The Fourth Ancestor Meets Lazy Rong

from the Jingde Chuandeng Lu (Jingde Era Transmission of the Lamp)
translated by Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi
(see the teisho “Daoxin’s Encounter With Oxhead Farong” in the Lineage of Luminosity Part Two teisho series, Saturday, December 7th, 2013)

In the middle of the Zhenguan (Chen-kuan period [627-649]) of the Tang Dynasty, the Fourth Ancestor, Daoxin, saw strange signs in the sky over Niutou Mountain from a distance and conjectured that some rare person must be living there. He went by himself to the mountain to search for them. Upon his arrival he asked a monk of the temple whether there was a person of the Way staying there. The monk answered that, “All those who have left home are people of the Way.” The Ancestor went on, “But which one is truly a person of the Way?” The monk made no reply. Then another monk directed him, “Ten kilometres (li) from here, deep in the mountain, there lives a man called Lazy Rong. He never stands up or joins his hands to greet those who approach. Is he this person of the Way?”

Having learned this, the Ancestor immediately went there as directed. On his arrival he saw Farong sitting upright and self-possessed, paying no attention to his visitor. The Ancestor asked him:

What are you doing here?
I am contemplating Mind.
Who is it that contemplates and what is the Mind that is contemplated?

Farong had no answer, but immediately stood up and made a deep bow. Then he asked his visitor:

Where does this worthy one dwell?
I never remain in any one place, but wander here or there.
Do you know the Chan Master Daoxin?
Why do you mention him?
I have always greatly admired him, and I intend to visit him that I may offer my respect.
Daoxin is my humble name.
Why have you come here?
I have come to look for you. Do you have a place where we can rest?

Farong took his visitor to a hut behind the cave that was guarded by wild animals, tigers and wolves, and the Ancestor raised his hands as if frightened. Farong remarked, “You are still like this?” “What is ‘this’?” replied Daoxin. Farong made no answer.

Later, the Ancestor wrote the character fo □, Buddha, on where Farong sat. When Farong saw this, he was shocked. The Ancestor said to him: “Are you still like this?” Farong did not understand and so earnestly asked the Ancestor to explain what he meant. The Fourth Ancestor said:

The hundred thousand gates of the Buddhadharma all return to Awareness, where measureless richness originates. The source of all subtleties is Awareness. The precepts and monastic standards, meditative practices, the Dharma gates of insight and wisdom, and all of their manifestations and wonders are not

seperate from your mind and they never depart from this. All hindrances to the attainment of bodhi which arise from passions that generate karma are originally non-existent. Every cause and effect is but a dream. There are no three worlds to be dropped off. [ref to Lankavatara sutra] There is no bodhi to attain. The original nature and the outer appearance of people and the thousand things are not seperate. The Vast Way is formless and boundless, free from thought and anxiety.

If you now realize this Dharma, then there is nothing lacking in you, and you yourself are no different from Buddha. There is no teaching left other than letting your mind rest in its own nature. You need not practise cultivation to purify your mind or undergo austerities. Live without craving and anger, without anxiety or fear. Be boundless and absolutely free from all conditions. Go freely in any direction you like. Do not try to do good or evil. Whether you walk or stand, sit or lie down, whatever arises before the eyes is nothing other than the essential source, the subtle activity of Awakening. It is joyful, free from care. This is called Buddha.

Farong asked, "If Awareness is complete in itself, then what is Buddha, and what is mind?"

The Fourth Ancestor answered, "If not for this mind, there is no asking about Buddha; in asking about the Buddha, it is nothing but this mind."

Farong continued, "If there is no meditation, what do you do when mental states emerge?"

The Ancestor replied:

Mental states are originally neither good nor bad; what emerges is due to your mind. If your mind is free from fabrication or conception, how could illusions occur? When illusions do not occur, actual awareness will freely be aware of everything. Just act in accordance with this Awareness as it is. Do not look for ways to manage it. This is called continuously abiding in the essence of things, the Dharmakaya which is motionless. I have received the teachings of sudden enlightenment from the Third Ancestor, Sengcan, and now I give them to you. Bear in mind what I have said. Stay in this mountain, and later there will be five sages that will succeed you in the profound Teaching.

There is a legend that after this, birds no longer carried flowers to Master Farong. After this transmission of Chan to Farong, the Fourth Ancestor returned to Mount Shuangfeng and remained there for the rest of his life. After taking this Dharma seat, Master Farong's teachings flourished widely.