grow for seven years, then it rapidly becomes a huge tree.

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Case 21.

The Twenty First Patriarch, Bashubanzu Sonja

One day, the 20th Patriarch, Shayata Sonja, said to Bashubanzu, “I do not seek the Way, but I am not bewildered. I do not worship the Buddha, but I do not despise him. I do not sit for long periods, but I am not idle. I do not limit myself to one meal a day, but I am not omnivorous. I am not aware of satisfaction, but I am not greedy. If you have nothing to ask for in your mind, that state of mind is called the Way.

When the master heard this, he reflected, “This is my own problem,” and he awakened to the wisdom that never leaks away.

Poem: The wind passes through the great void:

Clouds emerge from the mountain cave.

All desires for the way or for wordly affairs,

Have no connection with it.

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Case 22.

The Twenty Second Patriarch, Manura Sonja

The Twenty Second Patriarch, Manura, asked Bashubanza Sonja,
“What is the Way of all Buddhas?”

Sonja said, “The essential nature of mind is that.”

The Master asked again, “What is the essential nature of mind?”

Sonja said, “The eighteen realms are empty. That’s it!”

Hearing this the Master attained enlightenment.

Poem: The deity Sunyata is neither inside nor outside.

Seeing and hearing voices and colours altogether are completely
empty.

N.B. The eighteen realms of sense are the 18 Dhatu, the six
organs, their six objects or conditions, and their six perceptions. The
deity Sunyata presides over the void.

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Case 23.

The Twenty Third Patriarch, Kakurokuna Sonja

The Twenty Second Patriarch, Manura Sonja, one day said to Kakurokuna I have the supreme great treasure of Dharma. You should accept it, and save beings in the world of the future with it.

The Master, hearing this, confirmed his own satori.

Poem: With its white powdered wall

The gigantic mountain stands through the clouds;

Pure and clean, without a speck:

It differs from the blue heavens.

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Case 24.

The Twenty Fourth Patriarch, Shishi Sonja

The Twenty Fourth Patriarch, Shishi Sonja, asked the Twenty Third Patriarch, Kakurokuna Sonja, “I want to search for the Way. How should I use my mind?”

Sonja said, “If you want to search for the Way, then you should not use your mind.”

The Master said, “If I do not use my mind, who would perform Buddha’s deeds?”

Sonja said, “If you use your mind, that would not be a virtuous deed. When you do not use your mind, that is Buddha’s deed.”

And he continued, “It is said in a sutra, ‘Virtuous deeds are virtuous because there is no I-and-my-place in them.’”

The Master hearing these words, entered into the wisdom of Buddha.

Poem: If you wish to uncover the void,

You must not cover it.

Empty, pure and calm,

It is clear from the beginning.

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Case 25.

The Twenty Fifth Patriarch, Shishi Sonja

The Twenty Fourth Patriarch, Shishi Sonja said to Bashashita Sonja, "I now transmit to you the eye-treasury of the true Dharma. You should keep it well, and save beings in the future with it.

The Master attained realization about the cause and effect of past lives, and received the seal of mind in secret.

Poem: At that very time when the flowers just bloom, or leaves just fall;

The King of the Medicine Plants has no other taste than that.

N.B. The King of the Medicine Plants is a huge medicinal tree, useful for every sickness, that appears in the Great Prajna Paramita Sutra, Fascicle 599.

