

1: Introduction and reading of the text; Commentary on Danlin's Preface

by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi

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Good morning.

The snow fell last night to cover the trees, the rooftops and the ground. Coming to the Zendo earlier this morning, I'm sure that when you took a step into that snow, you saw that there were no footprints yet. And there was perhaps a certain delight at stepping into the snow, taking a step, feeling the step, being aware of taking a step. At that moment, taking a step comes alive. At that moment, the snow comes alive.

Now this morning, the black of the branches is still lined with white. And the morning is alive, and the grey sky is lit by the sun. Just as you felt taking that step in that fresh snow, just as there was that sense of wonder and joy, attend to this breath, take this breath completely. Hear this sound completely. Awaken to your life completely, and your life becomes alive.

If you were alive to taking that step in the snow this morning, at that moment there wasn't even any thought of how early it was or of where you were going. There was just enjoying that step. And your life was completely there and whole. In this moment, please uncover the whole bodymind, live the whole bodymind. You have never taken this breath before. You have never heard this moment of birds singing before. You have never been here before. You have never seen this wall before. This is such a tremendous opportunity. Every moment has this tremendous opportunity. When we meet it and explore it with this whole bodymind, then we find that this whole bodymind and this moment are seamless. This whole bodymind is the mind of snow, the mind of sky, the mind of breath and step, the mind of stars, sun, and starving millions. Becoming alive with this whole body, our practice has just begun. What is this living? How is it that there is this stepping, this seeing and hearing, this breathing out, this being born and dying? This is the essence of our practice.

Many centuries ago, an Indian monk named Bodhidharma arrived in China after a long journey. Coming to that land he presented the essence of the Buddha Dharma, the essence of the way of waking up. And so we call him Bodhidharma daishi - which means Great Master, Great Founder. Our Lineage began at the moment when Sakyamuni Buddha looked up and saw the morning star, and in that seeing, saw all the way through. The transmission of this experience of Buddha was passed from Buddha to Buddha, Dharma Ancestor to Dharma Ancestor, until it reached Bodhidharma Daishi, who then carried this, with his whole bodymind, to China. Where of course it always already was. Just as it is always, and always has been, and always will be, in every land, in every drop of water, and in every breath. And yet there is a need to point this out, and so Bodhidharma made this long journey.

This morning we are going to begin to consider a text called *Two Entries and Four Practices*, or the *Errusixing lan* which is attributed to Bodhidharma. There are many texts and many teaching stories which are attributed to Bodhidharma, and yet many of the facts, almost all of the facts of his life and teaching, are lost in history.[fn]The teisho series *Bodhidharma's Eyes* presented by Roshi from October through December 2000 at Dainen-ji goes into great detail on the history, legends, and many koan associated with Bodhidharma.[/fn] And while that really doesn't matter, because what matters is the present transmission to

each and every one of you, of each and every one of you, still it is good to hear from our old friends. It is good to listen to their Teachings, because their Teachings point to listening itself, to seeing itself, to living itself. And so this morning, we will hear first from the disciple Danlin, who composed a preface to the text. It is indeed possible that the text itself was authored by Danlin, based upon Huike, or Bodhidharma's Dharma Ancestor's, presentation of Bodhidharma's original teachings, which Danlin then compiled together in this form. It is doubtful that Bodhidharma actually wrote this text because it is in rather polished Chinese, rather literary Chinese, which would be rather difficult for an immigrant such as Bodhidharma to master. And yet in this very simple text, many of the essential points of the Teachings are to be found. Perhaps they are a representation of Bodhidharma's actual teaching style, of things that he actually said. But in any case, the text discusses things that are of primary importance in the practice of each and every one of you.

Two Entries and Four Practices[fn]Originally published in Zanmai 4, Winter/Spring 1990.[/fn]

Errusixing lan (Erh-ju-ssu-hsing lan); Nishu-nyu by Bodhidharma daishi

Translated by Yasuda Joshu Dainen roshi and Anzan Hoshin roshi

Preface by the Disciple Danlin

The Dharma Master Bodhidharma came from a country in southern India. The third son of a great Brahmin king, he was of bright intelligence and understood whatever he was taught. Aspiring to the Mahayana, he set aside the white robes of a layperson and took on the black of a monk so that he might transmit the tradition of the sages. His mind deepened into stillness, his understanding penetrated the events of the world. His wisdom was both inside and out and his virtue was beyond common standards.

His compassion and concern ached at the decline of the True Teaching in this obscure corner and so, crossing mountains and seas, he came to teach in this distant land of Han and Wei. Those who had stilled their minds had immediate faith but those who grasped at forms and fixed views despised him.

At this time only Daoyu and Huike were with him. These monks had strong determination though they were young and, having had the great fortune of meeting the Dharma Master, served him for many years. Respectfully requesting teaching, they studied deeply the Master's essence. Responding to their wholeheartedness, the Dharma Master taught them the Path of Truth. He taught them the pacification of mind, the development of practice, according to circumstances and skillful means.

This is the teaching of mind in the Mahayana. Practice it without deviation. The pacification of mind is this "wall-gazing" (biguan). The development of practice is these Four Practices. According to circumstances is freedom from slander. skillful means is the dropping of attachment to fixed forms. This is my summary of the text which follows.

The Treatise

There are many Dharma gates but they are all of two kinds: entry through the Nature and entry through conduct.

Entry through the Nature means the realization of the truth of the Teachings. The basis of this is Great Faith in the Actual Nature of all living beings, usual people and sages both. The reason it is not manifest is only due to it being wrapped in external objects and deluded views. If you abandon the false and turn to the true and practise this samadhi of "wall-gazing" (biguan), you will find no "self" or "other" and that the usual person and the sage are of one essence. Abide in this and you will not be swayed. You will then be free from "words" because you will be intimately merged with the Nature and free of conceptual distortion. This is to be at ease, free from activity. This is called "entry through the Nature."

Entry through conduct refers to the Four Practices which embrace all activities. These are: knowing how to answer enmity, according to circumstances, being free of craving, and being in accord with the Dharma.

What is meant by knowing how to answer enmity? Finding oneself in adverse circumstances, one who practises the Way should consider: From beginningless time I have wandered in countless states, concerned only with the branches and missing the root. Thus I have given rise to numberless instances of hatred, anger, and wrong action. While I might not have committed violations in this lifetime, the fruits of wrong actions of the past are being harvested now. This suffering has not been given to me by gods or by humans and so I will patiently accept all ills that occur without grudge or complaint. As well, the sutras teach that when situations are penetrated with prajna (radical insight) the basic root is known. Awakening this thought, one will be aligned with prajna and use enmity by bringing it into the Way. This is called knowing how to answer enmity.

According to circumstances means: There is no self in whatever arises as the play of causal conditions. Feeling good or feeling bad are both born from previous activities. If I wind up with name and fame this is in response to past actions; when the momentum of these conditions gives way, whatever I might presently enjoy will decay. Why rejoice about it? Win or lose, let me work with whatever conditions may arise. Awareness itself does not increase or decrease. I will not be swayed by the winds of fortune for I am intimately aligned with the Way. This is called according to conditions.

Being free of craving means: The usual person, through basic ignorance, fixates on one thing and then another; this is called craving. The sage however, understands truth and is free of ignorance, mind abiding evenly in non-action, and body moving in accord with the principle of causality. All dharmas are empty and there is nothing to crave or grasp. Merit and darkness follow each other. These three worlds (of desire, form, and formlessness), in which we have strayed altogether too long, are like a house on fire; all that is conditioned is dukkha (suffering) and no one knows true peace. Realizing this, be free from fabrication and so never grasp at the various states of becoming. The sutra says, Where there is craving, there is dukkha; cease from craving and there is joy. Know that being free of craving is the true practice of the Way.

Being aligned with the Dharma means the intimate knowing that what we call Dharma is in essence stainless, and knowing the emptiness of all that arises. It is undefiled and without attachment, and has no this or that within it. The sutra says; In the Dharma there are no sentient beings because it is free of any trace of being. In the Dharma there is no self because it is free of any trace of self-nature. The sage realizes and maintains this truth and is aligned with the Dharma. As in the Essence of Dharma there is no cherishing or possessing, the sage always practises generosity of body, life and property, and never grudges or knows the meaning of ill-will. With perfect understanding of the threefold emptiness of giving

(no giver, gift, receiver), one is unswerving and free of grasping. One uses forms to free beings of stains, to embrace and transform them; one is unattached to fixed forms. This is benefiting oneself and others and adorns the Path of Awakening. As with the paramita (transcendent activity) of dana (generosity), so with the other five paramitas. The sage practises the six paramitas to exhaust deluded views and yet has nothing to practise. This is called being in accord with the Dharma.

And so this very brief text comes to us from the beginnings of Zen in China, before Zen was called “Zen”, before koan, before katsu. In this brief text, we see little trace of the broken nosed barbarian Bodhidharma, in his smelly tattered robes and his earring, scowling at Emperor Wu and saying, “Don’t know.” There is very little in the text that smacks of what we often consider to be Zen, in that it’s somewhat heavy handed, somewhat conventional. But since it does speak clearly of issues that arise in the lives of all Zen practitioners, this text has much to tell us.

So to begin to understand the text, first let us consider briefly the various kinds of Teachings. I have spoken in the past of Tathagata Zen and Ancestral Zen, or the Gradual Teachings and the Direct Teachings.[fn]Nyorai-Zen and Soshi-Zen.[/fn] Zen itself is of course essentially the Direct Teachings, directly pointing to the mind of each and every one of you; directly pointing to Buddha, without taking shortcuts. It grabs you by the throat and says, “Well? Well?” This is the Direct Teaching. Tathagata Zen, or the Gradual Teachings, try to explain things to you, try to lead you through step by step, saying, “Well first you do this, and then you do this,” and “It’s okay. Don’t worry. It’ll all work out.” The Direct Teachings say, *There is nothing to attain, because nothing has ever been lost. This is Buddha.* The Gradual Teachings tell you how you can “become” Buddha.

But as I have pointed out in the past, there is no necessary conflict between the Gradual Teachings and the Direct Teachings. There might be from the point of view of the Gradual Teachings in that they would say, “What do you mean ‘this is Buddha?’ You have to become Buddha.” But from the point of view of the Direct Teachings, there is the direct pointing to what is present in this moment, to the arising of this moment, and to actualizing this moment. Which means not just a sudden burst of insight but standing up, sitting down, breathing in and breathing out, and actualizing being Buddha, taking responsibility for being Buddha, through seeing all of the ways in which one hides from being Buddha and opening each of those ways and finding Buddha inside. And so just because this text contains not a single katsu, not a single curse word, not a single fist upraised, a single broken leg, it is still a Zen text. Bodhidharma himself, in this text, presents both Direct and Gradual Teachings – speaking of directly realizing the Way, and gradually cultivating the Way through conduct.

We will begin with the preface. So Danlin tells us about Bodhidharma, that he was from a small country in southern India, and was the third son of a great Brahmin king (although the phrase “king” was rather loosely used in those days, and could refer even to a kind of tribal leader). But in any case, it seems that Bodhidharma came from a fairly auspicious segment of the populace. Leaving that though, he entered practice, first as a lay person, and then, wishing to completely marinate himself in the Way, he put aside the white of a lay person, and took on the black robes of a monk. The text says, *His mind deepened into stillness. His understanding penetrated the events of the world.* The first thing I would like to point out is that the mind deepening into stillness and having an understanding which can penetrate the events of the world, are not two separate things. And it is not that only when you sit and only when your sitting is “good” can you have an understanding which penetrates the events of the world. Prajna and realization are not only matters

for the cushion. It is through the mind deepening into stillness, into clarity, that one gets out of one's own way. And in that stillness opens the clarity which penetrates all dharmas arising, dwelling, and decaying as one's world. The mind deepening into stillness means to penetrate this breath, to penetrate this body, penetrate this mind, this wall, this floor; to penetrate into one's world. And then when one gets up from the zafu and walks, one is still walking in one's world. All beings that are met, all events that arise, are one's world, and this penetration into one's world is the essence of practice. It is often so easy for us to think that our practice is completely separate from the world, but our practice is entering into our world, to see how mind arises as world and world arises as mind.

The text goes on to say that through such deepening and such understanding, Bodhidharma's wisdom was both inside and out, and his virtue was beyond common standards, and blah, blah, blah, these little praises here. And then it goes on to say that his compassion and concern ached at the decline of the True Teaching in this obscure corner, and so, crossing mountains and seas, he came to teach in this distant land of Han and Wei. It is interesting that Danlin refers to China here as "this obscure corner", since in China, the word for the nation was "the middle kingdom" or "the centre of the world," and everything else was of course merely an obscure corner. I think this is why Buddhism wound up being persecuted so much in China during these years. Chinese Buddhists just couldn't take China seriously enough. But there is something about practice that makes it very difficult to take such things seriously; makes it very difficult for us to take nations seriously. Very difficult for us to take our own games seriously, our own strategies seriously. There is something about practice that won't allow us to rest on our assumptions of being the centre of the world. In any case, when Bodhidharma reached China, he had a bit of a hard time. Whereas previously, monks and translators from India, or Chinese monks and teachers, would fasten upon a particular text, and lecture on it day after day without end and encourage the building of monasteries and stupas, the copying forth of texts, the performance of meritorious actions, Bodhidharma came to teach sitting. In China, there were other schools that placed emphasis upon practice, such as the Tientai school's zhiguan which literally translates as samatha and vipasyana, or calming and insight. But the practice that Bodhidharma came to bring was somewhat different, it was biguan, "wall gazing"; which refers not even to the fact that one sits facing the wall, just that "wall gazing" means [strike] this. No calming, no insight. [strike] This. Look.

But people then as now are often more interested in things to see rather than in looking, rather than in seeing. They would like some bright shiny ball, to console them for the horrible and awful fact of having being born. They would like some justification for their existence. They would like to build themselves up by being in a relationship with something greater than themselves, something holier than themselves, so that they can crawl around at the feet of this idol and feel special because they are in relationship to it. And we search moment after moment in our practice for something to make ourselves feel better. We search for something to see, something to entertain us, something to make us better people. But Bodhidharma says, "Look! What is it that sees? What is it that hears? What is it that searches and craves? Who are you?" It is said in fact that Bodhidharma was poisoned several times, and that his nose was broken and some of his teeth knocked out by jealous lecturers. Or perhaps it was simply irate pilgrims and so on who might have come see this monk who had traveled all the way from India, and instead of being given a blessing or something of this nature were simply asked: "Who are you? What is this?"

The text now mentions that he had two students, Daoyu and Huike. Other texts name other students, but it seems that Bodhidharma never had a very large following. He simply worked with only those who would work very seriously with their lives. These two monks, Daoyu and Huike, served and studied under

Bodhidharma and learned and realized the pacification of mind, the development of practice according with circumstances and skillful means. This pacification of mind does not simply mean calm and quiet. We can perhaps begin to understand what this pacification of mind means when we remember the koan concerning Huike's meeting with Bodhidharma. Huike was standing outside in the snow as Bodhidharma sat in the cave near Shaolin temple, facing the wall. When Bodhidharma finally paid some attention to Huike, he more or less just asked him, "What the hell do you want?", and Huike said, "I am diseased. I am confused. Please pacify my mind." And Bodhidharma says, *Show me this mind*. Huike said, *I cannot find it*. And Bodhidharma says, *The mind is pacified*. Danlin says, *This is the teaching of the pacification of mind in the Mahayana. Practise it without deviation*.

Please, without swerving from this breath, from this moment, enter into your practise most completely. Enter into your lives most completely. Take each step, breathe each breath, meet each person completely.

Please, enjoy yourselves.