

# THE EASTERN BUDDHIST

## THE SECRET MESSAGE OF BODHI-DHARMA (OR, THE CONTENT OF ZEN EXPERIENCE)

“What is the meaning of Bodhi-Dharma’s coming from the west?” (如何是祖師西來意.) This is one of the questions most frequently met with in the history of Zen Buddhism and considered one of the most important subjects in the study of Zen. The question, however, is not at all concerned with the coming of Bodhi-Dharma to China as an historical event, that is, with the historical signification of Bodhi-Dharma in Chinese Buddhism. His landing on the southern shore of China is recorded as taking place in the first year of P’u-t’ung (520 A.D.). But the question has nothing to do with these things. Zen is above space-time relations, and naturally even above historical facts. Its followers are a singular set of transcendentalists. When they ask about the first coming of Bodhi-Dharma to China, their idea is to get into the inner meaning, if there were any, of his special teaching, which is thought to be spiritually transmitted to his successors. For there had been so many foreign Buddhist teachers and scholars who came to China before Bodhi-Dharma, and they were all learned and pious and translated many Buddhist texts into the Chinese language; some of them were even great adepts in meditation, and performed wonderful deeds moving the affections of unseen spiritual beings who used to live all over China in those ancient days. This being so, perhaps there was no special need for Bodhi-Dharma to appear among them, if not for some well-defined purpose characteristically distinguishing him from his numerous predecessors. What was this message then? What mission did he have for the people of the Far East?

As to that, Bodhi-Dharma did not make any open declaration, he simply vanished from the world keeping himself in complete retirement at Sung-shan in the dominion of Wei for nine long years as tradition has it. If he had any message to give to Chinese Buddhists concerning the truth of Buddhism, it must have been something quite unique and quite out of the way. What was his reason to keep himself in absolute secrecy? What is the signification of his silent teaching? Perhaps when this is mastered, Buddhism may yet open up some hidden treasure which cannot be described in words and reasoned out logically. The question, therefore, "What is the meaning of Bodhi-Dharma's coming from the west?" points directly to the presence of some truth innerly and mystically lying in the system of Buddhism. It amounts to this: What is the essence of Buddhism as understood by the first patriarch of Zen Buddhism? Is there anything in Buddhism which cannot be expressed and explained in the canonical writings classified into the "three baskets" and arranged in twelve divisions? Shortly, what is the truth of Zen? All the answers, therefore, given to this all-important question are so many different ways of pointing to the ultimate truth.

As far as it is recorded in history still in existence, the question seems to have been first raised in the latter half of the seventh century, that is, about one hundred and fifty years after the coming of Bodhi-Dharma, but the idea must have been in a state of brewing for some time before. When Hui-nêng, the sixth patriarch, established what may be called the native Chinese school of Zen in contradistinction to the Indian Zen of the first patriarch, Chinese Buddhists must have come to realise the significance of the spiritual message of the Zen patriarchs. Since then the question, "What is the meaning of the first patriarch's coming from the west?" naturally came to be one of the most meaningful subjects to be discussed among the Zen followers.

The first questioner as to the meaning of Dharma's coming to China was Tan-nen (坦然) and Yejo (懷讓), according to *The Transmission of the Lamp*, who in the latter half of the seventh century came to Ye-an (慧安) the national teacher and asked "What is the meaning of the first patriarch's coming from the west?" The teacher answered, "Why don't you ask about your own mind?" "What is our own mind, sir?" "You should contemplate the secret working." "What is the secret working, sir?" The teacher merely opened and closed his eyes, instead of giving any oral explanation.

Perhaps the next questioner on record was a certain monk who came to Genso (玄素), of Kakurin (鶴林), very early in the eighth century and asked the question to which the master answered, "When you understand, it is not understood; when you doubt, it is not doubted." Another time his answer was, "It is that which is neither understood nor doubted, again neither doubted nor understood."

As in other cases the masters' answers to the question show such an endless variety as to bewilder the uninitiated, making them wonder how they could ever expect to see into its essence through this labyrinth of thought. And the worst thing is that the variety of answers increases in proportion with the frequency of the question asked, for no masters will ever give the same answer as far as wording goes: indeed if they did there would have been no Zen long before this. The originality and individuality, however, thus shown by the masters, instead of clearing up the matter, complicates it to the utmost. But when one goes carefully over the answers, it is not so difficult to handle them under a certain number of headings. Of course, this classifying does not mean that the unintelligibility grows thereby less unintelligible, only that it may help the student to a certain extent, however tentatively, to find some clues to the orientation of Zen. The following is thus my imperfect attempt to erect a few signposts for the guidance of the Zen student.

(1) Cases where an object near-by is made use of in answering the question. The master when questioned may happen to be engaged in some work, or looking out of the window, or sitting quietly in meditation, and without a moment's hesitation will come his response. The objects thus connected with his doing at the time may be alluded to in his answer. Whatever he may say therefore on such occasions is not an abstract assertion on an object deliberately chosen for the illustration of his point. Yisan (濤山), for instance, questioned by Kyōzan (仰山) answered, "What a fine lantern this!" Probably he was looking at a lantern at the moment, or it stood nearest to them and came in most convenient for the master to be utilised for his immediate purpose. On another occasion his answer to the same question may not be the same; he is sure to find it more desirable and appropriate to demonstrate Zen in some other way. This is where Zen differs from the conceptual arguments of the philosopher.

Joshu's (趙州) answer was, "The cypress-tree in the court"; and Funnyo Zensho's (汾陽善昭), "How cool this blue silk fan is!" The connection between the Zen patriarch's visit to China and all those objects such as the lantern, cypress-tree, or silk-fan may seem to be the remotest possible one and charges our imaginative faculty to do its utmost. But this is what the Zen student is asked to find; for, according to these masters, when the cypress-tree in the court is understood, the reason of Zen Buddhism is understood, and when the reason of Zen Buddhism is understood, everything else will be understood, that is, all the variety of answers to be given below will be more or less thoroughly understood. One string passes through the one hundred and eight beads of a rosary.

(2) Cases where definite judgments are given concerning the question itself or the position of the questioner. Daibai Hojo's (大梅法常) answer was quite decisive, "There is no meaning in his coming from the west." Bokushu Ju (睦州

蹤)—"I have no answer to give." Ryozan Yenkwān (梁山緣觀)—"Don't talk nonsense." Kyūho Fuman (九峰普滿)—"What is the use of asking others?" Homei Dosei (保明道誠)—"I have never been to the western world." Nangaku Shi (南嶽思)—"Here goes another walking the same old way." Hongaku Shuichi (本覺守一)—"It is like selling water by the riverside." Honei Jinyū (保寧仁勇)—"It is like adding frost to snow." Ryūge Kyōton (龍牙居遁)—"This is the hardest question to answer." Sekito Kisen (石頭希遷)—"Ask the post standing there." When this was not comprehended by the inquiring monk the master said, "My ignorance is worse than yours." Kinzan Dokin (徑山道欽)—"Your question is not to the point." The monk asked, "How shall I get it to the point?" "I will tell you when I am dead," was the master's way to get it to the point.

I cannot help quoting Rinzai (臨濟) here, who was singularly logical with regard to this question though he was notorious for his "rough" treatment of the monks and for his exclamation "*Kwats*." When he was asked about the meaning of the patriarchal arrival from the west, he said, "If there were any meaning, no one could save even himself." "If there were no meaning here what is it that the second patriarch is said to have attained the truth under Bodhi-Dharma?" "What is called 'attained,'" said the master, "is really 'not-attained.'" "If that is the case, what is the meaning of 'not-attained'?" Rinzai explained: "Just because your mind is ever running after every object that comes before it and knows not where to restrain itself, it is declared by a patriarch that you are the foolish seeker of another head over your own. If you turn your light within yourself as you are told to do, without delay, and reflect, and stop seeking things external, you will realise that your own mind and those of the Buddhas and patriarchs do not differ one from the other. When you thus come to a state of doing nothing, you are said to have attained to the truth."

(3) Cases where the masters appeal to "direct action." This has not taken place frequently with regard to the present question, though appealing to direct action is quite an ordinary proceeding in the demonstration of Zen Buddhism since the time of Baso (馬祖) whose case is related here. He was one of the greatest masters in the history of Zen, and in fact it was due to his masterly way of handling Zen that it came to be recognised as a great spiritual force in China. When Suiryo (水滌) asked Baso as to the meaning of Dharma's coming from the west, Baso at once gave the questioner a kick over the chest which sent him down to the ground. This however awakened Suiryo to the realisation of the truth of Buddhism, for when he stood up again on his feet he declared this, clapping his hands and laughing loudly: "How very strange! how very strange! all the samadhis without number and all the religious truths unfathomable—I know them all now through and through even as they are revealed at the tip of one single hair." He then made a bow and quietly retired.

(4) Cases in which some kind of movement is involved either on the part of the master or on the part of the monk. This is a most favourite method with the master, and we can readily see why it is so. Inasmuch as Zen is not to be explained in words, acting must be resorted to in order to bring its truth nearer home to the student. Since Zen is the truth of life, something more intimate and immediate than words is to be made use of, and this can be found in some kind of movement symbolising life as it moves on. Words may be used too, but in this case they are not meant to convey ideas, but merely as expressive of something living and doing work. This also explains why cries or exclamations or ejaculations serve as answers by the Zen masters.

When Seppo (雪峰) and Gensha (玄沙) were mending a fence, Gensha asked, "What is the meaning of Dharma's coming from the west?" Seppo shook the fence. Gensha

said, "What is the use of making so much ado?" Seppo requested, "How with you then!" Gensha said, "Kindly pass me the mieh-t'ou." (篋頭). \*

When Tosu Daido (投子大同) met Suibi (翠微) in the Dharma Hall, he asked the master about the meaning of the patriarchal visit from India. Suibi the master kept on looking back for a while. Daido wanted some express instruction, whereupon Suibi said, "Do you want another dipperful of dirt over your head?" This latter remark means that the questioner had already been once bathed in dirt and did not know the fact. When Suibi turned back, there was an answer to the question, and if Daido had his eye already opened he could have seen into the meaning without further asking for special wordy instruction. But he failed, hence the master's reproach, which, however, ought not to be understood as implying any feeling of slight or unkindness on the part of the master. In all Zen "mondo" or transactions, absolute sincerity and confidence exists between master and disciple. Wording may be quite frequently strong and impatient, but this is the way with the Zen master, who only wants to attract such souls as do not break down under his training staff. Zen is by no means a democratic religion. It is in essence meant for the élite.

A monk came from Isan (鸞山) to Kyōgen (香嚴) when the latter asked the monk; "There was once a monk who asked Isan concerning the patriarch's idea of coming to China, and Isan in answer held up his hossu. Now how do you understand the meaning of Isan's action?" Replied the monk, "The master's idea is to elucidate mind along with matter, to reveal truth by means of an objective reality." "Your understanding," the master said, "is all right as far as it goes. But what is the use of hurrying so to theorise?" The monk now turned round and asked, "What will be your

---

\* An instrument used for mending or making a fence.

understanding?" Kyōgen held up his *hossu* like the other master.

Kyōgen once put his hand into his pocket, and when he got it out it was formed into a fist, which he opened as if handing the contents over to the questioner. The latter kneeled down and extended both hands in the attitude of receiving. Said Kyōgen, "What is this?" The monk made no reply.

It was again this same Kyōgen who proposed the well-known *kō-an* of a man in a tree. The *kō-an* runs thus: "It is like a man over a precipice one thousand feet high, he is hanging himself there with a branch of a tree between his teeth, his feet are off the ground, and his hands are not taking hold of anything. Suppose now some one come to him and ask him the question, 'What is the meaning of the first patriarch coming from the west?' If this man should open his mouth to answer, he is sure to fall and lose his life: but if he should make no answer, he must be said to ignore the questioner. At this critical moment what ought he to do?"

A monk asked Rakuho (洛浦) about Dharma's coming, and the master striking his straw-chair with the *hossu*, said, "Do you understand?" When the monk confessed his inability to understand, the master gave this to him, "A sudden thundering up in the sky and the whole world is taken aback, while a frog way down in the well has not even raised its head." Was the inquisitive monk the frog in the old well? The master's tongue was sharp and sarcastic. Basho, the great Japanese "haiku" \* poet, has the following verse: "The old pond—a frog jumps in—the sound of water!" It was this sound that awakened him to the truth of Zen Buddhism. The experience itself could not be expressed in any other way, hence the haiku merely descriptive of the occasion. The frog often figures in Japanese literature and has many

---

\* A short epigrammatic verse consisting of seventeen syllables.

poetical associations often suggestive of peace and loneliness.

(5) Cases where things impossible in this relative world of causation are referred to. Ryūge Kyoton (龍牙居遁) said, "Wait until the dark stone turtle begins to talk, when I shall tell you what is the meaning of the patriarch's visit here." Dosan's answer to Ryūge was of the same impossible order when the latter wished to know the meaning of this historical event, for he said, "Wait until the River Tung flows backwards when this will be told you." The strange thing was that the River did run backwards and Ryūge understood the meaning of this remark.

Baso, who, as I repeatedly said, figures most prominently in the history of Zen, proposed a similar condition to Ho the lay Buddhist disciple, in his answer to the question at issue: "When you drink up in one draught all the waters in the River Hsi, I will tell you the meaning of the patriarchal adventure." All these are impossibilities so long as space-time relations remain what they are to our final consciousness; they will only be intelligible when we are ushered into a realm beyond our relative experience. But as the Zen masters abhor all abstractions and theorisations, their propositions read so outrageously incoherent and nonsensical. Notice how the following answers too harp on the same string of transcendentalism:

Hoku-in Tsu (北院通) answered, "A dead pine-tree is hung over the wall, and the bees are busily sucking the flowers." Sekimon So (石門聰) answered, "See the ships sailing over the mountains of Chiu-li."

A monk came to a master called Sekiso Shōku (石霜性空) to be enlightened on the subject of the patriarchal visit, and the master said; "Suppose a man is down at the bottom of a well one thousand feet deep; if you could get him out without using a bit of rope, I would give you the answer as to the meaning of our patriarchal visit here." The monk did not evidently take this very seriously, for he said,

“Lately, venerable Cho of Konan was given a monastery to preside over, and he is also giving us all kinds of instruction on the subject.” Shōku called a boy-attendant and ordered him “to take this lifeless fellow out.” The boy-attendant, who later came to be known as Kyōzan, one of the most masterful hands in Zen, afterwards asked Tangen (耽源) how to get out the man in the well, when the master exclaimed, “Why, this fool, who is in the well?” The boy-attendant still later asked Isan as to the means of getting the man out of the bottom of the well. Isan called out, “O Yejaku!” (慧寂) as this was the name of the young monk. When Yejaku responded “Yes, master!” the master said, “There, he is out!” When the monk later became a fully-qualified adept in Zen and took charge of the monastery at Kyōzan, he referred to these adventures of his, saying, “Under Tangen, I got the name, while under Isan I got the ground.” May we substitute here philosophy for “name” and experience for “ground”?

(6) Cases where truism is asserted. This is just the opposite of the foregoing. Ummon (雲門) said: “O monks, you go around the world trying to see into the meaning of the patriarch’s coming from the west, but this is known better by the pillar standing in front of you. Do you want to know how it is that the pillar understands the meaning of the patriarchal visit to this country?” This seems so far to go against truism, but after proposing this question Ummon proceeds to answer it himself, saying, “Nine times nine are eighty-one.” The Zen master has here turned into a mathematician. Evidently he thinks that the multiplication table explains the truth of Buddhism. His allusion to the pillar appears to complicate his position, but this is his artful device (*upāya-karūśālya*); when “nine times nine are eighty-one” is grasped, the whole procedure gives up its secrets if there are any.

The Zen student is now asked how to establish an in-

herent relationship between the impossible statements mentioned above and the truism asserted by Ummon. Are they at all reconcilable? They must be. Otherwise, the masters would not be giving the irreconcilables as solutions of the same problem. If there is such a thing as Zen, there must be some way in which all contradictions are to be synthesised. This is indeed where all the masters of Zen Buddhism exhaust their genius, and as they are not philosophers but pragmatists, they appeal to an experience and not to verbalism, —an experience which is so fundamental as to dissolve all doubts into a harmonious unification. All the matter-of-factness as well as the impossibility of the master's statements must thus be regarded as issuing directly from their inmost unified experience.

Temmokū Man (天目滿) said, "Once in three years there is a leap year." This was a truism when the lunar calendar was in vogue. Everbody knew it, but what connection has it to the patriarchal visit? The inquiring monk said, "What are you talking about?" The master's reply was, "The chrysanthemum festival takes place in the ninth month of the year." This is another truism, for the ninth day of the ninth month has been celebrated by the Chinese as well as by the Japanese when the chrysanthemum is at the height of its season. The number nine is a lucky number with the Chinese, and when it is doubled, it is doubly lucky, hence the celebration. But does this explain the meaning of Dharma's coming over to China early in the sixth century? Bukkan Yegon's (佛鑑慧勸) answer was, "When you taste vinegar you know it is sour; when you taste salt you know it is salty."

A monk asked Sanshō Yenen (三聖慧然) as to the meaning of the patriarch's coming from the west, and the master answered, "Tainted meat collects flies." The monk reported this to Kōke (興化), who however expressed his disagreement. Whereupon the monk asked, "What is the meaning of the

patriarch's arrival here?" Kōke replied, "On the back of a broken-down donkey there are enough flies." In what point does Kōke differ from Shansho as he claims he does? As far as flies go, does it make much difference to them whether they are upon tainted meat or on a donkey about to die?

(7) Cases of silence are not many, I quote one. When Ryōju Nyobin (靈樹如敏) was approached with the question of Dharma's visit, he kept silent. Later when he died, his disciples wanted to erect a stone monument recording his life and sayings; among the latter there was this incident of silence. At the time Ummon was head-monk and they asked him how they should proceed to write out this silence on the part of the master. Ummon simply said, "Master!"

Ummon was famous for his one-word answers, he was no waster of words. Indeed if one had to say something and this to the utmost limit of bare necessity, a single word, no more and no less, must be pressed to answer the purpose. The one character, "master," here implies many things as we can readily observe and which of those implications was in Ummon's mind when he uttered it will be a problem indeed for the Zen student to unravel. Does it really clarify the meaning of the silence which was to be engraved on the monumental stone? Hakuun Shutan (白雲守端) later wrote a Zen poem on this:

"One character, 'master,' stands majestically like a mountain,  
 On it alone is the standard established for all rights and wrongs in  
 the world:  
 All the waters ultimately flow towards the ocean and pour them-  
 selves into it;  
 Clouds massy and overhanging finally get back to the mountains  
 and find their home there."

(8) Cases where the masters make meaningless remarks which are perfectly incomprehensible to the rational mind. While most Zen statements are apparently meaningless and unapproachable, the answers grouped here have by no manner

of means any relation whatever to the main issue, except that the uninitiated are hereby led further and further astray. For instance, consider this: A monk came to Sekiso Keisho (石霜慶諸) and asked him concerning the patriarchal visit, to which the master's reply was, "A solitary stone in the air!" When the monk made a bow probably thanking him for the uninformative instruction, the master asked, "Do you understand?" "No, sir." "It is fortunate," said the master, "that you do not understand; if you did your head would surely be smashed into pieces."

Nandai Gon's (南臺勤) answer was "A tortoise's hair, an inch long, weighs seven pounds."

Yengyo's (演教大師) was, "Today, and tomorrow." This seems to refer to the succession of time but may just as well mean anything else.

Ummon Doshin (雲門道信) said, "A graveyard snake one thousand years old has today grown a pair of horns on its head." The monk remarked, "Is this not your habitual way of teaching?" Replied the master, "He who interprets loses life." Does the Zen-understanding snake bite such a self-complacent monk as this? It is hard to make sense out of these remarks if we are mere literary interpreters. The Zen experience so called must then be such as to annihilate all space-time relations in which we find ourselves living and working and reasoning. It is only when we once pass through this baptism that a single hair of the tortoise begins to weigh seven pounds and an event of one thousand years ago becomes a living experience of this very moment.

(9) Cases in which the masters make some conventional remarks which are not exactly truisms, nor entirely meaningless statements as in the preceding cases, but such as people make in their daily life. As far as our rationality goes, such conventionalism has not the remotest relation to the meaning of the question here at issue. But no doubt the masters here as elsewhere are in earnest and the truth-seekers are

frequently awakened to the inner sense of the remarks so casually dropped from the master's lips. It is therefore for us to try to see underneath the superficial verbalism.

Gwaccho Dōrin (月頂道輪) gave this answer, "How refreshingly cool! The breeze has driven the heat away from the porch." The following three masters referring to natural phenomena may be said to belong to the same order: Hoge Ken (寶華顯) said, "The frost-bearing wind causes the forest leaves to fall." The monk asked, "What is the meaning of this?" The reply was, "When the spring comes they bud out again." When Kōfuku Donsho (廣福曇章) was asked about the patriarchal visit to China, he said, "When the spring comes all plants bloom." The monk expressed as usual his inability to comprehend, the master continued, "When the autumn comes, the leaves fall." Hōzen Fu's (褒禪溥) answer was also concerned with the season and vegetation: he said, "As to the tree-peony we look for its flowers in spring." The monk failed to get into the meaning of this, and the master helped him by this further comment on botany, "As to the yellow chrysanthemum, it blooms in the auspicious ninth month of the year." The monk who apparently liked to talk said, "If so, you are exerting yourself for the edification of others." The master's final dictum was, "Mistaken!"

The statements grouped here are more intelligible than those concerning the tortoise's hair weighing seven pounds or the river swallowed up in one draught, but the intelligibility does not go very far; for when we consider how they are to explain the meaning of Bodhi-Dharma's arrival in China, we realise an irrelevancy here, our imagination fails to penetrate the veil of mystery hanging over the entire field. As to making reference to natural events in the interpretation of Zen problems, the literature gives many instances and we are almost led to think that all the masters are naïve realists.

(10) Cases where the immediate surroundings are poet-

ically depicted. The masters are generally poets. Their way of viewing the world and life is synthetical and imaginative more than anything else. They do not criticise, they appreciate; they do not keep themselves away from nature, they are merged in it. Therefore, when they sing, their "ego" does not stand out prominently, it is rather seen among others as one of them, as naturally belonging to their order and doing their work in their co-partnership. That is to say, the "ego" turns into a blade of grass when the poet walks in the field; it stands as one of the cloud-kissing peaks when he is among the Himalayas; it murmurs in a mountain stream; it roars in the ocean; it sways with the bamboo-grove; it jumps into an old well and croaks as a frog under the moonlight. When the Zen masters take to the natural course of events in the world, their poetic spirit seems to roam among them freely, serenely, and worshippingly.

A monk asked Daido Sai (大同濟), "What is the meaning of the patriarch's coming from the west?" The master replied, "The bamboo grove in the front court-yard, how yet freshly green they look even after the frost!" When the monk wanted to know what was the ultimate signification of the remark, the master went on in the same strain, "I listen to the wind rustling through the grove, and realise how many thousands of bamboos are swaying there."

Kyōzan Yu's (仰山湧) way of describing the pagoda, perhaps in his own monastery grounds among the mountains, was quite poetic, though the English rendering altogether misses the poetic ring contained in each of the five Chinese ideograms: "A solitary spire penetrating the wintry sky!"

Tenye Yetsu (天衣慧通) was another Zen poet who beautifully describes a lonely mountain path which meanders along a purling stream; his monastery too must have been situated like so many others in mountainous district far away from human habitation. When asked about the patriarchal visit, he said, "Hanging over a lone unfrequented path, the

pine-trees, ever green, cast their shadows." The monk did not understand and the master added this: "Through a green bamboo grove, in refreshing rustle, there flows the mountain stream, murmuring and dancing." When the monk thanked the master saying, "Following this instruction of yours, we shall all be freed from doubt," the master cautioned him, "Take your time, don't be too premature."

Tenchu Shūye (天柱崇慧) who died towards the end of the eighth century gave out many poetic Zen statements, and his answer to this question on the patriarchal visit is a most widely known one: "A grey-coloured monkey with her children in arms comes down from the verdant peaks, while the bees and butterflies busily suck the flowers among the green leaves." In this what I wish to call to the special attention of the reader is that while other Zen masters are altogether too objective and apparently so coldly above the affectional side of life, Tenchu Ye has a fine touch of emotion in his reference to the motherly monkey and the industrial insects. Something tenderly human gleams out of his view of the patriarchal visit to China.

(11) We now come to a group of singular cases, the like of which I wonder if we can find anywhere in the history of religion or philosophy. The method adopted by the Zen master in the following cases is altogether unique and makes one wonder how the master ever came to conceive it, except in his earnest desire to impart the knowledge of Zen Buddhism to his disciples.

A monk came to Baso and asked, "Transcending the four propositions and one hundred negations, please tell me directly what is the meaning of the patriarchal visit to this country." In the master's answer there was nothing "direct", for he excused himself by saying, "I am tired today and unable to tell you anything about it, you had better go to Chizo (智藏) and ask." The monk went to Chizo as directed, and proposed him the question. Zo said, "Why do you not

ask the master about it?" "It was the master himself who told me to come to you." Zo then made the following excuse, "I have a headache today and do not feel like explaining the matter to you. You better go to our brother Kai." The monk now came to Kai (懷海) and asked him to be enlightened. Said Kai, "When it comes to this, I don't know anything." When the monk reported the whole affair to the master, the latter made this proclamation, "Zo's head is white while Kai's black."

Whatever Zen truth is concealed here, is it not the most astounding story to find an earnest truth-seeker sent away from one teacher to another, who evidently pretends to be too sick to elucidate the point to him? But is it possible that Zen is cunningly conveyed in this triviality itself?

Funshu Mugo (汾州無業) asked Baso, "What secret spiritual seal did the patriarch transmit when he came from the west?" This differs from the question under consideration at present as it is differently worded, but its ultimate sense comes to the same. In this case too Baso, the teacher of more than eighty fully-qualified masters, resorted almost to the same method as the one just related. For Baso excused himself again from answering the inquirer by saying thus, "I am busy just now, O venerable monk; come some other time." But when Mugo was about to leave, the master called out, "O venerable monk!" and the monk turned back. Said the master, "What is this?" Mugo at once understood the meaning and made bows when another remark came from the master, "What is the use of bowing, O this block-headed fellow?"

Seihei Reijun (清平令遵) asked Suibi (翠微無學), "What is the meaning of the patriarch's coming from the west?" Bi said, "Wait till there is nobody about us, I will tell you then." After a while Jun said again, "Nobody is here now, pray tell." Instead of answering this, Bi took the monk with him to a bamboo grove. Seeing the master still

in silence, Jun the monk reminded the master of the question and of there being nobody about them. Bi then pointed at the bamboos and announced, "What a long bamboo this! and what a short one that!" This awakened Jun's mind to the realisation of Zen truth. When later he came to preside over a monastery, he told his monks how kindheartedly his late master exercised himself for the sake of others, and how since then he did not know what was good and what was not.

This last case reminds one of Kisu Dosen's (歸宗道詮) observation about stones. When the monk asked the master if there were any Buddhism in the mountains of Chiu-feng Shan where he resided, the master answered, "Yes." The monk's further inquiry brought this from the master, "Big stones are big, and smaller ones small."

(12) Cases where the master makes the questioner perform an act. This method has not been resorted to so very much in the present case as in some other cases. I have just one or two examples to offer here. When Ryuge (龍牙居遁) first saw Suibi, he asked, "What is the meaning of the patriarch's coming from the west?" Suibi said, "Kindly pass me the zempan (禪版) over there." When this was handed to Suibi, the latter took it and struck Ryuge therewith. Ryuge later went to Rinzai and asked him the same question. Rinzai ordered him to perform a similar act as if they were in consultation beforehand. Rinzai said, "Please pass me the cushion over there." When this was done, Rinzai struck him with it just as Suibi did with his zempan. In both cases however Suibi refused to accept the treatment as proper, for he said, "As to striking, they may do so as much as they please; but as to the meaning of the patriarchal visit, there is none whatever in this."

The following case may not be classed exactly as belonging to this group; there is something in it which reminds us of the cases mentioned under (11). When Rokutan Hōye (泐潭法會) asked Baso about the patriarchal visit, Baso said,

“Softly, come nearer.” The questioner approached, and was boxed by Baso who said, “Six ears are out of harmony today, you’d better come tomorrow.” The following day Ye came into the Hall of the Dharma and accosting the master implored to be edified on the subject. Baso however said, “Wait till I get up on the platform when I will testify for you.” This proved to be the eye-opener to the mind of the monk, who then declared, “I thank you for the testimony of the whole congregation.” So saying, he went around the Hall for once and left.

A monk asked Bokuju Ju (睦州蹤) about the patriarch’s coming from the west, and the master answered. “Why doesn’t that monk come nearer?” The monk approached and the master wondered, “I called upon the one from the east of the Chê (浙) and what has the one from the west of the Chê to do with me?”

(13) Cases in which answers are merely indicated with no definite settling of the point raised in the question. This is generally the case with most answers given by the Zen masters and in this respect their answers so called are no answers at all in the logical sense of the word. Mere poetical descriptions of objects one sees about, or suggestions to perform a certain act are not at all satisfactory to those who have been educated to look for conceptual interpretations in everything they encounter. The cases enumerated here thus partake of the general characteristic of all the Zen statements. The reason why they are grouped here as one special class is chiefly that they do not properly fall in with any of the other cases already mentioned. The reader will understand this when actual examples are given.

A monk approached Chikuan Kei (竹庵珪) with the inevitable question about the patriarch, and the master answered, “While the eastern house is lighted, the western house sits in the dark.” Failing to understand this, the monk asked for further enlightenment. The master added, “In the case

of a horse we saddle it, but in the case of a donkey we let it turn a millstone."

Tendo Yesei's (天童懷清) answer was, "Don't get sand into your eyes." When asked how to take the statement, the master said, "Don't get water into your ears."

Tōyen Giro's (桃園曦朗) rejoinder was a grim one, for he declared, "If there is any meaning in it, cut my head off." When asked why, he reasoned, "Don't you know the teaching, 'Give your life for the Dharma?'"

Ungai Shigū's (雲蓋志願) reference to an old stone monument gives one some hope to get into the idea he had of the patriarchal visit: "The inscription on an old monastery stone is hard to read." Does this refer to the difficulty of explaining the matter in any intelligible way to an average mind? For he added when requested for further comment, "Readers all wrinkle their foreheads."

As I remarked elsewhere, Chinese is the language of Zen Buddhism par excellence. As its grammatical connections are very loose, much is often wholly left to the reader's imagination and judgment, and for this very reason an apparently indifferent expression from the mouth of the master may grow laden with meaning. For instance, when Shoshin So (稱心儆) answered, "The foot-passenger thinks of his trip," was he thinking of the patriarch's journey to China? Or did he intend to liken the monk's attempt to understand Zen unto the hardships of a traveller on foot, over the stormy roads for which China is notorious? Or did he want the questioner, perhaps in a travelling attire, to think of his own doings? The text has nothing explicit about all these possibilities except the bare saying itself of the master. When he was asked to say something further to make the sense clearer, he simply remarked, "Tighten the sandals well." No more, no less.

To give another example: Chomei Soku (朝明則) said, "A refreshing breeze is stirred in the azure heavens." Does it refer to Dharma's subjective mind in which all the egotistic

impulses are dead like unto the vastness of the sky? Or does it refer to the stirring of the wind, the whence and whither of which one is absolutely ignorant of? The master's further statement leaves the question in no better light: "The full moon is reflected in the Yang-tzu-chiang." Does this mean to say that while the moon has no idea to see its reflection in the water, it does so just because there is water which reflects it and will continue to do so whenever there is a moon and wherever there is water, even a dirty puddle of water on the roadside? Was Dharma's coming from the west like the lunar reflection in the Yang-tzu-chiang river? A thought was awakened in him to come to China just as the moon comes out of the clouds when they are dispersed, and he came and taught and died,—even as the moon sheds its silvery rays over the waves of the Yang-tzu-chiang.

Kokusui Shōkei's (黑水承璟) idea which is quoted below has something grander and more energetic than the last-mentioned which excels in serenity and aloofness. According to Kokusui, the meaning of Dharma's coming to China was this:

"How vastly, broadly, infinitely it expands all over the universe! Look at the illumining Buddha-sun as the murky fog rises and dissipates itself away!"

When he was further questioned about the functioning of the Buddha-sun, he said, "Even the great earth could not hide it, and it is manifesting itself this very moment!"

(14) We now come to the last group, which, however, may not be the last if we more closely examine all the answers given to the question under consideration, "What is the meaning of Dharma's coming from the west?" For there may some more cases to be found in Zen literature, which cannot very well be classified under any of the fourteen groups I have here enumerated. But I believe the above have almost exhausted all the variety enough to give the reader a general idea as regards what Zen statements are, concerning at least one particular theme. This therefore may fairly be

regarded as the last group of answers given to the patriarchal visit to China.

This will then include cases where the master's answers are more or less directly concerned with the person of the patriarch himself. So far the answers had nothing to do with the principal figure in the question; but they now begin to take him up and assertions are made about his doings. Still, the answers do not touch the central point of the question, that is, the meaning of the patriarchal visit to China is not explained in any way we of plain mind like to have done. In this respect the cases mentioned here are just as far off the mark as the other cases already mentioned.

Kōrin Chō-on's (香林澄遠) answer was "Sitting long makes one fatigued." Did the nine years' sitting make Dharma all tired out? Or is this just a general assertion concerning sitting in meditation, including the master's own case? One may find it hard to decide which. Perhaps it is both, perhaps it is neither. But in the case of Chōhei San (長平山), the reference is obvious, for he said, "He came from the western kingdom and disappeared in the land of the T'ang." The next one is concerned with the second patriarch and not with the first. According to Fukusei Gi (福清巍), "It was not quite hard to be standing in snow; the mark was hit when the arm was cut off." Evidently in his view the second patriarch's self-mutilation was the meaning of Dharma's coming overseas. Or did he mean that the meaning in question was to be realised only after the severest spiritual training? If so, this was not at all an answer to the question, but only pointing at the way to its final solution.

Gekka's (月華) answer was, "The Emperor of the Liang dynasty did not know him." Requested to be further enlightened, he said, "He went home carrying one shoe with him." This is simply a narration of the life of Bodhi-Dharma, with which Kōzan Rin's (黃山輪) remark is of the same order, when he says, "At the palace of Liang nothing was achieved,

and in the kingdom of Wei he was most profoundly absorbed in meditation." With these two masters Jōsen Kō (上泉古) keeps company as is to be observed in the following, "He never appeared at the Liang palace; after Wei he went home westwardly with one shoe in hand." Keifuku Nichiyo's (景福日餘) reply also falls in with these masters: "Nobody knew him when he spent nine years gazing at the wall, but he was heard all over when he returned west with one shoe in hand." To further enlighten the questioner, the master added, "If one wants to know about the event in the remote era of P'u-tung, it is not necessary to get an intelligence at the T'sung-ling range." The T'sung-ling (葱嶺) is a range of mountains dividing China from central Asia, which Bodhi-Dharma, the first patriarch of Zen Buddhism in China, is reported to have crossed on his way back to India. He was then bare-footed and carried one of his shoes in hand while the other was found in his grave which was opened when the report of his return over the T'sung-ling range got widely known among his Chinese followers. As we can see plainly, all these remarks have really no connection with the question at issue, which wants to know the meaning or reason of the patriarch's coming from the west, that is to say, the truth of Zen Buddhism as distinguishing itself from the philosophical teaching of the other Buddhist schools. While the statements touch the life of the patriarch, the masters are not evidently willing to disclose the meaning of Zen in any more intelligible manner than others.

After enumerating all these varieties of Zen answers given to one single question, there is at least one conclusion which we can draw out of them as a most legitimate one. It is this: the truth of Zen Buddhism as symbolised in the coming of the first patriarch to China is something demonstrable by every possible means of expression under human control, but at the same time incommunicable to others when the latter are not mentally prepared for it. The truth can be

expressed in words, and also interpreted by action, though it is not quite proper to say that it is thus explained or interpreted or demonstrated. For what the Zen master aims at in giving out those impossible propositions or nonsensical phrases or in performing mysterious movements is merely to let his disciples perceive by themselves wherein lies the reality which is to be grasped. They are all so many indicators and have in fact nothing with interpretation or definition or any other such terms as are used in our so-called scientific parlance. If we seek the latter in the Zen answers we shall be altogether off the track. And for this very reason all the contradictions and absurdities which we have seen are made to serve the the purpose of the master. When they are understood to be indicators pointing at one truth, we shall inevitably be led to look where all these divers hands converge. At the point where they all converge there sits the master quite at home with himself and with the world.

It is like so many rays radiating from one central luminary. The rays are innumerable and as long as we stand at the end of each ray, we do not know to reconcile one ray with another. Here is a range of mountains towering high, there is a sheet of water extending far out to the horizon, and how can we make mountains out of the foams and foams out of the mountains as long as we but see the foam-end or mountain-end of the ray? When a Zen irrationality alone is considered, it remains forever as such, and there is no way to see it merged with rationality. The contradiction will ever keep us awake at night. The point is to walk along with a ray of absurdity and see with one's own eyes into the very origin where it shoots out. The origin or the luminary itself once in view, we know to travel out into another ray at the end of which we may find another order of things. Most of us stand at the periphery and attempt to survey the whole; this position the Zen master wants us to change, he who sits at the centre of eternal harmony knows well where we are

bound, while we at the furthest end remain bewildered, perplexed, and quite at a loss how and where to proceed. If this were not the case, how could the master be so miraculously resourceful as to produce one absurdity or inconsistency after another and remain so comfortably self-complacent?

This is, however, the way we logic-ridden minds want to read in the answers given by the Zen master. As to the master himself, things may appear quite in another light. He may say that there is no periphery besides the centre, for centre is periphery and periphery is centre. To think that there are two things distinguishable the one from the other and to talk about travelling along the ray-end towards the luminary itself is due to a false discrimination (*parikalpa*). "When one dog barks at a shadow, ten thousand dogs turn it into a reality"—so runs the Chinese saying. Beware therefore of the first bark, the master will advise.

When Rakan Jin (羅漢仁) was asked as to the meaning of the patriarchal visit, he asked back, "What is it that you call the meaning?" "If so, there is no meaning in his coming from the west," concluded the inquiring monk. But the master said, "It comes from the tip of your own tongue." It may all be due to our subjective discrimination based on a false conception of reality, but, our good Zen master, without this discriminating faculty, false or true, how can we ever conceive of you as such? The master is a master because we are what we are. Discrimination has to start somewhere. It is quite true that a gold dust however valuable in itself injures the eye when it gets into it. The thing will then be to keep the eye open clear and use the gold dust in the way as it ought to be used.

After reviewing all these propositions, suggestions, or expressions as given by the masters, if some one comes to me and proposes the question, "What is after all the meaning of Bodhi-Dharma's coming from the west?" what shall I say to him? But as I am not an adept in Zen, I know not how

to answer from the standpoint of Zen transcendentalism, my answer will be that of a plain-minded person, for I will say "Inevitable!" How does this "inevitable" start? Nobody knows how and where and why; because it is just so and not otherwise. "That which abides nowhere" comes from nowhere and departs to nowhere. "For nine years he had been sitting and no one knew him; carrying a shoe in hand he went home quietly without ceremony."

DAISETZ TEITARO SUZUKI