

Wall Gazing By Padmavajra

Audio available at: <http://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/audio/details?num=OM700>

Talk given at Padmaloka Retreat Centre, 2004

01 Bodhidharma - the special transmission outside the scriptures

Sometime in the 6th century - looming out of the mists of history, but kind of concealed by them as well - there emerges, or there is hidden, the figure of Bodhidharma. We hardly know anything about him in terms of hard scientific fact, but for Chinese and Japanese and Korean Buddhists, Bodhidharma emerges, appears, and continues to stand as the great founder, the great father of Ch'an and Zen. I think there was a film made some years ago, a Korean film, "Why Did Bodhidharma Come from the West?" I never saw it. I'd quite like to track it down.

Bodhidharma is traditionally regarded as the 28th Indian patriarch of the Cha'an school and the 1st Chinese patriarch. Patriarch means here the kind of lineage holder of the special transmission outside the scriptures. For traditional Ch'an and Zen Buddhists, Bodhidharma is regarded, therefore, as being in a direct line from the Buddha, to Mahakashyapa, holding that special transmission – that direct wordless transmission of the essence of reality.

There is a Tang Dynasty verse which expresses this transmission, tries to give expression to it.

"A special transmission, outside the scriptures; No dependence upon words and letters; Direct pointing to the mind; Seeing into one's own nature and realizing Buddhahood."

This is regarded as the essence of Zen, and I really would warmly recommend you track down Sangharashita's book *The Essence of Zen*, which is a commentary on that verse.

Now Bodhidharma is said to have brought this special transition from India to China, but as I've said hardly anything was really known about him. Traditionally he's regarded as south Indian, from a royal family, who left that family and became a wandering monk, practised with the great teachers of his day – especially meditation. But not just meditation, evidently, because it's said that when he came to China he brought with him one text, one sutra. That is the Lankavatara Sutra - the sutra of the entry of the Buddhadharmas into Lanka, meaning Sri Lanka - which teaches the Dharma in terms of mind, in terms of consciousness. And which is especially concerned to point out the experience of what's called *Ashraya-parivrtti* – the revolution in the basis, or the turning around in the deepest seat of consciousness. That realization, that experience, brings about the realization that the whole of the cosmos is mind only. Empty, radiant, non-dual awareness. Those who are here next week will be hearing more about that very interesting-sounding teaching.

At some point Bodhidharma's realization led him, out of compassion we're told, to take the Dharma into China. So he took the long and dangerous sea journey to communicate his realization to the Chinese. Buddhism had been established in China for some four centuries by the time Bodhidharma appeared on the scene, so there were monks and there were monasteries. But for the Ch'an and Zen tradition Bodhidharma is regarded as bringing something very special, something fresh and new, something altogether extraordinary.

In Chinese and Japanese art, probably Korean art too, Bodhidharma is frequently depicted. And what you see usually is a powerful, imposing figure, wrapped in a dark robe, the robe sometimes draped over his head, and he's got great bulging, lidless eyes that stare right out at you. And great bushy eyebrows. He has a beard and he has short hair or he's shaved. And he's standing, holding a staff, and his eyes are really glaring at you. He looks a bit crazy. Sometimes he's depicted seated in meditation, eyes straight ahead. So this is Bodhidharma and his mythic presence – it haunts, looms over the entire Chinese, Japanese and Korean Zen traditions. He's even sort of entered into popular culture. I was reading a thing the other day about a certain festival in Japan where everyone is selling these little dolls, Bodhidharma dolls, which are kind of egg-shaped. When you flip them over they stand upright. That's how far Bodhidharma has entered into popular consciousness. But for the Zen tradition he's famous.

And particularly the *koan*, the famous *koan*, the *koan* that's always being brought up, "Why did Bodhidharma come from the west?" Meaning, why did Bodhidharma come from India? At some point, evidently, a master asked his disciple that question. What did he bring? What is this special transmission outside the scriptures? And you have to answer. Not from what you've read – the master isn't interested in what you've read, he's not interested in any kind of history – you have to answer from the depths of your consciousness. And the master is glaring at you. He wants to know. He really wants to know what you've got to say for yourself. If you keep silent, as if to say it's beyond words, he will have you. He's not interested in you playing games. Just as much as if you come out with a trite, clichéd answer. He's not interested. One master is depicted as saying, "If you speak, I'll give you fifty blows. If you stay silent, I'll give you fifty blows." How do you answer that question? You're just thrust up against that cliff face again, pressed, and you have to find something deeper. Sometimes it can actually feel like that in life, that whichever way the moves are presented to you – that you can't do them. All the moves that you've tried so far, they just don't work. You've got to find something else, something deeper. So Bodhidharma looms over the Zen tradition with his bulging, lidless eyes and his bushy eyebrows. What did he bring? What did he teach?

02 Emperor Wu's questions

The first person he tried to teach just didn't get it at all – just didn't get the teaching. This was the famous Emperor Wu – the founder of the Liang Dynasty – who had done a lot for Buddhism. He was a great supporter of Buddhism, of the Dharma. He built

temples, he made stupas and monasteries, he supported innumerable monks, he had sutras translated and transcribed. And he was very pious, very keen on Buddhism. And he especially like to meet Buddhist monks – especially any new, Indian monks who were in town – and he’d heard that there was this new Indian monk, Bodhidharma, who had arrived. He’d come, apparently, with the latest Indian teachings, and there was something a bit special, apparently, about this guy. And the Emperor Wu wanted to know all about it.

So Bodhidharma was invited to the palace. He turns up in his simple, patched robes with his bulging eyes and eyebrows, he’s holding his staff and bowl, and he enters the court. And the Emperor comes in, he ascends the throne, he’s dressed in all his finery and all his brocade, his robes and all the rest of it. No doubt, pleasantries were exchanged and all the rest of it. And then the Emperor asked, “Since ascending to the throne I have had temples built and monks ordained. What merit have I gained?” Very important question for the Emperor, very important traditional question. He’s done all these good works to benefit people, to establish the Dharma. So that must have surely brought him merit - good karma, good fortune. So, surely there’s going to be a good fruit for him. He wants to know what that fruit will be. A good rebirth - as a god, maybe. Or maybe some spiritual realization in the future. Maybe he wants Bodhidharma to predict some future greatness for him, that in future years he’ll be a bodhisattva or a Buddha. And we can smile at Emperor Wu’s question, “What merit have I gained?” But we’re probably like him ourselves. We do good things – help people, help out, practice the Dharma, do our bit, do good things for our family, and all the rest of it. Apparently selflessly – but somewhere, always, usually, at the back of our minds, there’s a desire for reward. Maybe it’s not heaven that we want. But certainly being liked, being accepted, being praised, being thought well of, looked after when we get old or when we’re going through it a bit. And of course we can get very disappointed if the reward that we expected, that we think is our right, is not given.

So anyway, Emperor Wu wanted to know, “What merit have I gained?” And Bodhidharma, standing there with those great bulging eyes, just said flatly, “No merit at all.” Not a jot of it, apparently. You won’t get anything from what you’ve done. And this is really shocking. It must have been incredibly shocking for poor Emperor Wu. He must have been thinking, “I’ve done all this good for Buddhism, all this good for this Indian barbarian religion. And this foreigner turns up and say I’ll get nothing!” You can imagine what’s going through his mind. So the Emperor asked, “*Why* no merit at all?” And Bodhidharma replied, “All these things you’ve done are but impure motives for merit. They *might* bring about a good rebirth, but they are like shadows following the form. They have no reality of their own.”

So, then the Emperor said, “Well then, what is true merit? What is real virtue?” And Bodhidharma replied, “It is pure knowing – wonderful and perfect. Its essence is emptiness. You cannot gain that merit by worldly means.” In other words, *true* virtue, *real* virtue – you might say *lasting* goodness – only comes when you see reality as it is. It only comes when you know. And all Buddhist practice, all good works, should really be for this end, and this end alone.

So then the Emperor asked about the highest meaning. Okay, Bodhidharma's getting onto these [topics] – you know, the highest reality, the deepest knowing, the deepest level. Let's move on to this, this will surely be interesting. And you know, he can really have a good intellectual conversation now. "What is the highest meaning of the holy truths?" he asked. And Bodhidharma replied, "Vastness. No holiness." Vastness. Some translations say "open-ness." No holiness. So, this is a strange answer. But the Emperor, he was very quick-witted. He thought, "Well, I'll be a bit clever." So he tried to do a bit of the old Zen stuff. He says to Bodhidharma, "Who is facing me?" In other words saying, "Who are you?" And Bodhidharma replied, "I don't know," and he just walked out. Left the city, left the country, crossed the Yangtze River - on a reed, tradition says [Laughter] - and just wandered off. "I don't know."

03 Master Chi's explanation; commentaries on Bodhidharma's answers

Later on, Emperor Wu talked about what had happened with his teacher, Master Chi, who was an interesting character in his own right. But anyway, we can't talk about Master Chi. But he asked Master Chi, "What was that all about?" [Laughter] "He was a strange one. He tells me there's no merit from everything I've done, he says there's no holiness, the highest meaning is just vastness, and then, when I ask him who he is, he says, 'I don't know.'" And Master Chi replied, "Does your majesty know who this man is?" And the Emperor said, "No." "This man is none other than the great being of compassion, Avalokiteshvara, transmitting to you the Buddha mind-seal!" And the Emperor was very regretful. He'd missed a great opportunity to receive the Buddha mind-seal from a great being – he'd missed a great chance. And so, he wanted to send an emissary to bring Bodhidharma back. But Master Chi said, "Your majesty, don't say that you'll send someone to fetch him. Even if everyone in the whole country were to go after him he would still not return. Bodhidharma hasn't just left the country, he's not to be found in any part of conditioned existence."

Now this story, by the way, is itself a koan. One of those kind of "problem stories" I told you about. It's a koan of ancient precedent, and it's something Ch'an and Zen adepts were told to meditate on. And it was commented on as well. And it's the first of the koans in the great collection *The Blue Cliff Record*. This is the first one that you take up for study. And just to give you some of the comments about it - the comments are... you think you're getting somewhere and then you're just completely thrown – just a couple of comments that are perhaps a little bit more accessible:

Yuan-Wu says, "If you can only penetrate vastness without holiness, you can return home and sit in peace." So, you might take that up as your koan for today. Vastness, not holiness, because if you penetrate it you can just go home and be at peace.

One master asks, commenting on Bodhidharma's disappearance, "Tell me, where is Bodhidharma right now? You've stumbled past him without even realizing it." Very strange stuff.

04 Bodhidharma in Shaolin Monastery - wall gazing; the Treatise on the Fourfold Practice and the Twofold Entrance

So, according to tradition, Bodhidharma – after crossing the Yangtze – went to the land of Wei and made his way to the legendary Shaolin monastery. Those into Kung Fu and all that, your ears will prick up. The legendary Shaolin monastery. And he didn't meet anyone there, apparently, but sat for nine years, gazing at a wall. Practicing wall-gazing - nothing else. And tradition says that when he became drowsy he cut off his eyelids and when they fell to the ground they turned into a plant – the tea plant. Tea is a mythic substance for the Chinese. Presumably it's green tea, I would imagine. But tea keeps you awake, because it comes from Bodhidharma's practice of wall-gazing. So, when you drink your tea, just remind yourself that this is to wake up. It's also said that it was Bodhidharma who taught the monks at Shaolin the martial arts. Apparently he brought these arts from South India. And he taught the monks the martial arts because they were too lethargic from all that sitting and study and they needed revving up.

So there is Bodhidharma practicing wall-gazing. It's an incredible image of this man with his bulging eyes, in his robes, with the robe wrapped round his head, just looking at a bare wall for nine years. And in the Zen tradition, down to the present day, this is how you practice in the Zendo. You look at the bare wall. Some of you might be wondering, on a retreat like this, "Why aren't we all sitting facing the wall?" But in fact, Bodhidharma's wall-gazing is much more profound than just simply looking at a wall in the literal sense. In fact, it's not sitting, simply gazing at a wall. You can do wall-gazing – in fact, you're told to practice wall-gazing – anywhere, at all times. Whether or not a wall, in the literal sense, is present. Wall-gazing is, in fact, Bodhidharma's way of speaking about Buddhist practice – about the whole of the spiritual life. When it says that Bodhidharma practiced wall-gazing for nine years, it probably means he lived and taught at Shaolin a whole practice that came to be styled "wall-gazing." And he was known as the wall-gazing Indian, or the wall-gazing Brahmin.

To understand what wall-gazing is, we need to look into one of the few texts that Bodhidharma is supposed to have taught – a short text that summarizes his dharma – and this text is called *The Treatise on the Fourfold Practice and the Twofold Entrance*. Bodhidharma says there are many ways to enter the path, but putting it briefly, there are only two ways. The first is called *li-ju*, or Entering by Communion with Primordial Reality. The second is called *hsing-ju*, or Entering by Practice. So, let's look at these two. I'm going to look at *li-ju*, Entering by Communion with Primordial Reality, today. Tomorrow I'm going to look at Entering by Practice.

05 Entering by communion with Primordial Reality; what is 'the wall' Reality reading

So, Entering by Communion with Primordial Reality. This means that you awaken to the essence of the Dharma through the aid of the Buddha's teaching. The teaching touches you directly, and it gives you a deep faith, a profound faith. A profound faith in a kind of intuitive knowing of your true nature. A profound faith in your true nature. In fact, you realize that this true nature, which is the nature of everything, is shared by all living beings. This is Buddha-nature – deep, profound, mysterious. But covered over by a mass of defilements. Once you've seen this nature - this true nature, this Buddha-nature – once you've awakened to it, you then firmly abide in it. You firmly abide, says Bodhidharma, in *pi-kuan*, or wall-gazing, wall meditation. By wall meditation, he doesn't mean gazing at a wall. By wall-gazing, you have to appreciate the symbolism of the wall in east-Asian culture. The wall is a symbol of no compromise, no negotiation, no change. You know, up against a wall. So it has the sense of being utterly, firmly established. The wall also symbolizes great strength and trust and wisdom. It symbolizes wisdom because, it's said, well a wall faces two ways. It opens two ways. There's this side and that side. So, although a wall is very solid – symbolizes this no compromise, no negotiation – it also, paradoxically it seems, symbolizes openness and emptiness. Because a wall opens two ways it symbolizes non-duality, the dissolving of self and other. The dissolving of the difference between transcendental and mundane. The dissolving of enlightenment and practice. All those distinctions are dissolved. A great Japanese Zen scholar who's done so much to revise our understanding of early Zen history has said that the translation should not really be "wall-gazing," but really "wall sees" or "wall observes." It's the wall that's doing the gazing. So, in wall-gazing meditation you're firmly abiding, facing both ways. You're firmly established in the non-dual. You're firmly established in the realization that self and other are not separate. This is the true nature of things. You're firmly abiding in a state of silent communion with primordial reality.

So this is the first way of entrance – *li-ju*. It sounds, I know, rather daunting, but also inspiring, I think. It seems very steep, as a Zen text would say, to be presented with an entrance into the Dharma, straight into firmly abiding in this primordial reality, this non-dual reality. It rises up like a great blue cliff. Some texts – indeed many Zen texts – say that you cannot awaken to this non-dual primordial reality through a gradual path. It's sudden, immediate. And this kind of approach to things can be misunderstood and it can be very confusing. Very early on in my involvement in the Dharma, I remember the first day retreat I ever attended was with a Japanese Zen teacher – in fact, he was more than a teacher, he was a Buddha. He regarded himself as the Buddha Maitreya. He was a very, very powerful sitter. And we did a day of sitting in silence, and he sat very strongly, very powerfully, in full lotus. Right in front of the shrine, which I thought was a bit strange, but anyway. And we'd have to go in and there was no instruction at all. You'd just have to sit – very uncomfortably – for ages, and he would say things like, "No need to do anything," and, "It's all here and now," and things like that. And I went for an interview with him and it was the same sort of thing. I'd say, "What should I do? How should I practice?" "No need to do anything." Which I found very confusing, because I didn't experience everything as being perfect in itself and I didn't know how to do nothing – I was only seventeen after all. There was even in his teaching a certain disparagement of trying to practice precepts and so on. So, it was all very confusing and really rather arid,

I felt. I found it all so plain and I just couldn't find a connection anywhere. In the end, maybe it's just my own lack of subtlety. I'm sure that has a lot to do with it. It was obviously very meaningful for the teacher, but not for me.

But, I must say, I find Bodhidharma's description of entering through communion with primordial reality inspiring. But, in a way, there's nothing you can do with it. It's not something you can do. It comes, it seems, through really opening up to the Dharma. It comes out of a profound receptivity, because Bodhidharma doesn't just say, "Well it just happens." Because he says it comes out of meditating on the teachings, or reading the scriptures. It's very interesting, in the Zen tradition they talk about different kinds of reading of the Buddhist scriptures. They're not against reading the scriptures, as some people think. But they talk about what's called "reality reading." You know, you can read a book where you just skim, you can read a book where you think about every line, but apparently there's another kind of reading called "reality reading" where you read intuitively. You just let the text speak directly to your heart. And in the Ch'an and Zen tradition, the *Diamond Sutra* especially was approached in this way. One of the main practices in the early Ch'an and Zen tradition was to recite, regularly, the *Diamond Sutra* or to do reality reading for the *Diamond Sutra* or passages from the *Lankavatara Sutra*. They're not to be studied to accumulate knowledge but you read it to spark you off. You read with your intuition. You read to be introduced to a vision of reality. And, of course, if you have a teacher who can bring the text alive for you, so much the better. It might be worthwhile, if you want to have perhaps some feeling for what reality reading might be like, just have a look at some passages in Bhante's *Wisdom Beyond Words*, his own commentary on some of the Perfection of Wisdom literature. You get a sense of what reality reading might be like there, as well as a great deal of practical advice on how to practice. So through your reality reading, you're sparked off. You're introduced to the true nature.

06 The Path of Vision; 'non-dual fundamentalism'

Perhaps there's another way of trying to look at Bodhidharma's li-ju, to try to bring it down to something we can relate to even more directly. Perhaps you could look at entering into communion with primordial reality in very traditional terms taken from the Buddha. You can look at things in terms of the path of Vision. The Buddha makes this distinction in the Eightfold Path, that there's the path of Vision, which is the first stage of the Eightfold Path, and then there's the path of Transformation – all the other stages.

And by path of Vision, you can take that to mean that you have some intuition of the way things are. This might have come about in all sorts of different ways depending on your experience, depending on who you are. It might be the product of very deep thought and reflection. Through your deep thinking and reflection you've come to some sort of intuitive sense of the depths of reality. Might have been some sort of spontaneous mystical experience – something like that. It might have come about through your participation in arts and culture. You know, reading great poetry, listening to great music. Even practicing the arts. It brought you to a deeper sense of things. It might have

come out of a lot of pain, a lot of suffering, bereavement, and it brought you to something different, a deeper sense of things. You know, you just have some sense that somehow there's a deeper current to things. You have a deeper faith in yourself, in humanity, and in life.

However it comes about, something has opened up – something deep and real. It might not be the non-dual mind. Then again, it might be. But it might, at least, just be a kind of softening, an opening, and a sense that there is something deep, and profound, and wonderful, and mysterious, and magical to existence – that's to be discovered and realized and known, and that you want to live by. That's why you practice. That's why you live by the Dharma. You're not driven by ideas and abstractions. You know, they're not going to keep you going for very long. Somewhere you're deeply moved by the Dharma, by the truth. You want to express that, you want to practice that, you want to enter the path of Transformation. You want to be transformed by it.

So, we need always, I think, to come back to – to treasure, to cherish – that fundamental intuition and faith and inspiration. It's just so incredibly important. I think if you're ever a spiritual friend to others, if you are a spiritual friend to others, and you aspire to be a spiritual friend to others, this is probably the most important thing that you can do – to just help others to stay in touch with that deep response to the Dharma. Just stay in touch with it and deepen it. It's the lifeblood of practice. Without it, spiritual practice really is simply acts of will coming out of good ideas – it just won't last very long, it will just peter out, you'll just be overwhelmed by other things. No vision, no transformation.

You see this in people sometimes who train for ordination. They're doing it, they're trying very hard. Yes, they have got something. But something, you feel, hasn't quite happened, hasn't quite connected up. They haven't caught the sort of living spirit of the Dharma. Somewhere or other – maybe it is there – but it hasn't connected up with their life sufficiently. And until that happens you can't really ordain them. So this sense of vision, this sense of faith, can't be taken for granted. It needs constant refreshment, constant deepening – through deep study, reality reading, through reflection, through meditation, through spiritual friendship, and living it out in daily life.

Sometimes, as I've already indicated, you can get the impression that practicing Ch'an or Zen or Tantra or Dzogchen, for that matter - let's name those as well - it means that you don't do anything. You just sort of stop and suddenly realize non-duality in whatever you do. Even if you're greedy or hateful or confused or stupid, that somehow expresses Buddha-mind. But this is a complete travesty of Ch'an and Zen and all the great traditions of Buddhism, a complete travesty. Those people should be given fifty blows, but I wouldn't do that. In fact, it's a highly dualistic perspective.

There is, I've found, a kind of non-dual fundamentalism. You've heard of the normal theistic fundamentalism, but there's a kind of non-dual fundamentalism. You know, no need to do anything, it's all here and now, and you can get quite irritated. You say, "Well, hang on, don't you have to practice something, like be kind to people?" "No! It's non-dual!" So, that's non-dual fundamentalism, because it makes a distinction between

duality and non-duality. If it really is non-dual, you don't make a distinction between duality and non-duality. You don't make a distinction between enlightenment and practice. Very important. So watch out for non-dual fundamentalists.

07 Entrance through practice & communion with primordial Reality - essence & function; the Precepts in terms of essence and function

So, let's go back to Bodhidharma's wall gazing, his gazing wall. Remember a wall gazes two ways. It's non-dual. Yes, there is the constant communion with primordial reality, but in his treatise Bodhidharma says that there is also the entrance through practice. It isn't just the entrance through a direct encounter with reality. There is also, alongside that, entrance through practice, entrance through conduct. And this entrance through practice is regarded as not being separate from your communion with primordial reality. It's not separate from it, it's not different from it. If you're practicing genuinely, from a place of faith, from a place of vision, you're harmonizing with that primordial reality. Or you could say, you're expressing that reality. And this touches on the crucial relationship in Chinese thought between what's called "essence" and "function." This is sometimes described as the hidden pivot in east-Asian thought, it's very, very important throughout all the far east-Asian traditions of China, Japan, and Korea. Particularly in Buddhism.

Essence is the real nature of things, it's what reality is. For Buddhism, it's the non-dual, it's *sunyata*, or it's Buddha-nature. It's beyond words. You can't name it. And it's also very clear, they're very clear, that this essence isn't some permanent, fixed thing. So there's essence. And then there's function. Function is how things appear, how they act, what they do, how they function in the day-to-day. So, in Buddhist practice you work in two ways. You can work from function to essence – this means you do something. You practice the precepts, you meditate, you study, you engage in spiritual friendship. You do that to harmonize with the essence of things. In doing that, you start to tune in to the true nature of things. So, that's moving from function to essence. But you can also move from essence to function. This means that when you've seen the true nature, your being naturally expresses that, spontaneously expresses that. If you've seen the true nature of things you *naturally* act with loving-kindness. The precepts are a natural expression of your being. It's said of the Buddha that the Buddha doesn't need to observe precepts – he *is* the precepts. They're the natural expression of his being. His function is the expression of his essence. For us, as I say, it's usually the other way. We go from function to essence. So we need to be aware of both of these aspects.

Quite a good example – it's very interesting when you get into discussion of the precepts. Take the first precept, abstaining from harming living beings. If you take the precepts as just a set of rules, as a set of prescriptions, you go astray. You've misunderstood the precepts. Not just understanding them, but you're probably practicing them wrongly as well. You're distorting them, because you're separating function from essence. So, you might get into discussions in study group like, "Does this mean I can't do X, Y, and Z?" So, you've got this idea that the precept is a rule that you're either kind of in or out of, and you have to move the discussion to, "Hang on, what's the principle behind this

precept? What is the essence of this precept?” That’s what you have to go to. Then you’ll discover how to act. You could have the other extreme, which could be, well, you don’t need precepts. You just go straight to the essence and then you don’t need precepts, but that’s a distortion too. That takes up a dualistic position. You’re making a distinction between essence and function. You’re both missing the point. The true position is that you have a feeling for reality – more or less – a feeling for the interconnectedness of all things. So, then, the first precept is a natural expression of that. If you’re not in contact with that naturally, you know that it’s a good idea to follow it, because you’re going to harmonize with the essence through doing it. You know that non-harm, that love, is a way of *expressing* the essence of things. It’s also a way of returning to that essence, as it were, of being in touch with that essence.

So Bodhidharma speaks of four practices by which you enter the Dharma through practice, and whereby you harmonize with the essence or express the essence. I’m going to look at those in detail tomorrow, as well as saying something about how Bodhidharma transmitted the Dharma to his main disciple.

08 Dogen on practice as Enlightenment

But let’s end with a teaching from the great Dogen, who really emphasized the non-duality of practice and enlightenment. By practice he didn’t just mean sitting meditation. He meant *total* practice – sitting in meditation, observing precepts, studying the Dharma, working to benefit others, practicing the arts, cultivating mindfulness in all things. So let’s end with his inspiring words.

“To think that practice and enlightenment are not one is a non-Buddhist view. In the Buddhadharma they are one. Inasmuch as practice now is based on enlightenment, the practice of a beginner is itself the whole of original enlightenment. Therefore, in giving the instruction for practice, a Zen teacher advises his disciples not to seek enlightenment apart from practice, for practice points directly to original enlightenment. Because it is the very enlightenment of practice, there is no end to enlightenment; because it is the very practice of enlightenment, there is no beginning to practice.”