For copyright reasons, the frontispiece and all other illustrations in this volume have been blacked out. We are in the process of applying for permission to reproduce these illustrations electronically. Once permission is gained, the illustrations will be made available. We apologize for the inconvenience.

## TRANSLATIONS

# The Voicing of the Way

## Dōgen's *Shōbōgenzō Dōtoku*

TRANSLATED WITH COMMENTARY BY
SAKAMOTO HIROSHI

Interest in the writings of the Japanese Zen master Dōgen (1200–1253) seems to be increasing steadily in the West as well as in Japan, attracting not only those who are concerned primarily with religion and philosophy, but also students from the ranks of the non-specialists, scientists, artists, poets, and men of letters. The reasons for this are many. Dōgen's marvelous gift for expressing in words the essential significance of enlightenment, his remarkably-achieved blend of religious fervor and philosophical profundity, his sharp critical eye, which catches unfailingly even the slightest hint of falsity—these are a few of the qualities in Dōgen's thought which may be offered to explain the fascination he holds for many readers. In addition, the form or style he employs in developing his thought cannot be underestimated in this regard, for it is here the qualities that mark his genius as a great religious thinker are most conspicuously displayed. I refer in particular to the form that is used in Dōgen's principal written work, the *Shōbōgenzō*.

Dōgen follows the same general format in each of the individual essays or "books" which make up the *Shōbōgenzō*. As a rule, he begins with an introductory statement on the subject with which he is to deal in that particular book. He then quotes a passage, generally from Zen literature, relevant to the theme. This is followed by his own commentary, the basic purpose of which is to clarify the underlying significance of the cited text. It attempts to achieve that end by giving further voice to the experience of enlightenment that lies vital at the root of the words and phrases of the cited passage.

From Dōgen's standpoint, no single expression of enlightenment, however eloquent, can be allowed to stand unchallenged as a fixed absolute. Enlighten-

ment, by its very nature, is free from any such determination, and must be constantly re-expressed. His own series of comments, proceeding from this basic standpoint, enable him to develop his theme in accord with his personal understanding, and in a manner most congenial to the presentation of his thought. The words and phrases of each of the passages he cites provide him in turn with fresh and creative stimuli, leading him to new ideas and new forms of expression. The changing, multifaceted, gradually intensifying predications he makes in the course of his commentary thus form a sequential chain, characterized by unexpected and illuminating flights of his striking Zen rhetoric.

This translation of *Shōbōgenzō Dōtoku*, while helping to demonstrate the way in which Dōgen deals with one of his important themes—the expressing of the realm of enlightenment in words and letters—should I hope at the same time give some idea of the unique manner in which he develops the various aspects of his central theme.

*Dōtoku* 道得, the title of this "book," is a term frequently encountered in the pages of the *Shōbōgenzō*. Semantically, it means "to be able to speak," being a compound of two Chinese characters, *dō* (literally, to speak) and *toku* (to gain, to obtain; to be able to). For Dōgen, however, *dōtoku* signifies something more than just being able to speak. Whenever he uses the word, he has in mind another essential meaning latent in the first character of the compound, *dō*. *Dō* also means the Way or Tao; in Chinese Buddhism, it signifies the Way to enlightenment, or enlightenment itself. For Dogen, then, *dōtoku* means "*to be able to give expression to the Way in speech*," or better, "*to give voice to the Way*."[1]

In the following translation, I have rendered the term *dōtoku* as "voicing the Way," "voicing of the Way," and sometimes simply "voicing," according to the context, to convey its essential meanings of "giving voice to the Way," and also "the Way giving voice to itself," through the lips of the enlightened one, with "the Way" signifying at once the object and the subject of the verb "voice."

[1] In *Shōbōgenzō Kaiin-zammai*, Dōgen writes, "*Dōtoku* is by no means *gontoku* (to be able to speak)" (*Shōbōgenzō*, ed. Ōkubo Dōshū, Chikuma, 1977, p. 103).

# The Voicing of the Way

Every buddha and every patriarch is able to voice the Way. That is why when buddha-patriarchs come to determine whether others are buddha-patriarchs or not, they invariably examine them to see if they are able to voice the Way. They pursue their questioning by means of mind, by means of body, with a stick or a fly whisk, with a pillar or a lantern. No one but a buddha-patriarch can either pursue this kind of questioning or give voice to the Way, because all others lack the ground from which such questioning and voicing become possible.

Dōgen's opening statement about buddha-patriarchs all being able to voice the Way, although seemingly directly contrary to Zen's "non-dependence upon words and letters," touches an essential point in his thought: the function of language in the expression of enlightenment.

Language is basically the tool of discriminative, dichotomous thinking. Through the acquiring of language, man's discriminative thought processes have become a determinate feature of his mode of being in the world. While we enjoy the products and conveniences that derive from this discriminative knowledge, we give little notice to discriminative thought itself. For all its contributions to the progress of civilized life, it has had the adverse effect of estranging man from the underlying reality (*tathatā*) of things, and wedding him to birth-and-death (*samsāra*), the state of ignorance (*avidyā*). From this viewpoint, words and letters are, after all, tools of this unenlightened state of being. So far as their ordinary function is concerned, it is inconceivable that words and letters should in any real sense express or communicate enlightenment itself, the state attained when ignorance is broken through.

A "buddha-patriarch," a truly enlightened person, is able to turn that inconceivability into actuality—through his marvelous exercise of

language. It is possible because, in him, language too breaks beyond the discriminatory boundaries of *avidyā* and functions as an immediate agency of his enlightenment. As such, the voicing of the Way by such a person is totally different from any ordinary voicing of the Way from the level of unenlightened discrimination.

The voicing of the Way of which I speak cannot be acquired from someone else; neither is it possible to come to it through your own power. The truth of the matter is: where is found the penetrating practice of the buddha-patriarchs, there also is found the buddha-patriarchs' voicing of the Way. Within this voicing of the Way, the buddha-patriarchs of the past have practiced and have penetrated to realization; within it as well buddha-patriarchs are negotiating the Way in the present time. When these buddha-patriarchs strive to penetrate buddha-patriarchs and affirm their voicing of the Way, the voicing of the Way becomes, of itself, three, eight, thirty, or even forty years of striving and penetrating. Then the buddha-patriarchs voice the Way with all their strength, completely and exhaustively.

(At this point, a note written on the back side of the scroll reads: "*Thirty or twenty is the length of time—the months and the years—it takes for the voicing of the Way to be realized. The months and years work together to bring it about.*")

Throughout these years, which may even extend into decades, the Way has continued to be voiced without so much as a single pause or intermission. Hence the discernment that comes at the moment enlightenment is realized must perforce be true. Because the discernment achieved at that time is a true discernment, the voicing that is made at present is unquestionably the voicing of the Way. Thus, the Way being voiced right now contains within it the discernment previously penetrated, while the discernment made, at that time, contains within it the present voicing of the Way. The present voicing of the Way owes its existence to this fact, as does the present discernment of the Way. The present voicing of the Way and that past discernment

form one continuous and inseparable piece, stretching out straight for a million leagues. The exertion put forth as you strive to penetrate the Way is exerted onward through your master's voicing and discernment of the Way.

In this passage, Dōgen proceeds to elucidate the voicing of the Way in light of the master-disciple relationship, what he calls "the relationship between one buddha-patriarch and another." A buddha-patriarch's voicing of the Way emerges from his discernment of the Way. His voicing then provokes in his disciple the aspiration to penetrate the voicing's true significance. This aspiration spurs him in his own practice, an intense, persevering struggle which may last for decades. But when the time finally comes, and the discernment of truth arises in him, he too is able to voice the Way, in his own words. The Zen records are filled with cases exemplifying this process.

Dōgen stresses that the authenticity and strength of the discernment continues from master to disciple without change and without pause or intermission. He compares this to a transfer of water from one vessel to another.[1]

Those long months and years, held firmly in hand by this exertion, finally make all the effort amassed hitherto fall away. As you reach the point at which the falling away occurs, the falling away is affirmed by skin, flesh, bone, and marrow all as one, and everything else, the earth and all its mountains and rivers, also affirms it at the same time. Since the exertion is put forth with a determination to attain the falling away as the ultimate and invaluable goal, and the goal, when attained, turns out to be the arising [of something absolutely affirmative and positive], at the very moment of falling away, the voicing of the Way arises, spontaneous and unexpected. It arises neither by strength of mind nor by strength of body. It is the voicing of the Way, arising of itself. When the voicing is being made,

[1] Cf. *Shōbōgenzō gyōji* (Ōkubo), p. 135.

you are not conscious of there being anything unusual or extraordinary about it.

Here Dōgen examines the voicing of the Way in connection with the experience of "falling away" (*datsuraku*), the breakthrough into enlightenment. The accumulated years of assiduous devotion to practice suddenly "fall away" in total negation, and with them, the illusoriness of all discriminatory knowledge.

But enlightenment is at once affirmation *par excellence*, an experience of the most positive kind. The falling away, when attained, turns out to be an arising, a spontaneous welling forth of unconditional affirmation. It may manifest itself as a sudden slap, a jubilant shout, the dashing off of an enlightenment verse. Invariably, these acts reveal the depth and strength of the experience. Dōgen expresses this impressively elsewhere in *Shōbōgenzō*: "When you fully discern the Mind, the whole sky overhead is struck completely down. The great earth itself crumbles to dust underfoot. . . . When you discern the Mind, the great earth instantly grows three inches thicker."[2] This reminds us of the words of Meister Eckhart, "When the soul is thoroughly detached and emptied of every kind of creatureliness, the birth of the Son or the eternal Word takes place of itself therein."

Furthermore, when this voicing of the Way is being voiced, it is at once the non-voicing of the Way being non-voiced. Merely to recognize and know that the Way is being voiced, and to fail to penetrate to the realization that it is also and at the same time the non-voicing of the Way—that is not the "true face" of the buddha-patriarchs; it is not their "bone and marrow."

Dōgen now takes up the question of "non-voicing," a close scrutiny of which, he says, is indispensable for the true understanding of the voicing of the Way. The idea of non-voicing is not original to Dōgen. Tōzan Ryōkai, a Sōtō Zen patriarch sixteen generations prior to Dōgen, said, "Grasp through voicing that which cannot be grasped through practice; grasp through practice that which cannot be grasped through

[2] *Shōbōgenzō sokushin zebutsu* (Ōkubo), p. 44.

voicing." Ungo Dōyō, one of Tōzan's heirs, is credited with a somewhat similar saying.[3]

But it was definitely Dōgen who disclosed its full significance. His elucidation of non-voicing is remarkable especially for the way it deals in depth with the related problems of faith and practice. Starting with this passage, the theme of voicing the Way is examined by means of some actual cases from the Zen records, with an emphasis on the vital matter of non-voicing.

Therefore, how could the voicing of "bowing thrice and standing up without saying a word," ever be equated with the voicing of those of the "skin, flesh, bone, and marrow"?[4] The latter's voicing can never join with the former's. "My" meeting with the latter now, just as "his" meeting with them then, is a

[3] Tung-shan Liang-chieh (807–869) and Yün-chü Tao-ying (?–902) *Dentōroku*, IX.

[4] The phrases "bowing thrice and standing up in his seat" and "skin, flesh, bone, and marrow," come from a well-known passage in the *Dentōroku* (ch. III), which relates Bodhidharma's acknowledgement of understanding in his four disciples:

Bodhidharma, just before departing for his native country, called all his disciples before him and said, "The time is come for me to depart. I want to see what your attainments are."

"According to my view," said Dōfuku, "the truth is not attached to words and letters; nor is it apart from them. That is the way it operates."

The master said, "You have my skin."

Next came the nun Sōji. "As I understand it," she said, "it is like Ānanda's viewing the Buddha-land of Aksobhya: it is seen once and never again."

The master said, "You have my flesh."

A third disciple, Dōiku, then presented his view. "Empty are the four elements, and non-existent the five skandhas. According to my view, there is not a thing to be grasped as real."

The master said, "You have my bone."

Finally Eka's turn came. He bowed thrice with great reverence. Then he stood up in his seat.

"You have got my marrow," the master affirmed.

In spite of the fact that the original text has Eka attaining his master's marrow (the essence of his teaching), Dōgen, in his commentary below adds a personal twist; while praising Eka's act of standing in his seat as an expression of true attainment, he views the symbol "attaining the marrow" in the same way he does "attaining the skin, flesh, and bone"—as a case of attachment to attainment.

case of "going among bestial beings."[5] In me, there is a voicing and a non-voicing of the Way. In him, there is a voicing and a non-voicing of the Way. In the voicing, there is a difference between "mine" and "theirs." In the non-voicing, there is also a difference between mine and theirs.

Here Dōgen alludes to those who are concerned only with the voicing of the Way, but remain in the dark about its non-voicing. He likens them to Bodhidharma's disciples, and refers to them as those of the "skin, flesh, bone, and marrow." He contrasts such people to "one who bows and stands up in his seat," a person who has a thorough grasp of the non-voicing, as well as the voicing, of the Way.

Dōgen is not passing a value judgment on the relative attainment of Eka and the other three disciples. In fact, he seems purposely to avoid doing that. His interest here is rather to make clear the difference between their ignorance and a true awareness of "non-voicing." He even goes on to state that he, Dōgen, is standing on the same footing as Eka, i.e., "one who bows and stands up in his seat"[6]—a genuine Zen person.

The Great Master Shinsai of Jōshū[7] addressed his assembly of monks: "If you do not leave the monastery for your entire lifetime and sit immovably without speaking for a period of fifteen years, nobody will call you a mute. Even the Buddhas will be unable to touch you."

Consider those fifteen years, spent firm in the resolve to remain

---

[5] "Bestial beings" (*irui* 異類, literally, "animals" or "beasts") is a Zen term used with various connotations, indicative of those unenlightened beings who still remain in the realm of illusoriness. "Going among bestial beings" (*irui chūgyō* 異類中行) refers to the activity of the enlightened one, who moves among beings in the realm of illusoriness and makes every effort to bring them over into the realm of enlightenment. Cf. *Dentōroku*, ch. VIII, section on Nansen.

[6] In *Shōbōgenzō kattō*, written nine months after *Shōbōgenzō dōtoku*, Dōgen argues that Bodhidharma gave acknowledgement to each of his four disciples, so here he does not mean that Eka alone had attained realization.

[7] Jōshū Jūshin (Chao-chou Ts'ung-shen, 778–897), heir to Nansen Fugan (Nan-ch'üan P'u-yüan). "Great Master Shinsai" is his posthumous title.

in the monastery for the rest of your life in order to concentrate on negotiating the Way, passing through many seasons of frost and seasons of flower. The immovable sitting practiced throughout this period is itself a considerable voicing of the Way. The walking, sitting, and lying down, all the activities of daily life, performed in the resolve never to leave the monastery gates, will be such that "nobody will call you a mute." You may not be aware whence your life has come, but if you resolve to make yours a life that "never leaves the monastery," then it will be without doubt "a life that never leaves the monastery." Through what avenue, then, does the "lifetime" connect with the "monastery"? You should just inquire into immovable sitting until it is fully affirmed. Do not despise the non-voicing, for non-voicing is indeed, from its head to its tail, the voicing of the Way.

Immovable sitting is for a whole lifetime, or for two whole lifetimes. It is not just for one time, or for two times. If you sit immovably without speaking for a period of fifteen years, even the buddhas will never make light of you, because sitting immovably without speaking is truly something "even a buddha's eye could not discern, even a buddha's power could not draw near or exercise any sway over."

What Jōshū says is this: The voicing voiced by someone sitting immovably without speaking is something the buddhas themselves could never describe as "mute" or "non-mute." If so, "not leaving the monastery for a whole lifetime" is precisely "not leaving the voicing of the Way for a whole lifetime." "Sitting immovably without speaking for fifteen years" is itself "voicing the Way for fifteen years"; it is "not leaving the non-voicing for a whole lifetime"; "not being able to voice the Way for fifteen years"; "sitting and breaking past a hundred or a thousand buddhas"; "a hundred or a thousand buddhas sitting and breaking past you."

In the light of all this, it can be said that the buddha-patriarchs' voicing of the Way is, as such, "not leaving the monastery for life." Even a man who is mute can give voice to the Way. Do not

make the mistake of thinking that a mute is unable to voice the Way. Those able to voice the Way are not necessarily limited to those who are not mute. A mute can also voice the Way. His voice must be audible. You should hear the voice of the mute. Unless you yourself are mute, how do you communicate with him? How do you converse with him? He is absolutely mute., How do you interview him? How do you converse with him? You should, in this way, penetrate the mute to full discernment.

In citing this sermon by the T'ang Zen master Jōshū Jūshin, Dōgen sets before the reader an ideal model for authentic Zen practice; at the same time he clarifies the significance of non-voicing in the practical terms of monastery life. He calls his monks' attention to the non-voicing of the Way, saying that the non-voicing of "immovable sitting" is itself the genuine voicing of the Way; voicing, however eloquent, cannot be accepted as genuine unless it is an outcome of immovable sitting.

Immovable sitting is to be practiced "for a whole lifetime, or for two whole lifetimes . . . not just for one time, or for two times." In other words, it is to be practiced for itself, not merely as a means for attaining enlightenment.

"Immovable sitting" of this kind, Dōgen declares, is "something even a buddha's eye could not discern, even a buddha's power could not draw near or exercise any sway over." Although the rhetoric here may seem exaggerated, it may be understood in connection with the extremely elevated role he gives to the practice of sitting. Elsewhere in the *Shōbōgenzō*, he speaks of the *gyōbutsu*, or "practice-buddha," the buddha who is ever-present in the practice of immovable sitting, but who is without any other attributes.[8] The "practice-buddha," according to Dōgen, retains such an unsurpassed state of sublimity that no other kind of buddha can compare with it, not even the recompense-buddha (*sambhogakāya-buddha*) or the transformation-buddha (*nirmanakāya-buddha*). "Immovable sitting," then, is the abode of this "practice-buddha," and the "practice-buddha" is ever-present in and essentially one with immovable sitting.

---

[8] *Shōbōgenzō gyōbutsuigi* (Ōkubo), p. 46.

There was a monk among the assembly of the Great Master Shinkaku of Mount Seppō[9] who took his leave of the master and went off to a desolate place on the mountain to live by himself. He built a small hut with a thatched roof. The years passed. He never once bothered to shave his head, and few could have had any knowledge of his life at the hut; news from that part of the mountain did not reach back to the monastery. Taking a dipper he had fashioned out of wood, he would go down to the valley stream and use it to ladle drinking water. Truly, he "drank of the waters of the swift stream."

As the days and months came and went, something of the man and his way of life finally filtered out and found its way back to the monastery. One day a monk from the monastery went and paid him a visit.

"What is the meaning of Bodhidharma's coming from the west?" the visitor asked.

"The valley is deep," the monk replied, "this dipper is long."

The visiting monk, without further ado—he neither made his bows nor asked for instruction from the recluse—returned to the monastery and reported to Master Seppō the words as he had heard them.

Seppō listened. Then he said, "That's extraordinarily good. Still, I'll have to go and examine him for myself. He won't really pass until then."

So one day Seppō set out for the hut. He took an attendant along with him, giving him a razor to carry. As soon as he was face to face with the monk, he said, "I won't shave your head if you are able to voice the Way."

We must grasp the significance of the question implied in this address. It sounds as if Seppō is telling the monk that not shaving him will signify approval of his voicing of the Way. Is that so?

---

[9] Seppō Gizon (Hsüeh-feng I-ts'un, 822–908). "Great Master Shinkaku" is his posthumous title.

If the voicing the recluse monk makes is a true voicing of the Way, he will escape the shaving. The voicing of the Way will be heard only by those who possess the capability of hearing it. It is for those with the capability of hearing it that it is spoken. After Seppō's initial words to him at the hut, the monk went and washed his hair. Then he reappeared before the master, ready to be shaved. When the monk appeared, did he come voicing the Way? Or, did he come non-voicing the Way? Whichever it was, Seppō at once shaved his head.

Before, using a passage from Jōshū's sermon, Dōgen offered a model for Zen practice. It is important to keep Jōshū's words in mind as we try to grasp the significance Dōgen gives to this story of Seppō and the recluse monk.

Seppō was deeply impressed with the recluse's voicing of the Way, praising it as extraordinarily good, but he would still not concede his attainment. The monk had presumably quit the monastery without permission to live alone at the hut. He neglected to keep his head shaved. It is understandable that his master would look upon this with disfavor, as a deviation from the ideal model of Zen life. Despite his admiration for the monk's voicing, Seppō seems to have had doubts about something prior and fundamental to the voicing: the non-voicing of the Way, the depth of his faith and dedication to practice.

According to Buddhist monastic regulations, a monk's head, mustache and beard must be shaved regularly, twice each month. It symbolizes the cleansing of the mind of vanity and self-pride. Tonsuring is thus an important part of the ceremony for ordaining monks. Seppō seems to have suspected that the recluse had succumbed to the error of pride. For him, the real underlying issue was a lifetime of continuous, immovable sitting free from any consciousness of self or feeling of arrogance.

A strong poison is mixed into Seppō's words, "I won't shave your head if you are able to voice the Way." Hence Dōgen's comment, "We must grasp the significance of the question implied in this address. It sounds as if Seppō is telling the monk that not shaving him will signify approval of his voicing of the Way. Is that so?" Had the monk been guilty of pride, he would have fallen instantly into Seppō's trap. What

Seppō really wanted from him was not a verbal response, however eloquent; he wanted to find out the genuineness of the monk's devotion to his calling.

The monk responded by coming and standing before him with his hair washed, ready and willing to be shaved. He knew that it was wrong for him to drop out of the monastery and live by himself, and wrong to be unshaven. And yet, he felt that there was nothing else he could do. The moment he saw his master and the razor in the attendant's hand, his mind was decided to have his head shaved. He appeared before him with a feeling of total humility. His head was shaved. The significance of the shaving thus underwent a radical change. No more did it mean rejection or denial of the monk's attainment. It now meant an unqualified approval, because the monk's response was precisely what Seppō wanted from him: the voicing of non-voicing.

This story is as rare a manifestation as the efflorescence of the Udumbara blossom. Not only is it rare to see, it is rare even to hear tell of it. It is beyond even the spiritual range of the Sages of the seven or ten ranks.[10] It cannot even be glimpsed by the Wise Men of the three or seven grades.[11] To those like sutra-masters and sastra-masters, or to those possessed of superhuman powers, or powers of self-transformation, it is utterly unfathomable. To have the good fortune to hear a story of this kind is no less than to encounter the appearance of a buddha in the world.

Now just how are we to take Seppō's utterance, "I won't shave your head if you are able to voice the Way"? Among persons still unable to voice the Way, those possessed of true ability will hear these words and be moved to astonishment and doubt. But others, helpless and dismayed, will just stare blankly. The

[10] The seven ranks probably refers to the final seven stages of those who rank as sages in Theravada Buddhism; the ten ranks refers to the last ten stages of Bodhisattvahood in Mahayana Buddhism.

[11] The "three grades" refers to the three groups of ten stages each through which the Mahayana Bodhisattva proceeds; the "seven grades" to the three stages of mindfulness and the four roots of goodness in Theravada Buddhism.

master does not inquire about the buddhas. He does not inquire about the Way. He does not ask about samadhi or about dharanis. He simply addresses the monks in this direct way. Although his words may seem to be a question, they resemble a voicing of the Way. This is a point you should give close and minute inquiry.

This story of Seppō and the recluse monk sets forth eloquently the spiritual foundation—infinite faith in the Way or Dharma—that underlies the immovable sitting spoken of by Jōshū. That is the reason why Dōgen heaps such lavish praise upon it. It is, he says, even beyond the spiritual range of the most advanced ranks of the Sages, who, because they are concerned only with forwarding their own attainment, cannot be compared with a buddha-patriarch such as Seppō.

Dōgen comments that Seppō's words, although framed as a question, are in fact a voicing of the Way spoken directly from a deep-rooted religious faith. By showing his readiness to shave the monk's head, Seppō attempts to elicit a direct reply from him—out of the depths of his faith.

The inhabitant of the hut was a man of genuine sincerity; he did not just stare in blank dismay. He was assisted and inspired by the voicing of the master. He reappeared before Seppō with his hair washed, ready to be shaved—his "family disposition"[12] manifested itself spontaneously. It is a case which well exemplifies "the wonderful way of conduct which even the wisdom of the Buddha himself cannot fully know." It deserves to be described as "a buddha appearing in the world"; "a buddha preaching of the Dharma"; "a buddha leading sentient beings to the other shore." Such is the monk coming with his hair washed.

At this moment, had Seppō not been the Person[13] he was, he

[12] "Family disposition" (*kafū*): a Zen term used to describe the characteristic style or disposition of a Zen master and his line of disciples. Seppō's *kafū* is known for its sober, sincere, and humble character.

[13] The Person (*sono hito*): a genuine Zen personality.

might have thrown the razor aside and laughed out loud. But Seppō was such a Person, in full possession of his power, so he forthwith shaved the monk's head. Had this encounter between Seppō and the recluse monk not been an encounter of buddha with buddha, events would have never turned out as they did. No, unless it had been one buddha and another buddha, one dragon and another dragon, it would never have turned out in this way. The black dragon is said to guard the rare Black Gem[14] jealously and untiringly. Even so, it will still fall into the hands of one who is able to get hold of it.

Dōgen asserts that the monk's coming with his hair washed is comparable to a buddha's appearing in the world, preaching the Dharma, and leading sentient beings to the other shore. No less valuable for Dōgen is Seppō's act of shaving unhesitatingly the monk's head. Seppō could do so, he declares, only because of his own accomplishment as a buddha-patriarch. He might, for example, have shown his mastery of the situation by throwing the razor aside and laughing aloud. But that would not have done full justice to the sincerity of the monk.

Dōgen's comment, "The Black Dragon is said to guard the rare Black Gem jealously and untiringly. Even so, it will still fall into the hand of one who is able to get hold of it," is a reference to the wonderful exchange between Seppō and the recluse monk—between two buddhas, two dragons, an occurrence as rare as the rare efflorescence of the Udumbara blossom.

It should be understood that Seppō examined the recluse, and the recluse saw what Seppō was about. There was voicing and non-voicing, a head shaved and the shaving of a head. We can say, then, that a path existed by which a "good friend" who was able to voice the Way arrived unexpectedly, and a place existed where a person who was non-voicing the Way was understood by that friend even though he had not expected it. Whenever

[14] Black Gem: the rare black gem that is said to be kept under the jaw of the Black Dragon.

one's study and practice are as thoroughgoing as to obtain the deep understanding of a "good friend," the voicing of the Way is there being manifested.

For Dōgen, then, the voicing of the Way (*dōtoku*) is not merely verbal utterance *about* the Way; it must also mean the Way voicing or manifesting itself through or as those utterances. That voicing, moreover, can appear only out of its basic source in non-voicing. In terms of praxis, non-voicing is immovable sitting without speaking, of the kind advocated in Jōshū's address to his monks. In terms of religious attitude, it signifies profound faith, total dedication to practice, and sincerity untainted by any trace of pride.

As such, the non-voicing of the Way, though extremely rare, is found by Dōgen to lie at the ground of the encounter between Seppō and the recluse monk. Using the story, he endeavors to bring his own ideas about non-voicing into greater resolution.

Dōgen's widely acknowledged gift for verbal expression is conspicuous even among Zen masters of the Sōtō Zen line, who have traditionally shown a penchant to use words and letters in elucidating their teachings. Dōgen was no doubt all the more cautious because of that, and on guard against any temptation to use this gift for its own sake, or for mere self-gratification. This is another reason, one suspects, that he places such great emphasis upon non-voicing, and stresses it as the source, rooted in deep faith and "single-minded dedication to sitting" (*shikan taza*), of the voicing of the Way.

*Self-Portrait of Hakuin Setting Out on Pilgrimage*