

Zen Buddhism
Its Origin And Its Goal

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Ztt! I entered. I lost the boundary of my physical body. I had my skin of course, but I felt I was standing in the center of the cosmos . . . I saw people coming toward me, but all were the same man. All were myself. I had never known this world before. I had believed that I was created, but now I must change my opinion: I was never created; I was the cosmos; no individual . . . existed.

--Discription of Satori

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Introduction

We, in the western world seem to have been, for the most part, unaware of half our human nature for centuries. I am speaking of the spirit; we seem to have been promoting the physical (witness the great advance in the physical sciences) at the expense of any great interest in the spiritual side of man. Somewhere in our history the world was bifurcated, perhaps as early as the times of Plato and Aristotle. The eastern counterpart of the dichotomy has been following exactly the opposite course. Now, after hundreds of years, the dichotomy is drawing to a close.

The West is looking to the East in matters spiritual and the East is building up a technology comparable to the West's. The religions of the East are beginning to have a tremendous impact on the culture of the West. Oriental habits and skills are beginning to receive a place in the lands of the Occident. The West has finally begun to realize that in the historical "drawing of straws" it is not a pre-drawn conclusion that the East came up with the shorter of the two.

Because of the close relationship of the West with Japan, Zen has been in the forefront of the influence that the East is beginning to have on the West. Because of this close contact with the West, Zen has made great in-roads into the lopsided culture of the Christian West. It is, therefore, desirable and profitable to know something about what Zen has to offer the West.

This treatment will proceed as follows: Chapter I -- a history of Zen Buddhism from 520 B. C. to 1200 A.D. (around 1200 Zen had all the traits of the Zen of today); Chapter II -- a section on zazen or seated meditation, then an explanation of the enigmatic koan, and finally an attempt at clarifying satori of enlightenment. Because of the general lack of knowledge of the East and especially of the Eastern religions on the part of Westerners, an attempt has been made to define all unfamiliar terms.

In any study of Zen, there is the inherent problem of the names of men, places, and ideas. Since Zen had its beginnings in India, spent six hundred years in China, and then spread to Japan in the twelfth century, there are many Indian, Chinese, and Japanese names involved. In this treatment the names of men will be given in the native language of the man; places will be named similarly. Ideas will be named in Japanese unless the reference is to an original Buddhist doctrine, in which case, the Indian name will be used.

Chapter I
A History of Zen

"What is the significance of Bodhidharma's
coming East into China?" "The cypress tree
in the courtyard."

Joshu

The develop~~ment~~ of Zen from the Indian Buddhist tradition was a very gradual transformation. (The Buddha's enlightenment under the pipal tree occurred around 550 B. C., and Bodhidharma's journey to China, the traditional event marking the birth¹ of Zen, occurred in 520 A. D.) In the thousand years that intervened, the very slow but no less constant crystallization of Zen from the Buddhist milieu took place.

The legendary origin of Zen is the story of the flower sermon by Sakyamuni on the Mount of the Holy Vulture. He went before his disciples and remained silent for a while, then he simply raised a bouquet of flowers. He was still silent. Only Mahakasyapa, who quietly smiled at the Master, understood the teaching. The Buddha, noticing Mahakasyapa, proclaimed, "I have the most precious treasure, spiritual and transcendental, which this moment I hand over to you, O venerable Mahakasyapa!" ¹ Having once established the lineage of Zen from the Gautama Buddha, the Zen followers established a list of the patriarchs of Zen from Sakyamuni to Bodhidharma.

This list is given below.

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Sakyamuni | 15. Kanadeva |
| 2. Mahakasyapa | 16. Arya Rahulata |
| 3. Ananda | 17. Sanighanandi |
| 4. Sanavasa | 18. Samghayasas |
| 5. Upagupta | 19. Kumarata |
| 6. Dhritaka | 20. Jayata |
| 7. Micchaka | 21. Vasubandhu |
| 8. Buddhanandi | 22. Manura |
| 9. Buddhamitra | 23. Haklenayasas |
| 10. Bhidshu | 24. Bhikshu Simha |
| 11. Punyayasas | 25. Vasasita |
| 12. Asvaghosha | 26. Punyamitra |
| 13. Bhikshu Kapimala | 27. Prajnatara |
| 14. Nagarjuna | 28. Bodhidharma 2 |

It appears that this list is very similar in character to the geneologies in the gospels showing the blood relationship of Christ to David, Abraham, Adam. It is the idea behind the list that is important, not its historical accuracy -- the idea is to say that Zen's founder was ultimately the Buddha. Huston Smith relates the essence of this in his The Religions of Man when he says

Whereas other religions have answered the difficult problem of historical continuity by institutional organization, papal succession, or resort to the authority of a fixed creed of scripture, Zen has rested its survival on the transmission of a specific state of awareness directly from mind to mind, like flame passed from candle to candle, or water poured from bucket to bucket. It is "transmission of Buddha-mind to Buddha-mind" that constitutes the "special transmission" Bodhidharma cited as Zen's essence. For a number of centuries this inward transmission was symbolized by the handing down of Buddha's robe and bowl from patriarch to patriarch, but in the eighth century A. D., the Sixth Patriarch in China considered even this simple gesture a step toward confusing form with essence and ordered it discontinued.³

From the above, it is evident that it is valuable to know at least the general path of this precious cargo from the Gautama Buddha to the Zen Buddhism of today. That is the purpose of this chapter.

Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki, in his first series of Essays in Zen Buddhism relates the sum of the Buddha's original teaching.

According to scholars of Pali Buddhism and of the Agama literature, all that Buddha taught, as far as his systematic teaching went seems to be summed up by the Fourfold Noble Truth,⁴ the Twelfefold Chain of Causation,⁵ the Eightfold Path of Righteous Living,⁶ and the doctrine of Non-ego (Anatman)⁷ and Nirvana.⁸ If this was the case, what we call primitive Buddhism was quite a simple affair when its doctrinal aspect alone is considered. There was nothing very promising in these doctrines that would eventually build up a magnificent structure to be known as Buddhism, comprising the Hinayana and the Mahayana.⁹

Dr. Suzuki explains that this teaching of the Gautama Buddha was Buddhism as long as he was alive. For his disciples

. . . did not distinguish between the person of their leader and his teaching; for the teaching was realized in the person and the person was livingly explained in the teaching. To embrace the teaching was to follow his steps -- that is to believe in him. His presence among them was enough to inspire them and to convince them of the truth of his teaching . . .¹⁰

The same situation would exist or would have existed for the founder of any religion. But once the master died

the identification of the person and the teaching would gradually be lost; the person would be glorified (indeed, if not deified) and the teaching would grow proportionally. Dr. Suzuki explains this development.

But things went differently when his state-ly and inspiring personality was no more seen in the flesh. His teaching was still there, his followers could recite it perfectly from memory, but its personal connection with the author was lost, the living chain which solidly united him and his doctrine as one was for ever broken. When they reflected on the truth of the doctrine they could not help thinking of their teacher as a soul far deeper and nobler than themselves. The similarities that were consciously or unconsciously recognized as existing in various forms between leader and disciple gradually vanished, and as they vanished, the other side -- that is, that which made him so distinctly different from his followers -- came to assert itself all the more emphatically and irresistibly. The result was the conviction that he must have come from quite a unique spiritual source. The process of deification thus constantly went on until, some centuries after the death of the Master, he became a direct manifestation of the Supreme Being himself -- in fact, he was the Highest One in the flesh, in him there was a divine humanity in perfect realization. He was Son of God or the Buddha and Redeemer of the world. He will then be considered by himself independently of his teaching; he will occupy the center of interest in the eyes of his followers. The teaching is of course important, but mainly as having come from the mouth of such an exalted spirit, and not necessarily as containing the truth of love or Enlightenment. Indeed, the teaching is to be interpreted in the light of the teacher's divine personality. The latter now predominates over the whole system, he is the center whence radiate the rays of Enlightenment, salvation is only possible in

believing in him as savior.

Around this personality or this divine nature there will now grow various systems of philosophy essentially based on his own teaching, but more or less modified according to the spiritual experiences of the disciples.¹¹

In the case of the Gautama Buddha there immediately developed the Theravada school (school of the Elders) which followed the precepts of the Master closely. In accord with Dr. Suzuki's theory, as time passed, the Mahayana (Larger Vehicle) school developed from the Theravada. (As is typical of a religion with a new interpretation of their common founder, the Mahayana Buddhists gave Theravada the name "Hinayana" or "Lesser Vehicle." Though "Hinayana" is often used, Theravada is the more correct name.) Though the separation of the two schools was definite, it was not so as the seeds of Mahayana were being planted in the Theravada milieu. It is evident that in the beginning there was no schism that violently separated these two schools. They developed side by side. Heinrich Dumoulin supports this viewpoint in his History of Zen Buddhism; he says,

At no point in the history of Buddhism is it actually possible to demonstrate an upheaval which might have brought about a radical break. Could there have been external pressures that precipitated profound changes? Or did the innovations stem from a personality of genius? Today Buddhist research is inclined to regard the transition as gradual -- so gradual in fact that contemporaries of the change were initially

unaware of it. This assumption is justified by the many traces of Mahayana doctrine which appear here and there in early Buddhist literature. Much that is new in the Mahayana movement does not present itself as wholly original thought. It appears likely that in the period from Alexander to Augustus, intellectual and religious influences reached India from the Occident. The development is highly complex. But it can be regarded as certain that Mahayana developed in organic connection with the whole of Buddhism, i.e., that it arose directly out of the Hinayanist schools. From the sources it can be seen that for a long period of time the followers of both Vehicles lived peaceably side by side in the same monasteries of the Hinayana observance. Intellectual-historical examination of the philosophic schools of Mahayana reveals that the new movement received important influences from without.¹²

But though the transformation was gradual or perhaps because it was so gradual, the growth of Mahayana thought brought about a change which touched practically all of the basic Buddhist concepts. Father Dumoulin gives examples of how thorough this change was.

In philosophy, the theory of the Dharmas,¹³ shattered by criticism gives way to an exclusive monist doctrine. The new doctrine of virtue (paramita) with the contemplative summit of knowledge, is placed in the service of a higher wisdom. Nirvana is coupled to the cosmic Buddha-vision and as the goal of salvation, is equated with achieving Buddhahood. Buddha, nirvana and enlightenment express the absolute side of reality, whose manifestation in the phenomenal world of samsara, in which all sentient beings go astray in their search for salvation. The Bodhisattva¹⁴ is presented as the embodiment of enlightenment. All these thoughts and motifs converge.¹⁵

Huston Smith gives a schematic representation of the transformation of Theravada to Mahayana Buddhism in his The Religions of Man; it is reproduced below.

Thervada	Mahayana
Man as an individual	Man as involved with others
Man on his own in the universe (emancipation by self effort)	Man not alone (salvation by grace)
Key virtue: wisdom [prajna]	Key virtue: karuna, compassion
Religion a full time job (primarily for monks)	Religion relevant to life in the world (for laymen as well)
Ideal: the Arhat	Ideal: the Bodhisattva
Buddha a saint	Buddha a savior
Eschews metaphysics	Elaborates metaphysics
Eschews ritual	Includes ritual
Confines prayer to meditation	Includes petitionary prayer
Conservative	Liberal 16

It is the Mahayana ideal of the Bodhisattva that later, through a process of mitosis that took centuries, became the nucleus of Zen. The Four Vows of the Mahayana Bodhisattva are recited twice daily by Zen monks.

Mahayana proper came into existence only when the Great Vehicle was proclaimed in conscious opposition to the less valuable Theravada or Small Vehicle. Father Dumoulin thinks that

. . . It is significant that this should occur in the sutras [discourses by the Buddha, or a disciple, accepted as authoritative teaching -- literal meaning -- "A thread on which jewels are hung"], which claim religious authority. The power unleashing the movement stems, not from philosophical spec-

ulation, but from the inspiration of spiritual men. The sutras as the expression of the new religious consciousness are the direction force.¹⁷

And it is from these sutras that Zen takes its fibre, even though Zen has little respect for religious authority as such. The sutras are "without doubt the mother soil from which Zen sprang." 18

Though it would be impossible in a volume of this size to treat of the true significance of all the sutras of Mahayana Buddhism, an attempt will be made to give an idea of the significance of two classes of sutras: the Prajnaparamita Sutas (of Transcendental Wisdom) and the Avatamsaka Sutas (of a religious cosmotheism). In addition to these two classes of sutras, special mention will be made of the Vimalakirti Sutra and the Lankavatara Sutra because these two sutras bear special significance for Zen.

The Prajnaparamita Sutas are the oldest of the Mahayana sect, perhaps dating from the first century B. C. The most famous example of the sutras of this class is the Diamond Sutra. From it, it is possible to get an insight into the meaning of Prajnaparamita. In it we read:

The Lord continued: "What do you think, Subhuti, can the Tathagata [Buddha who has attained oneness] be seen by the possession of his marks?" -- Subhuti replied: "No indeed, O Lord. And why? What has been taught by the Tathagata as the possession of marks, that is truly a no-possession of no-marks."

The Tathagata spoke of the "heap of merit" as a non-heap. That is how the Tathagata speaks of "heap of merit" . . .

The Tathagata has taught that the dharmas special to the Buddhas are just as not a Buddha's special dharmas . . .

Just that which the Tathagata has taught as the wisdom which has gone beyond, just that He has taught as not gone beyond . . .

The Tathagata has taught that as the highest (parama) perfection (paramita). And what the Tathagata teaches as the highest wisdom, that also innumerable Blessed Buddhas do teach . . . 19

As Father Dumoulin explains:

The Prajnaparamita Sutras lead to the religious experience in which both the emptiness of things and their thusness are comprehended, simultaneously and in one, as the passing darkness and the coming light. The Void is unutterable and unfathomable, without growth or diminution. Thusness is this matchless, perfect enlightenment. And this thusness neither increases nor decreases. In the same way the sutra speaks of enlightenment: "The perfection of knowledge is empty; it neither increases nor decreases." Emptiness, thusness, and the wisdom of perfect knowledge all stand on the same plane, exalted above the fluctuation of change and thus compose the absolute state attained in mystical experience. 20

And he continues a little later:

The chief elements in the doctrine of Transcendental Wisdom -- negativism, paradox, religious experience in intuitive cognition, the comprehension of things in their thusness -- all flowed from the Prajnaparamita Sutras through Nagarjuna [founder of the Middle Way philosophy in the 3rd century A. D.;

revered as a Bodhisattva throughout Mahayana Buddhism] into Zen, embedding themselves deeply in its substance.²¹

These sutras have indeed embedded themselves deep into the substance of Zen. As Dr. Suzuki, in his Manual of Zen Buddhism, quotes the Shingyo (a sutra of the Prajnaparamita class), which because of its short length is "read on almost all occasions" in Zen. The final paragraph of the Shingyo is of special significance to us here. It is quoted below.

Therefore, one ought to know that the Prajnaparamita is the great Mantram,²² the Mantram of great wisdom, the highest Mantram, the peerless Mantram, which is capable of allaying all pain; it is truth because it is not falsehood: This is the Mantram proclaimed in the Prajnaparamita. It runs: "Gate, gate, paragate, parasamgate, bodhe, svaha!" (O Bodhi, gone gone, gone to the other shore, landed at the other shore, Svaha!) ²³

Though the value of the Mantra is not a question to be settled here, the quote from the Shingyo does show that the Prajnaparamita Sutras do indeed flourish at the foundations of Zen. It is from these sutras, through Mahayana and through Nagajuna that Zen received its relish for transcendental wisdom. And it is through these same sutras that Zen satisfies⁵ this relish.

A second class of sutras, the Avatamsaka Sutras, proclaim a religious cosmotheism. They depict the universal presence of the Buddha. "In every particle of dust the whole universe is contained, and every particle of dust engenders all the

powers of the cosmos. For every particle of dust is the Buddha who in a single pore of his skin can reveal the history of all the worlds from their beginning until their destruction." 24

It is easy to see that this reverence for the Buddha-reality of the universe would make the Avatamsaka Sutras appeal to one of Zenist persuasion, for

. . . the religiously rooted conviction of divine unity of the universe permits the search for the fulfillment of one's own deepest being by fusion with nature. The natural phenomena in the flow of changing seasons determine the rhythm of physis life. With loving devotion the novice watches the hawk as it circles the mountain peak on whose slope the monastery rests. Every living being and every minute thing is significant, since even the tiniest thing contains the whole mystery. Reverence for the sanctity of the universe vibrates through Zen. 25

It remains only to say that Zen received the Avatamsaka when the school of Hua-yen (Kegon in Japan) was completely assimilated by the Chinese Zen masters during the Sung era (960 - 1279) when Zen was at the height of its development in China. 26

In the Vimalakirti Sutra Zen has exemplified for itself its own methods for the attainment of enlightenment. The sutra teaches right meditation -- concentration of the spirit even while one is engaged in daily routine. It teaches the right kind of begging, and the right way to preach; in short, the sutra teaches constant awareness. At the climax of the sutra, Zen appears as the ultimate wisdom. Vimalakirti, a

layman who has attained a high degree of enlightenment, is the central character of the sutra. After listening to the thoughts ~~of~~ of thirty-two Bodhisattvas on the doctrine of non-duality, Vimalakirti is asked to state his own view; he answers by remaining absolutely silent. But this is the proverbial pregnant silence; he remains silent because this is the only way to express the doctrine. "This is precisely the viewpoint of Zen. The unity which transcends all contradictions is unutterable." 27

The Lankavatara Sutra is important to a student of Zen, if for no other reason than that it was the sutra which Bodhidharma expressly recommended to his disciple, Hui-k'o. The point of the sutra is to give another explanation of enlightenment -- in this case a psychological explanation. The sutra text itself consists of the Buddha answering questions put to him by the Bodhisattva Mahamati -- one hundred and eight questions to be exact. The conspicuously irrational character of the answers demonstrates its close relationship to Zen.

The central theme of the sutra is illustrated by the following extract quoted by Aldous Huxley in his The Perennial Philosophy.

Those who vainly reason without understanding the truth are lost in the jungle of the Vijnanas (the various forms of relative knowledge), running about here and there and trying to justify their view of ego-substance.

The self realised in your inmost consciousness appears in its purity; this is the Tathagata-garbha (literally, Buddha-womb), which is not the realm of those given over to mere reasoning. . . .

Pure in its own nature and free from the category of finite and infinite Universal Mind is the undefiled Buddha-womb, which is strongly apprehended by sentient beings.

Lankavatara Sutra 28

The preceding does not mean to say that the sutras are accepted as authoritative. They are only, to use the phrases of some of the Zen masters: "the finger pointing at the moon," "an arrow pointing at the truth," "striking at the moon with a staff," or "scratching your foot which is covered by a shoe." Indeed, the literal meaning of the Sanskrit word "sutra" is "a thread on which jewels are strung." It is not the string that is valued, but the jewels. Zen would much rather have the jewels without the string if this were possible.

Philip Kapleau, in his book The Three Pillars of Zen, comments on the feeling of the masters toward the sutras. He says

Zen . . . is the only sect which is associated with no one sutra, and this gives the masters freedom to use the scriptures as and when they see fit or to ignore them entirely. In fact their attitude toward them is not unlike that of a skilled physician toward drugs: he may prescribe one or more for a particular illness or he may prescribe none. The familiar statement that Zen is a special transmission outside the scriptures, with no dependence upon words and letters,

only means that for the Zen sect Truth must be directly grasped and not taken on authority of even the sutras, much less in lifeless intellectual formulas or concepts. But the Japanese masters do not frown on sutra-reading after a disciple has attained Kensho [self awareness or first satori -- the first stage of enlightenment] if it acts as a spur to full enlightenment.²⁹

An etymological study of the name "Zen" uncovers the traces of the cultures that have influenced it. "Zen" is a Japanese translation of the Chinese word "ch'an" which in turn is a translation of the Sanskrit "dhyana," meaning meditation that leads to insight. As is often the case, the etymology of a word, in capsule form, gives the history of what it names. Now that we have an understanding of the pre-China history of Zen, we should now turn to a discussion of the special effect that Zen's sojourn in China had on the development of this branch of Buddhism.

In 520 A. D. Bodhidharma came from the west into China, carrying with him the seed of Mahayana Buddhism, which when planted in the fertile soil of China would yield the flower of Zen. Though the Bodhidharma is honored as the founder of Zen in China, he was not the first to bring the Mahayanist doctrine to China, for the sect had been seeping into China for centuries. Nor was he the one who caused the spread of Zen across China, but he is none-the-less the father of Zen; he planted the seed that was to bloom after a period of germination.

Father Dumoulin gives a good example of the readiness of the Chinese mentality and of the fertility of their culture for the quietly potent seed of Zen. He explains it thus:

The relationship of Chinese to Indian Buddhism has been variously interpreted. In contrast to the European scholars who, approaching the matter from their studies of India, attributed little originality to Chinese Buddhism, educated Chinese of the early centuries found in Buddhism, as in Taoism and Confucianism, so full an expression of their own genius that these three teachings together came to be regarded as representative of the religious mind of China. Thus for the Buddhist terms they coined Chinese equivalents. The Primal Nothingness (pew-wei) of Taoism prepared the way for the understanding of the Buddhist negativism of the Nonego, the Void, and nirvana. The Middle Way of the Mahayanist philosophy was prefigured in the teaching of Nonacting (wu-wei). In their enlightenment (sambodhi) Buddhists grasped the Absolute, which classic Chinese thinkers had conceived as the Great One (t'ai-yi). 30

In another place Father Dumoulin points out the special kinship between China's indigenous Taoism and the Buddhism from the west.

- The root for the striking kinship between the basic ideas of Buddhism and Taoism lies in the naturalistic apprehension of the world and of life which inspires the Mayayanist sutras as well as Chinese thinkers such as Chuang-tzu and Lao-tzu. The naturalistic germ of Mahayana Buddhism found more congenial possibilities for development in the spiritual climate of China than in the country of its origin, India. Whereas the Indians were inhibited by their agonizing struggle for salvation, the Chinese, who desired nothing

so much as to penetrate the secrets of nature, abandoned themselves completely to the Taoist-Buddhist naturalism.³¹

Bodhidharma himself seemed to have realized what would happen to his doctrine of the Way when he said:

Originally I came to this land

To transmit the Dharma and to save from error.

A flower with five petals opens;

Of itself the fruit will ripen.³²

From Bodhidharma, the First Patriarch, there is a line of succession of patriarchs: Hui-k'o, the second (487 - 593); Seng-ts'an, the third (died 606); Taohsin, the fourth (580 - 651); Hung-jen, the fifth (601 - 674); and then Hui-neng, the sixth (638 - 713). During the time from the Bodhidharma to Hui-neng, the school of Zen was growing; from the time of Hui-neng the sect of Zen was firmly implanted. There is good reason to call Hui-neng the actual founder of Zen as such. He caused the northern school of Shen-hsiu with its doctrine of meditating on the sutras for enlightenment to split off from his own southern school which, though it makes use of the sutras, does not have any great respect for any kind of dogmatic teaching.

The split is exemplified by Hung-jen's transmission of the mantel and rice bowl of Buddha to the one who should succeed him. (This is the mantel and bowl that had been passed from Buddha through the patriarchs of Zen in India to Bodhidharma -- it symbolized the message that Buddha had

transmitted to Mahakasyapa in the flower sermon.) Hung-jen, in order to pick a successor, asked all his monks to compose a gatha (stanza or verse) showing their degree of enlightenment. Shen-hsiu, the most learned of the monks, posted his gatha on the wall of the meditation hall.

The body is a Bodhi-tree
The soul a shining mirror:
Polish it with study
Or dust will dull the image. 33

No other monk dared compete with the chief monk, except for Hui-neng, a lowly grain pounder in the monastery, with no education, who read Shen-hsiu's gatha. The next morning he posted his own next to it.

The Bodhi is not a tree;
There is no shining mirror.
Since All begins with Nothing
Where can dust collect? 34

Hung-jen passed the bowl and mantel to Hui-neng.

From this point on, Zen is established. Hui-neng, wanting to emphasize that the vessel of Zen was not physical, discontinued the passing on of the bowl and mantel. The northern school of Shen-hsiu lasted only a short time after Shen-hsiu's death, being torn by forces from the outside. The southern school assimilated all its remnants.³⁵

After the Buddhist persecution in China under Emperor Wu-tsung in the 845, Zen was the only branch of Buddhism

that still flourished. It was during this time that the South Chinese Zen developed into the "Five Houses" of five traditions.³⁶ All five sects developed in a little more than a century. Listed in order of appearance they are: the Wei-yang sect, the Yun-men sect, the Lin-chi sect, the Ts'ao-tung sect, and the Fa-yen sect. Of the five, only two survived for any length of time. These are the Lin-chi sect and the Ts'ao-tung sect, both still present today, though today they are called by their Japanese names in the West (Rinzai and Soto Zen respectively). It was these two houses that carried the mainstream of the Zen message.

Though the Spirit of Zen is not dependent on the physical, its methodology is, and it is for this reason that we must discuss these two schools. As Father Dumoulin states,

. . . Zen has never existed in pure experience only, without admixture of theoretical teachings of methodical practice, as it has sometimes been idealized. It could not exist in that fashion, for mysticism, like all other human experience, is dependent on the actual conditions of human life.³⁷

So a discussion of these two schools will be considered requisite. The methods of the two schools will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter. Suffice it to say here that the Soto school and the Rinzai school may be distinguished by the phrases "gradual enlightenment" and "sudden enlightenment" respectively. Both schools seek the same enlightenment; they approach the task of attaining it in

different ways, however.

In the Rinzai sect we find the dynamic character of the koan experiment and of lightning-like enlightenment, while the Soto school is characterized by a preference for silent sitting in zazen and the quiet deeds of everyday life. It appears in Japan that adherence to one sect or the other is determined largely by the spiritual bent of the monks, who are inherently suited to one tradition or the other and pursue enlightenment in a way appropriate to their character. Thus one can find in the temples of the Soto sect men of brilliant wit and dynamic character who devote themselves to the koan exercises, while on the other hand certain Rinzai monks of subdued character can scarcely be distinguished from Soto disciples.³⁷

So we pass now to a discussion of the methods of Zen.

Footnotes

¹D. T. Suzuki, Essays in Zen Buddhism First Series, p. 167.

²Ibid., p. 170.

³Huston Smith, The Religions of Man, p. 129.

⁴The Fourfold Noble Truth:

- 1) No one can deny that existence involves a great deal of suffering for all human creatures.
- 2) This suffering and general dissatisfaction come to human beings because they are possessive, greedy, and, above all, self-centered.
- 3) Egocentrism, possessiveness and greed can, however, be understood, overcome and rooted out.
- 4) This rooting out can be brought about by following a rational Eightfold Path of behavior in thought, word and deed that will create a salutary change in viewpoint.
(Nancy Wilson Ross, Three Ways of Asian Wisdom, p. 91.)

⁵The Twelvefold Chain of Causation:

- 1) ignorance (avidya)
- 2) deed (samskara)
- 3) consciousness (vijnana)
- 4) name and form (namarupa)
- 5) six sense organs (sadayatana)
- 6) contact (sparsa)
- 7) sense-perception (nedana)
- 8) desire (trishna)
- 9) attachment (upadana)
- 10) being (bhava)
- 11) birth (jati)
- 12) old age and death (jaramarana)
(D. T. Suzuki, Manual of Zen Buddhism, pp. 29 - 30.)

⁶The Eightfold Path of Righteous Living:

- 1) First, you must see clearly what

- 2) Next decide to be cured.
- 3) You must act and
- 4) speak so as to aim at being cured.
- 5) Your livelihood must not conflict with your therapy.
- 6) That therapy must go forward at the "staying speed" the critical velocity that can be sustained.
- 7) You must think about it incessantly, and
- 8) learn how to contemplate with the deep mind.
(Three Ways of Asian Wisdom, p. 91.)

⁷Non-ego doctrine of Anatman: the denial of a permanent unchanging self.

⁸Nirvana: the attainment of final enlightenment; freedom from the birth-death cycle of samsara.

⁹D. T. Suzuki, op. cit., p. 48.

¹⁰D. T. Suzuki, Zen Buddhism, p. 30.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 30 - 31.

¹²Heinrich Dumoulin, History of Zen Buddhism, pp. 20 - 21.

¹³Dharma: the law, which, together with Buddha and Sangha [the Buddhist monastic assembly] forms the three Ratnas or treasures of Buddhism.

¹⁴The Bodhisattva: one who has attained enlightenment but chooses to remain among men to fulfill his vow of helping all life to attain salvation. The vows of the Bodhisattva, the Four Vows, are given below. As old as Mahayana Buddhism, and now a part of Zen Buddhism, they are recited three times in succession at the close of zazen.

- 1) Sentient beings are countless, I vow to save them all.
- 2) Tormenting passions are innumerable, I vow to uproot them all.
- 3) The gates (i.e. levels of truth) of the Dharma are manifold, I vow to pass through them all.
- 4) The Buddha's way is peerless, I vow to realize it.
(Philip Kapleau, The Three Pillars of Zen, p. 331.)

¹⁵Heinrich Dumoulin, History of Zen Buddhism, pp. 21 - 22.

¹⁶Huston Smith, The Religions of Man, p. 123.

¹⁷Heinrich Dumoulin, op. cit., p. 22.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 51.

¹⁹Heinrich Dumoulin, op. cit., pp. 34 - 35.

²⁰Ibid., p. 36.

²¹Ibid., pp. 36 - 37.

²²Mantram: a sacred sound -- like the OM of the Hindus -- which embodies some supernatural power. From Mantrayana, an offshoot of Buddhism of little importance, these Mantra are given to the disciple at the time he enters under a master's guidance. Once the disciple's mind has been properly attuned, the vibrations of this sound are said to lift his mind to higher demensions.

²³D. T. Suzuki, Manual of Zen Buddhism, p. 27.

²⁴Heinrich Dumoulin, op. cit., pp. 39 - 40.

²⁵Ibid., p. 41.

²⁶Ibid., p. 41.

²⁷Ibid., p. 44.

²⁸Aldous Huxley, The Perennial Philosophy, pp. 20 - 21.

²⁹Philip Kapleau, op. cit., p. 345.

³⁰Heinrich Dumoulin, op. cit., p. 54.

³¹Ibid., p. 55.

³²Ibid., p. 74.

³³Peter Pauper Press, Zen Buddhism, pp. 18.- 19.

³⁴Ibid., p. 19.

³⁵Heinrich Dumoulin, op. cit., p. 84.

³⁶Ibid., p. 106.

³⁷Ibid., p. 122.

³⁸Nancy Wilson Ross, op. cit., p. 156.

Chapter II

Zen's Striving

A special transmission outside the Scriptures;
No dependence upon words and letters;
Direct pointing to the soul of man;
Seeing into one's own nature and the attainment of Buddhahood.¹

Like every religion, Zen has its own special methods to attain the ideal that it holds before its followers. And in Zen the methods that it offers are some of the chief differences between it and the other Buddhist sects. But of course, as is evident from the preceding chapter, the distinction is far deeper than methods. But in the case of Zen the methods are bound up in the very fibre of the religion, perhaps more than is the case with other Buddhist religions. It is certain that without satori (enlightenment) there would be no Zen, for satori is ". . . the Alpha and the Omega of Zen Buddhism."² And the two chief methods of Zen training, the koan and zazen, are so intimately bound up with satori that it would be impossible to speak of one without mentioning the other two. Therefore it is mandatory that we discuss the Zen koan and zazen before attempting any comprehensive treatment

of satori.

We shall proceed by first obtaining a limited understanding of satori (in order to have some comprehension of the goal of the koan and zazen). After this brief canvassing of satori we shall discuss first zazen and then the koan. After we have gained some penetration into these two Zen devices, we shall attempt a further explanation of satori.

To try to explain satori is from the outset a task which cannot be carried to completion. For satori is an experience, called a religious experience by some, but admitted by all to be a personal experience. Through the enlightenment of satori, the Zen student realizes in a flash of insight the meaning of creation, the unity of opposites, the harmony of contradictions. In short, satori is an insight into the nature of "self."³

Satori is the goal of the Zen student's long hours of zazen meditation, of his brain wracking struggle with unsolvable koans, of the bodily pain so frequently administered in order to help him break free from bodily desires. Satori is the essence of the Zen sect -- it is satori that is the flower sermon; it was satori that was the message of Bodhidharma; it was because of satori that Hui-neng was chosen over Shen-hsiu to be the sixth patriarch. It comes close to the truth to say that satori is Zen.

Zazen -- Dynamic Meditation

Zazen of Zen meditation is a tool of the Zennists to help man liberate himself from his bodily perceptions and to become one with the universe. Hugo Enomiya-Lassalle explains this.

Every man is, more or less, dependent on his sensitive perceptions; many people up to eighty per cent. They react spontaneously to such perceptions. In the remaining twenty per cent, they are directed by their minds. They are unfree eighty percent of the time and free only twenty percent because only the mind makes man free, not the senses. Through enlightenment and, somehow, even while en route to it, this proportion is changed. If man is directed one hundred per cent by his mind, he is then one hundred per cent free. He is then a spiritual man (homo spiritualis). Through the practice of Za-zen and especially through enlightenment, the external senses are drawn inside, as it were, and are brought under the control of the spirit.⁴

Thus zazen is an instrument, an instrument that seeks to put the bodily senses in subordination to the mind. When this is understood as its acknowledged purpose, the depth of the method of zazen is more easily fathomed.

This subordination of the senses is reflected in the life of Dogen, the founder of the Soto sect in Japan and the father of the practice of zazen. He says, "The disciple who seeks the Way must free himself from all thought of personal honor and gain. Fearless of the future, he is to concern himself only with the present."⁵

In his advocacy of zazen as a method to help attain enlightenment coupled with the wide spread growth of the Soto sect in Japan, Dogen is called the father of the practice -- though it is actually a developement of yoga procedures.⁶ Zazen had been a part of Zen from the very beginning -- Bodhidharma practiced it for nine years in one sitting according to the legend and urged his disciples to practice it. Meditation became the identifying mark of Ch'an and later of Zen, as their names, both translations of the Sanskrit "dhyana" (dynamic meditation) indicate.

Dogen explains how to achieve success in zazen meditation.

If you wish to attain enlightenment, begin at once to practice zazen. For this meditation a quiet chamber is necessary, while food and drink must be taken in moderation. Free yourself from all attachments, and bring to rest the ten thousand things. Think of neither good nor evil and judge not right or wrong. Maintain the flow of mind, of will, and of consciousness; bring to an end all desires, all concepts and judgments. Do not think about how to become a Buddha.

In terms of procedure, first put down a thick pillow and on top of this a second (round) one. One may choose either a full or half cross-legged position. In the full position one places the right foot on the left thigh and the left foot on the right thigh. In the half position only the left foot is placed upon the right thigh. Robe and belt should be worn loosely, but in order. The right hand rests on the left foot, while the back of the left hand rests in the palm of the right. The two thumbs

are placed in juxtaposition.

The body must be maintained upright, without inclining to the left or to the right, forward or backward. Ears and shoulders, nose and navel must be kept in alignment respectively. The tongue is to be kept against the palate, lips and teeth are kept firmly closed, while the eyes are to be kept always open.

Now that the bodily position is in order, regulate your breathing. If a wish arises, take note of it and then dismiss it. In practicing thus persistently you will forget all attachments and concentration will come of itself. That is the art of zazen. Zazen is the Dharma gate of great rest and joy.⁷

The eyes are to be kept focused on a wall or on a spot on the floor about five feet in front of the disciple. (For a more detailed explanation of the details of the practice of zazen see Zen: Way to Enlightenment by H. M. Enomiya-Lassalle.) The disciple is kept alert by another monk or master who walks through the hall continuously, dealing out blows with a stick to anyone who might seem to be drowsy.

The state of the mind in zazen is more difficult to describe. One should not meditate on how to become a Buddha or consciously seek enlightenment. But one "must "Bring to an end all desires, all concepts and judgements." Father Dumoulin quotes the writings of Dogen to explain the mental state during meditation. Dogen told this story:

Once a monk asked the master Yao-shan, "Of what does one think while sitting?" Yao-shan replied, "One should think of nonthinking." To this the monk answered, "How does one think of nonthinking?" "Through superthinking," came the reply.⁸

It is the many misunderstandings of the state of mind of zazen that has caused many to charge Zen with being a form of quietism. But this utterly misses any point of accuracy in interpretation. Nancy Wilson Ross quotes two Zen poems which relate the essence of zazen.

Sitting quietly, doing nothing,
Spring comes and the grass grows by itself.

In the landscape of spring . . .
The flowering branches grow naturally
Some long, some short.

Miss Ross explains that, "Neither poem is meant to suggest a mere passive acceptance but rather a dynamic realization of the great unified harmony that underlies all the phenomena of existence."⁹

Father Dumoulin explains this seeming contradiction of thinking and non-thinking.

Enlightenment is to be found in thinking as well as in nonthinking, since originally thinking is without object or a nature of its own, while nonthinking connotes no mere void. Thinking and nonthinking are rendered translucent in a transcendent state in which ~~in which~~ both thinking and nonthinking are contained. During the sitting exercise the mind is fully at rest as the mirrorlike surface of a lake stirred by no

breeze, transparent to the bottom and composed in itself. In this state one can "know without touching things," that is, without making things into objects in one's consciousness. It is in this way that things can be known in their proper essence, just as they are, not as objects in relation to subject but in their primal thusness.¹⁰

If one agrees that it is through suffering that we grow and grow most propitiously, then he must admit that this wholesale denial of the concern for the body, and indeed, the soul, is a most potent approach to solving the problem of the growth of man's spirit. D. T. Suzuki, a master of the Rinzai sect in Japan, rejoices that this pain of life is ineradicable, that life is "after all arguing, a painful struggle." He says this is providential. "For the more you suffer the deeper grows your character, and with the deepening of your character you read the more penetratingly into the secrets of life."¹¹ And this ability to read the secrets of life more deeply is the goal of zazen, indeed of Zen itself. It is for this reason that the Zen disciples willingly undergo the strenuous and painful "Dharma gate of great rest and joy."

As was pointed out in the first chapter, the practice of zazen is primarily associated with the Soto sect, but it is used in the Rinzai sect as well. Indeed, if we take Father Lassalle's advice, it would be used universally. In Rinzai Zen, the meditation of zazen is coupled with the use of the koan. A disciple is given a koan on entering

the monastery and it is his job to solve it. He should be constantly aware of the koan and especially during zazen. Thus we see here again that enlightenment for the Rinzai is looked upon as a sudden flash -- and no wonder; they attack enlightenment by the most active means they can devise. But still they "do not think about how to become a Buddha," they simply attack the koan -- enlightenment will follow. But as was pointed out in the last chapter, these two schools are not so easily distinguished since there is a free mixing of their individual techniques to mutual benefit.

The purpose of zazen generally is to put the mind in the right attitude, to put the "ten thousand things" (worldly distractions) out of mind, out of consciousness, out of desire so that the "self" can emerge -- so that the ego-shell can be smashed and swept aside. This too is the purpose of many of the other less-well-known methods of the Zen masters for helping their disciples toward enlightenment.

These methods may be divided into two classes: I Verbal Method and II Direct Method. The first class may be further divided into six examples of the verbal method: Paradox, going beyond opposites, contradiction, affirmation, repetition and exclamation.¹² The use of this wide range of expression of the message of Zen is often incomprehensible to one who is unfamiliar with Zen's goal. But once satori

The koan, as Philip Kapleau explains, obtains its name from the word for a Chinese legal case which has established a precedent.¹⁴ This fact leads us to consider the origin of the koans themselves, because once a koan has been used, it is likely to be used for a long time to come. Isshu Miura and Ruth Fuller Sasaki explain the development of the use of the koan in their book The Zen Koan.

The masters of earliest Zen discerned that the doctrines of Buddhism did not contain the object of their yearnings -- they had to look elsewhere for satori.

The satori or enlightenment that the old masters experienced was ineffable and incommunicable. It had not come about as the result of thinking or reasoning. It was, indeed, an experience beyond and above the intellect. Understanding this only too well, they did not, on the whole, attempt to describe their experiences in words. They knew that verbal explanations were useless as a means of leading their students to the realization itself. They had to devise other means.¹⁵

The means that they developed was the koan. While the Roshi was trying to get his disciples to reach satori, he would need to know the extent of their progress. He would ask them a question; by the answer he would be able to tell how close they were to enlightenment. Even after the student had experienced satori, the master used these questions to judge the depth of that experience. Thus the

has been attained, the paradox resolves itself, opposites coincide, contradiction doesn't exist, repetition and exclamation are no longer needed, and affirmation becomes redundant. However, even after satori has been attained, zazen is still practiced, because there is always the desire to attain a deeper experience of it.¹³

The Koan -- The Sense of Nonsense

At this very moment what was the appearance of your face before your father and mother were born?

Hui-neng

Question: Has the dog a Buddha nature or not?

Answer: Mu!

Joshu

Listen to the sound of the Single Hand Clapping.

Hakuin

In discussing the methods of Zen, the Zen koan has to have first place in the interest of Westerners. The strange questions and the even stranger answers seem to hold a special fascination for the Western mind. But to the student of Zen the koan is not to be taken in such a light manner -- he knows that it is his path to satori. The student is also aware that if he does not solve the koan, he must face his master (roshi) in the koan interview (sanzen) and suffer his stern admonition, perhaps even his blows.

koans became the criteria of attainment.¹⁶

These questions and some of the masters' answers to them were being gathered into collections as early as the tenth century. Through these collections there became available many more koans from which the master could choose. But this system also brought a problem with it. In the beginning, there was only the confrontation of the student with his master. The master gave the student a koan and demanded an immediate answer -- it was his own personal problem. But when many of the koans had been written down (with some of their answers), the student could study them at his leisure. Thus the immediacy of the one koan was lost and the problem of an intellectual handling of the koan spread. It is still a problem today.

In this intellectualizing, the student undoes the work of the koan, for the purpose of the koan is to overcome or go beyond logic.

By forcing reason to wrestle with what from its normal point of view is flat absurdity, by compelling it to conjoin incompatibles, Zen tries to reduce it to the frantic condition of throwing itself against its walls with the desperation of a cornered rat. By paradox and puzzle it will provoke, excite, baffle, and exhaust the mind until it sees that thinking is never more than thinking about, or feeling more than feeling about. Then having brought the subject to an intellectual and emotional impasse, it counts on a flash of sudden insight to bridge the gap between second- and first-hand experience. The koans' contradictions increase pressure

in the trainee's mind until the structures of ordinary reason collapse completely, clearing the way for sudden intuition.¹⁷

It is no doubt due to the lesson learned from this mistake that Zen has since had no respect for dogmatic authority.

After all, creeds, dogmas and philosophical systems are only ideas about the truth, in the same way as words are not facts but only about facts, whereas Zen is a vigorous attempt to come into direct contact with the truth itself without allowing theories to stand between the knower and the known. In a certain sense Zen is feeling life instead of feeling something about life; it has no patience with second-hand wisdom, with someone else's description of a spiritual experience, or with mere conceptions and beliefs. While second-hand wisdom is valuable as a signpost pointing the way, it is too easily taken for the path itself or even for the goal. So subtle are the ways in which descriptions of truth may pose as truth itself that Zen is often a form of iconoclasm, a breaking down of the mere intellectual images of the living reality, knowable only by personal experience.¹⁸

The koan reached its maturity in the eighteenth century under the influence of the Rinzai master Hakuin (1686 - 1769). He gave new life to the decadent schools in Japan through severe discipline and exhorting his disciples to zazen practice and deeper and deeper experience of koan study. His teaching has been summed up in this way:

Men must realize Absolute Mind through their

zazen practice and their koan study; through continued zazen practice, koan study, and daily life that realization must be ever deepened so that it may be made visible in every thought, word, and act, whatsoever these may be. Morality is the foundation stone of practice; without morality there can be no true practice and therefore no true attainment. And, finally, health of body must be preserved in order to carry the practice to its completion.¹⁹

The quest for enlightenment, this personal experience of reality, is, like all man's endeavors, subject to the ebb and flow of his interest and his passion. And the quest for enlightenment is the most difficult journey upon which a man can embark. In order to make sure that his interest will be kept alive in the periods when passion fails is a part of the purpose of the koan. The seemingly unsolvable problem goads the disciple on mercilessly, leaving him no time to escape its burden. To use the image of one of the masters, the struggle with the koan is like a mosquito trying to bite an iron bar. The koan is a well suited method for instruction on the road to enlightenment.

In his essay "The Human Situation and Zen Buddhism," Richard De Martino gives a psychological accounting of this struggle with the koan.

The inability of the koan to be resolved as an object by the ego as subject is, in fact, precisely the inability of the ego as ego in its subject-object bifurcation to resolve the existential contradiction which is that bifurcation. For the student, the given

koan, also, is now, like the natural koan, a mode or expression of the actual "question" or quandry of the ego itself, and the struggle for its "solution" an equally torturing life-and-death struggle. The koan thus comes to be, as regards the student, a living crisis, taking over as the central and exclusive concern of his entire being. His confronting it is, indeed, his confronting his own predicament in all of its immediate and burning urgency. Not able to cope with it, he truly "feels his internals altogether put out of order as if a fiery ball swallowed down could not readily be ejected." 20

Zen's awareness of the individual is worth noticing at least in passing. The individual is and is not at the same time. One doesn't know who he is only that he is, and that is all he needs to know. D. T. Suzuki illustrates this point by the example of Bodhidharma being asked who he was,

. . . he said, "I do not know." This was not because he could not explain himself, nor was it because he wanted to avoid any verbal controversy, but just because he did not know what or who he was, save that he was what he was and could not be anything else. 20-a

But Zen is particularly interested in the individual, for it is of the individual that Zen demands answers to the dilemmas of the koans. The answers given to these dilemmas must be from the depths of the nature of the individual -- not just prating the answer that someone else has given to the problem. Zen disdains imitation and mimicry; it demands the self.

In The Zen Koan the authors explain the degrees of the

koan -- for there are five types. They are given to the student in a series of increasing difficulty in order to deepen his experience of satori. The first contact with a koan is made when the disciple meets the master for the first time. The master gives the student a koan and demands an answer. In this way the level of enlightenment of the student is discovered. The student, in a flash of intuition after long and arduous struggles gains an insight into the koan. Then the master gives him another of greater difficulty. This process is repeated until the disciple has passed through the five stages by the aid of the koans.

In the first class of koans, the Hosshin koans, the student gains his first glimpse into the realm of his own true nature, the Dharmakaya or in Japanese the Hosshin. Through the kikan koans, the disciple makes his way through the interlockings that comprise the realm of differentiation, and enters the inner sanctuary where Reality becomes increasingly distinct. The object of the Gonsen koans is to give the student an appreciation of the importance of words.

Up to this point the object of the koans has been to help the disciple escape his own ego. But now he must not only escape the cage of his own ego, he must enter in to the cave of the Dharma and grasp the final experience of the patriarchs. The nanto koans have been named well,

nanto means "difficult to pass through." After having mastered the Hosshin koans and having experienced kensho (first satori), the student moved through the multifold interlockings of the kikan koans, and mastered the enigmatic words of the patriarchs in the gonsen koans, but he still finds himself far away from the experience of satori. The trainee recalls the words of Hakuin:

My advice to you emminent persons who study this profound teaching is this: You resolute men must dauntlessly display your spirit and attain insight into your real nature once. But, the moment your insight into your own nature has become perfectly clear, discard the insight you have attained, and settle these nanto koans. Then you will understand beyond the question of a doubt the words of the Nirvana Sutra when it says: "All the Buddhas and World Honored Ones see their Buddha-nature with their own eyes as clearly as they see the mango fruit lying in the palms of their hands." Furthermore, you will penetrate into the patriarchs' final experience.²¹

To obtain an idea of the difficulty of these nanto koans, a few of them have been reproduced below.

Riku Ko: "The Dharma Master Jo has said: 'Heaven-and-Earth and I have one and the same source; the ten thousand things and I have one and the same body.' Is this not extraordinary?"

Nansen: "When men of today look at this flower, it seems to them like a dream."

Goso Hoen: "It is like a water buffalo's passing through a window lattice. Its head, horns, and four hoofs have all passed through. Why can't its tail pass through?"

Enkan Osho: "Fetch me my rhinoceros-horn

fan."

Attendant: "The fan is broken."

Enkan Osho: "If the fan has been broken,
then bring me the rhinoceros itself."

When the student has succeeded in passing through these and many other nanto koans, without any hesitation or doubt, he will have reached the Dharma-world where each thing interpenetrates and harmonizes perfectly with every other thing without any hindrance whatsoever, the realm of complete effortlessness.²²

But even now the study and meditation on the koans has not been exhausted. There is a fifth class of koans, the goi koans, through the mastery of which the Zen devotee passes through the Five Ranks of the Apparent and Real: The Apparent within the Real, The Real within the Apparent, The Coming from within the Real, The Arrival at Mutual Integration, and finally Unity Attained.

It is of the utmost importance for the student to pass through these Five Ranks, to attain penetrating insight into each of them and to be totally without doubt, hesitation, or fixation. But, though the personal study of the Five Ranks comes to an end, the Buddha-way stretches endlessly on and there are no resting places on it. The Gates of the Dharma are manifold.²³

It would seem from the preceding discussion that the study of the Zen koan is very systematized, but this not the case. D. T. Suzuki says this in his An Introduction to Zen

Buddhism. Himself a Rinzai master, he says of the preceding method of koan study:

It [enlightenment] is not to be attained by merely climbing up the gradation of the koans one after another, as is usually practiced by followers of the Rinzai school. The number really has nothing to do with it; the necessary requirements are faith and personal effort, without which Zen is a mere bubble.²⁴

Yuan-wu did not agree with the progressive-difficulty system of koan study either. He saw it as leading to the problem of intellectualization. He said, "If you understand a single koan right now, you can clearly understand all the teachings of the ancients as well as those of the men of today."²⁵ The Zen masters who do not and those who did not agree this progressive study were concerned over the possibility, to use a Zen metaphor, of mistaking the finger pointing at the moon for the moon itself. In The Spirit of Zen Alan W. Watts takes this stand too; he says,

. . . it must be remembered that Za-zen and the Koan are not, in themselves, the objectives of the Zen life. They are a form of spiritual gymnastics to assist in bringing about a certain experience, and when that experience has been attained, the devices used for producing it can be discarded.²⁶

Thus the koans are, in relation to satori, only tools. In fact, in relation to satori, everything in Zen is looked upon as guides, helps, methods, tools -- "the finger pointing at

the moon."

The purpose of the koans, of the beatings, of the commentaries, is to break the mind of logic. What the master wants of the pupil is not understanding in any usual sense. He wants to "burst the bag," and drive the pupil with whole-souled precipitation into the Great Emptiness, the Great Stillness -- where all things stand without being touchable; where all sounds are, without being heard.²⁷

In short, to literally force the mind of the student into satori.

Satori -- Seeing Into One's Own Nature

How wondrously supernatural,
And how miraculous this!
I draw water, and I carry fuel!
P'ang-yun

In Japanese the idea for enlightenment is expressed by the word "satori" or by "kensho." The two words are usually used interchangeably, but when a distinction is made, it is that satori is a deeper experience of enlightenment.²⁸ Any attempt to define the state of satori however would be doomed to failure; there can be no univocal expression of enlightenment.

Is satori something that is not at all capable of intellectual analysis? Yes, it is an experience which no amount of explanation or argument can make communicable to others unless the latter themselves had it previously. If satori is

amenable to analysis in the sense that by so doing it becomes perfectly clear to another who has never had it, that satori will be no satori.²⁹

All authors have admitted this difficulty and have limited their discussions to the descriptions of the experience that have been offered by those who have attained satori. We shall do the same and try to give an insight into the relationship that satori has to the whole of Zen.

However, before proceeding to the actual experience, there is a philosophical background to satori that should be understood. Although Dr. Suzuki insists that Zen is totally non-philosophical, satori is based, at least historically, on the doctrine of non-duality; even Dr. Suzuki himself must admit this, and he does: "If you have been in the habit of thinking logically according to the rules of dualism, rid yourself of it and you may come around somewhat to the viewpoint of Zen." ³⁰

William Barrett, in his introduction to Dr. Suzuki's Zen Buddhism, gives a good account of Zen's view of the West's problem with duality. He explains that we inherit these dualisms as a result of our logical systems.

The great achievement of the Greeks was to define the ideal of rationality for man, but in doing so, Plato and Aristotle not only made reason the highest and most valued function, they also went so far as to make it the very center of our personal identity.³¹

The same problem exists for anyone who cannot go beyond the bounds of logic and see into the self or the unity of things. This again explains the use of the illogical Zen koan; the student must break away from the duality of reason and unreason, intellect and senses, morality and nature, right and wrong. He must come into the awareness of the self.

What, then, is the Self? The Buddha remained silent when asked this question, but he taught that man will find out only when he no longer identifies himself with his person, when he no longer resists the external world from within his fortification, in fact, when he makes an end of his hostility and his plundering expeditions against life. In contrast to this philosophy of isolation the Buddha proclaimed the unity of all living things and charged his followers to replace this hostility by divine compassion (karuna).³²

This Zen teaching of the interdependence and oneness of all life . . . is . . . the realization that everything in the universe is constantly and continuously, freely and harmoniously interpenetrating, interconverting itself with every other thing. It is the realization of the universe as the expression of the eternal self-creating play of the Absolute. Thus experienced, the universe is seen to be one in time and one in space, or, rather, to be timeless and spaceless.³³

The non-duality of Zen is absolute, there is only One and this One is the Self. "God is the devil and heaven is hell" is no fallacy¹ in Zen because they are One.³⁴ This oneness is so absolute that Zen cannot be accused of pantheism for the simple reason that in making this accusation, God

has been equated with the world -- in Zen there is no God and no world, there is simply One. It is the desire and goal of the Zen disciple to experience this Oneness in satori.

This experience is sought through the student's trying to see into his own nature and to see that he is the Buddha, he is the All, he is Creation. The methods developed to aid him in his struggle have already been discussed. He must break the back of the dualistic conception of the universe and this can only be done by personal experience. This personal experience can be attained only by the student's struggle to get beyond his ego. For this reason the Zen masters have little patience with the study of others' writings, for they see that the student is trying to fill in gaps in his own experience with the experience of others. "From the first Zen had prided itself on not being founded on any scripture." 35

This feeling of Zen for authority comes up again and again in the writings on Zen. Alan W. Watts explains the rationale of Zen's point of view on doctrine and dogma.

There are theologians and philosophers who show the greatest concern if anyone questions their ideas about the universe, for they imagine that within those ideas they have at last enshrined ultimate truth, and that to lose those ideas would be to lose the truth. But because truth is alive it will not be bound by anything which shows no sign of life -- namely, a conception whose validity is held to depend partly on the fact that it is unchangeable. For once we imagine that we have grasped the truth of life, the truth has vanished, for truth cannot become anyone's property, the reason

being that truth is life, and for one person to think that he possesses all life is a manifest absurdity. The part cannot possess the whole.³⁶

Zen abhors repetition or imitation of any kind for it kills. It is for this reason that Zen never explains, it only affirms. Zen believes that life is fact and that is all there is to it; to explain is to apologize and why should we apologize for living. To live -- that is Zen in all its purity. Learning this can sometimes be a painful ordeal for the Zen trainee, as the following story illustrates.

Gutei, a Zen master of the ~~ninth~~ century, had a favorite response to any question: he would simply raise one of his fingers in the air. His boy attendant, in answering questions put to him about his master's teachings would imitate the master by raising his finger. The master learned of this one day called the boy in and cut off his finger. When the boy started to run away in pain, the master called him back. Gutei then lifted a finger; the boy lifted his finger and then realized it was not there. Then it dawned on him. Copying is slavery. It is the spirit that is to be followed not the letter. The higher affirmations live in the spirit. But where is the spirit? It is to be found in your everyday experience.³⁷

The Zen awakening of satori is not supposed to bring withdrawal from the world as the quietists would have it. Rather it encourages participation, however not the participa-

tion of the egocentric variety, for the ego has been overcome. The Zennist has fully inherited the Buddhist idea of thankfulness for having been born a human. The Zen-man wants only to become totally what he is -- the That Art Thou of the Hindus -- the Self.

The experience of satori comes about after a number of years of long hard hours of zazen, koan-study and sanzen (visits with the roshi to discuss progress on a koan). But before any of this can take place, the student must have complete faith in the truth of Zen and in his roshi. He must have faith enough to leap in the dark, to let go his hold on his ego and to fall away from duality. It is like the koan of the man hanging from a cliff, having hold on a branch only with his teeth. Someone at the foot of the cliff asks him, "Why did Bodhidharma come out of India into China?" If he answers he will fall, but he must have the faith to answer. Only then will he ever be able to attain satori.

As was stated earlier, the actual experience of satori defies definition. It is because of this inherent lack in the power of words that makes them second rate as far as Zen is concerned. The only true explanation of something is the experience of it; Zen has a distinct distrust of words even though the Zen masters seem to have good command over them. Zen is acutely aware of their limitations.

With all they contribute, words have three limitations. At worst they build up a false

world in which other people are reduced to stereotypes, and our actual feelings are camouflaged in honorific titles. Second, even when their discription of experience is in the main accurate, it is never adequate; they always dilute the intensity of immediate experience, even when they do not distort it. Finally and most important, the highest modes of experience transcend the reach of words entirely.³⁸

Thus it is difficult, to say the least, to try and describe the experience of satori.

However, there are many such descriptions made available to us by those who have attained satori. In order to give an idea of the variety of descriptions of satori, a few examples are quoted below. From these examples it can be seen that no two experiences of satori are ever exactly alike, though with each experience the student is One.

Imakita Kosen, a Zen master of the Meiji era gives a fairly complete description of his experience:

One night when I was engaged in zazen the boundary between before and after was suddenly cut off. I entered the blessed realm of the exceedingly wonderful. I found myself, as it were, on the ground of the Great Death, and no awareness of the being of all things and of the ego remained. I felt only how in my body a spirit extended itself to ten thousand worlds, and an infinite splendor of light arose. After a short while I breathed again. In a flash seeing and hearing, speech and motion, were different from every day. As I sought the supreme truth and the wonderful meaning of the universe, my own self was clear and things appeared bright. In the excess of delight I forgot that my hands were moving in the air and that my feet were dancing.³⁹

Kao-feng, one of the masters in the latter part of the Sung dynasty gives this account:

. . . the meaning of "who carries this lifeless corpse of yours?" burst upon me -- the question once given by my old master. I felt as if this boundless space itself were broken up into pieces, and the great earth were altogether levelled away. I forgot myself, I forgot the world, it was like one mirror reflecting another. I tried several koan in my mind and found them so transparently clear. I was no more deceived as to the wonderful working of Prajna (Transcendental Wisdom).⁴⁰

After one has travelled a particular arduous path to satori, the joy is proportional to the struggle. T'ien-shan Ch'iung, after a long and difficult effort attained enlightenment. He relates his ecstatic joy:

All the bonds that had hitherto bound my mind and body were dissolved at once, together with every piece of my bones and their marrow. It was like seeing the sun suddenly bursting through the snow-laden clouds and brightly shining. As I could not contain myself, I jumped down at once from the seat and running to the master took hold of him exclaiming, "Now, what am I lacking?"⁴¹

Fo-kuang, the founder of Engukuji temple and renowned as "the National Teacher," after describing his frustration in the zazen exercises relates in detail his sensation of satori:

All of a sudden the sound of striking the board in front of the head-monk's room

reached my ear, which at once revealed to me the "original man" [one's own nature] in full. There was then no more of that vision which appeared at the closing of my eyes. Hastily I came down from the seat and ran out into the moonlit night and went up to the garden house called Ganki, where looking up to the sky I laughed loudly, "Oh, how great is the Dharmakaya! Oh, how great and immense for evermore!"

Thence my joy knew no bounds. I could not quietly sit in the Meditation Hall; I went about with no special purpose in the mountains walking this way and that. I thought of the sun and the moon traversing in a day through a space 4,000,000,000 miles wide. "My present abode is in China," I reflected then, "and they say the district of Yang is the center of the earth. If so, this place must be 2,000,000,000 miles away from where the sun rises; and how is it that as soon as it comes up, its rays lose no time in striking my face?" I reflected again, "The rays of my own eye must travel just as instantaneously as those of the sun as it reaches the latter; my eyes, my mind, are they not the Dharmakaya itself?"

Thinking thus, I felt all the bounds snapped and broken to peices that had been tying me for so many ages. How many numberless years had I been sitting in the hole of ants! Today even in every pore of my skin there lie all the Buddha-lands in the ten quarters! I thought within myself, "Even if I have no greater satori, I am now all-sufficient unto myself." 42

Dr. Suzuki has listed eight characteristics of satori which would cover all these variations on the theme. But Suzuki is aware of the problem of semantics and he makes no claim that he has exhausted the subject. The chief characteristics of satori include: irrationality, intuitive insight, authoritativeness, affirmation, a sense of the beyond,

an impersonal tone, a feeling of exaltation and momentariness.⁴³

The question~~as~~ to whether satori is sudden or gradual has been discussed briefly before. But it is valuable here to point out that the rift between the school of Hui-neng and that of Shen-hsiu was not as much the result of this dispute as many writers would have it. For in The Platform Scripture Hui-neng writes,

Good and learned friends, in method there is no distinction between sudden enlightenment and gradual enlightenment. Among men, however, some are intelligent others are stupid. Those who are deluded understand gradually, while the enlightened achieve understanding suddenly. But when they know their own minds, then they see their own nature, and there is no difference in their enlightenment. Without enlightenment, they remain forever bound in transmigration.⁴⁴

Since it is probably correct to say that since intelligent students achieve satori more easily, there are more intelligent students who achieve satori than "deluded" students. It is therefore only natural that the lightning-like satori should be thought the norm. However, just as there is only one Zen, there is only one satori; rapidity has nothing to do with its genuineness.

There has been much discussion as to whether satori is a religious experience. It would seem that it could easily become one if the individual were a religious person (again we're involved in semantics for who is to define "religious"?)

In any case, objectively it would be necessary to say that satori of itself is a non-religious experience. Suzuki has changed his sense of the "beyond" to sense of the "Unconscious" because he thought "beyond" was saying a little too much. By the "Unconsciousness" however, he does not mean to infer any psychological nuance.⁴⁵ Putting it objectively keeps everybody happy and does not contradict the purposes of Dom Aelred Graham and Enomiya-Lassalle in writing their Zen Catholicism and Zen: Way to Enlightenment respectively.

Conclusion

In the preceding pages we have explained, codified, defined, but in no place did we understand Zen. And this is as it should be, for Zen is not to be understood, it is to be lived and experienced. This is exemplified by the arts and techniques in Zen known as "do." There is the do of swordsmanship and archery known as kendo, the art of self defense of judo (jiujitsu), the art of Zen painting, the arrangement of flowers. Anything and everything in a Zennist's life should take on the characteristics of a do. Through these media the student of Zen is able to live and express the stillness, simplicity, and naturalness that his efforts for satori have gained for him. In this way he is kept constantly aware of the meaning of Zen -- the meaning of life. The life pattern of a Zen devotee should be a do in itself -- everything that he does should have its origin in the oneness that he has experienced or is striving for.

Because of this fact -- that Zen has to be lived -- any westernization of Zen, if it is to be the genuine article, will take place only after a long struggle. Many of the western writers on Zen feel that a movement of Zen to the West is desirable but not to be expected in the near future because of the wide chasm that exists between the two cultures. But as was stated in the Introduction, this chasm is becoming smaller. However, it seems that the East is adopting the ways of the West much more readily than the West is willing

to accept the East, or perhaps is able to accept the East. For one can learn how to build automobiles much easier than he could learn to look at life with the eyes of the spirit.

The exchange is much easier for the East because they have already climbed the spiritual ladder -- the switch to technology demands from them a step down. Whereas the West, except in a few rare cases of our great men who stand "as a beacon on a high mountain shining out in the hazy future,"¹ has not climbed this ladder at all. So for the West to achieve the heights of the East is no easy matter.

However, great strides are being made. There is a tremendous interest in Zen due chiefly to the writings of D. T. Suzuki. Through his work many of the guides needed in an achievement of Zen are available to the West. Evidence of the increasing interest is the increasing number of Occidentals who have written on Zen, notably: Thomas Merton, Nancy Wilson Ross, Alan W. Watts, Philip Kapleau, Aelred Graham, C. G. Jung and many others.

It has been the purpose of the preceding pages to give an understanding of how Zen lives. If this has been achieved then the following poem can be said to sum it all.

When one looks at it, one cannot see it;
When one listens for it, one cannot hear it;
However, when one uses it, it is inexhaustible.²

Footnotes

¹D. T. Suzuki, Zen Buddhism, p. 9.

²Ibid., p. 84.

³This is not to confuse "ego" with "self." Nukariya understands by "self" the All-Buddha, that is a total consciousness of life. Rather than being the ego, the self is the non-ego. (D. T. Suzuki, An Introduction To Zen Buddhism, p. 13.)

⁴H. M. Lassalle, Zen: Way to Enlightenment, p. 51.

⁵Heinrich Dumoulin, History of Zen Buddhism, pp. 157-8.

⁶Nancy Wilson Ross, Three Ways of Asian Wisdom, p. 158.

⁷Heinrich Dumoulin, op. cit., p. 161.

⁸Ibid., p. 164.

⁹Nancy Wilson Ross, op. cit., p. 158.

¹⁰Heinrich Dumoulin, op. cit., pp. 164-5.

¹¹D. T. Suzuki, op. cit., pp. 5-6.

¹²Ibid., pp. 115-133.

¹³Isshu Miura and Ruth Fuller Sasaki, The Zen Koan, pp. 46-72.

¹⁴Philip Kapleau, The Three Pillars of Zen, p. 335.

¹⁵Isshu Miura and Ruth Fuller Sasaki, op. cit., p. 8.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 11.

¹⁷Huston Smith, The Religions of Man, p. 131.

¹⁸Alan W. Watts, The Spirit of Zen, p. 18.

¹⁹Isshu Miura and Ruth Fuller Sasaki, op. cit., p. 27.

²⁰Erich Fromm, D. T. Suzuki, and Richard De Martino, Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis, p. 161.

^{20a}D. T. Suzuki, An Introduction To Zen Buddhism, p. 75.

- 21Isshu Miura and Ruth Fuller Sasaki, op. cit., p. 58.
- 22Ibid., pp. 46-61.
- 23Ibid., pp. 62-72.
- 24D. T. Suzuki, An Introduction To Zen Buddhism, p. 115.
- 25Isshu Miura and Ruth Fuller Sasaki, op. cit., p. 13.
- 26Alan W. Watts, op. cit., p. 81.
- 27Peter Pauper Press, Zen Buddhism, p. 9.
- 28Philip Kapleau, op. cit., p. 335.
- 29D. T. Suzuki, An Introduction To Zen Buddhism, p. 92.
- 30Ibid., p. 88.
- 31D. T. Suzuki, Zen Buddhism, p. ix.
- 32Alan W. Watts, op. cit., p. 26.
- 33Nancy Wilson Ross, op. cit., p. 151.
- 34D. T. Suzuki, Zen Buddhism, p. 115.
- 35Isshu Miura and Ruth Fuller Sasaki, op. cit., p. 9.
- 36Alan W. Watts, op. cit., p. 57.
- 37D. T. Suzuki, An Introduction To Zen Buddhism, pp. 71-2.
- 38Huston Smith, op. cit., p. 126.
- 39Heinrich Dumoulin, op. cit., p. 273.
- 40D. T. Suzuki, Essays In Zen Buddhism, p. 253.
- 41Heinrich Dumoulin, op. cit., p. 274.
- 42D. T. Suzuki, Essays In Zen Buddhism, p. 257.
- 43D. T. Suzuki, Zen Buddhism, pp. 103-108.
- 44Wing-tsit Chan, translator, The Platform Scripture, p.
49.
- 45D. T. Suzuki, Zen Buddhism, p. 106.

Footnotes

(In the Conclusion)

¹D. T. Suzuki, An Introduction To Zen Buddhism, p. 27.

²Nancy Wilson Ross, Three Ways of Asian Wisdom, p. 188.

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