

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SUDDEN SCHOOL AND THE GRADUAL SCHOOL.

Contemporaneous with the Patriarch, when he was living in Po Lam Monastery, there was Grand Master Shin Shau who preached in Yuk Chuen Monastery of King Nam. At that time, the two schools, known as Wei Lang of the South and Shin Shau of the North, flourished side by side. As the two schools were distinguished from each other by the names "Sudden" (the South) and "Gradual" (the North), the question which sect they should follow baffled some Buddhist scholars (of that time).

(Seeing this), the Patriarch addressed the assembly as follows:—

"So far as the Dharma is concerned, there can be only one school. (If a distinction exists), it exists in the fact that the founder of one school is a northern man, while that of the other, a southerner. While there is only one system of Law, some disciples realise it quicker, and some slower. The reason why the names "Sudden" and "Gradual" are given is this: some disciples are superior to others in mental dispositions. So far as the Dharma is concerned, the distinction of "Sudden" and "Gradual" exists not."

(In spite of what the Patriarch had said), the followers of Shin Shau used to criticise the Patriarch. They discredited him by saying that as he was illiterate, he could not distinguish himself in any respect.

Shin Shau, on the other hand, admitted himself that he was inferior to the Patriarch, that the Patriarch attained wisdom without the aid of a teacher, and that the Patriarch understood thoroughly the teaching of the Mahayana School. "Moreover", added he, "my teacher, the Fifth Patriarch, would not personally transmit to him the robe and the bowl unless with some good causes. I do regret that, owing to the patronage of the state, which I by no means deserve, I am unable to travel far to receive instructions from him personally. Your men should go to Tso Kai to consult him. Tarry here not."

One day he said to his disciple, Chi Shing, "You are clever and witty. On my behalf, you may go to Tso Kai to attend the lectures there. Try your best to keep in mind what you learn there, so that upon your return, you may repeat it to me."

Acting on his teacher's instruction, Chi Shing arrived at Tso Kai. Without telling whence he came, he joined the crowd there to call on the Patriarch.

"Some one has hidden himself here to plagiarize my lecture," addressed the Patriarch to the assembly. Thereupon, Chi Shing came out, made obeisance, and told the Patriarch what his mission was.

"You come from Yuk Chuen Monastery. Did you?" asked the Patriarch.

"And you must be a spy."

"No, I am not," replied Chi Shing.

"Why not?" asked the Patriarch.

"If I had not told you," said Chi Shing, "I would be a spy. Since I have told you all about it, I am not."

"How does your teacher instruct his disciples?" asked the Patriarch.

"He often tells us to concentrate our mind to contemplate on purity, to keep up the squatting posture all the time and not to lie down," replied Chi Shing.

"To concentrate the mind to contemplate on purity," said the Patriarch, "is an infirmity and not Dhyana. To restrict oneself to the squatting posture all the time is logically unprofitable. Listen to my stanza:—

"A living man sits and does not lie down (all the time),
While a dead man lies down and sits not.
To this physical body of ours
Why should we impose the task of squatting?"

Making obeisance a second time, Chi Shing remarked, "Though I have studied Buddhism for nine years under Grand Master Shin Shau, my mind has not yet been awakened for enlightenment. But as soon as you speak to me, my mind is enlightened. As the question of incessant re-births is a momentous one, will you please take pity on me and give me further instructions."

"I understand," said the Patriarch, "that your teacher gives his disciples instructions on Sila (disciplinary rules), Dhyana (meditation), and Prajna (Wisdom). Will you please tell me how he defines these terms."

"According to his teaching," replied Chi Shing, "to refrain from all evil actions is Sila, to practise whatever is good is Prajna, and to purify one's own mind is Dhyana. This is the way he teaches us. May I know your system."

"If I tell you," said the Patriarch, "that I have a system of Law to transmit to others, I am cheating you. What I would do to my disciples is to liberate them from their own bondage with such device as the case may need. To use an appellation which is nothing but a makeshift, this may be called Samadhi. The way your master teaches Sila, Dhyana, and Prajna is wonderful; but my exposition is different."

"How can it be different, Sir," asked Chi Shing, "when there is only one form of Sila, Dhyana, and Prajna?"

"The teaching of your master," replied the Patriarch, "is for the guidance of the followers of the Mahayana School, while mine is for those of the Supreme School. Because some one realises the Dharma quicker and deeper than the others, this accounts for the difference in the interpretation. You may listen, and see if my instruction is the same as his. In expounding the Law, I deviate not from the authority of the essence of mind (i.e., I speak what I realise intuitively). To do it otherwise would indicate that the expositor's essence of mind is under obscurity and that he can touch the phenomenal side of the Law only, (but not its essence). The true teaching of Sila, Dhyana, and Prajna should be based on the principle

that the function of all things derives its impetus from the essence of mind. Listen to my stanza:—

"To free the mind from all improprieties is the Sila of the essence of mind.
To free the mind from all perturbations is the Dhyana of the essence of mind.
That which neither increases nor decreases is the Vagra (Diamond, used metaphorically for the essence of mind)
'Coming' and 'going' are different phases of Samadhi."

(Note:—This means that it is not necessary to attain Samadhi by sitting quietly: one may be in Samadhi while walking to and fro.)

Having heard this, Chi Shing felt sorry (for having asked an impertinent question) and thanked the Patriarch for his instruction.

He then submitted the following stanza:—

The 'Self' is nothing but a phantasm created by the union of five Skhandhas.
And phantasm can have nothing to do with the absolute reality.
To hold that there is Tathata (Suchness or Absolute) for us to aim at or to return thereto

Also falls within the category of 'Impure Law'.

(Note:—Pure Law is above concept and speech.)

Approving what he said in his stanza, the Patriarch said to him again. "The teaching of your master on Sila, Dhyana, and Prajna deals with wise men of the inferior type, while mine with those of the superior type. He who realises the essence of mind may dispense with such doctrines as Bodhi, Nirvana, and 'Knowledge of Emancipation'. Only those who inherit or possess not a single system of Law can formulate all systems of Law, and those who can understand the meaning (of this paradox) may have such terms as Buddhakaya, Bodhi, Nirvana, or 'Knowledge of Emancipation' applied to them. To those who have realised the essence of mind, it makes no difference whether they formulate all systems of Law or dispense with all of them. They are at liberty to come or to go (i.e. they may remain in or leave this world at their free will). They are free from obstacles or impediments. They take appropriate actions, when circumstances require. They give suitable answers according to the temperament of the requirer. They see with comprehensive glance that all Bodies of Transformation (Nirmanakaya) are not separate from the essence of mind. They attain liberation, psychic powers (Siddhi), and Samadhi which enable them to perform the arduous task of universal salvation as willingly as if they were only playing. Such are the men who have realised the essence of mind!"

"By what principle are we guided in dispensing with all systems of law?" was Chi Shing's next question.

"When our essence of mind is free from improprieties, infatuations, and perturbations," replied the Patriarch, "when we introspect our mind from Ksana to Ksana (momentary sensation) with Prajna, and when we do not cling to things and phenomenal objects (Dharmalaksana); we are free and liberated. Why should

we formulate any system of Law, when our goal can be reached no matter whether we turn to the right or to the left? Since it is with our own efforts that we realise the essence of mind, and since the realisation and the practice of the Law are both done instantaneously, and not gradually or stage by stage, the formulation of any system of Law is therefore unnecessary. As all Dharmas are intrinsically Nirvanic, how can there be gradation in them?"

Chi Shing made obeisance and volunteered himself to be the attendant of the Patriarch. In that capacity, he worked hard both day and night.

Bhikkhu Chi Chai, whose secular name was Chang Hang Chong, was a native of Kiangsi. As a young man, he was fond of chivalric exploits.

Since the two Dhyana Schools, Wei Lang of the South and Shin Shau of the North, flourished side by side, a strong sectarian feeling ran high on the part of the disciples, in spite of the tolerant spirit shown by the two masters who hardly knew what egotism was. Calling their own teacher, Shin Shau, the Sixth Patriarch on no better authority than their own, the followers of the Northern School naturally were jealous of the rightful owner of that title whose claim supported by the robe inherited was too well known to be ignored. (In order to get rid of the rival teacher), they sent Chang Hang Chong (who was then a layman) to murder the Patriarch.

With his psychic power of mind-reading, the Patriarch was able to know the plot beforehand. (Making ready for the coming of the murderer), he put ten taels by the side of his own seat. Chang came one evening, entered the Patriarch's room, and was going to execute the murderous act. With outstretched neck, the Patriarch was quite ready for the fatal blow. Thrice did Chang cut; (but strange to say), not a single wound was thereby inflicted! The Patriarch then addressed him as follows:—

"An upright sword is not crooked,
While a crooked one is not upright.
I owe you money only;
But life I owe you not."

The surprise was too great for Chang: he fell into a swoon and did not revive until a considerable time. Remorseful and penitent, he asked for mercy and volunteered to join the order at once. Handing him the money, the Patriarch said, "You had better not remain here, lest my followers should do you harm in return. Come to see me under disguise some other time, and I shall take good care of you then."

As directed, Chang ran away in the same night. Subsequently, he joined the order under a certain Bhikkhu. Upon being fully ordained, he proved himself to be a very diligent monk.

One day, recollecting what the Patriarch had said, he took the long journey to see him and to tender him homage. "Why do you come so late?" asked the Patriarch. "I have been thinking of you all the time."

"Since that day you so graciously pardoned my crime," said Chang, "I have become a Bhikkhu and studied Buddhism diligently. Yet, I find it difficult to requit you adequately, unless I can show my gratitude by spreading the Law for the deliverance of sentient beings. In studying the Maha Parinirvana Sutra which I read very often, I cannot understand the meaning of 'Eternal' and 'Not Eternal'. Will you, Sir, kindly give me a short explanation."

"What is not eternal is the Buddha-nature," replied the Patriarch, "and what is eternal is the discriminating mind together with all meritorious and demeritorious Dharmas."

"Your explanation, Sir, contradicts the Sutra," said Chang.

"I dare not, since I inherit the 'Heart-Seal' of Lord Buddha", replied the Patriarch.

"According to the Sutra," said Chang, "the Buddha-nature is eternal, while all meritorious and demeritorious Dharmas, including the Bodhi-citta (the heart or thought of enlightenment) are not eternal. As you hold otherwise, is this not a contradiction? Your explanation has now intensified my doubts and perplexities."

"On one occasion," replied the Patriarch, "I had Bhikkhuni Wu Chun Chong to recite to me the whole book of Maha Parinirvana Sutra, so that I could explain it to her. Every word and every meaning I explained on that occasion agreed with the text. As to the explanation I give you now, it likewise differs not from the text."

"As my capacity for understanding is a poor one," observed Chang, "will you kindly explain to me more fully and more clearly."

"Don't you know?" said the Patriarch. "If Buddha-nature is eternal, it would be of no use to talk about meritorious and demeritorious Dharmas; and until the end of a Kalpa, no one would arouse the Bodhi-citta (the wisdom heart or the thought of enlightenment). Therefore, when I say 'Not Eternal' it is exactly what Lord Buddha meant for 'Truly Eternal'. Again, if all Dharmas are not eternal, then every thing or object would have a nature of its own (i.e., positive essence) to suffer death and birth. In that case, it would mean that the essence of mind which is truly eternal (and knows neither birth nor death) does not pervade everywhere. Therefore when I say 'Eternal' it is exactly what Lord Buddha meant for 'Truly Not-Eternal'."

"Because ordinary men and heretics believe in 'Heretical Eternalism' (the opposite of True Eternalism, i.e., they believe in the eternity of soul and of the world), and because Cravakas (aspirants to arhatship) mistake the eternity of Nirvana as something not eternal, eight upside-down notions arise. (i.e. Ordinary

men and heretics mistake the non-eternity, non-happiness, non-egoism, and non-purity of mundane existence as eternity, happiness, egoism, and purity; while Cravakas mistake the Eternity, Happiness, Egoism, and Purity of Nirvana as Non-eternity, Non-happiness, Non-egoism and Non-purity.) In order to refute these one-sided views, Lord Buddha preached exoterically in the Maha Parinirvana Sutra—which expounds the 'Ultimate Doctrine' of Buddhist teaching—true eternity, true happiness, true self, and true purity.

"In following slavishly the wording of the Sutra, you have ignored the spirit of the text. In assuming that what annihilates is non-eternal and that what is fixed and immutable is eternal, you have misinterpreted Lord Buddha's dying instruction (Buddha preached the Maha Parinirvana Sutra before he entered into Parinirvana) which is perfect, profound, and abstruse. You may read the Sutra one thousand times, but you will get no benefit out of it."

All of a sudden, Chang awoke to full enlightenment and submitted the following stanza to the Patriarch:—

In order to refute the bigoted belief of 'Non-eternity',
Lord Buddha preached the 'Eternal Nature'.
He who does not know that such preaching is only a skilful device
(Upayakaushalya)
May be likened to the child who picks up pebbles and calls them
gems.
Without painstaking on my part,
The Buddha-nature manifests itself.
This is due neither to the instruction of my teacher
Nor to the attainment of my own.

"You have now thoroughly realised (the essence of mind)," commended the Patriarch, "and hereafter you should name yourself Chi Chai (to realise thoroughly)." Chi Chai thanked the Patriarch, made obeisance, and departed.

Note:—Buddha's object is to get rid of bigoted belief of any form. He would preach 'Non-eternity' to believers of Eternalism; and preach 'Neither Eternity nor Non-eternity' to those who believe in both.

A thirteen year old boy named Shin Wui, who was born of a Ko family of Sheng Yang, came from Yuk Chuen Monastery to tender homage to the Patriarch.

"My learned friend," said the Patriarch, "it must be pretty hard on you to undertake such a long journey. But can you tell me what is the 'fundamental principle'. If you can, you would know the owner (i.e., the essence of mind). Try to say something, please."

"Non-attachment is the fundamental principle,* and to know the owner is to realise (the essence of mind)," replied Shin Wui.

"That Samanera (a young monk or a novice) is fit for nothing but to talk loosely," reproved the Patriarch.

Thereupon Shin Wui asked the Patriarch, "In your meditation, Sir, do you see (your essence of mind) or not?"

Striking him three blows with his staff, the Patriarch asked him whether he felt painful or not. "Painful and not painful," replied Shin Wui. "I see and I see not," retorted the Patriarch.

* Manjursi asked Virmalakirti, "What is the source of our body."

"Craving and desire," answered Virmalakirti.

"What is the source of craving and desire?"

"Delusion and particularization."

"What is the source of delusion and particularization?"

"Topsy-turvy views."

"What is the source of topsy-turvy views?"

"Non-attachment."

"What is the source of non-attachment?"

"Non-attachment has no source, Manjursi. With non-attachment as basis, all Dharmas are established."

—VIRMALAKIRII NIRDESA SUTRA.

Commentary on the above by Dharma Master Shiu:—

"If we take the 'action of the mind' as the source, then 'phenomena' would exist. But the 'Ultimate of the Norm' or the 'Primordial Action' has no source. If we take 'non-Dharma' as the source, then 'inexistence' would be the cause of 'inexistence.' But as 'inexistence' needs not another 'inexistence' to be its cause, it would also be sourceless."

Further, he said:—"From Non-Attachment, topsy-turvy views arises. From topsy-turvy views, particularization arises. From particularization, craving and desire arise. From craving and desire, our physical body exists. The existence of our physical body will be ensued by good and evil elements from which all Dharmas arise. Thenceforth, things become so multifarious that neither speech nor enumeration can exhaust them."

According to Dharma Master Shiu, the primordial mind-impulse or the fundamental non-enlightenment is the source of Non-attachment. In the "Transmission of the Lamp," National Teacher Ching Leung," in reply to the question put to him by the Crown Prince on the essential teaching of the mind, said, "The source of the ultimate teaching is the Transcendental Mind and the source of the Transcendental Mind is Non-attachment. The inherent quality of Non-attachment is omniscient and free from obscuration."

The quotation, "One should use one's mind in such a way that it will be free from any attachment," from the Diamond Sutra expresses the same idea too.

In his book, "An Explicit Treatise on Dhyana Teaching", Dhyana Master Ho Chak said, "After the Parinirvana of the Exalted One, the twenty-eight Patriarchs of India all transmitted the 'Mind of Non-attachment' to their successors. What is referred to as 'Non-attachment' is the real state of all things (i.e., things as they really are, things stripped of their draperies and trappings). In such a state, truth and falsehood merge into one. Call it 'Unity,' it is of many kinds. Call it 'Duplicity,' it is non-dualistic."

From the above, it will be seen that this sentence "Non-attachment is the fundamental principle" is the keynote of the Dhyana teaching.

—DIH PING TSZE.

"How is it that you see and you see not?" asked Shin Wui.

"What I see and often see is my own fault," replied the Patriarch. "What I do not see is the good, the evil, the merit and the demerit of others. That is why I see and I see not. Now, please tell me what do you mean by 'painful and not painful'. If you feel no pains, you would be as insensible as a piece of wood or stone. On the other hand, if you feel painful and anger or hatred is thereby aroused, you would be in the same position as an ordinary man.

"'Seeing' and 'not Seeing', as you referred to are pairs of opposites; while 'painful' and 'not painful' belong to that category of Dharma which becomes and ceases (i.e. Samskṛta Dharma, conditioned or caused elements). Without having realised your own essence of mind, you dare to hoodwink others."

Shin Wui apologised, made obeisance, and thanked the Patriarch for his instruction.

Addressing him again, the Patriarch said, "If you are under delusion and cannot realise your essence of mind, you should seek the advice of a pious and learned friend. When your mind is enlightened, you will know the essence of mind; and then you may tread the Path according to the right way. Now you are under delusion and do not know your essence of mind. (Instead of seeking advice) you dare to ask whether I know my essence of mind or not. If I do, I would realise it myself. But the fact that I know cannot help you from being under delusion. Similarly, if you know your essence of mind, your knowing would be of no use to me. Instead of asking others, why not see it for yourself and know it for yourself?"

Making obeisance more than hundred times, Shin Wui again expressed regret and asked the Patriarch to forgive him. (Henceforth), he worked diligently as the Patriarch's attendant and posted himself always either on the right or on the left of his Master.

Addressing the assembly one day, the Patriarch said, "I have an article which has no head, no name, no appellation, no front, and no back. Do your men know it?"

Stepping out from the crowd, Shin Wui replied, "It is the source of all Buddhas, and the Buddha-nature of Shin Wui."

"I have told you already that it is without name and appellation, and yet you call it 'Source of Buddhas' and 'Buddha-nature'," reproved the Patriarch. "Even you confine yourself in a matched for further study (as is the wont of the Bhikkhus), you will be a Dhyana scholar of second hand knowledge only (i.e. Knowledge from books and verbal authority instead of Knowledge obtained intuitively).

After the death of the Patriarch, Shin Wui left for Loyang where he spread widely the teaching of the Sudden School. The popular work entitled 'An Explicit Treatise on Dhyana Teaching' was written by him. He is generally known by the name Dhyana Master Ho Chak (the name of his monastery)

Seeing that many questions had been put to him in bad faith by followers of various schools and that a great number of such interrogators had gathered around him, he addressed them, out of compassion, as follows:—

"A treader of the Path should do away with all thoughts—good ones as well as evil ones. It is merely as an expedient that the essence of mind is so called; but it really cannot be named by any name. This 'Non-dual nature' is called the 'true nature', upon which all systems of teaching are based. One should realise the essence of mind as soon as one is spoken to about it."

Upon hearing this, every one of them made obeisance and asked the Patriarch to allow them to be his disciples.

