

## **The Intimate Mind**

*By Padmavajra*

Audio available at: <http://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/audio/details?num=OM703>

*Talk given at Padmaloka Retreat Centre, 2004*

### **01 The Jewelled Sword of the Diamond King**

Thank you very much, Padmadaka, brothers in the Dharma. Brothers in the intimate mind... Could be a long one. Could be a complex one. So, rouse yourselves, get here, don't drift. So yesterday we heard about Mahasattva Fu – Fu, Chih, and Wu. We heard about how he expounded the *Diamond Sutra*, how he demonstrated the *Diamond Sutra*. How he showed the Diamond Sutra's great function of destroying, smashing like a thunderbolt any fixed ideas about self, world, life, even spiritual life and spiritual attainment. We saw how he showed to Emperor Wu the Great Emptiness, how he destroyed in order to give life, as the Zen texts put it.

Yes, the Zen master is likened to the jewelled sword of the Diamond King. The Diamond King is the enlightened mind itself – perfectly pure and clear, radiant mind, in which there's no separation between self and other. And this jewelled sword of the Diamond King is the dynamic functioning and expression of that mind, of that enlightened heart. And it's a double-edged sword. It destroys - it cuts away - all that is false, all that is confused, all that restricts, all that causes pain. But this sword also gives life. It restores, it renews your true being. The "real human," as the great Linji puts it, the true human. That rises up when the jewelled sword of the Diamond King is wielded. The enlightened mind is revealed as you. It's a very important message there, I think. If you cannot create, if you cannot give life, you cannot destroy. You must not destroy. It's very easy to go around seeing what's wrong. It's very easy to criticize. It's very easy to carp. It's very easy to stand apart and fault-find. It's very easy, it's very safe. In the end, of course, you only destroy yourself. You think you're wielding a wonderful sword of wisdom but you're actually cutting yourself – a death by a thousand cuts. You can only really cut if you can restore and renew. We go away on retreat at Christmas and the New Year. We move away from the parties, and all the food and drink, and all the rest of it. We cut away, we simplify, but only in order to restore ourselves, only in order to renew ourselves. We go into the tiger's cave. The cave up to which there are human footprints, but which there are no human footprints coming back. We go into the tiger's cave to be consumed, but we return a different man.

So, I mentioned yesterday that the *Diamond Sutra* was hugely influential on the development of Ch'an and Zen. I mentioned how it was recited, meditated upon, even used to transmit the enlightened mind itself. I told you about Hui Neng, the sixth Ch'an patriarch, going at night to his teacher Hung Jen and how during the recitation of the *Diamond Sutra* Hui Neng was suddenly, immediately awakened. The words were used by Hung Jen as a means, a vehicle, a medium to transmit the enlightened mind itself.

Now before the time of Hung Jen it seems that another Buddhist text was used in China as the means to transmit enlightenment. And this text was the *Saddharma Lankavatara Sutra* - The Sutra of the True Dharma's Entry Into Sri Lanka. And this great sutra is associated with the great figure of Bodhidharma, so let me say something about Bodhidharma. Some of you heard about him last week, but you can't hear too much about Bodhidharma.

## **02 Bodhidharma and Emperor Wu**

It has to be said that in terms of hard historical fact, Bodhidharma is a rather hazy figure. He shifts through the mists of the past. But as a legend, as a myth, Bodhidharma is immensely powerful. He is an enormous, a huge symbolic presence who looms over the entire Chinese, Japanese, and Korean Zen traditions. In East Asian Buddhist art, Bodhidharma is depicted as a very powerful figure, as many of these Zen and Cha'an masters are. A very powerful figure in swirling robes with great bulging eyes and thick tangled eyebrows and beard. He's going along with a staff or is seated, rooted in meditation.

The question that is repeatedly asked in the Zen tradition, a kind of koan which you're to go away and meditate on, is "Why did Bodhidharma come from the West?" (the West meaning India). Your master looks at you when he puts this question and he wants an answer from your realisation. He is not interested in history or legend or facts or figures. He wants you to tell him what the transmission was. He wants you to tell him, he wants a direct response. Sometimes it's clear that the response he wants, well, it got to come from another dimension because if you speak in response to this question, you get fifty blows. If you stay silent in response to this question, you get fifty blows. How will you speak? [Noise of desperation] Probably run out of the shrine room.

Bodhidharma lived sometime in the 6<sup>th</sup> century and he was born into a royal family in South India. At a young age he left home, he studied the Dharma in South India, practiced under a number of teachers. And at some point, he received the special mind to mind transmission that had started with the Buddha holding up the golden flower to Mahakasyapa. Out of compassion, Bodhidharma undertook the dangerous sea voyage from India to China. His first stop was the capital city of Yang. Here he was invited to the court of our good friend Emperor Wu.

We're not sure if this meeting with Emperor Wu occurred before or after the encounter with Mahasattva Fu. The Emperor wanted to talk about Buddhism with Bodhidharma, this new Indian monk, new in town, who had, apparently, something a bit special. Something a bit fresh and new – the latest Indian teachings.

So, the meeting took place in the court and Emperor Wu sat on his great throne, with Bodhidharma in his simple patched robes and his bulging eyes before him. And Emperor Wu said:

*“I’ve built monasteries, I’ve built temples, I’ve erected stupas, I support monks, I publish texts. What merit, what virtue, have I gained?”*

He’s very interested in merit because he’s done all these good deeds, he must have accumulated good karma so he must be going to get a really good reward – heaven? Or even some sort of spiritual attainment, or a special place in the Buddhist tradition, in the Buddhist pantheon. So what merit have I gained from all this? And Bodhidharma just said, flatly:

*“No merit at all.”*

And Emperor Wu was astonished.

*“Why no merit?”*

And Bodhidharma replied:

*“All those things you’ve done are all very well, but they’re just shadows following the form. For real, lasting virtue you need to know, to see directly, reality as it is.”*

We can smile at Emperor Wu, but maybe just look into yourself. How much do you do selflessly, out of your realization, such as it is, and how much do you do things for reward? Maybe not heaven, but certainly being thought well of, and when we don’t get the praise and the promotion that we think is our due, well, we can start having other thoughts.

So then Emperor Wu, because Bodhidharma is speaking about reality, he thought he’d shift the ground and get onto high, deep topics. Maybe that would open up another discussion. So, he said to Bodhidharma:

*“What is the highest meaning of the holy truths?”*

Bodhidharma replied:

*“Vast emptiness, no holiness.”*

So, Emperor Wu, being a bit clever, said:

*“Who is standing before me? If everything is vast emptiness, then who is standing before me? Who are you?”*

And Bodhidharma replied:

*“I don’t know.”*

And just left. He left, he crossed the Yangtze River, and he found his way to the remote Shaolin Monastery. And Emperor Wu, after he'd gone, said to Master Chih:

*"Well, what was all that about?"*

And Master Chih said:

*"Don't you know? Don't you know that was Avalokiteshvara, the bodhisattva of compassion, communicating the mind-seal of all the Buddhas, communicating enlightenment?"*

So, Emperor Wu thought, "Oh, I've really missed a chance." So he said to Master Chih:

*"Well, let's send for him, let's send an imperial emissary to bring him back!"*

And Master Chih wisely said:

*"Even if the whole country went to bring him, they would never bring him back. Bodhidharma has left more than the country of Liang."*

So, this story is, by the way, another one of these *kung'ans*, another one of these stories on which you have to meditate. You're taught that you have to meditate on this to penetrate its meaning. What did Bodhidharma mean in that conversation? In fact, they even ask, "Well who got the best out of the exchange, Bodhidharma or Emperor Wu?" They don't sort of assume that Bodhidharma necessarily "won," and as I said, the teacher doesn't want an explanation, he wants your realization.

### **03 Wall gazing at Shaolin - dual yet unified practice**

Anyway, let's stay with Bodhidharma. He went to Shaolin Monastery, where it's said he spent nine years wall-gazing. Nine years sitting, rooted in meditation, gazing at the wall. Legend has it that he dozed off at one point, or started to doze off, so he cut off the lids of his eyes, which fell to the ground and turned into tea plants. That's the Buddhist drink, tea. Where there's tea, there's meditation. Where there's tea, there's Buddhist hermits. I was reading that in a book on Buddhist hermits recently, you know, where you have mountains, where you have trees on mountains, where you have tea bushes on mountains, there must be Buddhist hermits meditating. It all comes from Bodhidharma. So, when you have your tea, think of Bodhidharma.

He also, it's said, taught the monks Kung Fu. You remember *Kung Fu*, the television series. He brought these martial arts from South India because he found the monks at Shaolin Monastery rather stuffy, you know, rice bags. They weren't really alive enough, so he taught them martial arts. But that's not our main concern – tea or Kung Fu.

Let's look at wall-gazing. By wall-gazing wasn't simply meant gazing at a wall, although Zen monks do that. Wall in East Asian thought and culture is a symbol for

rootedness, stability, of being firmly established. The wall is a symbol of no compromise, of utter commitment. The wall is a symbol for wisdom. A wall sees two ways. It sees this side, it sees that side, so it becomes a symbol of being rooted in non-duality. In reality things are not separate. There's no "self" and "other." So, it's not a matter of Bodhidharma wall-gazing, it's more a matter of the wall gazing. The wall sees, the wall observes, Bodhidharma *is* the wall, seated, rooted in wisdom, seeing all ways.

And his teaching of wall-gazing is really about how you enter the non-dual state. He says you do this in two ways: directly, by being sparked off by the teaching, by the teacher introducing you to this non-dual mind directly *or* by practice, through the practice of basic Buddhism. We had a look at this in the talks last week. These two aspects are actually aspects of one practice. There's one wall with two sides. You need in your spiritual practice both the principle, the spirit, the living vitality of Buddhism – which is some sort of intuition of the way things are – but you also need to practice that, to live that out in forms and precepts and methods. You need to keep principle and practice, spirit and letter, spirit and form, completely unified in your practice. What probably happened is that Bodhidharma taught the Dharma and his approach was called wall-gazing because of this dual approach.

#### **04 Hui Ko**

At some point, he was able to transmit his realisation - this non-dual realization, this wall-gazing – directly to his greatest disciple, whose name was Hui Ko. They stayed together in Shaolin for many years, and Hui Ko badly wanted the mind-to-mind transmission. And one night it took place, in deep winter. The date they give is December the 9<sup>th</sup>. The Chinese can be very concrete and specific. It was a bitterly cold night. The snow was falling, and Hui Ko was standing in the cold, in the snow pouring down on him. And inside, in the meditation hall, Bodhidharma was deep in meditation, deep in wall-gazing, in wall gazes, deeply absorbed in non-duality. T some point he became aware of Hui Ko and he came out, out of compassion to see how he was doing, what he was doing. And he saw that he was still not ready for the supreme teaching. Something else was needed. No doubt he communicated this rather gruffly, as Bodhidharma probably did. Hui Ko didn't know what to do. He didn't have anything, he didn't have any money, he'd gone forth. He didn't know what the effort was, what was required. And then he knew. He knew what he had to do. He took a sharp knife and severed the lower portion of his arm and presented it as an offering to Bodhidharma, saying:

*“Give me the teaching. Give me the deepest meaning. I long for it. Give my mind, give my heart, peace. Give it rest.”*

And Bodhidharma said immediately:

*“Bring me your mind, give me your mind, and I will give it peace.”*

And then Hui Ko said:

*“I’ve searched for my mind. I’ve searched for my heart. I can’t find it.”*

And Bodhidharma said:

*“Then, I’ve set it at rest. It’s at peace.”*

And Hui Ko, at that moment had a great realization – the transmission happened. Enlightenment, awakening, was transmitted. He stayed with Bodhidharma thereafter some time, deepening his realization, becoming wall-like, becoming completely rooted, uncompromising in this state of non-duality, for many years.

Just a comment here, just in case there’s any misunderstanding and people get carried away. I take the severing of the arm as symbolic. It’s a powerful image of what you have to do to make real spiritual progress. You have to give yourself to it fully, completely. You have to give your life to spiritual practice. Like anything else in life, if you want to do anything properly you have to really do it, you have to give yourself to it. There are no free lunches in the spiritual life, there just isn’t, you have to really give yourself to it for there to be any success and progress. And there has to be an absolute commitment. The great Master Yun Men, when he was asked an abstruse question about the meaning of the profound and how you realize it, just said, “Thirty years. Thirty years of practice.”

Eventually Bodhidharma left Hui Ko. His job was done, the transmission completed, he disappeared. Legend says that he was poisoned by jealous monks, but mysteriously when they opened up his grave he wasn’t there. There was just one sandal. And apparently bodhidharma still walks through the world. If you ever meet a one-sandaled man... that could be Bodhidharma. And you can ask him the question, “Why *did* you come from the West?”

## **05 The Lankavatara Sutra and Mind teachings**

Now, before leaving Hui Ko, Bodhidharma told him that there was one Buddhist sutra, one Buddhist text he needed to use and teach in his transmission of the Dharma. It was the only sutra that Bodhidharma was said to have brought with him. And that was the *Lankavatara Sutra*. That’s what Hui Ko should use to spark people off and the early Cha’an masters, Bodhidharma and the generations that followed him are known as the Masters of the Lanka. There’s an early Cha’an text found in Dunhuang, in Central Asia, called the *Record of the Masters of the Lanka*, meaning the *Lankavatara Sutra*.

It has to be said the *Lankavatara Sutra* is a very difficult Sutra. It’s a very strange sutra. There are passages which seem clear but are intrinsically difficult because they are describing realisation. And then there are other passages which really are quite complex and the ground keeps shifting, the terminology seems to keep changing. The modern

authority on the *Lankavatara Sutra* describes it as a rag bag of things. But a very beautiful rag bag. It's full of jewels and brocade, and all mixed up. But it's very complex and rich.

But it's not difficult to see why the *Lankavatara Sutra* should have been associated with Cha'an and Zen in the early days because the *Lankavatara Sutra* is particularly concerned with mind (*citta*), consciousness (*vijnana*). Mind in the sense of *manas* as well. So, mind in all its aspects, especially the enlightened mind. And Zen talks a lot about mind. Of realising one mind, for example. Or of transmitting and realising the Buddha mind. You get the great T'ang verse, which is said to encapsulate the essence of Zen, which Sangharakshita wrote a commentary on, this particular verse:

*A special transmission outside the scriptures.*

*No dependence on words and letters.*

*Direct pointing to the mind.*

*Seeing into one's own nature and realizing Buddhahood.*

So, this emphasis on mind is not peculiar to Zen, in fact, it's common to all schools of Buddhism. Mind is regarded as absolutely central throughout the Buddhist tradition. It's the key to spiritual life. It's the key to life.

The first two verses of the *Dhammapada*, which you could say is Buddhism's most basic scripture, sums it all up:

*All experiences or things are preceded by mind, led by mind, and produced by mind.*

*If one speaks or acts with an impure mind, suffering follows even as the cart-wheel follows the hoof of the ox drawing the cart.*

*All experiences or things are preceded by mind, led by mind, and produced by mind.*

*If one speaks or acts with a pure mind, happiness follows like a shadow that never departs.*

If you understand the meaning of those verses you would probably be enlightened. There you have it right there. All of our tendencies of character, all of our experience, all things, are preceded, led, and produced by the mind. Mind causes suffering, mind causes happiness. All the love, all the hate, all the violence, all the exploitation, all the war, all the kindness, all the civilization, all the wisdom, it all comes from mind. It all comes from the mind of men. Mind is absolutely central. By mind we don't just mean thoughts or ideas, although it includes that. By mind we mean emotion, will, feeling, our whole psychological being. Our whole spiritual being as well. Mind is the cause of spiritual development. Mind is the cause of enlightenment. Mind is the cause of our suffering and restriction. It's all mind. And that's why mind is so crucially important in Buddhist practice. And why meditation is so crucially important in Buddhist practice – it's the direct method of working on the mind and why we have to apply ourselves to meditation repeatedly and effectively.

Mind is immensely powerful and decisive in human life. And because it's decisive and powerful in human life, it's powerful and decisive for the whole universe, the whole world. Happiness and suffering don't come from God, from fate, from chance, from economic forces, from chemicals. In the end, they come from the mind of man.

So, Buddhism's discussion of the mind, insights into the mind, are extraordinarily rich and complex, especially as found in the *Lankavatara Sutra* and the Buddhist school associated with it. That is, the *Cittamatra*, or "mind-only," or *Vijnanavada*, "consciousness-only" school – which is more importantly called the Yogacara school. Yogacara here means "those who practice meditation." The insights that come into mind and consciousness arise from meditation experience in Buddhist tradition. The insights of the Yogacara, the insights into mind from Buddhism, generally are not about creating a theory, a system, a world-view, a water-tight philosophy and psychology. They're arising out of meditation and insight, and the discussion of mind is essentially sotiriological. The discussion of mind is concerned with liberation and enlightenment. Nothing else.

## **06 The layered Mind; six sense consciousnesses**

Now, one of the most important insights into the nature of mind from the *Lankavatara Sutra* is the fact that the mind is layered. It's deep, it's rich and complex. And going into this particular teaching helps us to see that changing the mind, turning from a confused and rigid mind with ill-will and craving and suffering and so on, isn't just a matter of having different thoughts – just good thoughts, "I'm having a good thought."

Even good resolutions. You know, enlightenment isn't just about thinking about something. It's topical this time of year, with New Year's resolutions due. Maybe some of you are thinking about making a resolution to, maybe meditate every day, or give up smoking, or dietary things, or something like that. To be nicer to others. Whatever it may be. It's good to have resolutions, it's a good time of year to have resolutions, to start fresh. And you can make that resolution to meditate every day, and you seem sure and convinced. You *know* that meditation is really good for you and really important [Joking seriousness – Laughter]. And you know, the first of January you're up there sitting. The second of January you're up there sitting, the third, fourth, yes, you're doing it. Gradually, imperceptibly, into the mind there comes that little thought, "Well, I don't really need to do it today. It's going well, I can have a break." And slowly the resolution sort of dissolves, vanishes.

So why is this? What goes on? So, we need to look at the structure, the texture, the outer and inner of mind, of consciousness. And the *Lankavatara Sutra's* insights are that we have, in fact, eight consciousnesses. So consciousness is layered. They're not separated out, they're all intimately connected. Our mind, our consciousness, is multi-layered, and I'm going to be simplifying this teaching. This is a very complex topic indeed, but let's try to get hold of the spirit of the thing.

So, first of all, there are the six sense consciousnesses. So the first five consciousnesses are really quite straightforward at first sight. There's the eye-consciousness, consciousness of sight objects. You see. There's the ear-consciousness, consciousness of sounds. The nose-consciousness, consciousness of smells. Tongue-consciousness, consciousness of tastes. There's the consciousness of touch. It's all consciousness. They're all consciousnesses.

Actually, the *Lankavatara Sutra* goes even further. It says whatever is seen, heard, sensed, that is only consciousness. There is nothing that is separate from consciousness. We'll come to that a bit later. But just to say, in the Yogacara, in the *Lankavatara Sutra*, the inner and outer is all mind. It's not your mind, it's not my mind, it's *all* mind. It's pretty obvious if you think about it, because you can only know anything through mind. You cannot know it in and of itself. I know you, I have an experience of you, because of mind. But, if I look for my mind, if I go in, I won't find my mind. In one Yogacara text it says, "There are many names, many metaphors, for self and things, but they are only transformations of mind, transformations of consciousness."

So, I've mentioned the five consciousnesses. The sixth consciousness is mind consciousness. Our mind is regarded as a sort of sense. This is, if you like, ordinary mind. It's consciousness of feelings, thoughts, ideas, intuitions, imaginings, will, volition. This is all mind, ordinary mind, *mano-vijnana*.

And of course, our practice at first is at this level. It's at the level of these six consciousnesses. We need to be aware of what's going on through our senses, including our mind. Practice at this level is noticing what's happening. Particularly practicing mindfulness, practicing ethics, practicing basic meditation, mindfulness of breathing, and so on. This is where we work. Calming the sense consciousnesses, refining them, in order to calm the mind, integrate the mind, focus the mind. On a retreat like this you simplify. There's less distraction. The meditation calms the mind, integrates the mind, expands the mind. That's what we're doing. We're working on this level of the mind, the first six levels of consciousness. But there are deeper levels that influence us powerfully, where we need to go to in order to work and practice if we're to make lasting progress.

## **07 The seventh consciousness - klišto-manovijñāna; Master Pan Shan**

The seventh consciousness is called the *manas*. It's better described as the *klišto-manovijñāna* - the defiled, the afflicted mind, the afflicted consciousness. And this is defiled and afflicted because it's the level of our mind that divides everything up in to a really existing separate self *here* and really existing separate world *there*.

This is very, very deep, very habitual, and basically deluded. If we examine closely, if we look into it - and you do this in certain forms of meditation on the basis of real concentration and depth of practice - we won't find anything that separates us out from everything else. If we look into ourselves, if we look into our body, it isn't as separate as

we think it is. Where does our body begin and where does it end? To take a very kind of mundane level example, when you go and piss, when does the urine stop being you? Was it ever you in the first place? There's a practice called the Contemplation of the Six Elements, where you reflect on how you borrow the different elements that make up your body. You borrow it from the elements outside of you and you're constantly giving them back - a very powerful practice. And of course, at death you finally give it all back.

And then you might think, "Well the mind. That separates me out." But, well, go and look for your mind. Look for it. Where is your mind? Oh, it's up there. Well no, sorry, because you can focus throughout your body. Where does the mind go in dreams? How do we know that we're not dreaming? When we're in dreams sometimes it's incredibly real and then we wake up and think, "Whew! It was only a dream," but how do we know that we're not in a dream now? This is the sort of reflection that Buddhist texts give you to kind of get you to find your mind and then you realise that it's not as separated out as you thought. Is the mind inside or is it outside? What colour is the mind?

Perhaps everybody senses the fact that deep down they kind of know that they're not as separate and secure as they thought. Perhaps deep down everybody knows this - senses that the self, which seems so immutable as the common-sense view would have it, (belies) an insecurity that it's not really like that. And that insecurity is painful. So we try to cover over and avoid this insecurity. So, we grab hold of things, hold onto things - lovers, friends, philosophies, opinions, religions, food, sex, life itself. "I really exist. Those things really exist. Everything's solid. It's as it should be."

From time to time something happens to shake that up. When you lose someone you love very much, suddenly your self, that seemed so certain and sure, it kind of vanishes when the impermanent, the insubstantial breaks through. You can't find yourself. When changing, pulsing life breaks through, our world seems to fall apart. Or self seems to fall apart - which we then quickly, or maybe not so quickly, try to reassemble.

Or suddenly something breaks through. A sense or an intuition that life could be so very different. That we don't have to follow the tracks. The immutable tracks that seem to be laid down for us, that seem to be defining us forever. Maybe it's family expectation, maybe it's society expectation. And we are this person, going along down there, down this railroad track, and there are our friends and family and they're going down the same track. Well, there aren't many tracks. Sometimes something breaks through and well, you realize there are no tracks. You realize, "I don't have to be rigid in this way. Self and other don't separate out like that." And it can be so unexpected sometimes when this happens, even for a sort of steady spiritual adept, because you do it with your spiritual practice. You have to, to get into a good groove of practice. But sometimes something erupts which brings about a complete change in your worldview, into your ideas of self and other.

There's a lovely story of Master Pan Shan, an old Chinese Ch'an master. A great practitioner, steady, and he was walking in the market one day and he was just passing the butcher's store, where the butcher was selling pork. And the government inspector

was buying pork and he said, “Cut me a pound of the fine stuff!” And the butcher replied, “Inspector, which isn’t fine?” And hearing this – “What is not fine?” – Master Pan Shan had a great awakening.

But, this *klish-to-manovijnana*, this defiled, afflicted mind-consciousness, this ingrained sense of self and other, needs deep work. It needs deep meditation and insight practice. So, in Buddhist practice you don’t beat yourself up for having a sense of self, this is incredibly important. When Sangharakshita was first in the West, he found that some of the Buddhists he was meeting had this kind of idea that a sense of self, no matter what it was, even in an ordinary sense, was deeply morally wrong, and that spiritual practice was, as described by one Buddhist lecturer, a process of going along the path and “hacking off great bloody lumps of self.” But it’s not really like that, because the sense of self is very deep. In fact, the self needs to be employed in practice. It needs to undo itself, dissolve itself. I’ll come back to that in a moment.

### **08 Deepest level of consciousness – the alaya; seeds & habit energies; ‘an ecology of consciousness’; ‘the revolution in the base’**

Before that, I want to look at the deepest level of consciousness, the eight consciousness, and this is called the *alaya-vinyana*, the “store consciousness.” This is deep, it’s unconscious. You can’t really be aware of it. But don’t associate it with the unconsciousness of Jung. There are parallels and maybe overlaps, but be very careful not to make facile correspondencies.

The *alaya* is a “store” because it collects the effects of our actions, of our volitional actions. If we act out of greed or hate or jealousy or conceit, or any of their refinements, their effects don’t vanish into space. They’re stored in the *alaya*. And the same with good things. If we act out of kindness, of love, of faith, intelligence, generosity, and so on, the effects go into the *alaya*. These effects are called *vasanas*, which means “perfume” or “traces.” The depths of our minds are touched, perfumed by what we have done. And when conditions are right, those traces will be activated. We’ll do those things again, or suffer the consequences of those actions.

Sometimes, the *vasanas* are called *bijas* or “seeds,” so the effects of our actions are like seeds which drop into the *alaya* and then sprout, rise up, when conditions are appropriate, or right as it were. They might rise up as some terrifying poisonous plant or like a beautiful sweet-smelling flower, depending on what we’ve put in.

*Vasanas*, perfume, traces, have also been translated by D. T. Suzuki as “habit energies,” which I think is really good. “Habit energies” puts it very well. Our actions create habit energies in the depths of our being that rise again and again, and yet again. And, of course, there are enormous implications and ramifications of this. What we put into the mind doesn’t vanish. It will have an effect.

The *alaya* is likened to a river and an ocean. So, what we need, I think, is an *ecology* of consciousness. I think Gregory Bates wrote a book called *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*. I think it a brilliantly insightful phrase. So, Buddhism is an ecology of consciousness, an ecology of mind, spiritual ecology. We get very concerned, quite rightly, about the poisoning of our rivers and oceans, all the effluent, the raw sewage, the crap, that we just throw into it, pour into it. But what about the mind? What about the sewage, the crap, the rubbish, that we just tip in on a daily basis? What about the anxiety? I mean, that really is like some stinky chemical that we're just pouring into the depths of our mind. Or the resentment and the ill-will, like so much crap. It's all sewage and crap that we're just pouring into the depths of the mind. And it leaves its effect. Its effect is pain and suffering. You know, and further resentment and greed and ill-will and anxiety. We're just pouring it in. And it's just going on, just running on. You know, like some of those polluted rivers you see in India with some weird color from all the chemicals that they're pouring into it, some lurid red.

Sometimes people wonder – we can see it much more clearly in others than we can in ourselves – why they are the way they are. You know, they sort of scratch their head and wonder, “Why am I so unhappy? Why am I so miserable?” And their friends are standing around, “Well, I could tell you why you are the way you are. Because of the crap you put in your consciousness. The effluent you're dumping into yourself on a regular basis.” Sorry to sound so drastic, but it's true. And it's not one-sided, that's the negative.

But when we act well, out of love and integrity and awareness and understanding, we really do perfume the mind. We clean and cleanse the mind. We seed the depths with wonderful spiritual potentialities which can be activated and reactivated again and again. And this is why Buddhism places so much importance on regularity of practice, repeated practice. It's why you do the same practice every day, several times a day. It's why you repeat mantra, why you read and reread the same Buddhist text year in and year out. You're fully seeding the *alaya*. And it's also why Buddhism says to just cut the unskillful habits. Just stop pouring the shit into the mind.

Some people think that the *alaya-vijnana* is a kind of Buddhist soul, but the Lankavatara Sutra and the Yogacara people say well no, not at all, because it's nothing fixed. If it was there could not be spiritual transformation. The metaphors for the *alaya* are of a torrent, a river running along, a river of habit energy, or it's the image of the ocean stirred by waves with all our restless habits. So, the river and the ocean are in no way fixed and immutable. The *alaya* is also called *ashraya*, which means “the base” or “the basis,” because it's the basis of our ignorance. It's the basis for our *samsaric* mind, our mind of restriction. And ignorance and *samsara* are only dealt with when the basis is dealt with, when there is what's called the “revolution in the basis.” - the “turning about in the deepest seat of consciousness.” But, I think I prefer that “revolution in the base.”

So, this is why the defiled mind-consciousness is so embedded, why this sense of self and other is so embedded. The seventh consciousness, just above the *alaya*, as it were. Our habit energy is constantly reinforcing our sense of self and other. Our greed, our hatred,

our ignorance, is constantly reinforcing that sense of self and other – over and over again. We do things that reinforce self and other. We set up barriers. And we've been doing this since beginningless time. Another way you could look at this – why this sense of self and other arises – is that you have a sense of continuity in the *alaya*, in your life. And you take that as somehow a permanent self to stand on with the world out there.

But, of course, it's not actually like that if we look into it. In deep meditation, with the eye of insight, you will not find any permanent entity, either outside or inside. Just a flow of mutually-conditioning states, in which there's no separation between self and other. There's just a flow of experience, to use that word, with a subjective and objective pole, as it were. And you cannot find where one begins and the other ends. In the end, all is nothing but mind. Nothing but awareness. No self and other. Just the rich flow of non-dual awareness. Rich and luminous and mysterious. Empty and compassionate.

I hope from this you're getting some sense of the depth of mind and consciousness and why spiritual life is so demanding, dealing with those habit energies. So, how to work? How to practice?

### **09 How do we work with the 'self?'; Yun Men and his disciple; refining, expanding, seeing through; Han Shan and the melting snows; meditation; Huang Po; Dogen's 'intimate words'**

Well, we definitely don't work by pretending that we don't have a self. Mouth Zen people, mouth Buddhist people, can sometimes do this. They can talk about the Dharma practice, especially in relation to Precepts. Well, if they've treated somebody badly or they've done an idiotic thing where they've caused a lot of pain and you say, "Hey, what about harming people? What are you playing at?" They can turn around and say, "Well, there's no one who practices and no one who harms. There's no self, there's no other." And when you push it they start getting a bit angry, and you say, "Well, why are you getting angry, then?" And they say, "There's no anger! It's all an illusion!" This does happen, it has happened. Of course this is absurd, it's a travesty of Buddhism. The real Ch'an and Zen people are well aware of this kind of nonsense. They probably had to face it in their day. One of my favorite exchanges is between Master Yun Men and one of his disciples. The monk comes to him and says, "What's the problem?" In other words, what's the meaning? What is the problem of life, what's the meaning of life? What to do? How to overcome ignorance? And Yun Men, who was very direct, just said, "You don't know the stench of your own shit." Meaning you don't know how the stink of your own egotism and your own pride and your own rigid sense of self – you don't know how that really stinks, how that really smells. It really is smelly, because it's so stagnant and stuck.

So, let's not pretend that we don't have a self. We do. In fact, it's good that we have a sense of self. That's an amazing achievement, that sense of self-consciousness. That's the human state. It's a wonderful thing to be able to reflect on our experience. It means we're not completely lost in an animal sense reaction. We have that ability to reflect on

our experiences – fantastic! It can also cause a lot of problems. So, spiritual life is not about smashing that sense of self. It's first of all about refining it, expanding it, and then seeing through it. Dogen says, "To study the way is to study the self, to study the self is to forget the self, to forget the self is to be enlightened by all the things in the universe."

So, we have to begin with ourselves and all others, and you see this in meditation practice – in the humble meditations that we do ourselves. In our Mindfulness of Breathing we have self and other. We have the breath, which is as it were "out there," in our body. And we have our mind, our attention. They can seem at first to be two. We feel the breath, but we observe, we look. But as we go on mind and breath get closer and closer. We become at one with the breath. We experience the whole breath-body. And when we experience that there's an expansion. We can have this sense of coming together of our awareness and all sensations, even what we hear outside we become very close to. There's a kind of blending and merging of self and other. There's a lovely story of a late Ch'an master named Han Shan who was meditating in a place where there was a mountain fastness and all the snows were melting, and there was a great roaring all day long. Very disturbing. And he remembered the teaching that if you meditated on sounds without using mind consciousness you gain realization. So he would sit using the roaring sound as his meditation. And sure enough... So when you have this sense of self and other blending in meditation there's a wonderful sense of relief and pleasure and bliss. There's a dissolving of tension.

And in the Metta Bhavana it's very vivid. We begin with ourselves. We begin with self-appreciation. We begin with realizing what it is to be alive, to be aware, to be self-conscious, to be human - aware of our breath, aware of the present moment. We appreciate it. We enjoy it. It's special. We're special. And in the other stages you tune into that life in others. They are special to themselves as well. They're unique to themselves as well. They feel exactly the same way as you do to yourself.

So you start to realize that fundamental non-difference - that same life, that same flow of life between yourself and everybody else. And this expands to all things. It's the same life everywhere. You lose, just gradually, that sense of self. It just drops off. Mind and body drop off, as Dogen puts it. There's no more dualistic consciousness. Consciousness and awareness kind of perfumes all beings and all things – it's not your consciousness. In fact, this consciousness, this mind, this heart, cannot be found – cannot be located. And this is when defiled mind and *alaya-vijnana* just vanish away. And instead you have *tathagatagarbha* – Buddha-nature, pure mind. The great Huang Po says, "The Buddhas and all beings are only one mind – nothing else. This mind, since the beginningless past, has never been born, never perished, it is not green, not yellow, it has no bounds, it transcends all limits."

And Dogen, the incredible Dogen, has great and wonderful insight here. He speaks in one of his commentaries on some of the great *koans* about intimate language, intimate words. Words where there is no gap between them and reality. He's talking about the transmission of the Dharma between master and disciple. And he really takes hold of this phrase "intimate words" and starts to talk about intimacy. Starts to talk about this mind,

this non-duality, this absence of self and other, in terms of intimacy – the intimacy of all things. So we need to make our practice a becoming intimate. Dogen says:

*Intimate means 'close' and 'inseparable.' There is no gap. Intimacy means the Buddhas embrace everything, you embrace everything, and I embrace everything. Practice includes all. A generation includes all. And intimacy includes all. You should clearly study this. Indeed, intimacy comes forth at the place where the person is at the moment when understanding takes place. Right now is the very moment when you are intimate with yourself, intimate with others. You are intimate with Buddhas, and intimate with other beings. This being so, intimacy renews intimacy, because the teaching of practice enlightenment is the way of Buddhas, it is intimacy that penetrates Buddhas. Thus, intimacy penetrates intimacy.*

Obviously Dogen's use of the word "intimacy" is very specialized. He's not talking about the intimacy of romance and sex, for example. It's the intimacy that comes when you dissolve, when you expand, your separateness. So, practice intimacy with all beings, with all things. Practice intimacy with Buddhas. Then everybody and everything will be communicating enlightenment, and you will have received the mind transmission of all the Buddhas. You will be right there, in and with everything and everyone.

## **10 Hakuin's verse of Awakening**

So I want to conclude by reading an awakening verse of the great Hakuin. It's an intimate verse. It's language that seems so close to experience. Even in the English translation it seems to come across. And this verse came after years of struggle and effort and practice, of going deep, of transforming the depths of consciousness. It came after the revolution in the basis. It came after the experience of brokenness. It came after the Great Doubt and the Great Death. And I'll be looking at those things tomorrow. But let's just hear Hakuin's intimate words. The context is that he's seated, meditating, late and long into the night, in an old country temple. The snow is falling continuously, ceaselessly, outside – falling on the roofs, falling on the pines, covering everything in utter whiteness and stillness. Suddenly Hakuin awakened:

*If only I could share it:  
The soft sound of snow.  
Falling late at night.  
From the trees.  
At this old temple.*