

Zen Sayings & Poems

Sitting Quietly

"Sitting quietly, doing nothing,
Spring comes, and the grass grows by itself." Zenrin Kushû (The Way of Zen 134, 222)

Suchness

"The blue mountains are of themselves blue mountains;
"The white clouds are of themselves white clouds." Zenrin Kushû (The Way of Zen 134, 222)

Mountains are Mountains

The famous saying of Ch'ing-yüan Wei-hsin (Seigen Ishin):
(The Way of Zen 220 k)

Before I had studied Zen for thirty years, I saw mountains as mountains, and waters as waters. When I arrived at a more intimate knowledge, I came to the point where I saw that mountains are not mountains, and waters are not waters. But now that I have got its very substance I am at rest. For it's just that I see mountains once again as mountains, and waters once again as waters.¹³

¹³ *Ch'uan Teng Lu*, 22. (The Way of Zen 126)

"Before a man studies Zen, to him mountains are mountains and waters are waters; after he gets an insight into the truth of Zen through the instruction of a good master, mountains to him are not mountains and waters are not waters; but after this when he really attains to the abode of rest, mountains are once more mountains and waters are waters." (Essays in Zen Buddhism – First Series 24)

Eternity in an hour

An eternity of endless space:

A day of wind and moon. (The Golden Age of Zen 246, 322 n.2)

"One of the most frequently reiterated couplets in Chinese Zen literature" (The Golden Age of Zen 246)

Oneness

Heaven and earth and I are of the same root,
The ten-thousand things and I are of one substance.
Zen Master Sêng-chao/Sōjō (384-414)

"Nan-ch'uan and his lay disciple Lu Hsuan. Lu was reciting Seng-chao's saying:

Heaven and earth come from the same root as myself:
All things and I belong to one Whole.

However, he did not really understand the full purport of it. Nan-ch'uan pointed at the peonies in the courtyard, saying, 'The worldlings look at these bush of flowers as in a dream.' Lu did not see the point." (The Golden Age of Zen 285)

(The Golden Age of Zen 324 n.92)

"While Rikkō, a high government official of the T'ang dynasty, had a talk with his Zen master Nansen, the official quoted a saying of Sōjō, a noted monk scholar of an earlier dynasty:

Heaven and earth and I are of the same root,
The ten-thousand things and I are of one substance
and continued, 'Is not this a most remarkable statement?' / Nansen called the attention of the visitor to the flowering plant in the garden and said, 'People of the world look at these flowers as if they were in a dream.' "
(The Essentials of Zen Buddhism 483-4)

Unity

Merge your mind with cosmic space, integrate your actions with myriad forms.

Ch'an master Hung-chih Cheng-chüeh (Wanshi Shōkaku, 1091-1157)
(Transmission of Light xi)

Subtlety

"Entering the forest he moves not the grass;
Entering the water he makes not a ripple." Zenrin Kushû (The Way of Zen 152, 224)

Everyday Mind

"There's nothing equal to wearing clothes and eating food. Outside this there are neither Buddhas nor Patriarchs." Zenrin Kushû (The Way of Zen 152, 224)

Seeking the Same Thing

From the K'un-lun mountains eastward the (Taoist) term "Great Oneness" is used. From Kashmir westward the (Buddhist) term *sambodhi* is used. Whether one looks longingly toward "non-being" (*wu*) or cultivates "emptiness" (*sunyata*), the principle involved is the same.⁴

⁴ Quoted by Fung Yu-lan (1), vol. 2, p. 240, from Seng-yu, *Ch'u San-tsang Chi-chi*, 9. (The Way of Zen 82)

Ocean of Pure Reality

Ocean of pure Reality,
Its substance, in fathomless quiescence, exists eternally.
Ch'an master Fo-kuang Ju-man (Bukkō Nyoman)
(The Development of Chinese Zen After the Sixth Patriarch 64)

Great Unity

There is one thing: above, it supports Heaven; below, it upholds Earth. It is black like lacquer, always actively functioning.
Ch'an master Tung-shan Ling-chia (Tōsan Ryōkai, 807-869)
(The Development of Chinese Zen After the Sixth Patriarch 74)

Man of Tao

Like the clear stillness of autumn water—pure and without activity; in its tranquil depths are no obstructions. Such an one is called a man of Tao, also, a man who has nothing further to do.
Wei-shan Ling-yu (Isan Reiyū)
(The Development of Chinese Zen After the Sixth Patriarch 66)

Nondiscrimination

"When you forget the good and the non-good, the worldly life and the religious life, and all other dharmas, and permit no thoughts relating to them to arise, and you abandon body and mind—then there is complete freedom. When the mind is like wood or stone, there is nothing to be discriminated." Pai-chang Huai-hai (Hyakujō Ekai, 720-814)
(The Development of Chinese Zen After the Sixth Patriarch 63)

Speech and Silence

"Speech is blasphemy, silence a lie. Above speech and silence there is a way out."

I-tuan one of Nan-ch'uan's great disciples (The Golden Age of Zen 250, 322 n.13)

Inexpressible

What is inexpressible is inexhaustible in its use.

A Chinese Zen master (The Golden Age of Zen 253, 322 n.19)

Independent

I would rather sink to the bottom of the sea for endless eons than seek liberation through all the saints of the universe. Shih-t'ou (The Golden Age of Zen 270, 323 n.57)

Independent

The full-grown man aspires to pierce through the heavens:

Let him not walk in the footsteps of the Buddha!

Ts'ui-yen (The Golden Age of Zen 270, 323 n.59)

Bodhidharma's Definition of Zen

Four Sacred Verses of Bodhidharma (Daruma no Shiseiku)

Kyōge betsuden A special transmission outside the scriptures;

Furyū monji No dependence upon words and letters;

Jikishi ninshin Direct pointing at the soul of man;

Kenshō jōbutsu Seeing into one's nature and the attainment of
Buddhahood.

Bodhidharma (Essays in Zen Buddhism – First Series 176)

Accomplishing Beforehand

"When the task is done beforehand, then it is easy." Zen master Yuan-tong (The Tao of Abundance 100)

Begin at the Top

If you want to climb a mountain, begin at the top. Zen saying

Every Day is a Good Day

"Everyday is a good day." (Nichi nichī kore kōjitsu.)

Yün-men (Unmon) Hekiganroku case 6

No Work, No Eating

"A day without work, a day without eating."

"When there's no work for a day, there's no eating for a day." (The Development of Chinese Zen After the Sixth Patriarch 62)

Ichijitsu nasazareba, ichijitsu kuwarazu.

Pai-chang Huai-hai (Hyakujō Ekai, 720-814)

Living Dead

What a long procession of dead bodies follows the wake of a single living person! Chao-chou Ts'ung-shen (Jōshū Jūshin)

"At the funeral of one of his monks, as the Abbot joined the procession, he remarked, 'What a long procession of dead bodies follows the wake of a single living person!' " (The Golden Age of Zen 145, 309 n.47)

Mind is Buddha

Asked "What is buddha?" Ma-tsu replied "This very mind, this is Buddha."

Mumonkan case 30 (The Development of Chinese Zen After the Sixth Patriarch 53)

No Mind No Buddha

Asked "What is buddha?" Ma-tsu replied "Neither mind nor Buddha."

Mumonkan case 33 (The Development of Chinese Zen After the Sixth Patriarch 53)

This Very Mind is Buddha

"Your own mind—this is Buddha." Ma-tsu

(The Development of Chinese Zen After the Sixth Patriarch 55)

No Mind No Buddha Not a Thing

"This is not mind, this is not Buddha, this is not a thing." (Fuzeshin, fuzebutsu, fuzemotsu.) Nan-chüan (The Development of Chinese Zen After the Sixth Patriarch 55)

No Clinging

"No clinging, no seeking." (Fujaku, fugu.) Pai-chang (Hyakujō)
(The Development of Chinese Zen After the Sixth Patriarch 62)

All Dharmas are Mind-Created

"Therefore the Three Realms are only mind" (Yue ni sangai yuishin) Ma-tsu Tao-i (The Development of Chinese Zen After the Sixth Patriarch 54)
Ultimate reality has a unified form. (Fa-chieh i-hsiang./Hokkai issō.)
Buddha
(Early Ch'an in China and Tibet 107)

Great Tao

"The non-dual Great Tao." (Funi Daidō) Chao-chou Ts'ung-shên
(The Development of Chinese Zen After the Sixth Patriarch 61)

No Delusive Thoughts

"Away with your delusive thoughts!" "Don't be deluded!" (Maku mōzō!)
Ch'an master Wu-ye (Mugō, 760-821) (Zen Word, Zen Calligraphy 65)
Whatever the master was asked, he replied "Maku mōzō!"

Who is This

[I] know not. (Fushiki.) Bodhidharma

No Merit At All

Vast emptiness, nothing holy! (Kakunen mushō.) Bodhidharma

Dropped

"Body and mind dropped off." (Shen-hsin t'o-lo./Shinjin datsuraku.) Dōgen
Dōgen's words describing his enlightenment (This is not a saying)
(Zen Buddhism: A History vol. 2, 107 n.24)
"Body and mind dropped away." (Zen Master Dogen 32)
(Casting off [both] body and mind.)

Hui-neng's Enlightenment and Diamond Sutra

Fifth Patriarch Hung-jen (Gunin or Kōnin, 601-674) signed Hui-neng to go to his chamber at the third watch in the evening.

"When the two were face to face in the stillness of the night, the Patriarch expounded the *Diamond Sutra* to his disciple. When he came to the sentence: "Keep your mind alive and free without abiding in anything or anywhere," Hui-neng was suddenly and thoroughly enlightened" (The Golden Age of Zen 62)

"Keep your mind alive and free without abiding in anything or anywhere." Diamond Sûtra (Vajracchedikâ [Prajña Paramita] Sûtra) (The Golden Age of Zen 300 n.6)

"To awaken the mind without fixing it anywhere" (Essays in Zen Buddhism – Second Series 32)

Note on Sources

1. Zenrin Kushû "*Ch'an lin lei chü* in twenty fasciculi compiled in the year 1307. The title means 'Zen materials (literally, woods) classified and collected'. The book is now very rare." (Essays in Zen Buddhism – Second Series 253 n.1)

Also see Watts, *The Way of Zen* 117 n.4; Dumoulin, *Zen Buddhism: A History* vol. 2, 47 n.113

Sharing a Mountain Hut with a Cloud

A lonely hut on the mountain-peak towering above a thousand others;

One half is occupied by an old monk and the other by a cloud:

Last night it was stormy and the cloud was blown away;

After all a cloud could not equal the old man's quiet way.

Kuei-tsung Chih-chih, a monk who lived in a humble hut on Lu-shan (Rozan)

(Essays in Zen Buddhism – Second Series 352)

"he aptly gives vent to his appreciation of Emptiness; the verse is not to be understood as merely describing his solitary hut where he lived in company with clouds." (Essays in Zen Buddhism – Second Series 351-2)

Carrying Water, Chopping Wood

Miraculous power and marvelous activity–

Drawing water and hewing wood!²³

P'ang Yün (龐公 Hō Un, 740-808), a lay disciple of the eighth century, also known as P'ang Chü-shih (龐居士 Hō Koji) (Chü-shih/koji is a title of respect for a lay student of Ch'an)

(The Way of Zen 221 o)

²³ *Ch'uan Teng Lu*, 8. (The Way of Zen 133)

How wondrous this, how mysterious!

I carry fuel, I draw water. (Zen and Japanese Culture 16)

How wondrously supernatural,

And how miraculous this!

I draw water, and I carry fuel. (Essays in Zen Buddhism – First Series 319)

Supernatural power, wondrous activity – just a matter of

carrying fuel or drawing water. (Zen Words for the Heart 57)

Daily, nothing particular,

Only nodding to myself,

Nothing to choose, nothing to discard.

No coming, no going,

No person in purple,

Blue mountains without a speck of dust.

I exercise occult and subtle power,

Carrying water, shouldering firewood.

(Two Zen Classics 262-3)

"*Hō Koji* (Hō was his family, Koji a title of respect for a lay student of Zen) studied first with Sekitō and then with Baso, who he succeeded. When he first met Sekitō, he asked, 'Who is he that is independent of all things?' Before he had finished asking this, Sekitō covered Koji's mouth with his hand. At this Koji underwent an experience and expressed himself in the following verse:" (Two Zen Classics 262-3)

In my daily life there are no other chores than

Those that happen to fall into my hands.

Nothing I choose, nothing reject.

Nowhere is there ado, nowhere a slip.

I have no other emblems of my glory than

The mountains and hills without a spot of dust.

My magical power and spiritual exercise consists in

Carrying water and gathering firewood.

P'ang Chü-shih (The Golden Age of Zen 94, 304 n.5)

"Ma-tsu's outstanding lay disciple, Pang Yün" (The Golden Age of Zen 94)

Stillness

The ten directions converging,
Each learning to do nothing,
This is the hall of Buddha's training;
Mind's empty, all's finished.

P'ang Yün (Two Zen Classics 263)

"When he came to Baso he again said, 'Who is he that is independent of all things?' Baso said, 'When you have drunk all the water in the Yang-tze river, I will tell you.' At this, Koji underwent his great experience and composed another verse:" (Two Zen Classics 263)

Without Name and Form

Well versed in the Buddha way,
I go the non-Way
Without abandoning my
Ordinary person's affairs.
The conditioned and
Name-and-form,
All are flowers in the sky.
Nameless and formless,
I leave birth-and-death.
P'ang Yün

Mind at Peace

When the mind is at peace,
the world too is at peace.
Nothing real, nothing absent.
Not holding on to reality,
not getting stuck in the void,
you are neither holy or wise, just
an ordinary fellow who has completed his work.
P'ang Yün (The Enlightened Heart 34)

Being as Is

Food and clothes sustain
Body and life;
I advise you to learn
Being as is.

When it's time,
I move my hermitage and go,
And there's nothing
To be left behind.
P'ang Yün

The Ultimate Attainment

The past is already past.
Don't try to regain it.
The present does not stay.
Don't try to touch it.
From moment to moment.
The future has not come;
Don't think about it
Beforehand.
Whatever comes to the eye,
Leave it be.
There are no commandments
To be kept;
There's no filth to be cleansed.
With empty mind really
Penetrated, the dharmas
Have no life.
When you can be like this,
You've completed
The ultimate attainment.
P'ang Yün

Mindfulness

Spring comes with its flowers, autumn with the moon,
summer with breezes, winter with snow;
when useless things don't stick in the mind,
that is your best season.
Wu-men Huai-kai, from Wu-men kuan (Mumonkan) case 19
(The Light Inside the Dark 97)

The spring flowers, the autumn moon;
Summer breezes, winter snow.
If useless things do not clutter your mind,
You have the best days of your life.
(Two Zen Classics 73)

Hundreds of spring flowers; the autumnal moon;
A refreshing summer breeze; winter snow;
Free thy mind of all idle thoughts,
And for thee how enjoyable every season is!
(Essays in Zen Buddhism – First Series 349)

Hundreds of flowers in the spring, the moon in the autumn,
A cool breeze in summer; and snow in winter;
If there is no vain cloud in your mind
For you it is a good season.
(Zen Comments on the Mumonkan 140)

In spring hundreds of flowers,
In summer, refreshing breeze.
In autumn, harvest moon,
In winter, snowflakes accompany you.
If useless things do not hand in your mind,
Every season is a good season. (Zen Word, Zen Calligraphy 9)

Spring has its hundred flowers,
Autumn its moon.
Summer has its cooling breezes,
Winter its snow.
If you allow no idle concerns
To weight on your heart,
Your whole life will be one
Perennial good season. (The Golden Age of Zen 286-7)

The Great Tao

Daidō mugyō,	The Great Tao is without form,
Shinri mutai,	The Absolute is without opposite;
Hitoshiku kû fudō,	It is both empty and unmoving,
Shōji no nagare ni arazu;	It is not within the flow of Samsara;
Sangai fushō,	The Three Realms do not contain it,
Koraikon ni arazu.	It is not within past, future, or present.
Nan-ch'üan P'u-yüan	
(The Development of Chinese Zen After the Sixth Patriarch 58)	

The Great Tao has no form,
Truth has no counterpart,
It is motionless like the Void,

It does not wander through [the samsara of] life and death,
The Three Worlds do not contain it,
Within it there is neither past, nor present, nor future.
(The Development of Chinese Zen After the Sixth Patriarch 11-2)

Oneness

O Maitreya, O true Maitreya!
Thou dividest the body into hundreds of thousands of million forms.
Thus manifesting thyself to men of the world;
But how they are ignorant of thee!
Verse attributed to Pu-tai, one of the Seven Gods of Luck
(Essays in Zen Buddhism – Second Series 289)

Shan-hui

Something there is, prior to heaven and earth,
Without form, without sound, all alone by itself.
It has the power to control all the changing things;
Yet it changes not in the course of the four seasons.
Bodhisattva Shan-hui (), better known as Fu Ta-shih (497-?)
(The Golden Age of Zen 254, 322 n.25)

Shan-hui

Empty-handed, I hold a hoe.
Walking on foot, I ride a buffalo.
Passing over a bridge, I see
The bridge flow, but not the water.
Bodhisattva Shan-hui, better known as Fu Ta-shih (497-?)
(The Golden Age of Zen 254, 322 n.24)

Empty-handed I go and yet the spade is in my hands;
I walk on foot, and yet on the back of an ox I am riding:
When I pass over the bridge,
Lo, the water floweth not, but the bridge doth flow.
(Essays in Zen Buddhism – First Series 272)

Beyond This World

Over the crest of the T'ung-hsuan-feng,
The human world is no more.
Nothing is outside the Mind;

And the eye is filled with green mountains.
T'ien-t'ai Te-chao (Tendai Tokushō; 891-972), most prominent disciple of
Fa-yen, and abbot of a temple on Mount T'ung-hsuan-feng.
(The Golden Age of Zen 240, 321 n.37)

Mindfulness

I stroll along the stream up to where it ends.
I sit down watching the clouds as they begin to rise.
Wang Wei (699-761) (The Golden Age of Zen 271, 323 n.62)
"The most favorite lines among the Zen masters are Wang Wei's:" (The
Golden Age of Zen 271) "I have seen this charming couplet many times in
Zen literature." (The Golden Age of Zen 271-2)

Oblivion

A bird in a secluded grove sings like a flute.
Willows sway gracefully with their golden threads.
The mountain valley grows the quieter as the clouds return.
A breeze brings along the fragrance of the apricot flowers.
For a whole day I have sat here encompassed by peace,
Till my mind is cleansed in and out of all cares and idle thoughts.
I wish to tell you how I feel, but words fail me.
If you come to this grove, we can compare notes.
Ch'an master Fa-yen (The Golden Age of Zen 238, 321 n.31)

Suchness

The wind traverses the vast sky,
clouds emerge from the mountains;
Feelings of enlightenment and things of the world
are of no concern at all.
Zen Master Keizan Jōkin (1268-1325)
From Transmission of the Light, chap. 22 (Transmission of Light 97)

Nan-ch'üan's Serenity

Drinking tea, eating rice,
I pass my time as it comes;
Looking down at the stream, looking up at the mountains,
How serene and relaxed I feel indeed!
(Essays in Zen Buddhism – First Series 264)
Ch'an master Nan-ch'üan P'u-yüan

Serenity

At Nantai I sit quietly with an incense burning,
One day of rapture, all things are forgotten,
Not that mind is stopped and thoughts are put away,
But that there is really nothing to disturb my serenity.
Shou-an (Essays in Zen Buddhism – First Series 349)
Nan-t'ai

Emptiness Poem

Old P'ang requires nothing in the world:
All is empty with him, even a seat he has not,
For absolute Emptiness reigns in his household;
How empty indeed it is with no treasures!
When the sun is risen, he walks through Emptiness,
When the sun sets, he sleeps in Emptiness;
Sitting in Emptiness he sings his empty songs,
And his empty songs reverberate through Emptiness:
Be not surprised at Emptiness so thoroughly empty,
For Emptiness is the seat of all the Buddhas;
And Emptiness is not understood by the men of the world,
But Emptiness is the real treasure:
If you say there's no Emptiness,
You commit grave offence against the Buddhas.
P'ang (Essays in Zen Buddhism – Second Series 341)
"Who flourished in the Yüan-ho period (806-821) and thereabout, and was
a younger contemporary of Ma-tsu." (Essays in Zen Buddhism – Second
Series 341 n.1)

Cutting the Spring Breeze

Throughout heaven and earth there is not a piece of ground where a single
stick could be inserted;
I am glad that all things are void, myself and the world:
Honored be the sword, three feet long, wielded by the great Yüan
swordsmen;
For it is like cutting a spring breeze in a flash of lightning.
(Essays in Zen Buddhism – First Series 255 n.2)
"Tsu-yüan (1226-1286) came to Japan when the Hōjō family was in power
at Kamakura. He established the Engakuji monastery, which is one of the
chief Zen monasteries in Japan. While still in China his temple was invaded

by soldiers of the Yüan dynasty, who threatened to kill him, but Bukkō was immovable and quietly uttered the following verse:" (Essays in Zen Buddhism – First Series 255 n.2)

Wu-hsüeh Tsu-yüan (Mugaku Sogen; also known as Fo-kuang Kuo-shih /Bukkō Kokushi, 1226-1286)

There is not a room in the whole universe where one can insert even a single stick;

I see the emptiness of all things—no objects, no persons.

I admire the sword of the Great Yüan⁴⁰ three feet in length:

[When it cuts at all,] it is like cutting the spring breeze with a flash of lightning.

(Zen and Japanese Culture 201-2)

⁴⁰The Mongolian dynasty (1260-1367) that invaded China and replaced the Sung dynasty. (Zen and Japanese Culture 202)

The heaven and earth afford me no shelter at all;

I'm glad, unreal are body and soul.

Welcome thy weapon, O warrior of Yuan! Thy trusty steel,

That flashes lightning, cuts the wind of Spring, I feel.

(The Spirit of Zen 95)

Wu-hsüeh Tsu-yüan's poem is reminiscent of a poem by Seng-chao, a disciple of Kumarajiva, the founder of the San-lun Sect of Buddhism. On the verge of death by a vagabond's sword, Seng-chao expressed his feelings in the following verse:

In body there exists no soul.

The mind is not real at all.

Now try on me thy flashing steel,

As if it cuts the wind of Spring, I feel. (file ZenHistory)

Even the Fire is Cool

In the midsummer heat, the gate is closed and we're wearing monk's robes,

In addition, there are no pines or bamboos shading the rooms and corridors,

For a peaceful meditation, we need not to go to the mountains and streams;

When thoughts are quieted down, fire itself is cool and refreshing.

Ch'an monk Tu Kou-hao

Famous poem of T'ang monk and poet Tu Kou-hao

Immovable Mind

You wish to know the spirit of Yung-ming Zen?

Look at the lake in front of the gate.
When the sun shines, it radiates light and brightness,
When the wind comes, there arise ripples and waves.
Yung-ming Yen-shou (Yōmyō Enju; 904-975) disciple of T'ien-t'ai Te-
chao (Tendai Tokushō; 891-972). (The Golden Age of Zen 241, 321 n.41)
"There is a time for peaceful contemplation; there is a time for dynamic
action; and all the time the lake remains itself." (The Golden Age of Zen
241)

Hsiang-yen's Gatha of Enlightenment

Forgetting all knowledge at one stroke,
I do not need cultivation anymore.
Activity expressing the ancient road,
I don't fall into passivity.
Everywhere trackless,
conduct beyond sound and form:
the adepts in all places
call this the supreme state.
Gâthâ of enlightenment by Ch'an master Hsiang-yen Chih-hsien (Kyōgen
Chikan) (Rational Zen 119)

One stroke and all is gone,
No need of stratagem or cure;
Each and every action manifests the ancient Way.
My spirit is never downcast,
I leave no tracks behind me,
Enlightenment is beyond speech, beyond gesture;
Those who are emancipated
Call it the unsurpassed.
(Two Zen Classics 40)

One stroke has made me forget all my previous knowledge,
No artificial discipline is at all needed;
In every movement I uphold the ancient way,
And never fall into the rut of mere quietism;
Wherever I walk no traces are left,
And my senses are not fettered by rules of conduct;
Everywhere those who have attained to the truth,
All declare this to be of highest order.
(Essays in Zen Buddhism – First Series 243)

Ichigeki shochi o bōzu. At a single stroke all I'd known was forgotten,

Sara ni shûchi o karazu. Now there's no further need for cultivation.
(The Development of Chinese Zen After the Sixth Patriarch 18, 64)

Yen-shou's Poem of Enlightenment

Something dropped! It is no other thing;
Right and left, there is nothing earthy:
Rivers and mountains and the great earth,—
In them all revealed is the Body of the Dharmarâja.
Ch'an master Yung-ming Yen-shou (904-975)
(Essays in Zen Buddhism – First Series 250)
"His realization took place when he heard a bundle of fuel dropping on the
ground." (Essays in Zen Buddhism – First Series 250)

Chang Chiu-ch'en's Poem of Enlightenment

In a moonlit night on a spring day,
The croak of a frog
Pierces through the whole cosmos and turns it into
a single family!
Chang Chiu-ch'en (The Golden Age of Zen 284, 324 n.88)
"The Upasaka Chang Chiu-ch'en was pondering a *koan* when he was in the
toilet. Suddenly he heard the croak of a frog, and he was awakened, as
evidenced by the following lines:" (The Golden Age of Zen 284)

No-Mind

Versified questions and replies between T'ang emperor Shun-tsung and
Ch'an master Fo-kuang Ju-man:

From where did the Buddha come,
To where did the Buddha go?
If the Buddha is still around,
Where can be the Buddha found? Shun-tsung

From non-activity the Buddha came
To non-activity the Buddha disappeared.
Cosmic reality his spiritual body is,
In no-mind the Buddha will appear. Ju-man

Great mountains, rivers and seas,
Heaven and earth, sun and moon.
Who says there is no birth and death?

For even these meet their end soon. Shun-tsung

Birth is also before birth,
Death is also before death.
If you have attained no-mind,
Naturally there will be nothing left. Ju-man

(The Complete Book of Zen 242-3)
"Emperor Soon Zong of the Tang dynasty asked the Zen master Ru Man, in poetic style:" (The Complete Book of Zen 242)

Gathas of Shen-hsiu and Hui-neng

This body is the Bodhi-tree,
The soul is like a mirror bright;
Take heed to keep it always clean,
And let no dust collect on it. Shen-hsiu

The Bodhi is not like the tree,
The mirror bright is nowhere shining;
As there is nothing from the first,
Where can the dust itself collect? Hui-neng

Gâthâs of Shen-hsiu and Hui-neng
From Hui-neng's Platform Sûtra ,
full title Liu-tsu Ta-shih Fa-pao-t'an-ching (Essays in Zen Buddhism – First Series 206, 207)

The body is the tree of enlightenment.
The mind is the stand of a bright mirror.
Wipe it constantly and with ever-watchful diligence,
To keep it uncontaminated by the worldly dust. Shen-hsiu
(The Golden Age of Zen 60, 300 n.4)

Enlightenment is no tree,
Nor is the Bright Mirror a stand.
Since it is not a thing at all,
Where could it be contaminated by dust? Hui-neng
(The Golden Age of Zen 60, 300 n.5)

The body is the Bodhi tree,	Bodhi by nature is no tree,
The mind is like a mirror.	The mirror is inherently formless.
Every now and then dust	There is originally nothing,

and polish it,
And let no dust settle on it.
(Two Zen Classics 160-1)

On what, then, can the dust settle?

The body is like unto the Bodhi-tree,
And the mind to a mirror bright;
Carefully we cleanse them hour by hour
Lest dust should fall upon them.
(The Spirit of Zen 37)

Neither is there Bodhi-tree,
Nor yet a mirror bright;
Since in reality all is void,
Whereon can the dust fall?

The body is the tree of
enlightenment,
And the mind like a clear
mirror stand;
Time and again wipe it diligently,
Don't let it gather dust.

Enlightenment is basically not a tree,
And the clear mirror not a stand.
Fundamentally there is not a single
thing—
Where can dust collect?

(Transmission of Light 140-1)

The body is the bodhi-tree,
The mind is like the mirror bright.
Clean it diligently every time,
Do not ever let dust alight.

Bodhi is actually not a tree,
The mind not a mirror bright.
Buddha nature is always tranquil,
Wherefore can dust alight?

(The Complete Book of Zen 81)

Gathas of Wo-lun and Hui-neng

"A monk once made reference to a gâthâ composed by Wo-luan which reads as follows:" (Essays in Zen Buddhism – First Series 225)

"Hearing this, the sixth patriarch remarked: 'That is no enlightenment but leads one into a state of bondage. Listen to my gâthâ:'" (Essays in Zen Buddhism – First Series 225)

I, Wo-luan, know a device
Whereby to blot out all my thoughts:
The objective world no more stirs the mind,
And daily matures my Enlightenment!

Wo-lun

I, Hui-neng, know no device
My thoughts are not suppressed:
The objective world ever stirs the mind,

And what is the use of maturing Enlightenment? Hui-neng
Gâthâs of Wo-lun and Hui-neng
From Hui-neng's T'an-ching (Essays in Zen Buddhism – First Series 225)

Wo-Lun possesses a special aptitude:
He can cut off all thoughts.
No situation can stir his mind.
The Bodhi tree grows daily in him. Wo-lun

Hui-neng has no special aptitude:
He does not cut off any thoughts.
His mind responds to all situations.
In what way can the Bodhi tree grow? Hui-neng

From Hui-neng's T'an-ching (The Golden Age of Zen 81, 302 n.33)

Emptiness Gnashing its Teeth

Buddhas and patriarchs cut to pieces;
The sword is ever kept sharpened.
Where the wheel turns,
The void gnashes its teeth.
Death verse of Shûhō Myōchō (titled Daitō Kokushi, 1282-1337)
(Manual of Zen Buddhism 148)

"For many years Shuho had been unable to meditate in the full lotus position because of a crippled leg. When he felt death approaching, he broke his leg with his own hands and took the full lotus. Then, despite agonizing pain, he wrote his final words and died with the last stroke of the brush." (Samadhi 41)

Bright Pearl

There is a bright pearl within me,
Buried for a long time under dust.
Today, the dust is gone and the light radiates,
Shining through all the mountains and rivers.
Master Yueh of Ch'a-ling (The Golden Age of Zen 248, 322 n.7)
Master Yueh of Ch'a-ling "came to his enlightenment when he slipped and fell in crossing a bridge, and that he hit off a very wonderful *gatha* on the occasion." (The Golden Age of Zen 248)

I have one jewel shining bright,
Long buried it was under worldly worries;

This morning the dusty veil is off and restored is its lustre,
Illuminating rivers and mountains and ten thousand things.
(Essays in Zen Buddhism – First Series 250)

I have one jewel shining bright,
Long buried it was underneath worldly worries;
This morning the dusty veil is off, and restored its lustre,
Illuminating the blue mountains in endless undulations.
(Essays in Zen Buddhism – Second Series 211)

Between Heaven and Earth

The spring mountains covered with layers of most variegated colors,
And the spring streams fancifully laden with the reflecting images.
Standing by himself between heaven and earth,
Facing infinitude of beings.
Ch'an master Hsüeh-t'ou Ch'ung-hsien (Secchō Jūken, 980-1052)
(Zen and Japanese Culture 298)

The Essence

One, seven, three, five.
What you search for cannot be grasped.
As the night deepens, the moon brightens over the ocean.
The black dragon's jewel is found in every wave.
Looking for the moon, it is here in this
wave and the next.
A verse that master Hsueh-t'ou Ch'ung-hsien wrote for a disciple

One, seven, three, five.
What you search for cannot be grasped.
As the night deepens,
the moon brightens over the ocean.
The black dragon's jewel
is found in every wave.
Looking for the moon,
it is here in this wave
and the next.
(Translated by Yasuda Joshu Roshi and Anzan Hoshin Roshi, from
Cooking Zen, Great Matter Publications. 1996)

Huai's Poem of Enlightenment

One, two, three, four, five, six, seven—
Yes, many thousand feet high is the mountain peak, and lo, someone stands
there on one leg;
He has carried away the gem from the dragon's jaws,
And Vimalakîrti's secrets he holds in one word.
I-huai of T'ien-i (Essays in Zen Buddhism – Second Series 206)
"While he was carrying water, the pole suddenly broke, and the incidence
gave him the chance to become conscious of the truth hitherto hidden to
him. The poem he composed to express the feeling he then had runs as
follows:" (Essays in Zen Buddhism – Second Series 206)

Detached

Be detached, be detached!
Be thoroughly detached!
What then?
The pine is green,
And white is the snow.
Author unknown (The Essentials of Zen Buddhism 237)

Monks sit peacefully among the trees,
Ridding themselves of illusion with a calm mind.
Quietly realizing enlightenment,
They experience a joy that is beyond that of heaven.
Laymen seek fame and profit,
Or fine robes, seats, and bedding.
Though the joy in getting them is only fleeting,
They are untiring in their quest.
Monks, however, beg for food in humble robes,
Their daily actions being one with the Way.
With their Wisdom-eye opened
They realize the essence of the Law.
Gathering all together to listen
To the countless Buddhist teachings,
They leave behind the world of illusion,
Quietly enveloped in enlightenment's Wisdom.
Bodhisattva Nâgârjuna
From Treasury of Eyes of True Teaching of Dōgen
(Zen Master Dogen 69-70)

Light Itself

Dwell!

You are Light itself.
Rely on yourself,
Do not rely on others.
The Dharma is the Light,
Rely on the Dharma.
Do not rely on anything other than Dharma.
A Pali verse (Zen Word, Zen Calligraphy 31)

Poem on Bodhidharma

Poem by Lu Yu, a famous poet of Southern Sung Dynasty (1131-1162). A poem describing Bodhidharma's personal philosophy.

Others are revolted, I am unmoved.
Gripped by desires, I am unmoved.
Hearing the wisdom of sages, I am unmoved.
I move only in my own way. (Muscle/Tendon Changing and Marrow/Brain Washing Chi Kung 24)

Three Mysteries

The three mystical doors and the three essential points
Are in actuality hard to divide and distinguish.
If you get the idea, you must forget the words:
This is the simple way to approach the Tao.
All phenomena are clearly comprehended in one sentence:
At the feast of Double-Nine, the chrysanthemums bloom afresh.
Ch'an master Fen-yang Shan-chao (Funnyō Zenshō, 947-1024)
(The Golden Age of Zen 209-10, 317 n.45)

Dead Man's Zazen

While living, one sits up and lies not,
When dead, one lies and sits not;
A set of ill-smelling skeleton!
What is the use of toiling and moiling so?
A gâthâ by Hui-neng, T'an-ching (Essays in Zen Buddhism – First Series 216)

When alive, one keeps sitting without lying down:
When dead, one lies down without sitting up.
In both cases, a set of stinking bones!
What has it to do with the great lesson of life?
(The Golden Age of Zen 82, 302 n.38)

A living man who sits and does not lie down,
A dead man who lies down and does not sit!
After all these are just dirty skeletons. (The Way of Zen 111, 218 hh)

The Essence

The bamboo shadows are sweeping the stairs,
But no dust is stirred:
The moonlight penetrates deep in the bottom of the pool,
But no trace is left in the water.
Author unknown (Essays in Zen Buddhism – First Series 352)

Beyond the Gate

The celestial radiance undimmed,
The norm lasting for ever more;
For him who entereth this gate,
No reasoning, no learning.
Ch'an master P'ing-t'ien P'u-an
From Ching-te Record of the Transmission of the Lamp (Ching-te Ch'uan-teng Lu /Keitoku Dentōroku), book 9 (Essays in Zen Buddhism – Second Series 101)

Quietitude

Here rules an absolute quietness, all doings subside;
Just a touch, and lo, a roaring thunder-clap!
A noise that shakes the earth, and all silence;
The skull is broken to pieces, and awakened I am from the dream!
Tu-feng Chi-shan's stanza, from Chu-hung's *Biographies of the Famous Zen Masters of Ming*
(Essays in Zen Buddhism – Second Series 133 n.2)

One with It

Long seeking it through others,
I was far from reaching it.
Now I go by myself;
I meet it everywhere.
It is just I myself,
And I am not itself.
Understanding this way,

I can be as I am.

Ch'an master Tung-shan Ling-chia (Tōsan Ryōkai, 807-869) (Two Zen Classics 267)

Do not seek from another,
Or you will be estranged from self.
I now go on alone,
Finding I meet It everywhere.
It now is I,
I now am not It.
One should understand in this way
To merge with suchness as is. (Transmission of Light 38)

Don't seek from others,
Or you'll be estranged from yourself.
I now go on alone—
Everywhere I encounter It.
It now is me, I now am not It.
One must understand in this way
To merge with being as is. (Transmission of Light 167)

A Death Verse

I rebuke the wind and revile the rain,
I do not know the Buddhas and patriarchs;
My single activity turns in the twinkling of an eye,
Swifter even than a lightning flash.
Death verse of Zen master Nanpo Jōmyō (titled Daiō Kokushi ,
1235-1308)
(Zen Buddhism: A History, Japan, 40)

Old Pan Kou

Old Pan Kou knows nothing about time
and nothing about space has well.
His life is self-natured and self-sufficient.
He needs to ask for nothing outside of his own being.
The genesis of the world is the exercise of his mind.
When his mind starts to think, the world starts to move.
The world has never been made by any special desing.
Neither has an end ever been put to it.
The Song of Pan Kou

Contentment

As the pines grew old and the clouds idled
He found boundless contentment within himself.
Babo, preface to The Record of Lin-chi (Lin-chi Lu /Rinzairoku)
(Zen Word, Zen Calligraphy 127)

Mind and Senses

The mind is an organ of thought and objects are set against it:
The two are like marks on the surface of the mirror;
When the dirt is removed, the light begins to shine.
Both mind and objects being forgotten, Ultimate Nature
reveals itself true.
Yung-chia Hsüan-chüeh (Yōka Genkaku) (The Essentials of Zen Buddhism
236)

Free Spirit

Every day I'm either in a wine shop or a brothel,
A free-spirited monk who is hard to fathom;
My surplice always appears torn and dirty,
But when I patch it, it smells so sweet.
Ch'an master Tao-chi (Lust for Enlightenment 92)

Three Teachings into One

With a Taoist cap, a Buddhist cassock, and a pair of Confucian shoes,
I have harmonized three houses into one big family!
Bodhisattva Shan-hui , better known as Fu Ta-shih (497-?)
(The Golden Age of Zen 254, 322 n.23)

Autumn Wind

Asahi matsu
kusaha no tsuyu no
hodo naki ni
isogina
tachizo
nobe no akikaze

On leaf and grass
Awaiting the morning sun

The dew melts quickly away.
Haste thee not, O autumn wind
Who dost now stir in the fields!

A verse (on'uta) composed by Dōgen Kigen (1200-1253) shortly
before his death
(Zen Buddhism: A History, Japan, 72)

Forgetting the Self

To learn Buddha Dharma is to learn the self.
To learn the self is to forget the self.
To forget the self is to become one with
endless dimension, Universal Mind.
Dōgen (Zen Word, Zen Calligraphy 23)
("Endless dimension, Universal Mind" is another name for Amitâbha
Buddha)

This is Our World

We eat, excrete, sleep, and get up;
This is our world.
All we have to do after that—
Is to die.

Dōka (way song/poem) by Zen master Ikkyū Sojun (The Way of Zen 162)
"In Japan, wandering monks are called *unsui*—literally, 'cloud and water'—
as a reminder to be always floating and flowing. Ikkyū himself took the
moniker Kyouun, or 'Crazy Cloud,' to describe his eccentric, nonconformist
style of zen. (In Japan, the word *kyo* has connotations of bravery and high
intention, of living outside the rules in order to retain the spirit of the rules.)
He called his collected poems the 'Crazy Cloud Anthology.' " (Zen Sex
148) Crazy cloud (Kyōun)

Selflessness

Misery only doth exist, none miserable,
No doer is there; naught save the deed is found.
Nirvāna is, but not the man who seeks it.
The Path exists, but not the traveller on it.
Visuddhimagga (chapt. 16)
Trs. H.C. Warren (Essays in Zen Buddhism – Second Series 311)

Zen Sayings

Chop wood, carry water.

Before a person studies Zen, mountains are mountains and waters are waters; after a first glimpse into the truth of Zen, mountains are no longer mountains and waters are no longer waters; after Enlightenment, mountains are once again mountains and waters once again waters.

The willow is green; flowers are red.

The flower is not red, nor the willow green.

The raindrops patter on the Basho leaf, but these are not the tears of grief; this is only the anguish of him who is listening to them.

Lovely snow flakes, they fall nowhere else!

Everything the same; everything distinct.

If you meet on the way a man who knows, Don't speak a word, - don't keep silent!

If the waves of the Zen stream were alike, innumerable ordinary people would get bogged down.

Say one word with your mouth shut!

Even a good thing isn't as good as nothing.

Catch the vigorous horse of your mind.

Meditation

Withdraw the mind. Be still. Be no more there
Far on the rim of some unfelt
Unheard horizon earth resolves
In toil and tumult of affray.
Be still and not anywhere.

Withdraw. Far off, mankind in love's despite
With warm entanglement would snare
The feet of sense. Be unaware.
With folded hands be silent know
And see with closed eyes the Darkness-Light.

Now distance only, and a void of things
And yet the infinite in either hand.
In poise, without desire or no desire
Be absolute for life, a mind set free
Abiding nowhere, on two wings.

Bi-Yan-Lu

Master Juchi had, so people say,
A peaceful, kindly, unassuming way,
Was never heard to speak and never taught,
For words are but illusions, and he sought
To keep illusions faithfully at bay.
And so, while others chose to air their learning,
While novices and monks spoke out concerning
The meaning of the world, its why and wherefore,
And boldly found for each "because" a "therefore,"
He listened and said nothing, always turning
A warning finger upward, and the same
Was his response whenever people came-
Questioners who, careless or perplexed,
Inquired as to the meaning of some text,
The dawning of the truth or Buddha's name.
Silen but eloquent, this pointing finger
Grew ever more insistent, more commanding;
Instructing, guiding, praising, reprimanding,
Of the world's meaning and of truth it spoke
So well that many a pupil, understanding
It's gentle message, suddenly awoke.

by SHODOKA

Walking is Zen,
Sitting, too, is Zen.
If I speak or am silent,
Tarry or hasten:
Everything, in its true nature,
Is stillness.

What Zen Looks Like In Practice

The moon pours light
Across the stream abundantly.
The pines breathe softly.
Who is leading this sacred evening
Toward everlasting night?
Deep in his heart he wears the seal,
The flawless pearl of Buddha-nature.

attributed to Buddha

Seeking the builder of this dwelling,
I vainly passed through the cycle
Of many births-
Births, like all births, freighted with sorrow.
But now, builder of the tent, you are known
And shall build it no more.
Your rafters are broken,
Your cross-ties all shattered.
Free of all bonds, redeemed,
The spirit has come, where all desires cease.

untitled

There is no grasping the nature of true nature
And no casting it aside.
Only so can the center
Of the unattainable

Be attained.
It is silent when it speaks
And speaks when it is silent.
Wide open stands the mighty door
Of the giver
Truth.

Non-attachment to "Being"

Every two depends on the One
But with this alone you must not rest content.
Do not chase Being, the ever-active,
And do not stop at non-Being, the empty.
When you find the One
And are freed into serenity,
All of this will fall
Effortlessly from you.
If, wanting motion to be stilled,
You return to this one thing, hoping to find stillness,
You only drive stillness
Further into movement.
For how can you grasp the One
While you still hesitate
Between One and the Other?
If you do not understand
The One,
You lose even what the two
Has brought you.
Being recedes
When you pursue it;
Nothingness turns its back
When you run after it.
A thousand words and
A thousand thoughts
Take you only further from it.
Thought seizes nothing
But shells without substance.
If thought guides you,
Even for a moment,
You lose yourself
In the void of the not-something

Whose mutability and transience
Are born entirely of your error.

The Song of Experience of Truth

by Master Yoka c.800

Woe to this degenerate age
Of consummate unbelief!
Empty of virtue, people
Are scarcely now to be bettered.
Too long have they been
By holiness deserted,
And wrong thinking
Has eaten deep into them.
Since truth is so weak,
The devil rules them,
And evildoers and enemies of truth
Are not few in number.
Now it angers them that they too,
Powerless to destroy or rend it in pieces,
Must listen face-to-face to the teaching
Of him who is come.

Everyone, in His True Nature, Is Buddha

Deep in their true nature, people are Buddha,
As water is ice. And as without water
There is no ice, so without Buddha
There is no one.
Woe to those who seek afar off
And know not what is close at hand!
They are like people standing in water
And shouting for water nonetheless.
Born noble and rich beyond counting,
They wander their way as if poor, wretched
And unsolaced.

The Experience of Being and Dualism

Stubbornly to seek the truth's deepest meaning
Is to wear yourself out in idle cogitation.
Put your thinking to silence-
That is what matters!
Do not linger in thought
Upon antitheses;
To chase after and seek them-
Beware of so doing!
For one breath of antithesis
Hands your spirit over to confusion.

The Doctrine of Not-Two

Believing is not-two.
Not-two is believing
In that which cannot be uttered.
Are not
Past and future
An everlasting now?

untitled

By ourselves is evil done,
By ourselves we pain endure,
By ourselves we cease from wrong,
By ourselves become we pure.
No one saves us but ourselves,
No one can and no one may;
We ourselves must tread the Path:
Buddhas only show the way.

Trust in the Heart

The perfect way knows no difficulties
Expect that it refuses to make preferences;
Only when freed from hate and love
Does it reveal itself fully and without disguise;
A tenth of an inch's difference,
And heaven and earth are set apart.
If you wish to see it before your eyes
Have no fixed thoughts either for or against it.

To set up what you like against what you dislike-
That is the disease of the mind.
The Way is perfect like unto vast space,
With nothing wanting, nothing superfluous.
It is due to making choices
That its Suchness is lost sight of.

The One is none other than the All, the All none other than the One.
Take your stand on this, and the rest will follow of its own accord;
I have spoken, but in vain, for what can words tell
Of things that have no yesterday, tomorrow, or today?