

The Record of Transmitting the Light

Zen Master Keizan's Denkoroku

Translated by Francis Dojun Cook

Chapter on Ancestor Xuedou Zhijian (Setcho Chikan)

Case

The forty-ninth ancestor was Zen Master Xuedou Zhijian. When Zongjue was at [Mount] Tiantong, one day he entered the hall and said, "The World-honored One spoke with a hidden meaning, but it was not concealed to Kashyapa." When the master heard this, he was suddenly awakened to its profound meaning. Standing there in the ranks with the others, his tears fell. He unconsciously burst out, "Why haven't I heard this before?" Zongjue finished his talk and summoned the master. He asked, "Why were you weeping?" The master replied, "The World-honored One spoke with a hidden meaning, but it was not concealed to Kashyapa." Zongjue gave his approval, saying, "You must be the one that Yunju predicted."

Circumstances

The master's initiatory name was Zhijian. He was from the Wu family of Chuzhou. When he was a boy, his mother washed a sore on his hand and asked him what it was. He replied, "My hand is like a Buddha's hand." When he grew older, his parents died. He went to see Zhenxie [Changlu] in Changlu. At that time, Zongjue was the senior monk and he thought the master was a vessel [of the Dharma]. Later, [the master] secluded himself on Mount Xiang and the wild animals would not trouble him. Late one night, he was enlightened. He sought confirmation from Yanshou, but he went back to practice with Priest Zongjue. At that time, Zongjue was the abbot at [Mount] Tiantong. He appointed the master to the important position of clerk. One day, he brought up the above situation [in the case].

This situation occurs in the *Nirvana Sutra* [scroll five, in the chapter on "Tathagata Nature"]. Once, Kashyapa Bodhisattva said to the Buddha, "O World-honored One, according to what the Buddha has said, all Buddhas, World-honored Ones, speak with a hidden meaning. But this is not what he means. Why? All Buddhas, World-honored Ones, have a hidden meaning, not a hidden body of teaching. It is like a magician's mechanical person. Even though people see it lean over, stretch, and look up and down, they do not realize that there is something inside it that makes it the way it is. The Buddhadharma is not like that but instead allows people to understand completely. How could it be said that Buddhas, World-honored Ones, have a secret body of teachings?" The Buddha praised Kashyapa: "Very good, very good, good son. As you say, the Tathagata truly has no secret body of teachings. Why? Just as the full moon in autumn is clear and exposed in the sky, pure and unobscured and seen by everybody, so are the Tathagata's words. He utters them clear and exposed, pure and unobscured. Deluded people say that it is a secret body of teachings, but the wise understand completely and do not call it a secret body of teaching." Since then, this expression has been used for a long time by followers of the ancestral teachers. Therefore, when it was brought up here, Zhijian was awakened. It was truly not concealed.

Teisho

When you hear words, you must know their inner meaning and not get trapped by the words. Saying "fire" is not fire, and saying "water" is not water. Therefore, you do not burn your mouth when you say "fire," nor is your mouth wet when you say "water." You must realize that fire and water are not words. Priest Shitou said, "When you hear words, you should understand their meaning and not set up any rules of your own." Also, Yaoshan said, "You have to look yourself. You cannot eliminate language. I am saying these words right now and they reveal what is unspoken. Who is That One who lacks ears, eyes, and so on, right from the beginning?"

Also, Zhangqing said, "The twenty-eight generations [of Indian ancestors] spoke of transmitting Mind, not of transmitting words." Great Master Yunmen said, "If this matter existed beyond words, wouldn't the twelve-part canon of the three vehicles be wordless? Why do we speak of a 'special transmission outside the scriptures'? If you proceed by using intellectual understanding like the saints of the ten stages, then even though your preaching of the Dharma is like clouds and rain [in its abundance], you will be criticized for seeing essential nature as if through thin silk. You should realize as a result of this that all discriminating minds [are as apart from it] as heaven and earth." Though this is how it is, if you are a thoroughly accomplished person, you won't burn your mouth when you say "fire." You can talk all day and nothing will cling to your lips and teeth. You won't utter a word.

Monks, you should know that there is Someone who is not only speechless but also mouthless. Not only is He mouthless but He also has no eyes. From the beginning, He has not possessed a hair's worth of the four elements and six senses. Though it is like this, it is not emptiness, nor is it nothingness. Even though you say you see things

and hear sounds, it is not your eyes seeing or your ear hearing; it is this Faceless Fellow doing it. Your mind and body were provided by this Fellow. Therefore, the mind and body are not at all created things. If you haven't reached this point, then you may think that your body was created as a result of your parents, and that your body is a result of karma. Thus, you may think that your body resulted from the union of sperm and egg, or that your body is covered with skin and flesh. This is because you have not thoroughly clarified Self.

In order to get you to know this realm, spiritual teachers use unlimited means to get you to put an end to the six senses and stop everything. At such a time, there is something that cannot be destroyed, something that cannot be crushed. When you become aware of it, it surely cannot be reduced to emptiness or existence, nor is it bright or dark. Therefore, it is hard to talk about whether you are deluded or enlightened. For this reason, this realm is not called "Buddha," "Dharma," "Mind," or "essential nature." It is nothing but bright light existing brilliantly. Therefore, it is not the light of fire or the light of water; it is just boundless clarity and brightness. You cannot see it, though you try; nor can you acquire it, though you try. It is just alertness. When the three disasters of water, fire, and wind occur, and the world is destroyed, it is not destroyed. When the triple world and its six paths arise [again] and the myriad things sprout profusely, this thing does not change. Even Buddhas do not know what to make of it; even ancestors do not know what to make of it. O monks, if you want to reach this realm in person, you must close your eyes for a while, regulate your breathing, forget your body, have no place to lodge your body, have no need for any relationship with things, become like a cloudless blue sky, and become like the great ocean without waves. Then you will have some experience of It.

At this time, even though Buddha ancestors cannot figure you out, there is a bright light. It is not like the moon in the dark sky, or like the sun. The whole sky becomes the moon, and there is nothing else [remaining] to be illuminated. The whole universe becomes sun, and there is nowhere to shine. You must experience this completely. If you do not experience this realm, not only will you be deluded about monk and layperson, male and female, but you will transmigrate through the triple world and six paths of rebirth. While as disciples of the Buddha you look like monks, you will still end up in the hands of old Yama [judge of the Dead]. Won't you be mortified!

There is no place in all the many worlds where the Buddhadharma of Shakyamuni does not exist fully. How can you fail to reach it if you seek it? It is not easy to acquire a human body. You received it as a result of [good] roots in the past. If you once reach this realm, you will be completely liberated. It is not male or female, divinity or devil, worldly or sage, monk or lay. If you can reach this realm, though you are a monk, you are not a monk; though you are a layperson, you are not a layperson. You will not be deluded by your six senses, nor will you be at the mercy of the six kinds of consciousness. If you fail to reach it, you will be completely deluded and enslaved by those things. Wouldn't that be too bad? It exists with you from the beginning but, if you still want to reach it, you must use your power. Though no one is without it, people are deluded by their eyes [and other senses]. How much more pitiful it is that they transmigrate ever so long.

Just look carefully, forgetting the senses and their objects. Have no recourse to mind or consciousness, and you will surely reach it. You do not have to reach it gradually [by stages]. Once you arouse your determination with all your power, you will experience it. Even though it is brief, just immediately become aware of the source, without giving rise to partial understanding, and you will reach it. Once you reach it, just as if you were standing on four feet, you will not be moved by the eight winds (gain and loss, praise and blame, fame and disgrace, pleasure and pain). The ancients said, "Learning the Way is like making fire by rubbing two sticks together. Do not stop a second when you see smoke." Once you exert all your power, you will get fire. What is "smoke"? When you encounter the skill of a spiritual teacher and not a single thought arises, this is when you see smoke. If you stop here and rest, it is like stopping at warmth; but if you continue on, you will see fire. This means knowing the One who does not give rise to a single thought.

If you are not thoroughly aware of the Self, then even though it seems that you have found some rest now and in so doing you are like a withered tree, you are nothing but a corpse whose spirit has not dispersed [but has no power]. Therefore, if you want to personally experience this realm, you must practice with everything you have. It does not depend on meditation or croaking like a bullfrog.

Verse

What is the principle of this "secret words unconcealed"?

*It is called the indestructible hidden body;
That body is empty and bright.*