

# THE EASTERN BUDDHIST

## ZEN AS CHINESE INTERPRETATION OF THE DOCTRINE OF ENLIGHTENMENT

### BUDDHISM AS UNDERSTOOD BY ZEN

BEFORE I proceed to the discussion of the main idea of this essay, it may not be out of place to make some preliminary remarks concerning the attitude of some Zen critics and thereby to define the position of Zen in the general body of Buddhism. They allege that Zen Buddhism is not Buddhism, it is something foreign to the spirit of Buddhism, and that it is one of those aberrations which we often see growing up in the history of any religion. Zen is thus, according to them, an abnormality prevailing among the people whose thought and feeling flow along a channel different from the main current of Buddhist thought. Whether this allegation is true or not, will be decided, on the one hand, when we understand what is really the essence or genuine spirit of Buddhism, and, on the other, when we know the exact status of Zen doctrine in regard to the ruling ideas of Buddhism as they are accepted in the Far East. It may also be desirable to know something about the development of religious experience in general. We cannot dogmatically assert that Zen is not Buddhism just because it looks so different on its surface from what some people with a certain set of preconceived notions consider Buddhism to be. The statement of my position as regards these points will prepare the way to the development of the principal thesis.

Superficially there is something in Zen so staggering, so bizarre, and so uncouth, as to frighten the pious literary followers of the so-called primitive Buddhism. What, for instance, would they really make out of such statements as follow: In *The Sayings of Nansen* (南泉語錄) we read that, "When T'sui (崔), governor of Ch'i District (池洲), asked the Fifth Patriarch of the Zen sect how it was that while he had five hundred followers, Hui-nêng (慧能), in preference to all others, was singled out to be given the orthodox robe of transmission as the Sixth Patriarch, replied the Fifth Patriarch: 'Four hundred and ninety-nine out of my disciples understand well what Buddhism is, except Hui-nêng. He is a man not to be measured by an ordinary standard. Hence the robe of faith was handed over to him.' On this comments Nansen: 'In the age of Void there are no words whatever; as soon as the Buddha appears on earth, words come into existence, hence our clinging to signs... And thus as we now so firmly take hold of words, we limit ourselves in various ways. In the Great Way there are absolutely no such limitations as ignorance and holiness. Everything that has a name thereby limits itself. Therefore, the old master of Chiang-hsi (江西) declared that "it is neither mind, nor Buddha, nor a thing." It was in this way that he wished to guide his followers, while these days they vainly endeavour to experience the Great Way by hypostatizing such an entity as mind. If the Way could be mastered in this manner, it would be well for them to wait until the appearance of Maitreya Buddha [which is said to be at the end of the world] and then to awaken the thought of Enlightenment. How could such ones ever hope for spiritual freedom? Under the Fifth Patriarch, all of his five hundred disciples, except Hui-nêng, understood Buddhism well. The lay-disciple, Nêng, was quite unique in this respect, for he did not at all understand Buddhism. He understood the Way only and no other thing.'"

These are not very extraordinary statements in Zen, but to most of the Zen critics they must spell abomination. Buddhism is flatly denied, and its knowledge is regarded not to be indispensable to the mastery of Zen, the Great Way, which on the contrary is more or less identified with the negation of Buddhism. How is this?

To answer the question, the life and spirit of Buddhism must be stripped of all its outer casings and appendages which hide its original, genuine form. The acorn is so different from the oak, but as long as there is a continuation of growth, their identity is a logical conclusion. To see really into the nature of the acorn is to trace an uninterrupted development through its various historical stages. As long as the seed remains a seed and means nothing more, there is no life in it, it is a finished piece of work and except as an object of historical curiosity, it has no value whatever in our religious experience. In like manner, to determine the nature of Buddhism we must go along its whole line of development and see what are the healthiest and most vital germs in it which have brought it to the present state of maturity. When this is done, we shall see in what manner Zen is to be recognised as one of the various phases of Buddhism and in fact as the most essential factor in it.

To comprehend fully the constitution of any existent religion that has a long history, it is advisable to separate its founder from his teaching, as a determinant factor in the course of its development. By this I mean, in the first place, that the founder so called had in the beginning no idea of being the founder of any religious system which would later grow up in his name; in the second that to his disciples, while he was yet alive, his personality was not regarded as independent of his teaching, at least as far as they were conscious of the fact; in the third that what was unconsciously working in their minds as regards the nature of their master's

personality came out in the foreground after his passing with all the possible intensity that had been latently gaining strength within them; and lastly that the personality of the founder grew up in his disciples' minds so powerful as to make itself the very nucleus of his teaching, that is to say, the latter was made to serve as explanation of the meaning of the former. It is therefore a great mistake to think that any existent religious system was handed down to posterity by its founder as the fully matured product of his mind, and therefore that what the followers had to do with their religious founder and his teaching was to embrace both the founder and his teaching as sacred heritage—a treasure not to be profaned by the content of their individual spiritual experience. For this view fails to take into consideration what our spiritual life is and petrifies religion to its very core. This static conservatism, however, is always opposed by a progressive party which looks at a religious system from a dynamic point of view. And these two forces which are seen conflicting against each other in every field of human activity, weave out the history of religion as in other cases. In fact, history is the record of these struggles everywhere. But the very fact that there are such struggles in religion shows that they are here to some purpose and that religion is a living force; for they gradually bring to light the hidden implications of the original faith and enrich it in a manner undreamed of in the beginning. This takes place most illogically not only with regard to the personality of the founder but with regard to his teaching, and the result is an astounding complexity or rather confusion which sometimes prevents us from properly seeing into the constitution of a living religious system.

While the founder was still walking among his followers and disciples, the latter did not distinguish between the person of their leader and his teaching; for the teaching was realised

in the person and the person was livingly explained in the teaching. To embrace the teaching was to follow his steps, that is, to believe in him. His presence among them was enough to inspire them and convince them of the truth of his teaching. They might not have comprehended it thoroughly, but his authoritative way of presenting it left in their hearts no shadow of doubt as to its truth and eternal value. So long as he lived among them and spoke to them, his teaching and his person appealed to them as an individual unity. Even when they retired into a solitary place and meditated on the truth of his teaching, the image of his person was always before his mental eye.

But things went differently when his stately and inspiring personality was no more seen in the flesh. His teaching was still there, his followers could recite it perfectly from memory, but its personal connection with the author was lost, the living chain which solidly united him and his doctrine was for ever broken. When they reflected on the truth of the doctrine, they could not help thinking of their teacher as a soul far deeper and nobler than themselves. The similarities that were recognised as existing in various forms between leader and disciple gradually vanished, and as they vanished, the other side, that is, that which made him so distinctly different from his followers came to assert itself all the more emphatically and more irresistibly. The result was the conviction that he must have come from quite a unique spiritual source. The process of deification thus constantly went on until, some centuries after the death of the Master, he became a direct manifestation of the Supreme Being himself, in fact, he was the Highest One in the flesh, in him there was a divine humanity in perfect realisation. He was Son of God or the Buddha and the Redeemer of the world. He will then be considered by himself independently of his teaching; he will occupy the centre of interest in the eyes

of his followers. The teaching is of course important, but mainly as having come from the mouth of such an exalted spirit, and not necessarily as containing the truth of Enlightenment. Indeed, the teaching is to be interpreted in the light of the teacher's divine personality. The latter now predominates over the whole system, he is the centre whence radiate the rays of Enlightenment, salvation is only possible in believing in him as saviour.

Around this personality or this divine nature there will now grow various systems of philosophy essentially based on his own teaching, but more or less modified according to the spiritual experiences of the disciples. This would perhaps never have taken place if the personality of the founder were not such as to stir up the deep religious feelings in the hearts of his followers; which is to say, what most attracted the latter to the teaching was not primarily the teaching itself but that which gave life to it, and without which it would never have been what it was. We are not always convinced of the truth of a statement because it is so logically advanced, but mainly because there is an inspiring life-impulse running through it. We are first struck with it and later try to verify its truth. The understanding is needed, but this alone will never move us to risk the fate of our souls.

One of the greatest religious souls in Japan once confessed, "I do not care whether I go to hell or anywhere, but because my old master taught me to invoke the name of the Buddha, I practise the teaching." This is not a blind acceptance of the master, in whom there was something deeply appealing to one's soul, and the disciple embraced this something with his whole being. Mere logic never moves us; there must be something transcending the intellect. When Paul insisted that "if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins," he was not appealing to our logical idea of

things, but to our spiritual yearnings. It did not matter whether things existed as facts of chronological history or not, the vital concern of ours was the fulfilment of our inmost aspirations; even so-called objective facts could be so moulded as to yield the best result to the requirements of our spiritual life. The personality of the founder of any religious system that has survived through centuries of growth must have had all the qualities that fully meet such spiritual requirements. As soon as the person and his teaching are separated after his own passing in the religious consciousness of his followers, if he was sufficiently great, he will at once occupy the centre of their spiritual interest and all his teachings will be made to explain this fact in various ways.

To state it more concretely, how much of Christianity as we have it to-day is the teaching of Christ himself? and how much of it is the contribution of Paul, John, Peter, Augustine, and even Aristotle? The magnificent structure of Christian dogmatics is the work of Christian faith as has been experienced successively by its leaders, it is not the work of one person, even of Christ. For dogmatics is not necessarily always concerned with historical facts which are rather secondary in importance compared with the religious truth of Christianity: the latter is what ought to be rather than what is or what was. It aims at the establishment of what is universally valid, which is not to be jeopardised by the fact or non-fact of historical elements, as is maintained by some of the modern exponents of Christian dogmatics. Whether Christ really claimed to be the Messiah or not is a great historical discussion still unsettled among Christian theologians. Some say that it does not make any difference as far as Christian faith is concerned whether or not Christ claimed to be the Messiah. In spite of all such theological difficulties, Christ is the centre of Christianity. The Christian

edifice is built around the person of Jesus. Buddhists may accept some of his teachings and sympathise with the content of his religious experience, but so long as they do not cherish any faith in Jesus as "Christ" or Lord, they are not Christians. Christianity is therefore constituted not only with the teaching of Jesus himself but with all the dogmatical and speculative interpretations concerning the personality of Jesus and his doctrine that have accumulated ever since the death of the founder. In other words, Christ did not found the religious system known by his name, but he was made its founder by his followers. If he were still among them, it is highly improbable that he would sanction all the theories, beliefs, and practices, which are now imposed upon self-styled Christians. If he were asked whether their learned dogmatics were his religion, he might not know how to answer. He would in all likelihood profess complete ignorance of all the philosophical subtleties of Christian theology of the present day. But from the modern Christians' point of view they will most definitely assure us that their religion is to be referred to "a unitary starting point and to an original basic character," which is Jesus as Christ and that whatever manifold constructions and transformations that were experienced in the body of their religion did not interfere with their specific Christ-faith. They are Christians just as much as the brethren of their primitive community were; for there is an historical continuation of the same faith all along its growth and development which is its inner necessity. To regard the form of culture of a particular time as something sacred and to be transmitted for ever as such is to suppress our spiritual yearnings after eternal validity. This I believe is the position taken up by progressive modern Christians.

How about progressive modern Buddhists then in regard to their attitude towards Buddhist faith constituting the essence



of Buddhism? Let us first see what is Buddhism and how Buddhism came into existence in India.

It is not quite in accordance with the life and teaching of the Buddha to regard Buddhism as a system of religious doctrines and practices established by the Buddha himself; for it is more than that, and comprises, as its most important constituent elements, all the experiences and speculations of the Buddha's followers concerning the personality of their Master and his relations to his own doctrine. Buddhism did not come out of the Buddha's mind fully armed, as did Minerva from Jupiter. The theory of a perfect Buddhism from the beginning is the static view of it, and cuts it short from its continuous and never-ceasing growth. Our religious experience transcends the limitations of time, and its ever-expanding content requires a more vital form which will grow without doing violence to itself. Inasmuch as Buddhism is a living religion and not an historical mummy stuffed with dead and functionless materials, it must be able to absorb and assimilate all that is helpful to its growth. This is the most natural thing for any organism endowed with life. And this life may be traceable under divergent forms and constructions.

According to scholars of Pali Buddhism and of the Āgama literature, all that the Buddha taught seems to be summed up by the Fourfold Noble Truth, the Twelve Chains of Causation, the Eightfold Path of Righteous Living, and the doctrine of Non-ego and Nirvāna. If this was the case, what we call primitive Buddhism was quite a simple affair as long as our consideration was limited to its doctrinal aspect. There was nothing very promising in these doctrines that would eventually build up a magnificent structure to be known as Buddhism comprising both the Hinayana and the Mahayana. When we wish to understand Buddhism thoroughly, however,

we must dive deep into its bottom where lies its living spirit. Those that are satisfied with a superficial view of its dogmatical aspect are apt to let go the spirit which will truly explain the inner life of Buddhism. To some of the Buddha's immediate disciples the deeper things in his teaching failed to appeal, or they were not conscious of the real spiritual forces which moved them towards their Master. We must look underneath if we want to come in contact with the ever-growing life-impetus of Buddhism. However great the Buddha was, he could not convert a jackal into a lion, nor could a jackal comprehend the Buddha above his beastly nature. As the later Buddhists state, a Buddha alone understands another Buddha; when our subjective life is not raised to the same level as the Buddha's, many things that go to make up his inner life escape us; we cannot live in any other world than our own. Therefore, if the primitive Buddhists read so much into the life of their Master as is recorded in their writings, and no more, this does not prove that everything belonging to the Buddha has thereby been exhausted. There were probably other Buddhists who penetrated deeper into his life, as their own inner consciousness had a richer content. The history of religion thus becomes the history of our own spiritual unfolding. Buddhism must be conceived biologically, so to speak, and not mechanically. When we take this attitude, even the doctrine of the Fourfold Noble Truth becomes pregnant with yet deeper truths.

The Buddha was not a metaphysician and naturally avoided discussing such subjects as were strictly theoretical and had no practical bearing on the attainment of Nirvana. He might have had his own views on those philosophical problems that at the time engaged Indian minds. But like other religious leaders his chief interest was in the practical result of speculation and not in speculation as such. He was too busy in trying to get rid of the poisonous arrow that had

pierced the flesh, he had no desire to inquire into the history, object, and constitution of the arrow; for life was too short for that. He thus took the world as it was, that is, he interpreted it as it appeared to his religious insight and according to his own valuation. He did not intend to go any further. He called his way of looking at the world and life Dharma, a very comprehensive and flexible term, though it was not a term first used by the Buddha; for it had been in vogue some time prior to him mainly in the sense of ritual and law, but the Buddha gave it a deeper spiritual signification.

That the Buddha was practical and not metaphysical, may be seen from the criticism which was hurled at him by his opponents: "As Gautama is always found alone sitting in an empty room, he has lost his wisdom. . . . Even Śāriputra who is the wisest and best disciple of his is like a babe, so stupid and without eloquence." Here however lies the seed of a future development. If the Buddha were given up to theorising, his teaching could never be expected to grow. Speculation may be deep and subtle, but if it has no spiritual life in it, its possibilities are soon exhausted. The Dharma was ever maturing, because it was mysteriously creative.

The Buddha evidently had quite a pragmatic conception of the intellect and left many philosophical problems unsolved as unnecessary for the attainment of the final goal of life. This was quite natural with him. While he was still alive among his disciples, he was the living illustration of all that was implied in his doctrine. The Dharma was manifest in him in all its vital aspects, and there was no need to indulge in idle speculation as to the ultimate meaning of such concepts as Dharma, Nirvana, Ego, Karma, Enlightenment, etc. The Buddha's personality was the key to the solution of all these. The disciples were not fully aware of the significance of this fact. When they thought they understood the Dharma, they

did not know that this understanding was really taking refuge in the Buddha. His presence somehow had a pacifying and satisfying effect on whatever spiritual anguish they had; they felt as if they were securely embraced in the arms of a loving, consoling mother; to them the Buddha was really such. Therefore, they had no need to press the Buddha very hard to enlighten them on many of the philosophical problems that they might have grown conscious of. They were easily reconciled in this respect to the Buddha's unwillingness to take them into the heart of metaphysics. But at the same time this left much room for the later Buddhists to develop their own theories not only as to the teaching of the Buddha but as to its relation to his personality.

After the Buddha's entrance into Nirvāna, the disciples lost their World-Light through which they had such an illuminating view of things. The Dharma was there and in it they tried to see the Buddha as they were instructed by him, but it had no enlivening effect on them as before; the moral precepts consisting of many rules were regularly observed in the Brotherhood, but the authoritativeness of these regulations was missed somehow. They retired into a quietude and meditated on the teaching of the Master, but the meditation was not quite so life-giving and satisfying because they were ever assailed by doubts, and, as a natural consequence, their intellectual activities were resumed. Everything was now to be explained to the full extent of the reasoning faculty. The metaphysician began to assert himself against the simple-hearted devotion of the disciple. What was accepted as an authoritative injunction from the mouth of the Buddha, was to be examined as a subject of philosophical discussion. Two factions were ready to divide the field with each other, and radicalism was opposed to conservatism, and between the two wings there were arranged schools of various tendencies. The Sthaviras

were pitted against the Mahāsaṅghikas, with twenty or more different schools representing various grades of diversity.\*

We cannot, however, exclude from the body of Buddhism all the divergent views on the Buddha and his teaching as something foreign and not belonging to the constituent elements of Buddhism. For these views are exactly what support the frame of Buddhism, and without them the frame itself will be a non-entity altogether. The error with most critics of any existent religion with a long history of development is to conceive it as a completed system which is to be accepted as such, while the fact is that anything organic and spiritual—and we consider religion such—has no geometrical outline which can be traced on paper by ruler and compass. It refuses to be objectively defined, for this will be setting a limit to the growth of its spirit. Thus to know what Buddhism is will be to get into the life of Buddhism and to understand it from the inside as it unfolds itself objectively in history. Therefore, the definition of Buddhism must be that of the life-force which carries forward a spiritual movement called Buddhism. All these doctrines, controversies, constructions, and interpretations that were offered after the Buddha's death as regards his person, life, and teaching were what essentially constituted the life of Indian Buddhism, and without these there could be no spiritual activity to be known as Buddhism.

As I said above, there was, along with the development of Buddhist dogmatics, a strong desire among the Buddha's followers to speculate on the nature of his personality. They had no power to check the constant and insistent cry of this desire brimming in their inmost hearts. What moved them most in the whole life of the Buddha was his Enlightenment and Nirvāṇa and consequently his birth and its preceding

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\* For a more or less detailed account of the various Buddhist schools that came up within a few centuries after the Buddha, see Vasumitra's *Samayabhedo-paracana-cakra*, 異部宗輪論. Professor Suisai Funahashi recently published an excellent commentary on this book.

conditions. Enlightenment was the essence of Buddhahood, and when one understands it, one knows the whole secret of the Buddha's superhuman nature, and with it the riddle of life and the world. In his enlightened mind there must have been many things which the Buddha did not divulge to his disciples. When he refused to answer metaphysical questions, it was not because he did not solve them for himself, but because the minds of the questioners were not developed enough to comprehend the full implication of them. The disciples who had no living Master now were naturally quite anxious to solve the problems by themselves if they could. They were never tired to exhaust their intellectual ingenuity on them. Various theories were then advanced, and Buddhism ceased to be merely the teaching of the Buddha, for it came also to be a reflection of something eternally valid. It ceased to be a thing merely historical, but a system ever living, growing, and energy-imparting. Various Mahayana Sutras and Sastras were produced to develop various aspects of the content of Enlightenment as realised by the Buddha. Some of them were speculative, others mystical, and still others ethical and practical.

Next to the theory of Enlightenment, Nirvana as the ideal of Buddhist life engaged the serious attention of Buddhist philosophers. Was it an annihilation of existence, or that of passions and desires, or the dispelling of ignorance, or a state of egolessness? Did the Buddha really enter into a state of utter extinction leaving all sentient beings to their own fate? Did the love he showed to his followers vanish with his passing? Would he not come back among them in order to guide them, to enlighten them, to listen to their spiritual anguish? The value of such a grand personality as the Buddha could not perish with his physical existence, it ought to remain with us for ever as a thing of eternal validity. How could this nation be reconciled with the annihilation theory of Nirvana, so prevalent among the personal disciples of the Buddha?

When history conflicts with our idea of value, can it not be interpreted to the satisfaction of our religious yearnings? What is the objective authority of "facts" if not supported by an inwardly grounded authority? Varieties of interpretation are then set forth in the Mahayana texts as to the implication of Nirvana and other cognate conceptions to be found in the "original" teaching of the Buddha.

What is the relationship between Enlightenment and Nirvana? How did Buddhists come to realise Arhatship? What convinced them of their attainment? Is the Enlightenment of an Arhat the same as that of the Buddha? To answer these questions and many others in close connection with them was the task imposed upon various schools of Hinayana and Mahayana Buddhism. While they quarreled much, they never forgot that they were all Buddhists and whatever interpretations they gave to these problems they were faithful to their Buddhist experience. They were firmly attached to the founder of their religion and only wished to get thoroughly intimate with the faith and teaching as were first promulgated by the Buddha. Some of them were naturally more conservative and wished to submit to the orthodox and traditional way of understanding the Dharma; but there were others as in every field of human life, whose inner experience meant more to them, and to harmonise this with the traditional authority they resorted to metaphysics to its fullest extent. Their efforts, there is no doubt, were honest and sincere, and when they thought they solved the difficulties or contradictions they were satisfied inwardly as well as intellectually. In fact they had no other means of egress from the spiritual *impasse* in which they found themselves through the natural and inevitable growth of their inmost life. This was the way Buddhism had to develop if it ever had in it any life to grow.

There was one great original idea in the teaching of

the Buddha which proved fruitful in its later development in connection with his Enlightenment and Nirvana. I mean by this the doctrine of non-Atman which denies the existence of an ego-substance in our psychic life. When the notion of Atman was ruling Indian minds, it was a bold announcement on the part of the Buddha to regard it as the source of ignorance and transmigration. The theory of origination which seems to make up the foundation of the Buddha's teaching is thus finally resolved into the finding of a mischievous "designer" which works behind all our spiritual restlessness. Whatever interpretation was given to the doctrine of non-Atman in the early days of Buddhism, the idea came to be extended over to things inanimate as well. Not only there was no ego-substance in our mental life, but there was no ego in the physical world, which meant that we could not separate in reality acting from actor, force from mass, or life from its manifestations. As far as thinking goes, we can establish these two pairs of conception as limiting each other, but in the actuality of things they must all be one, as we cannot impose our logical way of thinking upon reality in its concreteness. When we transfer this separation from thought to reality, we encounter many difficulties not only intellectual but moral and spiritual, from which we suffer an unspeakable anguish later on. This was felt by the Buddha, and he called this mixing up ignorance. The Mahayana doctrine of Śūnyatā was a natural conclusion. But I need not make any remark here that the Śūnyatā theory is not nihilism or acosmism, but that it has its positive background which sustains it and gives life to it.

It was quite logical for Buddhists to endeavour to find a philosophical explanation of Enlightenment and Nirvana in the theory of non-Atman or Śūnyatā to the best of their intellectual power and in the light of their spiritual experience. They finally found out that Enlightenment was not a thing



especially belonging to the Buddha himself, but that each one of us could attain it if he got rid of ignorance by understanding the dualistic conception of life and the world; they further concluded that Nirvana was not vanishing into a state of absolute non-existence which was an impossibility as long as we had to reckon with the actual facts of life, and that Nirvana in its ultimate signification was an affirmation—an affirmation beyond opposites of all kinds. This metaphysical understanding of the fundamental problem of Buddhism marks the features of the Mahayana.

Almost all Buddhist scholars in Japan agree that all these characteristic ideas of the Mahayana are systematically traceable in the Hinayana literature, and that all the reconstructions and transformations which the Mahayanists are supposed to have put on the original form of Buddhism are really nothing but an unbroken continuation of one original Buddhist spirit and life, and further that even the so-called primitive Buddhism as is expounded in the Pali canons and in the Āgama texts of the Chinese Tripitaka, is also the result of an elaboration on the part of the earlier followers of the Buddha. If Mahayana is not Buddhism proper, neither is Hinayana, for the historical reason that neither of them represents the teaching of the Buddha as it was preached by the Master himself. Unless one limits the use of the term Buddhism very narrowly and only to a certain form of it, no one can very well refuse to include both Mahayana and Hinayana in the same denomination. And, in my opinion, it is proper, considering the organic relation between system and experience, that the term Buddhism should be used in a broad, comprehensive, and inward sense.

This is not the place to enter into the details of organic relationship existing between the Hinayana and the Mahayana; for the object of this introduction is to delineate the course of

development as traversed by Zen Buddhism before it has reached the present form. Having outlined my position with regard to the definition of Buddhism and Mahayana in general as a manifestation of Buddhist life and thought, the next step will be to see where lies the source of Zen and how it is one of the legitimate successors and transmitters of the Buddhist spirit.

#### ZEN AND ENLIGHTENMENT

The origin of Zen is to be sought in Supreme Perfect Enlightenment (*anuttara-samyak-sambodhi*) attained by the Buddha while he was sitting under the Bodhi-tree. If this Enlightenment was of no value to the development of Buddhism, Zen then had nothing to do with Buddhism, it was altogether another thing created by the genius of Bodhi-Dharma who visited China early in the sixth century. But if Enlightenment was the *raison d'être* of Buddhism, that is to say, if Buddhism was an edifice erected on the solid basis of this Enlightenment, realised by the Buddha, Zen was the central pillar which supported the entire structure, it composed the direct line of continuation drawn out from the content of the Buddha's illumined mind. Traditionally, Zen is considered to have been transmitted by the Buddha to his foremost disciple, Mahākāśyapa, when the Buddha held out a bunch of flowers to his congregation, the meaning of which was at once grasped by Mahākāśyapa who quietly smiled at him. The historicity of this incident is justly criticised, but knowing the value of Enlightenment we cannot ascribe the authority of Zen just to such an episode as this. Zen was in fact handed over not only to Mahākāśyapa but to all beings who will follow the steps of the Buddha, the Enlightened One.

Like a true Indian the Buddha's idea of ascetic meditation was to attain Vimoksha (or simply Moksha, deliverance) from

the bondage of birth and death. There were several ways open to him to reach the goal. According to the Brahman philosophers of those days, the great fruit of deliverance could be matured by embracing the religious truth, or by practising asceticism or chastity, or by learning, or by freeing oneself from passions. Each in its way was an excellent means, and if they were practised severally or all together, they might result in emancipation of some kind. But the philosophers talked about methods and did not give one any trustworthy information concerning their actual spiritual experience, and what the Buddha wished was this self-realisation, a personal experience, an actual insight into truth, and not mere discoursing about methods, or playing with concepts. He detested all philosophical reasonings which he called *drishṭi* or *darśana*; for they would lead him nowhere, bring him no practical result in his spiritual life. He was never satisfied until he inwardly realised the Bodhi as the truth immediately presented to his transcendental consciousness and whose absolute nature was so inner, so self-convincing as he had no doubt whatever in regard to its universal validity. The content of this Enlightenment was explained by the Buddha as the Dharma which was to be directly perceived (*sunditṭhika*), beyond limits of time (*akālika*), to be personally experienced (*ehi-passaka*), and altogether persuasive (*opānāyika*). This meant that the Dharma was to be intuited and not to be analytically reached by concepts. The reason why the Buddha so frequently refused to answer metaphysical problems was partly due to his conviction that the ultimate truth was to be realised in oneself through one's own efforts; for all that could be gained through discursive understanding was the surface of things and not things themselves; conceptual knowledge never gave full satisfaction to one's religious yearning. The attainment of the Bodhi could not be the accumulation of dialectical subtleties. And this is the position taken up by Zen Buddhism as regards what it

considers final reality. Zen in this respect faithfully follows the injunction of the Master.

While the ideal of Arhatship was no doubt the entering into Nirvana that leaves nothing behind (*anupadhiśeṣa*), it did not ignore the significance of Enlightenment, no, it could not do so very well without endangering its own reason of existence. For Nirvana was nothing else in its essence than Enlightenment, the content was identical in either case. Enlightenment was Nirvana reached while yet in the flesh, and no Nirvana was ever possible without obtaining an Enlightenment. The latter may have a more intellectual note in it than the former, which is a psychological state realised through Enlightenment. Bodhi is spoken of in the so-called primitive Buddhism just as much as Nirvana. So long as passions were not subdued, and the mind still remained enshrouded in ignorance, no Buddhist could ever dream of obtaining a moksha (deliverance) which is Nirvana, and this deliverance from ignorance and passions was the work of Enlightenment. Generally, Nirvana is understood in its negative aspect as the total extinction of everything, body and soul, but in the actuality of life no such negativist conception could ever prevail, and the Buddha never meant Nirvana to be so interpreted. If there were nothing affirmative in Nirvana, the Mahayanists could never have evolved the positive conception of it later on. Though the immediate disciples of the Buddha were not conscious of this, there was always the thought of Enlightenment implied in it. Enlightenment attained by the Buddha after a week's meditation under the Bodhi-tree could not be of no consequence to his Arhat-disciples, however negatively the latter tended to apply this principle to the attainment of their life-object.

The true significance of Enlightenment was effectively brought out by the Mahayanists not only in its intellectual implications but in its moral and religious bearings. The re-

sult was the conception of Bodhisattvaship in contradistinction to Arhatship, the ideal of their rival school. The Arhat and the Bodhisattva are essentially the same. But the Mahayanists, perceiving a deeper sense in Enlightenment as the most important constituent element in the attainment of the final goal of Buddhism, which is spiritual freedom, did not wish to confine its operation in oneself, but wanted to see it realised in every being sentient and even non-sentient. Not only was this their subjective yearning, but there was an objective basis on which the yearning could be justified and realised. It was the presence in every individual of a faculty designated by the Mahayanists as *Prajñā*. This was the principle that made Enlightenment possible in us as well as in the Buddha. Without *Prajñā* there could be no Enlightenment, which was the highest spiritual power in our possession. The intellect or what is ordinarily known by Buddhist scholars as *Vijñāna*, was relative in its activity, and could not comprehend the ultimate truth which is Enlightenment. The ultimate truth was what lifted us above the dualism of matter and spirit, of ignorance and wisdom, of passion and non-attachment. Enlightenment consisted in personally realising the truth, ultimate and absolute and capable of affirmation. Thus we are all Bodhisattvas now, beings of Enlightenment, if not in actuality, then potentially. Bodhi-sattvas are also *Prajñā*-sattvas, as we are universally endowed with *Prajñā*, which, when fully and truly operating, will realise in us Enlightenment, and intellectually (in its highest sense) lift us above appearances.

If by virtue of Enlightenment Gautama was transformed into the Buddha, and then if all beings are endowed with *Prajñā* and capable of Enlightenment, that is, if they are thus Bodhisattvas, the logical conclusion will be that Bodhisattvas are all Buddhas, or destined to be Buddhas as soon as sufficient conditions obtain. Hence the Mahayana doctrine that all beings, sentient or non-sentient, are endowed with Buddha-nature,

and that our minds are the Buddha-mind and our bodies are the Buddha-body. The Buddha before his Enlightenment was an ordinary mortal, and we, ordinary mortals, will be Buddhas the moment our mental eye opens to Enlightenment. In this do we not see plainly the most natural and most logical course of things leading up to the main teaching of Zen as it later developed in China and Japan?

How intensely and extensively the concept of Enlightenment influenced the development of Mahayana Buddhism may be seen in the composition of the *Saddharmapundarika*, which is really the Mahayana protest against the Hinayana conception of the Buddha's Enlightenment. According to the latter, the Buddha attained it at Gayā while meditating under the Bodhi-tree; for they regarded the Buddha as a mortal being like themselves, subject to historical and psychological conditions. But the Mahayanists could not be satisfied with such a realistic common-sense interpretation of the personality of the Buddha, they saw something in it which went deep into their hearts and wanted to come in immediate touch with it. What they sought was finally given, and they found that the idea of the Buddha's being a common soul was a delusion, that the Tathāgata arrived in his Supreme Perfect Enlightenment "many hundred thousand myriads of kotis of æons ago," and that all those historical "facts" in his life which are recorded in the Āgama literature are his "skilful devices" to lead creatures to full ripeness and go in the Buddha Way. In other words, this means that Enlightenment is the absolute reason of the universe and the essence of Buddhahood, and therefore that to obtain Enlightenment is to realise in one's inner consciousness the ultimate truth of the world which for ever is. While the *Pundarika* emphasises the Buddha-aspect of Enlightenment, Zen directs its attention mainly to the Enlightenment-aspect of Buddhahood. When this latter aspect is considered

intellectually, we have the philosophy of Buddhist dogmatics which is studied by scholars of the Tendai, Kegon, Hosso, and other schools. Zen approaches it from the practical side of life, that is, to work out Enlightenment in life itself.

If the idea of Enlightenment played such an important rôle in the development of Mahayana Buddhism, what is the content of it? Can we describe it in an intelligible manner so that our analytical intellect could grasp it and make it an object of thought? The Fourfold Noble Truth was not the content of Enlightenment, nor were the Twelve Chains of Causation, nor the Eightfold Righteous Path. The truth flashed through the Buddha's consciousness was not such a thought capable of discursive unfolding. When he exclaimed:

"Through birth and rebirth's endless round.  
 Seeking in vain, I hastened on,  
 To find who framed this edifice.  
 What misery! — birth incessantly!  
 "O builder! I've discovered thee!  
 This fabric thou shalt ne'er rebuild!  
 Thy rafters all are broken now,  
 And pointed roof demolished lies!  
 This mind has demolition reached,  
 And seen the last of all desire!"

he must have grasped something much deeper than mere dialectics. There must have been something most fundamental and ultimate which at once set all his doubts at rest, not only intellectual doubts but spiritual anguish. Indeed, forty-nine years of his active life after Enlightenment were commentaries on it, and yet they did not exhaust its content; nor did all the later speculations of Nāgārjuna, Aśvaghoṣa, and Vasubandhu, and Asaṅga explain it away. In the *Lankavatāra* therefore the author makes the Buddha confess that since his Enlightenment till his passing into Nirvana he uttered not a word.

Therefore, again, with all his memory and learning, Ānanda could not reach the bottom of the Buddha's wisdom, while the latter was still alive. According to tradition, Ānanda's attainment to Arhatship took place at the time of the First Convocation, in which he was not allowed to take part in spite of his twenty-five years' attendance upon the Buddha. Grieving over the fact, he spent the whole night perambulating in an open square and when he was about to lay himself down on a couch all exhausted, he all of a sudden came to realise the truth of Buddhism, which with all his knowledge and understanding had escaped him all those years.

What does this mean? Arhatship is evidently not a matter of scholarship; it is something realised in the twinkling of an eye after a long arduous application to the matter. The preparatory course may occupy a long stretch of time, but the crisis breaks out at a point instantaneously, and one is an Arhat, or a Bodhisattva, or even a Buddha. The content of Enlightenment must be quite simple in nature and yet tremendous in effect. That is to say, intellectually, it must transcend all the complications involved in an epistemological exposition of it; and psychologically, it must be the reconstruction of one's entire personality. Such a fundamental fact naturally evades description, and can be grasped only by an act of intuition. It is really the Dharma in its highest sense. If by the stirring of one thought Ignorance came into our life, the awakening of another thought must put a stop to Ignorance and bring out Enlightenment. No further explanation of the Dharma is possible, hence an appeal to *via negativa*. And this has reached its climax in the Śūnyatā philosophy of Nāgārjuna, which is based upon the teaching of the Prajñāpāramitā literature of Buddhism.

So we see that Enlightenment is not the outcome of an intellectual process in which one idea follows another in sequence finally to terminate in conclusion or judgment. There is neither



process nor judgment in Enlightenment, it is something more fundamental, something which makes a judgment possible, and without which no form of judgment can take place. In judgment there are a subject and a predicate; in Enlightenment subject is predicate, and predicate is subject; they are here merged as one, but not as one of which something can be stated, but as one from which arises judgment. We cannot go beyond this absolute oneness; all the intellectual operations stop here; when they endeavour to go on further, they draw a circle in which they for ever repeat themselves. This is the wall against which all philosophies have beaten in vain. This is an intellectual *terra incognita*, where prevails the principle, "*Credo quia absurdum est*," (I believe because it is irrational). This region of darkness, however, gives up its secrets when attacked by the will, by the force of one's entire personality. Enlightenment is the illuminating of this dark region, when the whole thing is seen at one glance, and all the intellectual inquiries find here their rationale. Hitherto one may have been intellectually convinced of the truth of a certain proposition, but somehow it has not yet entered into his life, the truth still lacks ultimate confirmation, and he cannot help feeling a vague sense of indeterminateness and uneasiness. Enlightenment now comes upon him in a mysterious way without any previous announcement, and all is settled with him, he is an Arhat or even a Buddha. The dragon has got its eyes dotted, and it is no more a lifeless image painted on a canvas, but winds and rains are its willing servants now.

When Śāriputra saw Āśvajit, he noticed how composed the latter was, with all his organs of sense well controlled and how clear and bright the colour of his skin was. Śāriputra could not help asking him who was his teacher and what doctrine he taught. To this Āśvajit replied: "The great Śākyamuni, the Blessed One, is my teacher and his doctrine in substance is this:

“The Buddha hath the cause told  
 Of all things springing from a cause;  
 And also how things cease to be—  
 ‘Tis this the Mighty Monk proclaims.”

It is said that on hearing this exposition of the Dharma, there arose in the mind of Śāriputra a clear and distinct perception of the Dharma that whatever is subject to origination is subject also to cessation. Śāriputra then attained to the deathless, sorrowless state, lost sight of and neglected for many myriads of kalpas.

The point to which I wish to call attention here is this : Is there anything intellectually remarkable or brilliant or original in this stanza that has miraculously awakened Śāriputra from his habitually cherished way of thinking? As far as the Buddha's Dharma (Doctrine) was concerned, there was not much of anything in these four lines. It is said that they are the substance of the Dharma; if so, the Dharma may be said to be rather devoid of substance, and how could Śāriputra ever find here a truth deep enough to turn him away from the old rut? The stanza which is noted for having achieved the conversion of not only Śāriputra but Maudgalyāyana, has really nothing characteristic of Buddhist thought, strong enough to produce such a great result. The reason for this, therefore, must be sought somewhere else, that is, not in the objective truth contained in the stanza, but in the subjective condition of the one to whose ears it chanced to fall. It was in the mind of Śāriputra that opened up to a clear and distinct understanding of the Dharma, that is to say, the Dharma was revealed in him as something growing out of himself and not as an external truth poured into him. In a sense the Dharma was created by his mind when it was ready just at the moment when Aśvajit's stanza was uttered. He was not a mere passive receptacle into which something not native to his Self was poured. The hearing of the stanza gave him

an opportunity to experience the supreme moment. If Śāriputra's understanding was intellectual and discursive, his dialogue with Ānanda later on could not take place in the way it did. In the Samyutta-Nikāya, iii, 235f, we read :

Ānanda saw Śāriputra coming afar off, and he said to him ; "Serene and pure and radiant is your face, Brother Śāriputra ! In what mood has Śāriputra been today ?"

"I have been alone in Dhyāna, Brother, and to me came never the thought : *I am attaining it ! I have got it ! I have emerged from it !*"

Here we notice the distinction between an intellectual and a spiritual understanding which is Enlightenment. When Śāriputra referred to the cause of his being so serene, pure, and radiant, he did not explain it logically but just stated the fact as he subjectively interpreted it himself. Whether this interpretation of his own is correct or not takes the psychologist to decide. What I wish to see here is that Śāriputra's understanding of the doctrine of "origination and cessation" was not the outcome of his intellectual analysis but an intuitive comprehension of his own inner life-process. Between the Buddha's Enlightenment which is sung in the Hymn of Victory and Śāriputra's insight into the Dharma as the doctrine of causation, there is a close connection in the way their minds worked. In the one Enlightenment came first and then its expression ; in the other a definite statement was addressed first and then came an insight ; the process is reversed here. But the inadequacy of relation between antecedent and consequence remains the same. The one does not sufficiently explain the other, when the logical and intellectual understanding alone is taken into consideration.

If the Buddha's Enlightenment really contained so much in it that he himself could not sufficiently demonstrate or illustrate it with his "long thin tongue" (*prabhūtatamujihva*) through his long peaceful life given to meditation and discoursing, how could those less than he ever hope to grasp it and attain

spiritual emancipation? This is the position taken up by Zen: To comprehend the truth of Enlightenment, therefore, we must exercise some other mental power than intellection, if we are at all in possession of such. Discoursing fails to reach the goal and yet we have an unsatiated aspiration after the unattainable. Are we then meant to live and die thus tormented for ever? If so, this is the most lamentable situation in which we find ourselves on earth. Buddhists have applied themselves most earnestly to the solution of the problem and have finally come to see that we have after all within ourselves what we need. This is the power of intuition possessed by spirit and able to comprehend spiritual truth which will show us all the secrets of life making up the content of Buddha's Enlightenment. It is not an ordinary intellectual process of reasoning, but a power that will grasp something most fundamental in an instant and in the directest way. *Prajñā* is the name given to this power by Buddhists, as I said, and what Zen Buddhism aims at in its relation to the doctrine of Enlightenment is to awaken *Prajñā* by the exercise of meditation.

We read in the *Saddharma-piṇḍarīka*: "O Śāriputra, the true Law understood by the Tathagata cannot be reasoned, is beyond the pale of reasoning. Why? For the Tathagata appears in the world to carry out one great object, which is to make all beings accept, see, enter into, and comprehend the knowledge and insight gained by the Tathagata, and also to make them enter upon the path of knowledge and insight attained by the Tathagata. . . . . Those who learn it from the Tathagata also reach his Supreme Perfect Enlightenment." If such was the one great object of the Buddha's appearance on earth, how do we get into the path of insight and realise Supreme Perfect Enlightenment? And if this Dharma of Enlightenment is beyond the limits of the understanding, no amount of philosophising will ever bring us nearer the goal. How do we then learn it from the Tathagata? Decidedly not

from his mouth, nor from the records of his sermons, nor from the ascetic practise; but from our own inner consciousness through the exercise of Dhyana. And this is the doctrine of Zen.

#### ENLIGHTENMENT AND SPIRITUAL FREEDOM

When the doctrine of Enlightenment makes its appeal to the inner experience of the Buddhist and its content is to be grasped immediately without any conceptual medium, the sole authority in his spiritual life will have to be found within himself; traditionalism or institutionalism will naturally lose all its binding force. According to him, then, propositions will be true, that is, living, because they are in accordance with his spiritual insight; and his actions will permit no external standard of judgment; as long as they are the inevitable overflow of his inner life, they are good, even holy. The direct issue of this interpretation of Enlightenment will be the upholding of absolute spiritual freedom in every way, which will further lead to the unlimited expansion of his mental outlook going beyond the narrow bounds of monastic and scholastic Buddhism. This was not however, from the Mahayanistic point of view, against the spirit of the Buddha.

The constitution of the Brotherhood will now have to change. In the beginning of Buddhism, it was a congregation of homeless monks who subjected themselves to a certain set of ascetic rules of life. In this Buddhism was an exclusive possession of the *élite*, and the general public or Upāsaka group which accepted the Threefold Refuge Formula was a sort of appendage to the regular or professional Brotherhood. When Buddhism was still in its first stage of development, even nuns (*Bhikṣuṇī*) were not allowed into the community; the Buddha received them only after great reluctance, prophesying that Buddhism would now live only a half of its normal life. We can readily see from this fact that the

teaching of the Buddha and the doctrine of Enlightenment were meant to be practised and realised only among limited classes of people. While the Buddha regarded the various elements of his congregation with perfect impartiality, cherishing no prejudices as to their social, racial, and other distinctions, the full benefit of his teaching could not extend beyond the monastic boundaries. If there was nothing in it that could benefit mankind in general, this exclusiveness was naturally to be expected. But the doctrine of Enlightenment was something that could not be kept thus imprisoned, it had many things in it that would overflow all the limitations set to it. When the conception of Bodhisattvahood came to be emphatically asserted, a monastic and self-excluding community could no longer hold its ground. A religion of monks and nuns had to become a religion of laymen and laywomen. An ascetic discipline leading to the Anupadīśeṣa Nirvana had to give away to a system of teaching that will make one attain Enlightenment and demonstrate Nirvana in life. In all the Mahayana Sūtras, this general tendency in the unfoldment of Buddhism is vehemently asserted, showing how intense was the struggle between conservatism and progressivism.

This spirit of freedom which is the power impelling Buddhism to break through its monastic shell and bringing forward the idea of Enlightenment ever vigorously before the masses, is the life-impulse of the universe, — this unhampered activity of spirit, and everything that interferes with it is destined to be defeated. The history of Buddhism is thus also a history of freedom in one's spiritual, intellectual, and moral life. The moral aristocracy and disciplinary formalism of primitive Buddhism could not bind our spirit for a very long period of time. As the doctrine of Enlightenment grew to be more and more inwardly interpreted, the spirit rose above the formalism of Buddhist discipline. It was of no

absolute necessity for one to leave his home life and follow the footsteps of the wandering monks in order to reach the supreme fruit of Enlightenment. Inward purity, and not external piety, was the thing needed for the Buddhist life. The Upāsakas were in this respect as good as the Bhiksus. The fact is most eloquently illustrated in the *Vimalakīrti-Sūtra*. The chief character here is Vimalakīrti, a lay philosopher, outside the pale of the Brotherhood. None of the Buddha's disciples were his matches in the depth, breadth, and subtleties of thought, and when the Buddha told them to visit his sickroom, they all excused themselves for some reason or other, except Mañjuśrī, who is Prajñā incarnate in Mahayana Buddhism.

That the lay-devotees thus asserted themselves even at the expense of the Arhats, may also be gleaned from other sources than the *Vimalakīrti*, but especially from such Sūtras as the *Śrīmālā*, *Gandhavyūha*, *Vajrasamādhi*, *Candrottara-dārikā*, etc. What is most noteworthy in this connection is that woman plays an important rôle on various occasions. Not only is she endowed with philosophising talents, but she stands on equal footing with man. Among the fifty-three philosophers or leaders of thought visited by Sudhana in his religious pilgrimage, he interviewed many women in various walks of life, and some of whom were even courtesans. They all wisely discoursed with the insatiable seeker of truth. What a different state of affairs this was when compared with the reluctant admission of women into the Sangha in the early days of Buddhism! Later Buddhism may have lost something in austerity, aloofness, and even saintliness which appeal strongly to our religious imagination, but it has gained in democracy, picturesqueness, and largely in humanity.

The free spirit which wanders out beyond the monastic walls of the Brotherhood now follows its logical consequence

and endeavours to transcend the disciplinary rules and the ascetic formalism of the Hinayanists. The moral rules that were given by the Buddha to his followers as they were called for by contingencies of life, were concerned more or less with externalism. When the Buddha remained with them as the living spirit of the Brotherhood, these rules were the direct expressions of their subjective life; but with the Buddha's departure, they grew formal and failed to reach the inner spirit of the Buddhists, and the followers of Enlightenment revolted against them, upholding the spirit that giveth life. They advocated perfect freedom of spirit, even after the fashion of antinomianists. If the spirit were pure, no acts of the body could spoil it; it could wander about anywhere it liked with absolute immunity. It would even go down to hell if it were necessary or expedient for them to do so for the sake of the salvation of the depraved. It would indefinitely postpone the entering into Nirvana if there were still souls to save and minds to enlighten. According to the letter that killeth, no Buddhists were allowed to enter a liquor shop, or to be familiar with inmates of the houses barred from respectability, in short, even for a moment to be thinking of violating any of the moral precepts. But to the Mahayanists all kinds of "expediency" or "devices" were granted if they were fully enlightened and had their spirits thoroughly purgated. They were living in a realm beyond good and evil, and as long as they were there, no acts of theirs could be classified and judged according to the ordinary measure of ethics; they were neither moral nor immoral. These relative terms had no application in a kingdom governed by free spirits. This is a most slippery ground for the Mahayanists. When they were really enlightened and fathomed the depths of spirituality, every deed of theirs was a creative act of God, but in this extreme form of idealism, objectivity had no room, and consequently who could ever distinguish libertinism from spiritualism? In spite



of this pitfall the Mahayanists were in the right in consistently following up all the implications of the doctrine of Enlightenment. Their parting company with the Hinayanists was inevitable.

The doctrine of Enlightenment leads to the inwardness of one's spiritual experience, which cannot be analysed intellectually without somehow involving logical contradictions. It thus seeks to break through every intellectual barrier that may be set against it, it longs for emancipation in every form, not only in the understanding but in life itself. Enlightenment is thus liable to degenerate into libertinism. If the Mahayanists remained here and did not see further into the real nature of Prajñā, they would have certainly followed the fates of the Friends of Free Spirit, but they knew how Enlightenment realises its true signification in love for all beings and how freedom of spirit has its own principle to follow though nothing external is imposed upon it. For freedom does not mean lawlessness, which is the destruction and annihilation of itself, but creating out of its inner life-force all that is good and beautiful. This creating is called by the Mahayanists "skilful device" (*upāya-kauśalya*), in which Enlightenment is harmoniously wedded to love. Enlightenment when intellectually conceived is not dynamical and stops at illumining the path which love will tread. But Prajñā is more than merely intellectual, it produces Karūṇa (love or pity), and with her cooperation it achieves the great end of life, the salvation of all beings from ignorance and passions and misery. It now knows no end in devising or creating all kinds of means to carry out its own teleological functions. The *Saddharma-Piṇḍarīka* regards the Buddha's appearance on earth and his life in history as the "skilful devices" of world-salvation on the part of the Supreme Being of Eternal Enlightenment. This creation, however, ceases to be a creation in its perfect sense when

the creator grows conscious of its teleological implication; for here then is a split in his consciousness which will check the spontaneous flowing-out of spirit, and then freedom will be lost at its source. Such devices as have grown conscious of their purposes are no more "skilful devices"; and according to the Buddhists they do not reflect the perfect state of Enlightenment.

Thus the doctrine of Enlightenment is to be supplemented by the doctrine of Device (*upāya*), or the latter may be said to evolve by itself from the first when it is conceived dynamically and not as merely contemplative state of consciousness. The earlier Buddhists showed the tendency to consider Enlightenment essentially reflective or a state of tranquillity. They made it something lifeless and altogether uncreative. This however did not bring out all that was contained in Enlightenment. The affective element which moved the Buddha to come out of his Sāgaramudrā-samādhi—a Samādhi in which the whole universe was reflected in his consciousness as the moon stamps her image on the ocean, has now developed into the doctrine of Device. By this the wantonness of a free spirit is regulated to operate in the great work of universal salvation. Its creative activity will devise all possible means for the sake of love for all beings animate as well as inanimate. Dhyāna is one of those devices which will keep our minds in balance and well under the control of the will. Zen is the outcome of the Dhyāna discipline applied to the attainment of Enlightenment.

#### ZEN AND DHYĀNA

The term "Zen", (*Chan* in Chinese), is an abbreviated form of *zenna* or *channa* (禪那), which is the Chinese rendering of "Dhyāna," or "Jhāna," and from this fact alone it is evident that Zen has a great deal to do with this practice

which has been carried on from the early days of Buddha, indeed from the beginning of Indian culture. Dhyāna is usually rendered in English meditation, and the idea is to meditate on a truth, religious or philosophical, so that it may be thoroughly comprehended and deeply engraved into the inner consciousness. This is generally practised in a quiet place away from the noise and confusion of the world. Allusion to this abounds in Indian literature; and "To sit alone in a quiet place and to devote oneself to meditation exclusively" (獨一靜處專精禪思) is the phrase one meets everywhere in the Āgamas. An appeal to the analytical understanding is never sufficient to thoroughly comprehend the inwardness of a truth, especially when it is a religious one; nor is mere compulsion by an external force adequate for bringing about a spiritual transformation in us. We must experience in our innermost consciousness all that is implied in a doctrine, when we are able not only to understand it but to put it in practice. There will then be no discrepancy between knowledge and life. The Buddha knew this very well, and he endeavoured to produce knowledge out of meditation, this is, to make wisdom grow from personal, spiritual experience. The Buddhist way to deliverance, therefore, consisted in threefold discipline: moral rules (*śīla*), tranquilisation (*śamādhi*), and wisdom (*prajñā*). By *Śīla* one's conduct is regulated externally, by *Samādhi* quietude is attained, and by *Prajñā* real understanding takes place. Hence the importance of meditation in Buddhism.

*Samādhi* and *Dhyāna* are to a great extent synonymous and interchangeable, but strictly *Samādhi* is a psychological state realised by the exercise of *Dhyāna*. The latter is the process and the former is the goal. The Buddhist scriptures make reference to so many *Samādhis*, and before delivering a sermon the Buddha generally enters into a *Samādhi*,\* but

\* One hundred and eight *Samādhis* are enumerated in the *Mahāvīyūtpatti*.

never I think into a Dhyāna. The latter is practised or exercised. But frequently in China Dhyāna and Samādhi are combined to make one word, 禪定, meaning a state of quietude attained by the exercise of meditation or Dhyāna. There are some other terms analogous to these two which are met with in Buddhist literature. They are Samāpatti (coming together), Samāhita (collecting the thoughts), Śamatha (tranquilisation), Cittaikāgratā (concentration), Dṛṣṭa-dharma-sukha-vihāra (abiding in the bliss of the Law perceived), etc. They are all connected with the central idea of Dhyāna, which is to tranquilise the turbulence of self-assertive passions and to bring about a state of absolute identity in which the truth is realised in its inwardness, that is, a state of Enlightenment. The analytical tendency of Buddhist philosophers is also evident in this when they distinguish four or eight kinds of Dhyāna.

The first Dhyāna is an exercise in which the mind is made to concentrate on one single subject until all the coarse affective elements are vanished from consciousness except the serene feelings of joy and peace. But the intellect is still active, judgment and reflection operate upon the object of contemplation. When these intellectual operations too are quieted and the mind is simply concentrated on one point, it is said that we have attained the second Dhyāna, but the feelings of joy and peace are still here. In the third stage of Dhyāna, perfect serenity obtains as the concentration grows deeper, but the subtlest mental activities are not vanished and at the same time a joyous feeling remains. When the fourth and last stage is reached, even this feeling of self-enjoyment disappears, and what prevails in consciousness now is perfect serenity of contemplation. All the intellectual and the emotional factors liable to disturb spiritual tranquillity are successively controlled, and the mind in absolute composure

remains absorbed in contemplation. In this there takes place a fully-adjusted equilibrium between *Samatha* and *Vipaśyanā*, that is, between tranquillisation or cessation and contemplation. In all Buddhist discipline this harmony is always sought after. For when the mind tips either way, it grows either too heavy or too light, either too torpid in mental activity or too given up to intellection. The spiritual exercise ought to steer ahead without being hampered by either tendency, they ought to strike the middle path.

There are further stages of *Dhyāna* called "*Āruppa*" which are practised by those who have passed beyond the last stage of *Dhyāna*. The first is to contemplate the infinity of space, not disturbed by the manifoldness of matter; the second is on the infinity of consciousness as against the first; the third is meant to go still further beyond the distinction of space and thought; and the fourth is to eliminate even this consciousness of non-distinction, to be thus altogether free from any trace of analytical intellection. Besides these eight *Samāpatti* ("coming together") exercises, technically so called, the Buddha sometimes refers to still another form of meditation. This is more or less definitely contrasted to the foregoing by not being so exclusively intellectual but partly affective, as it aims at putting a full stop to the operation of *Samjñā* (thought) and *Vedita* (sensation), that is, of the essential elements of consciousness. It is almost a state of death, total extinction, except that one in this *Dhyāna* has life, warmth, and the sense-organs in perfect condition. But in point of fact it is difficult to distinguish this *Nirodha-vimoksha* (deliverance by cessation) from the last stage of the *Āruppa* meditation, in both of which consciousness ceases to function even in its simplest and most fundamental acts.

Whatever this was, it is evident that the Buddha like the Indian leaders of thought endeavoured to make his disciples realise in themselves the content of Enlightenment by

means of Dhyāna, or concentration. They were thus made gradually to progress from a comparatively simple exercise up to the highest stage of concentration in which the dualism of the One and the Many vanished even to the extent of a total cessation of mentation. Apart from these general spiritual exercises, the Buddha at various times told his followers to meditate on such an object as would make them masters of their disturbing passions and intellectual entanglements.

We can now see how Zen developed out of this system of spiritual exercises. Zen adopted the external form of Dhyāna as the most practical method to realise the end it had in view, but as to its content Zen had its own way of interpreting the spirit of the Buddha. The Dhyāna practised by primitive Buddhists was not in full accord with the object of Buddhism, which is no other than the attaining of Enlightenment and demonstrating it in one's everyday life. To do away with consciousness so that nothing will disturb spiritual serenity was too negative to correspond with the positive content of the Buddha's own enlightened mind. Tranquilisation was not the real end of Dhyāna, nor was the being absorbed in a Samādhi the object of Buddhist life. Enlightenment was to be found in life itself, in its fuller and freer expressions, and not in its cessation. What was it that made the Buddha pass all his life in religious peregrination? What was it that moved him to sacrifice his own well-being, in fact his whole life, for the sake of his fellow-creatures? If Dhyāna had no positive object except in pacifying passions and enjoying absorption in the unconscious, why did the Buddha leave his seat under the Bodhi-tree and come out into the world? If Enlightenment was merely a negative state of cessation, the Buddha could not find any impulse in him that would urge him to exertion in behalf of others. Critics sometimes forget this fact when they try to understand Buddhism simply as a

system of teaching as recorded in the Āgamas and in Pali Buddhist literature. As I said before, Buddhism is also a system built by his disciples upon the personality of the Buddha himself, in which the spirit of the Master is more definitely affirmed. And this is what Zen has in its own way been attempting to do—to develop the idea of Enlightenment more positively and intellectually by the practice of Dhyāna and in conformity with the spirit of general Buddhism, in which life, purged of its blind impulses and sanctified by an insight into its real values, will be asserted.

## ZEN AND THE LANKĀVATĀRA

Of so many Sūtras that were introduced into China, the one in which the principles of Zen are more expressly and directly expounded than any others is the *Lankāvatāra Sūtra*. Zen, as its followers justly claim, does not base its authority on any written documents, but directly appeals to the enlightened mind of the Buddha. It refuses to do anything with externalism in all its variegated modes, even the Sūtras are looked down upon as not touching the inward facts of Zen. Hence its reference to the mystic dialogue between the Buddha and Mahākāśyapa on a bouquet of flowers. But Bodhi-Dharma, the founder of Zen in China, handed the *Lankāvatāra* over to his first Chinese disciple Hui-k'ê (慧可) as the only literature in existence at the time in China, in which the principles of Zen are taught. When Zen unconditionally emphasises one's immediate experience as the final fact on which it is established, it may well ignore all the scriptural sources as altogether unessential to its truth; and on this principle its followers have quite neglected the study of the *Lankāvatāra*. But to justify the position of Zen for those who have not yet grasped it, an external authority may be quoted and conceptual arguments resorted to in perfect harmony with its truth. This was why Dharma selected the Sūtra out of so many that had been in

existence in China in his day. We must approach the *Lankāvatāra* with this frame of mind.

There are three Chinese translations of the Sutra still in existence. There was a fourth one, but it was lost. The first in four volumes was produced during the Ling Sung dynasty (A.D. 443) by Gunabhadra, the second in ten volumes comes from the pen of Bodhiruci, of the Yüan-Wu dynasty (A.D. 513), and the third in seven volumes is by Śikshananda, of the T'ang dynasty (A.D. 700). The last-mentioned is the easiest to understand and the first the most difficult, and it was this that was delivered by Dharma to his disciple Hui-K'ê as containing the "essence of mind." In form and in content this translation reflects the earliest text of the Sutra, and on it are written all the commentaries we have at present in Japan.

The special features of this Sutra which distinguish it from the other Mahayānā writings is, first, that the subject-matter is not systematically developed, but is a series of notes of various lengths; secondly, that the Sutra is devoid of any supernatural demonstrations, it is filled with deep philosophical and religious statements concerning the central teaching of the Sutra; thirdly, it is exclusively dialogues between the Buddha and the Bodhisattva Mahāmāti; and lastly, that it contains no Dharanis or Mantrams—those mystical formulas supposed to have a miraculous power.

The main thesis of the *Lankāvatāra* deals with the content of Enlightenment, that is, the Buddha's own inner experience concerning the great religious truth of Mahayana Buddhism. Most of the readers of the Sutra have singularly failed to see this, and contend that the writing belongs to the Yogācārya school, and that it principally explains the five Dharmas, the three characteristics of Reality, the eight kinds of Consciousness, and the two forms of Non-ego. It is true that the Sutra reflects



the psychological school of Buddhism advocated by Asanga and Vasubhandu, when for instance it refers to the *Ālaya-vijñāna* as the storage of all karmic seeds; but such and other references in fact do not constitute the central thought of the Sutra, they are merely made use of in explaining the philosophy of *Pratyātma-āryajñāna*. Therefore when Mahāmati finishes praising the Buddha's virtues before the whole assembly at the summit of the Mount Lankā, the Buddha is quite definite in his declaration of the main theme of his discourse in this Sutra. Let us however first quote the song of the Bodhisattva Mahāmati since it sums up in a concise and definite manner all the essentials of Mahayana Buddhism and since at the same time it illustrates my statement concerning the union of Enlightenment and Love.

The hymn runs as follows:

"The world is like an ethereal flower, of which we cannot say whether it is or it is not: and the Reason (*Prajñā*), in which there obtains neither being nor non-being, awakens the heart of great pity.

"All things are like visions, they are without mind and consciousness: and the Reason in which there obtains neither being nor non-being awakens the heart of great pity.

"When the ideas of disruption and continuity are done away with, the world is always like a dream, and the Reason in which there obtains neither being nor non-being awakens the heart of great pity.

"When one understands that there is no ego either in subject or object, all passions and prejudices are purgated, one is always pure and free from form and awakens the heart of great pity.

"There is no such thing as Nirvana anywhere, the Buddha does not reside in Nirvana, nor does Nirvana reside in the Buddha. [In the ultimate truth] there is neither Enlightenment nor the Enlightened; being and non-being—these two are done away with.

"Consider how serene is the Muni, which comes from doing away with [the ideas of relativity]! This is called non-attachment, he remains unstained now and hereafter."

After this says the Buddha: "O you, sons of the Jina, question me anything you feel like asking. I am going to tell you about the state of my inner attainment (*pratyātmagatigocanam*)."

This is conclusive, nothing is left to discussion

concerning the theme of the *Lankāvatāra*. The five Dharmas, the three Marks, etc., are referred to only in the course of the Buddha's exposition of the principal matter

The two later translations contain extra chapters, one at the beginning and the other at the end, and are divided regularly in one into ten and in the other into eighteen chapters while the earlier one has just one chapter title for the whole book, "The Gist of all the Buddha-words." The first extra chapter which is not found in Bodhi-Dharma's text is significant in that it gives the outlines of the whole Sutra in the form of a dialogue between the Buddha and Rāvana, Lord of Yakshas, in the Isle of Lankā. When the Buddha coming out of the Nāga's palace views the castle of Lankā, he smiles and remarks that this was the place where all the Buddhas of the past preached regarding the Excellent Understanding of Enlightenment realised in their inner consciousness (*svapratyātmāryajñāna*). As a special article will be devoted to this Sutra later on, I will refrain from entering into detail here, except that Bodhi-Dharma had good reason for recommending it to his disciples.

It now remains to see how the Buddha's inner experience known as Enlightenment came to be demonstrated in such a characteristic manner as is done in Zen, at first sight suggesting nothing of the so-called primitive Buddhism. We may observe here the law of growth or transformation in religion illustrated in a remarkable fashion.

The doctrine of Enlightenment is expounded in the *Lankāvatāra*, first, psychologically from the Yogācāryan point of view; secondly, logically as a state beyond the discursive understanding, which foreshadows the philosophy of Śūnyatā; thirdly, as the essence of Buddhahood, and, fourthly, in its practical bearing on the life of a Buddhist. As far as literature was concerned, this was the way Zen was made known to

China in the hands of Bodhi-Dharma. Dharma however did not deliver any sermons based on the *Lankāvatāra*; judging from the writing alleged to be his, he rather took his text from a Sutra entitled, *Vajrasamādhi* (金剛三昧經), about which the Zen masters following him do not profess to know any more than about the other Mahayana Sutras. In any event, Zen first proposed by Dharma differed in appearance from Zen that has grown up after him in the soil of transplantation, and my object in this chapter is to show why the Zen of Dharma and the *Lankāvatāra* or *Vajrasamādhi* came to be that of the later ages.

#### THE DOCTRINE OF ENLIGHTENMENT

##### AS ZEN IN CHINA.

To understand how the doctrine of Enlightenment came to be translated in China as Zen Buddhism, we must first see where the Chinese mind varies from the Indian generally. When this is done, Zen will appear as a most natural product of the Chinese soil where Buddhism has been successfully transplanted in spite of many adverse conditions. Roughly, then, the Chinese are a practical people above all things, while the Indians are visionary and highly speculative. We cannot perhaps judge the Chinese as unimaginative and lacking in the dramatic sense, but when they are compared with the inhabitants of the Buddha's native land, they look so gray, so sombre. The geographical features of each country are singularly reflected in the people. The tropical luxuriance of imagination so strikingly contrasts with the wintry dreariness of common practicalness. Indians are subtle in analysis and dazzling in poetic flight; Chinese are children of earthly life, they plod, they never soar away in the air. Their daily life consists in tilling the soil, gathering dry leaves, drawing water, buying and selling, being filial, and observing social duties, and developing the most elaborate system of etiquette. Being practical means in a sense being historical, observing the progress of time and

recording its traces as they are left behind. The Chinese can very well boast of their being great recorders,—such a contrast to the Indian lack of sense of time. Not satisfied with books printed on paper and with ink, the Chinese would engrave their deeds deep in stone, and have developed a special art of stone-cutting. This recording events has developed their literature, and they are quite literary and not at all warlike, they love a peaceful life of culture. Their weakness is that they are willing to sacrifice facts for literary effects, for they are not very exact and scientific. Love of fine rhetoric and beautiful expressions has frequently drowned their practical sense, but here is also their art. Well restrained even in this their soberness never reaches that form of fantasm which we encounter in most of the Mahayana texts.

The Chinese are in many ways great, their architecture is great indeed, their literary achievements deserve the world's thanks, but logic is not one of their strong points; nor are their philosophy and imagination. When Buddhism with all its characteristically Indian dialectics and imageries was first introduced into China, it must have staggered the Chinese minds. Look at its gods with many heads and arms,—something that has never entered into their heads, in fact into no other nation's than the Indian's. Think of the wealth of symbolism with which every being in Buddhist literature seems to be endowed. The mathematical conception of infinities, the Bodhisattva's plan of world-salvation, the wonderful stage-setting before the Buddha begins his sermons, not only in their general outlines but in their details—bold, yet accurate, soaring in flight, yet sure of every step,—these and many other features must have been things of wonderment to the practical and earth-plodding people of China.

One quotation from a Mahayana Sutra will convince the readers of the difference between Indian and Chinese minds, in

regard to their imaginative powers. In the *Saddharmapundarikā* the Buddha wishes to impress his disciples as to the length of time passed since his attainment of Supreme Enlightenment; he does not merely state that it is a mistake to think that his Enlightenment took place some countable number of years ago under the Bodhi-tree near the town of Gayā; nor does he say in a general way that it happened ages ago, which is very likely the way with the Chinese, but he describes in a most analytical way how remote an age it was that he came to Enlightenment.

“But, young men of good family, the truth is that many hundred thousand myriads of kotis of æons ago I have arrived at Supreme, Perfect Enlightenment. By way of example, young men of good family, let there be the atoms of earth of fifty hundred thousand myriads of kotis of worlds; let there exist some man who takes one of these atoms of dust and then goes in an eastern direction fifty hundred thousand myriads of kotis of worlds further on, there to deposit that atom of dust; let in this manner the man carry away from all those worlds the whole mass of earth, and in the same manner, and by the same act as supposed, deposit all those atoms in an eastern direction. Now would you think, young men of good family, that any one should be able to weigh, imagine, count, or determine [the number of] those worlds? The Lord having thus spoken, the Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Maitreya and the entire host of Bodhisattvas replied: They are incalculable, O Lord, those worlds, countless, beyond the range of thought. Not even all the disciples and Pratyekabuddhas, O Lord, with their Ārya-knowledge, will be able to imagine, weigh, count, or determine them. For us also, O Lord, who are Bodhisattvas standing on the place from whence there is no turning back, this point lies beyond the sphere of our comprehension; so innumerable, O Lord, are those worlds.

This said, the Buddha spoke to those Bodhisattvas Mahāsatt-

tvas as follows: I announce to you, young men of good family, I declare to you: However numerous be those worlds where that man deposits those atoms of dust and where he does not, there are not, young men of good family, in all those hundred thousands of myriads of kotis of worlds so many dust atoms as there are hundred thousands of myriads of kotis of æons since I have arrived at Supreme, Perfect Enlightenment."

Such a conception of number and such a method of description would never have entered the Chinese mind. They are of course capable of conceiving long duration, and great achievements, in which they are not behind any nation; but to express their idea of vastness in the manner of the Indian philosophers would be beyond their understanding.

When things are not within the reach of conceptual description, ways open to most people will be either to remain silent, or to declare it to be beyond words, or to say simply "not this", "not that"; but the Indians have found another way of illustrating philosophical truths that cannot be appealed to analytical reasoning. They resorted to miracles or supernatural phenomena for their illustration. Thus they made the Buddha a great magician; not only the Buddha but almost all the chief characters appearing in the Mahayana scriptures became magicians. And in my view this is one of the most charming features of the Mahayana texts—this description of supernatural phenomena in connection with the teaching of abstruse doctrine. Some may think it altogether childish and injuring the dignity of the Buddha as a teacher of solemn religious truths. But this is a superficial interpretation of the matter. The Indian idealists knew far better; they had a more penetrating imagination which was always effectively employed by them whenever the intellect was put to a task beyond its power. We must understand that the motive of the Mahayanists who made

the Buddha perform all these magical feats was to illustrate in words what could not be done so in the very nature of things. When the intellect failed to analyse the essence of Buddhahood, their rich imagination came in to help them out by visualising it. When we try to explain Enlightenment logically, we always find ourselves involved in contradictions. But when an appeal is made to our symbolical imagination—especially if one is liberally endowed with this faculty—the matter is more readily comprehended. At least this seems to have been the Indian way of conceiving the signification of supernaturalism.

When Vimalakīrti was asked by Śāriputra how such a small room as his with just one seat for himself could accommodate all the host of Bodhisattvas and Arhats and Devas numbering many thousands, who were coming there with Mañjuśrī to visit the sick philosopher, replied Vimalakīrti, "Are you here to seek chairs or the Dharma?... One who seeks the Dharma finds it in seeking it in nothing." Then learning from Mañjuśrī where to obtain seats, he asks a Buddha called Sumerudīparāja to supply him with 32,000 lion-seats, majestically decorated and as high as 84,000 yojanas. When they were brought in, his room, formerly large enough just for one seat, now miraculously accommodated all of them with all of the retinue of Mañjuśrī, and yet the whole town of Vaiśālī and the rest of the world did not appear on this account to be crammed up. Śāriputra was surprised beyond measure to witness this supernatural event, but Vimalakīrti explained that for those who understand the doctrine of spiritual emancipation, even the Mount of Sumeru could be sealed up in a seed of mustard, and the waves of the four great oceans could be made to flow into one pore of the skin (*romakupa*), without even giving any sense of inconvenience to any of the fishes, cocrodiles, tortoises, and other living beings in them; the spiritual kingdom was not bound in space and time.

To quote another instance from the *Lankāvatāra-sūtra*. When King Rāvana was requesting the Buddha through the Bodhisattva Mahāmāti to disclose the content of his inner experience, the king unexpectedly noticed his mountainous residence turned into numberless mountains of precious stones and most ornately decorated with celestial grandeur, and on each of these mountains he saw the Buddha manifested. And before each Buddha there stood King Rāvana himself with all his assemblage as well as all the countries in the ten quarters of the world, and in each of those countries there appeared the Tathāgata, before whom again there were King Rāvana, his families, his palaces, his gardens, all decorated exactly in the same style as his own. There was also the Bodhisattva Mahāmāti in each of these innumerable assemblies asking the Buddha to declare the content of his inner spiritual experience; and when the Buddha finished his discourse on the subject with hundreds of thousands of exquisite voices, the whole scene suddenly vanished, and the Buddha with all his Bodhisattvas and the followers of his were no more; then King Rāvana found himself all alone in his old palace. He now reflected: "Who was he that asked the question? Who was he that listened? What were those objects that appeared before me? Was it a dream? or a magical phenomenon?" He again reflected: "Things are all like this, they are all creations of one's own mind. When mind discriminates, there is manifoldness of things; but when it does not, it looks into the true state of things." When he thus reflected, he heard voices in the air and in his own palace, saying: "Well you have reflected, O King! You should conduct yourself according to this view."

I could quote many such incidents if it were further necessary for the establishment of my thesis that the reason for the introduction of supernaturalism into the Mahayana.



literature of Buddhism was to demonstrate the intellectual impossibility of comprehending spiritual facts. Philosophy exhausted its resources logically to explain them, and Vimalakīrti like Bhava, a Vedic mystic, remained silent, and the Indian Mahayana writers introduced supernaturalistic symbolism. It remained for the Chinese Zen Buddhists to invent their own methods according to their own needs and insight.

The Chinese have no aptitude to hide themselves in the clouds of mystery and supernaturalism. Chwang-tze and Lieh-tze were the nearest to the Indian type of mind in ancient China, but their mysticism does not begin to approach that of the Indian Mahayanists in grandeur, in elaborateness, and in the height of soaring imagination. Chwang-tze did his best when he rode up in the air on the back of the Taip'eng whose wings looked like overhanging clouds; and Lieh-tze when he could command winds and clouds as his charioteers. The later Taoists dreamed of ascending to the heavens after so many years of ascetic discipline and by taking an elixir of life concocted from various rare herbs. Thus in China we have so many Taoist hermits living in the mountains far away from human habitations. No Chinese saints or philosophers are recorded in history who have been capable of equaling Vimalakīrti or Mañjuśrī, or even any of the Arhats. The Confucian verdict that superior man never talks about miracles, wonders, and supernaturalism, is the true expression of Chinese psychology. The Chinese are thoroughly practical. They must have their own way of interpreting the doctrine of Enlightenment as applied to their daily life. They could not help creating Zen as an expression of their inmost spiritual experience.

The inner sense of Enlightenment was not understood in China except intellectually in the earlier days of Buddhism. This was natural, seeing that it was in this respect that the

Chinese minds were excelled by the Indian. As I said before, the boldness and subtlety of Mahayana philosophy must have fairly stunned the Chinese, who had, before the introduction of Buddhism, practically no system of thought worthy of the name, except moral science. In this latter they were conscious of their own strength; even such devout Buddhists as I-tsing and Hsüan-t'sang acknowledged it, with all their ardour for the Yogācārya psychology and the Avatamsaka metaphysics, they thought that their country, as far as moral culture was concerned, was ahead of the land of their faith or at least had nothing to learn from the latter. As the Mahayana Sūtras and Śāstras were translated in rapid succession by able, learned, devout scholars, both native and Indian, the Chinese minds were led to explore a region where they had not ventured very far before. In the early Chinese biographical histories of Buddhism, we notice commentators, expounders, and philosophers far outnumbering translators and adepts in Dhyāna so called. The Buddhist scholars were at first quite busily engaged in assimilating intellectually the signification of the various doctrines expounded in Mahayana literature. Not only they were so deep and complicated but they were also so contradicting one another, at least on the surface. If they were to enter into the depths of Buddhist thought, they had to dispose of these entanglements somehow. But if they were sufficiently critical, they could do that with comparative ease, which was however something we could never expect of those earlier Buddhists; for even in these modern days critical Buddhist scholars will in some quarters be looked upon as not quite devout and orthodox. They all had not a shadow of doubt as to the genuineness of the Mahayanist texts as faithfully and literally recording the very words of the Buddha, and therefore they had to plan out some system of reconciliation between diverse doctrines taught in the Scriptures. This meant to find out what was the object of the Buddha's appearance

in the world ignorant, corrupted, and given up to the karma of eternal transmigration. Such efforts on the part of Buddhist philosophers developed what is to be distinctly designated as Chinese Buddhism.

While this intellectual assimilation was going on on the one hand, the practical side of Buddhism was also assiduously studied. There were followers of the Vinaya texts, and others devoted themselves to the mastery of Dhyāna. But what was here known as Dhyāna was not the Dhyāna of Zen Buddhism, it was a meditation, concentrating one's thought on some ideas such as impermanence, egolessness of things, chain of causation, or the attributes of the Buddha. Even Bodhi-Dharma, the founder of Zen Buddhism, was regarded by historians as belonging to this class of Dhyāna-adepts, his peculiar merits as teacher of an entirely novel school of Buddhism were not fully appreciated. This was inevitable, the people of China were not yet quite ready to accept the new form; for they had only inadequately grasped the doctrine of Enlightenment in all its bearings.

The importance of Enlightenment in its practical bearings, however, was not altogether overlooked in the maze of doctrinal intricacies. Chi-i (智顗), one of the founders of the T'ien Tai school, and the greatest Buddhist philosopher in China, was fully awake to the significance of Dhyāna as the means of attaining Enlightenment. With all his analytical powers, his speculation had room enough for the practice of Dhyāna. His work on "Tranquilisation and Contemplation" is explicit in this point. His idea was to carry out intellectual and spiritual exercises in perfect harmony, and not partially to emphasise either one of the two, Samādhi or Prajñā, at the expense of the other. Unfortunately, his followers grew more and more one-sided until they neglected the Dhyāna practice or the sake of intellection. Hence their antagonistic attitude

later on towards advocates of Zen Buddhism, for which however the latter were to a certain extent to be responsible, too.

It was due to Dharma that Zen came to be the Buddhism of China. It was he that started this movement which proved so fruitful among a people given up to the practical affairs of life. When he declared his message, it was still tinged with Indian colours, he could not be entirely independent of the traditional Buddhist metaphysics of the times. His allusion to the *Vajrasamādhi* and the *Lankāvatāra* was natural, but the seeds of Zen were sown by his hands. It now remained with his native disciples to see to it that these seeds grew up in harmony with the soil and climate. It took more than two hundred years after Dharma for the Zen seeds to bear fruit, rich and vigorous in life, and fully naturalised while fully retaining the essence of what makes up Buddhism.

Some Japanese Buddhist scholars are inclined to find the first pioneers of Zen Buddhism among the philosophers of the Madhyamika school under the leadership of Kumārajīva and his immediate disciples; for they think there is something in Zen, especially in its expository writings, that makes one seek its source in the Śūnyatā metaphysics. But this view is based on a wrong understanding of Zen, according to which Zen is a philosophy and not a discipline leading to Enlightenment. While Zen most explicitly avows its independence of all metaphysical analysis and conceptual reasoning, the critics endeavour to look into its truths by means of concepts and abstractions, whereas this was the very method strongly condemned by the Zen followers. Their position from the very first was that the content of Enlightenment was to be grasped intuitively and not analytically, in fact, this was the *raison d'être* of their existence as a separate school of Buddhism.

Supposing for argument's sake that Dharma wished to build up his Zen philosophy on the Śūnyatā doctrine of the

Prajñāpāramitā school, he could do so by recommending its texts to his followers, as their Chinese translations were already in existence. But instead of doing that he recommended the *Lankāvatāra* as showing the way of Zen more directly than any other Mahayana writings. Why did he do so? In his own writing, he quoted from the *Vajrasamādhi-sūtra* which can hardly be regarded as belonging to the Prajñāpāramitā class of Mahayana literature. In fact, if Dharma had any intention to base his Zen on the philosophy of Śūnyatā, the literature was quite handy, especially the *Vajracchedika*, which came into vogue later on among the Zen students. Dharma's decided preference for the *Lankāvatāra* and the *Vajrasamādhi* leaves us no doubt as to the foundation of his Zen philosophy if there is at all such a thing.

On this ground, however, some critics may be inclined to deny Dharma's being the first real founder of Zen in China and would point to Hung-jên (弘忍) or Hui-nêng (慧能), that is, the Fifth or the Sixth Patriarch of the Zen sect in China as the originator of Zen Buddhism. But here is a great difficulty if this view is to be adopted as correct. For we have to ask, why did Hung-jên or Hui-nêng from which the *Vajracchedika* evidently began to be regarded as important in the study of Zen, trace his doctrine straight back to Dharma instead of any other great Indian teacher who came to China to propagate Buddhism, or, as the founder of the T'ien-tai school did, directly to Nāgārjuna or Aśvaghoṣa? Unless there was some inner and necessary relation between Dharma and the later Zen representatives, the latter would never have thought of showing forth Dharma as their leader in China, when it was so easy to pick up any of the great Buddhist fathers either in China or in India. But this is not the place to enter into a detailed discussion of the subject and I will defer it to a special article.

We may conclude now that Zen, in spite of the uncouthness of its external features, belongs to the general system of Buddhism. And by Buddhism we mean not only the teaching of the Buddha himself as recorded in the earliest **A**gamas, but the later speculations, philosophical and religious, concerning the person and life of the Buddha. His personal greatness was such as sometimes made his disciples advance theories somewhat contrary to the advice supposed to have been given by their Master. This was inevitable. The world with all its contents, individually as well as as a whole, is subject to our subjective interpretation, not a capricious interpretation indeed, but growing out of our inner necessity, our religious yearnings. Even the Buddha as an object of one's religious experience could not escape this, his personality was so constituted as to awaken in us every feeling and thought that goes under the name of Buddhism. The most significant and fruitful ideas that were provoked by him were concerned with his Enlightenment and Nirvāna. These two facts stood most prominently in his long peaceful life of seventy-nine years, and all the theories and beliefs that are bound up with the Buddha are attempts to understand these facts in terms of our own religious experience. Thus Buddhism has grown to have a much wider meaning than is understood by most critics.

The Buddha's Enlightenment and Nirvāna were two separate ideas in his life as it unfolded in history so many centuries ago, but from the religious point of view they are to be regarded as one idea. That is to say, when his Enlightenment is understood as to its content and value, the signification of Nirvāna is also realised. Taking a stand on this, the Mahayanists developed two currents of thought: the one was to rely on our intellectual efforts to the furthest extent they could reach, and the other, pursuing the practical method adopted by the Buddha himself, indeed by all Indian truth-seekers,

endeavoured to find in the practice of Dhyāna something directly leading to Enlightenment. It goes without saying that in both of these efforts the original impulse lies in the inmost religious consciousness of pious Buddhists.

The Mahayana texts compiled during a few centuries after the Buddha testify to the view here presented. Of these, the one expressly composed to propagate the teaching of the Zen school is the *Lankāvatāra-sūtra*, in which the content of Enlightenment is, as far as words admit, presented from a psychological, philosophical, and a practical point of view. When this was introduced into China and thoroughly assimilated according to the Chinese method of thinking and feeling, the main thesis of the Sutra came to be demonstrated in such a way as is now considered characteristically Zen. The truth has many avenues of approach through which it makes itself known to the human mind. But the choice it makes depends on certain limitations under which it works. The superabundance of Indian imagination issued in supernaturalism and wonderful symbolism, and the Chinese sense of practicalness and its love for the solid everyday facts of life resulted in Zen Buddhism. We may now be able to understand, though only tentatively by most of readers at present, the following definition of Zen offered by its masters:

When Jōshu was asked what Zen was, he answered, "It is cloudy to-day and I won't answer."

To the same question, Ummon's reply was: "That's it." On another occasion the master was not at all affirmative, for he said, "Not a word to be predicated!"

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