

# Zen Master Ejo

## *Absorption in the Treasury of Light*

There is a chapter on light in the *Shobogenzo*: the reason for writing this essay now in addition is just to bring out the essential substance, the fact that the countenance of Buddhism is absorption in the treasury of light.

This is the unobtrusive application of inconspicuous practice, carried out by oneself and influencing others, proper to people who have studied Zen for a long time and have entered its inner sanctum.

The so-called treasury of light is the root source of all Buddhas, the inherent being of all living creatures, the total substance of all phenomena, the treasury of the great light of spiritual powers of complete awareness. The three bodies, four knowledges, and states of absorption numerous as atoms in every aspect of reality, all appear from within this.

*The Flower Ornament Scripture* says, "The Great light of the Lamplike Illuminate is supreme among auspicious signs: that Buddha has entered this hall, so this place is most auspicious."

This great light of the Lamplike Illuminate pervades the universe, without differentiating between the mundane and the sacred: thus "that Buddha has entered this hall." The reception of "thus once I heard" is itself "having entered this hall".

Because "this place is therefore most auspicious," Shakyamuni Buddha received indications of future direction from the Lamplike Illuminate.

Because this one light extends throughout all time, if there were any attaining it, then it would have to be twofold.

*The Scripture on the Miraculous Empowerment of Vairochana Attaining Buddhahood* says, in the book on entering the state of mind of the method of mystical spells, "At that time the Blessed One said to the Thunderbolt Bearer, "The will for enlightenment is the casual basis, great compassion is the root, skill in means is the ultimate.

" 'O Master of the Secret, what is enlightenment? It means knowing your own mind as it really is. This is unexcelled complete perfect enlightenment, in which there is nothing at all that can be attained. Why? Because the form of it is enlightenment; it has no knowledge and no understanding. Why? Because enlightenment has no form. Master of the Secret, the formlessness of all things is called the form of space.' "

The same scripture also says, "Master of the Secret, the practice of the Great Vehicle awakens the mind that transports you to the unconditioned, guided by selflessness. Why? Those who have cultivated this practice in the past have observed the basis of the clusters of mental and physical elements, and know they are like illusions, mirages, shadows, echoes, rings of fire, castles in the air. Master of the Secret, thus they relinquish the selflessm and the host of the mind autonomously awakens to the fundamental nonarousal of the essential mind. Why? Because what is before mind and what is after mind cannot be

apprehended. Thus knowing the nature of the essential mind, you transcend two aeons of yoga practice."

The fact that "before and after cannot be apprehended" means that the light of great knowledge of Vairochana is like this because the essential mind is fundamentally unaroused.

*The Flower Ornament Scripture* also says, "The body of Buddha radiates great light of infinite colors perfectly pure, like clouds covering all lands, everywhere extolling the virtues of Buddhahood. All who are illumined by the light rejoice, beings with pains have them all removed. Everyone is inspired with respect and develops a compassionate heart. This is the independent function of enlightenment."

The same scripture also says, in "The Book on Awakening by Light", "At that time the light passed a hundred thousand worlds and illumined a million worlds in the East. The same thing occurred in the south, west, north, four intermediate directions, the zenith, and the nadir. Everything in all of those worlds was clearly revealed. At that time, the enlightening being Manjushri in each place spoke up simultaneously before the Buddha in each place, uttering this verse:

The Enlightened One is supremely independent,  
transcending the world, relying on nothing,  
imbued with all virtuous qualities,  
liberated from all that exists,  
undefiled, unattached,  
free from imagination, without fixations.  
His substance and essence cannot be measured;  
Those who see him all utter praise.  
His light is everywhere, clear and pure;  
The burdens of the senses are washed away.  
Without moving, he detaches from the two extremes;  
This is the knowledge of the Enlightened One.' "

So the knowledge of the enlightened is light, a concentration of the light of immutable knowledge beyond the two extremes of ordinary and holy, or absolute and conventional. It is the light of the nonconceptual knowledge of Manjushri, who represents great knowledge. This becomes manifest in the effortlessness of simply sitting.

For this reason Vairochana said to the Master of the Secret, "The practice of the Great Vehicle awakens the mind that transports you to the unconditioned, guided by selflessness." The Third Patriarch of Zen said, "Do not seek reality, just stop views." Obviously there is no ego in the treasury of light of the vehicle of the unconditioned, no opinionated interpretations. Ego and opinions are different names of spirit

heads and ghost faces. This is just the light alone, not setting up any opinions or views, from the idea of self and ego to the ideas of Buddhas and Dharma. Let us clearly hear transcendent wisdom being likened to an enormous mass of fire.

*The Lotus of Truth Scripture* says, "At that time the Buddha radiated a light from the white hair between his eyebrows, illuminating eighty thousand worlds in the East, pervading them all, to the lowest hells below as well as the highest heavens above." So this auspicious sign of light is the foremost, rarest of spiritual lights perfected by Buddhas.

The great being Manjushri said, in answer to the question of Maitreya, "This very auspicious sign of light appeared in ancient times when the Buddha named Illuminate like a Lamp made of the Sun and Moon expounded the Great Vehicle. Now Shakyamuni Buddha must be going to expound the teaching of the Lotus Blossom of Sublime Truth, which is for enlightening beings and kept in mind by Buddhas."

So we should know that this light is the universal illumination of matchless, peerless great light completely filled with infinite meaning. The great being Manjushri was at that time called the enlightening being Sublime Light, and was the eighth son of the Buddha called Illuminate like a Lamp made of the Sun and Moon, who enabled him to stabilize unsurpassed enlightenment. The last one to attain Buddhahood was called Burning Lamp Buddha.

Hence we know that the sitting meditation of our school is absorption in the treasury of light inherited directly from Burning Lamp and Shakyamuni. What other doctrine might there be? This is the light that is not two in ordinary people and sages, that is the one vehicle in the past and present. It does not let anything inside out and does not let anything outside in: who would randomly backslide into cramped boredom within the context of discriminatory social and personal relationships? It cannot be grasped, cannot be abandoned: why suffer because of emotional consciousness grasping and rejecting, hating and loving?

Furthermore, in "The Book on Comfortable Behavior" [in *The Lotus Scripture*] Manjushri is told, "Great enlightening beings dwell in a state of forbearance, gentle, docile, and not rough, their minds undisturbed. And they do not ruminate over things, but see the real character of things, and do not act indiscriminately." This is simply sitting: without acting indiscriminately, one thereby goes along in conformity with the great light.

A verse from the same book says,

"Delusion conceives of things as existent or nonexistent,  
as being real or unreal, as born or unborn.

In an uncluttered place, concentrate your mind,  
remain steady and unmoving, like a polar mountain.

Observe that all phenomena have no existence,  
that they are like space, without solid stability,  
neither being born nor emerging.

Unmoving, unflagging, abide in oneness:

this is called the place of nearness."

This is a direct indication, "only expounding the unexcelled Way, getting straight to the point, setting aside expedients."

In China, the great master Bodhidharma replied to the question of an emperor about the ultimate meaning of the holy truths, "Empty, nothing holy." This is the great mass of fire of the light of the Zen of the founding teachers: crystal clear on all sides, there is nothing in it at all. Outside of this light, there is no separate practice, no different principle, much less any knowledge or objects; how could there be any practice and cultivation, or deliberate effort to effect specific remedies?

The emperor said to Bodhidharma, "Who is replying to me?" Bodhidharma said, "Don't know." This is simply the single light that is empty.

Later Zen master Xuedou wrote a eulogy of this anecdote:

" 'Empty, nothing holy'-

how to discern the point?

'Who is replying to me'-

'Don't know,' he says."

If you can attain freedom and ease by absorption in this koan, the entire body is luminous, the whole world is luminous.

The great master Yunmen, thirty-ninth generation from the Buddha, said to a group in a lecture, "All people have a light, but when they look at it they do not see it, so it is obscure. What is everyone's light?" No one replied, so the master himself said in their behalf, "The communal hall, the Buddha shrine, the kitchen pantry, the mountain gate." Now when the great master says that everyone has a light, he does not say it is to appear later on, nor that it existed in the past, nor that it becomes apparent to a view from the side: he is stating that everyone has a light. This is exactly what is meant in the overall sense by the light of great wisdom: it should be heard and retained, enjoyed and applied, in the skin, flesh, bones, and marrow.

The light is everyone: Shakyamuni and Maitreya are its servants. What is not more in Buddhas or less in ordinary people is this spiritual light, so it is existent in all; it is the whole earth as a single mass of fire.

The master said, "What is everyone's light?" At that time, the assembly made no reply. Even if there had been a hundred apt statements, there still would have been "no reply".

Yunmen answered himself in their behalf, " The communal hall, the Buddha shrine, the kitchen pantry,

the mountain gate." This answering himself in their behalf is answering himself in everyone's behalf, answering himself in behalf of the light, answering himself in behalf of obscurity, answering himself in behalf of the assembly's lack of response: it is absorption in the treasury of light awakening and bringing forth radiant light.

This being so, it does not question whether you are ordinary people or Buddhas, it does not discriminate between sentient and inanimate beings: having always been shining everywhere, the light has no beginning, no location. That is why it is "obscure", it is "what", it is "traveling at night", it is "impossible to conceive of even in a billion billion million aeons".

Also, a monk asked Yunmen, "The light silently shines throughout countless worlds-" Before he had even finished posing his question, Yunmen quickly asked back, "Are these not the words of a famous poet?" The monk said, "They are." Yunmen said, "You are trapped in words".

Hail to the ancient Buddha Yunmen! His eyes were fast as comets, his mind swift as lightning! At this point the monk was speechless. Who would not be ashamed?

Zen master Xuefeng, instructing a group, said, "The Buddhas of all times turn the great wheel of the Teaching in flames of fire." Yunmen said, "The flames of fire expound the Teaching of the Buddhas of all times, the Buddhas of all times stand there and listen".

So the light of flames of fire is the site of enlightenment of the Buddhas of all times, it is the teacher of the Buddhas.

For this reason, all of the Enlightened Ones are always expounding the Teaching in the midst of myriad forms even as they remain at their own site of enlightenment, which is the light of complete perfect tranquility.

It is a matter of "valuing the ears without devaluing the eyes." This mass of flames of fire is not in front, not behind: it is just total manifestation.

To go on degrading yourself and limiting yourself in spite of that, producing individual subjective ideas that you are basically ignorant ordinary being, a common person with no wisdom, is truly hellish behavior slandering the Wheel of True Teaching of the Enlightened.

The exposition of the Teaching by the flames of fire indicated by Xuefeng and expressed by Yunmen is a direct approach without expedients, just expounding the unexcelled Way, bringing out the totality of the teachings of the Buddha's whole lifetime.

When Xuefeng spoke as he did, this was already being burned up in the flames of fire. Do you want to escape? Reciting scriptures, performing prostrations, raising and lowering each foot - everything is the manifestation of the great function of light.

There are those who learn to wonder whose grace this depends on, uselessly toiling to quiet thoughts without knowing this hidden essence. There are also those who doubt and dismiss the possibility, making a living in a ghost cave. There are also those who are like mosquitoes breaking through a paper window. Leaving aside for the moment getting trapped in words, what would be right?

Although there is no more leisure time to wash a clod of earth in the mud, students of Zen should first know what is being said when they pose a question. Once we are talking about silent illumination

pervading the universe, why should these be the words of a famous poet? Why should they be the words of Buddha? Why should they be your words? After all, whose words should they be? "The communal hall, the Buddha shrine, the kitchen pantry, the mountain gate." Listen clearly, hear accurately.

Great master Changsha said to a congregation, "The whole universe is the eye of the practitioner. The whole universe is the family talk of the practitioner. The whole universe is the total body of a practitioner. The whole universe is one's own light. In the whole universe there is no one who is not oneself."

So penetrating study of the Way of the enlightened requires diligence to learn and faith to attain. Unless you form an alliance with the family of Buddhas lifetime after lifetime, how can you grasp what you hear in a lecture like this? Make sure that you do not become further estranged and further remote from it.

Now the universe spoken by Changsha is a single eye of the individual involved in Zen study. The entirety of space is the total body and mind. He does not grasp the holy or reject the ordinary, he does not say that confused people are not so while enlightened people are thus. What he does is point directly to your own light: don't defer this to Great Master Changsha.

This sermon is an all-inclusive talk within your nostrils, a freely adapted practical lesson within your eyes. There are those who specially bring up old model koans but never attain insight or knowledge all their lives. Everyone of them is the child of a rich family but has no britches.

Also, hearing talk of light, ignorant people think of it as like the light of fireflies, like the light of lamps, like the light of sun and moon or the luster of gold and jewels, groping for comparisons, trying to see shining radiance, they focus on the mind and figure inside the intellect, aiming for it as a realm of utter emptiness and total silence.

For this reason they stop movement and take refuge in stillness, or they are unable to relinquish ideas of an actual entity or false ideas of the existence of something to obtain, or their thoughts of inconceivable mystic wonder go on and on unceasingly and they think too deeply only of its rarity. Such people, rice bags sleeping with their eyes open, are the only numerous ones.

If it were really an inconceivable mysterious matter of such great import, why do you imagine you can reach it by thinking? This is the type of bedevilment characterized by understanding the quiet reflection of the conscious spirit as the sitting of Buddha. This is why the founder of Zen explained that there is nothing holy in openness, and it is not consciously known. To be given such an explanation is something that rarely happens.

Zen Master Changsha said, "The reason students of the Way do not discern the real is simply that they continue to recognize the conscious spirit. It is the root of infinite aeons of birth and death, yet deluded people call it the original human being."

So to cultivate realization based on ideas about your own mind and assumptions about what is to be attained is to cultivate the root of birth and death.

Now the reference made to the real and the original human being mean the openness of the light that is inherently there and perfectly complete. Outside of the openness of the light, what thing would you try to seek so greedily?

That is why there is no holiness, and it is not consciously known, it is only a holeless iron hammerhead, a

great mass of fire.

Zhaozhou asked Nanquan, "What is the Way?"

Nanquan said, "The normal mind is the Way."

Zhaozhou said, "How should one approach it?"

Nanquan said, "If you try to head for it, you immediately turn away from it."

Zhaozhou said, "If one does not make an attempt, how can one know it is the Way?"

Nanquan said, "The Way is not in the domain of knowledge, yet not in the domain of unknowing. Knowledge is false consciousness, unknowing is indifference. If you really arrive at the effortless Way without a doubt, you are as empty as open space: how can you insist on affirmation or denial?"

That is why the ancients, pitying those whose approach is mistaken because of it is contrived based on cultivated power, painstakingly guided them by saying, "The Way cannot be attained by the conscious mind, nor can it be attained by mindlessness; it cannot be communicated by words, nor can it be reached by silence. As soon as you get involved in deliberation, you are ten million stages away."

People, can there be any idea of cultivating mind, or any transmundane phenomena or principles, outside of this conscious mind or mindlessness? Since it is said to be unattainable either by the conscious mind or by mindlessness, why not immediately give up false ideas of seeking mind or relinquishing mind?

Ordinary people who do not believe and are lazy, and are not even up to the level of this device, cling to illusory definitions of self, rush around pompously in the dreamlike evanescent world, unaware that they are possessed by demons of worldly knowledge and intellectual acumen.

Their wits always at work, they imagine that the light of which they have heard tell must be like a fiery comet shooting from between the eyebrows of Buddha. Interpreting meaning literally, they never even think of finding out the real truth of sages. Even if they appear in the world as seasoned practitioners and adepts, they have no part in higher study, so they cannot ascertain how the light throughout the whole body, the light of the realm of reality, covers the heavens and covers the earth. They are charlatans clinging to forms, unworthy of even pity.

Shakyamuni Buddha said, "The light of lights is not blue, yellow, red, white or black. It is not matter, not mind. It is not existent, not nonexistent. It is not a phenomenon resulting from causes. It is the source of all Buddhas, the basis of practicing the Way of enlightening beings, fundamental for all Buddhist."

So the Realized One had emerged from absorption in flowery light, empty of substance and essence, sat on the regal diamond throne of a thousand lights, and expounded the light of the discipline of unity.

It is clearly obvious that this light is not blue, yellow, red, white, or black. It is just "the god of fire, crimson through and through," it is "a clay ox running on the bottom of the ocean," it is "an iron ox without skin or bones." It being "neither matter nor mind," why stick a sense of seeking in your chest and repeatedly pant over the inner mind? Furthermore, it is not a casually effected phenomenon: how could it be made by cultivating realization?

Truly this is the source of the Buddhas, fundamental for all Buddhist. Not only that, it is the light of the discipline of unity and held by Vairochana Buddha since his first inspiration. Therefore it is an element

of the ground of mind, detached from all labels and appearances, this is called the light of discipline of the mind ground.

Shakyamuni Buddha said, "If people who expound the Teaching stay alone in deserted places, where there is utter silence and no sound of human voices, and read and recite this scripture, I will then manifest for them the body of pure clear light. If they forget a chapter or verse, I will expound it to them so that they may comprehend it fluently."

So when you read and recite this scripture, this is the self at that time therefore manifesting pure and clear light. The body and mind of the Buddhas are light. The land of all Burning Lamps is Eternally Silent Light. Pure Lands, bodies, and minds are all light, that is why we say there are eighty-four thousand lights, up to an infinite number of lights.

Zen master Puning Yong quoted the aforementioned story about the flames of fire expounding the Teaching, and recited this verse to his congregation:

"One mass of fierce flames reddens the whole sky,  
The Buddhas of all times are right in the center.  
Having expounded the Teaching, now they are done;  
Above the eyebrows there rises pure breeze."

In the process of finding out the inner sanctum of Buddhism, spontaneously penetrating vision of the flames of fire expounding the Teaching is thus. So one mass of fierce flames blazes through time: it comes from nowhere, has no form, has no differentiation, and so ultimately has no extinction. Because it is completely undifferentiated, it is the scenery of the original ground of all phenomena, all beings, and all Buddhas.

Why do students today not keep this in mind or believe in it resolutely? Because they do not believe in it resolutely, they become lowly ignorant fools, not escaping vicious circles.

They should ask themselves where the fault is, and see all the way through.

Those who are wedded to worldly conventions think that illusory and ephemeral phenomena are really permanent, so they are completely preoccupied with gain and loss of mundane profit. Placing profoundly abiding trust in a life that is like a temporary lamp before the wind, which cannot be guaranteed even until tomorrow, where each outgoing breath does not ensure that another incoming breath will follow, they rejoice and lament according to vicissitudes.

Even your physical elements will vanish in the funeral pyre, like evaporating dew; although there is not so much as an atom of anything that you can cling to as your own, you spend your life taking it easy, as if you were master of yourself.

This does not depend on the teachings of the scriptures; it is an evident truth, right before our eyes. Since it is a mass of roaring flames, therefore the Buddhas of all times are also herein. In this context, how are

living beings and Buddhas different? Those who erroneously cling to the ego do not believe in the light, so they are *herein* arbitrarily making themselves bob and sink in birth and death. Those who see through the light, in contrast, are *herein* realizing impartial unhindered universal knowledge.

Therefore Yongjia once said, "Eternal calm is not apart from right where you are; if you seek, I know you cannot see. It cannot be grasped, cannot be rejected; within ungraspability it is attained just so. The ancient Nagarjuna said in a eulogy of wisdom, "Transcendent wisdom is like a mass of fire, ungraspable on all four sides."

Although everyone hears and reads such great teachings, you study them as if they were only relevant to others. You do not free and easy your whole being, you do not penetrate the totality. Instead you say that you are lacking in capacity, or that you are beginners, or that you are latecomers, or that you are ordinary mortals who have not cut off a single delusion. You do not put down your former views or your self-image. Dwelling in the great treasury of light all day and all night, you turn yourself into a lowly hireling, roaming in misery, a long time pauper.

This is your own conceit of inferiority, having forgotten the call of your noble origins. How sad it is to take up a nightsoil bucket and become a cesspool cleaner, thinking of the body of pure light as a defiled body full of misery. This is the saddest of sadnesses, which nothing can surpass.

The subjectivity of the self-image should be changed right away. Even if you talk about the major and minor teachings, the provisional and the true teachings, the phenomena and principles of the exoteric and esoteric teachings, and the subtle messages of the five houses and seven schools of Zen, as long as you retain your self-image, you wind up in birth and death.

This is why it is said that if you interpret reality by means of the mind of birth and death, then reality will become birth and death.

The idea of the self, the idea of a person, the idea of a being, and the idea of a life are a self-image. The idea of the physical body, prejudiced views, false views, and fixated views are self-image. Even the countless subtle veils of ignorance between standard enlightenment and sublime enlightenment are self-image. First it is called the idea of self, or intellectual habit energy; even attachment to principle, traces of enlightenment, and the view of equanimity are all different names varying according to the degree and seriousness of self-image.

If you wonder why this is, from the very first great evil, perverted, and biased views even up to the last little bit of subtle ignorance, when there is no self-image, what can be called the idea of Buddha or an idea of Dharma? Who is conscious of the veil?

For this reason Zen Master Dogen said, "First you should be done with the ego. If you want to be done the ego, you should contemplate impermanence." This is a direct instruction from a heart of consummated magnanimity and perfect sincerity.

"The Teaching on Pacifying the Mind," by the Great Teacher of Shaolin says, "Why do people of the world fail to attain enlightenment in spite of all their studies? They do not attain enlightenment because they are self-conscious. Fully developed people do not worry in miserable situations and do not rejoice in pleasant situations; this is because they are not self-conscious."

A verse by an ancient illuminate says,

"Buddhas do not seem themselves; wisdom is Buddha.

If you really have wisdom, there is no other Buddha.

The wise know the emptiness of the obstructions of sin,

Equanimous, they have no fear of life and death."

Not fearing life and death is because of not seeing oneself. Not seeing oneself means not being self-conscious, not having a self-image. The light of great wisdom is thus impersonal, so the verse says that wisdom is Buddha.

In spite of this, you think that it is a matter of loving the transitory body, which is like dew on the grass, like a floating bubble, when it comes to the great light that is your real body, you think it is an irrelevant discussion and suppose that there must be something more grandiose. Thus you waste your time talking about political conditions and the status of pious donations, without any stable practice reflecting consideration of how this idly passing life will end up.

If you have any attainment of faith or practice within this treasury of light, why would it be only your own personal liberation? Requiting the four debts above, providing sustenance for those in the three realms of being below, mountains, rivers, and earth, your own body and other's bodies, are all the light of suchness, illumining everywhere endlessly.

Great Master Caoshan said in a verse,

"The essence of awareness, round and bright, the body without form:

Do not force distance or closeness in knowledge and opinion.

When thoughts differ, they obscure the mystic being,

When mind diverges, it is not close to the Path.

When feelings distinguish myraid things, you sink into the objects before you;

When consciousness reflects many things, you loose the original reality.

If you understand completely what is in these lines,

Clearly, you are trouble-free, as you were of yore."

This is a direct indication, a direct explanation, within the treasury of light, which furthermore gives directions for subtle cultivation of fundamental realization. It does not matter whether you are a monk or a lay person, whether you are beginner or experienced, it makes no difference whether you are sharp or dull, or how much learning or knowledge you have. This just points directly at the formless body of the

essence of awareness, round and bright, which is utterly unique and unmatched.

The essence of awareness is the Buddha-nature. Round brightness is a great light; it is the formless silent light of your present illusory body. Therefore an ancient worthy said, "The whole body has no form, the whole world does not hide it."

If you still do not understand, then let me ask you this: shattering your whole body and burning up your skin, flesh, bones, and marrow, bring me one thing. At precisely such a time, the living beings and Buddhas of past and present, the ordinary mortals and sages of the three realms, myriad forms and appearances, are all without exception the formless body.

Master Linji said, "The physical elements are not able to expound the Teaching or listen to the truth. Your spleen, stomach, liver, and gallbladder are not able to expound the truth or listen to the truth. Space is not able to expound the truth or listen to the truth. So what can expound the truth and listen to the truth?" This independent spiritual light listening to the truth is the formless body. The ancient temporarily gave it a name for the sake of other people, calling it the "independent wayfarer listening to the truth."

Having spoken about the "round and bright formless body of the essence of awareness," everything has been explained in one line. Out of kindness the master goes on to speak of subtle cultivation, saying not to force distance or closeness in knowledge and opinion. Those who are close to false teachers learn only opinions and interpretations, claiming to have attained Zen beyond the Buddhas and Patriarchs by means of empowerment through study, claiming to be beyond the knowledge and perception of all others, claiming to be closer to the Zen potential than anyone else. This is a perverse mentality, possessed by the king of all demons. It is a heretical belief in having attained what one has not really attained.

Next, those who imagine identity and cling to appearances slack off and fail to progress simply say they are dullards, they are not studious, they are far from being learners. This is "idly producing opinions."

The arising of these two kinds of view, hating and loving, judging right and wrong, turns into intellectual and emotional feelings and thoughts. Therefore Caoshan cuts in two with out sword stroke, saying, "When thoughts differ, they obscure the mystic being; when mind diverges, it is not close to the Path." Does this not mean that we should abandon false teachers and approach good companions? Through the profession of false teachers, people learn opinions and interpretations, thinking of near and far, this is "idly producing opinions."

"This Path" and the "Mystic Being" are the Sun Face and Moon Face of the light, essence of awareness. Nevertheless, from within this light a single unaware thought arises, and the errant mind increases false imaginings. These are floating clouds blocking the round and bright moon of the mind. This is why the verse says "it is not close to the Path."

"When feelings distinguish myriad things, you sink into the objects before you." The Buddha already said, "Mind, Buddha, and living beings - these three have no distinction." He also said, "There is only one Truth." Even though you hear and read such great teachings, for your own part you arbitrarily contrast others and self, and discriminate between the noble and the base, the ordinary and the holy.

Because of the beauty or ugliness of sound and form, because of poverty and wealth, loss and gain, you are taken by the objects before you. This is brought about by your reliance on intellectual views, by pride and disbelief infecting practice and realization.

"When consciousness reflects many things, you lose the original reality." Buddhism originally adapted to myriad different types of potential, resulting in teachings great and small, temporary and true, half and full, partial and complete, exoteric and esoteric, meditation and doctrine, the Path of Sages and the Pure Land Way. It is not that there are not many facets to Buddhism, but if you cling to them intellectually, after all you lose the original reality.

"If you understand completely what is in these lines, clearly you are trouble-free, as you were of yore." The way you "were of yore" means that there is no fabricated effort to cultivate realization, it is the formless body, sitting utterly still, without doubt. If you keep any intellectual interpretations on your mind, you are not trouble-free, you are not "as you were of yore."

Shakyamuni Buddha said, "There is nothing I gained from Dipankara Buddha to realize supreme perfect enlightenment." This is an expression of a meeting with Dipankara Buddha; it is "one statement which transcends millions." The light of this "nothing gained" should be studied.

Nowdays, those who shave their heads and wear black as latter-day followers of Buddha spend the days and pass the months illumined by the light of Dipankara, "The Lamp," but they do not wonder what Dipankara Buddha, The Lamp Illuminate, really is. Therefore they are not real students; they just make use of the appearance of renunciants in order to grab donations. In reality, they are actuality vagrants and roustabouts.

If you deny this, let me ask you, what the marks and refinements of the Lamp Buddha? You cannot say anything, yet you cannot say nothing, speak quickly, speak quickly!

How sad that you only learn of the Lamp Buddha as an illuminate of the past and do not know that the Lamp Buddha shines throughout all time. How then could you believe that it is teaching and attaining nirvana in your nostrils, in your eyes?

Now there is a group of the lowest type of hearer, who repeatedly weary of life and death and hurriedly seek nirvana, arousing their determination on the basis of the idea of something really existing and something being attained. Adding religious greed on top of selfish conceit, their seeking mind never rests until they die. Teachers without perception praise them as good people of faith, so they take pride in egotistical clinging and possessiveness as diligent spiritual practice, eventually turning into ghouls.

To begin with, the Buddhist study of perpetual energy and the pure transmission of immutable radiant concentration is not like your erroneous concentration, which approaches cultivation and realization as two stages and seeks intellectual understanding.

Master Baizhang said, "The spiritual light shines alone, utterly free of senses and objects, the essence manifests, real and eternal. It is not confined to writings. The nature of mind is undefiled, originally complete and perfect in itself. Just detach it from false objects and it awakens to suchness."

This spiritual light is unbroken from the infinite past through the infinite future, this is called perpetual energy. Utterly free of senses and objects, the essence manifests, real and eternal, this is called permanent stability of radiance. Trusting in this spiritual light, abiding peacefully, impermutable, is called the supreme concentration of simply sitting.

So there must be different levels of depth and shallowness, of levity and gravity, even in saying there is something attained. If you just cling to the appearance of phenomena and cultivate formal practices,

seeking Buddha externally, distinguishing the real and the false in terms of writings and words, you may practice giving while dwelling on appearances, misconstruing this to be accumulation of merit, or cause your body and mind pain for the sake of annihilating sin and producing virtue, simply taking pride in this as diligence. This is not called attaining something.

Even if you put aside pen and ink, abstain from social relations, sit alone in an empty valley, live off the fruits of the trees, and clothe yourself with grasses, and sit all the time without laying down, in your mind you are trying to stop movement and return it to stillness, cut off illusion completely, dwell only on absolute truth, reject samsara and grasp nirvana, despising the one and loving the other, all of this is possessiveness.

For this reason, the great teacher Yongjia said, "if you abandon existence and cling to emptiness, your sickness is still there. This is like plunging into fire to avoid drowning.

If you reject imagination to grasp truth, the grasping and rejecting mind produces clever falsehood. Students not understanding how to apply developmental practice actually wind up recognizing a thief as their own offspring. The loss of spiritual wealth and destruction of virtues inevitably derive from this mind, intellect, and consciousness." So students should plunge body and mind into the treasury of light, free and ease the whole body in the light of Buddha, sitting, reclining, and walking around therein.

This is why the Buddha said, "Offspring of Buddha abide in this stage, which is the experience of Buddhahood. They are always therein, walking around, sitting, laying down."

These golden words should not be forgotten for even a moment by those who aspire to be offspring of Buddha. "This stage" is the treasury of light; it is the sole vehicle to Buddhahood. Do not let a single thought turning away from enlightenment to merge with material objects transform this experience of Buddhahood into the experience of animality of ghosthood.

Now tell me about the marks of refinements, about the site of the nirvana, of Dipankara Buddha, of Shakyamuni Buddha, of the seven Buddhas and generations of Zen Masters who perpetuated the flame of the lamp: do you investigate and study them as permanently present and eternal? Would you say they are in the jewel citadel of silent light?

You understand that "the true reality of Buddha is like space," but at such a level, if you do not pass through and beyond the cave of learned judgements and comparisons, how can you be called masters of the inheritance of the light of Buddha? You are jackals howling, clinging to the body of a lion.

If you cannot investigate truth through your own eyes, even if you shave your head and dress in black, you are pitiful living beings. Even if you can interpret a thousand scriptures and ten thousand treasures, you are "counting the treasures of another house," you are "seafarers who know there's something valuable but do not know the price."

Tell me, right now as you defecate and urinate, dress and eat, ultimately whose experience is it? And what, moreover, of the colors of the waters, the scenery of the mountains, the coming and going of heat and cold, the spring flowers, the autumn moon, thousands of changes, myriad transformations - what brings all this about? Truly this is a "countenance most wondrous, light illuminating the ten directions." It is "samsara and nirvana are like last night's dream." It is "being is nonbeing, nonbeing is being." If not thus, even if you speak of "always being there on Spiritual Mountain," it is a false teaching, it is specious discourse; even if you hear of "eternally silent light that neither comes into being nor passes away," I

would say it is only talk, with no real meaning.

In a classic statement of the discipline of unity, Shakyamuni Buddha said, "Those who entertain the idea of self and cling to appearances cannot believe in this teaching, while those who cultivate realization that annihilates life are not fertile ground. If you want to foster the sprouts of enlightenment, so that the light illumines the world, you should calmly examine the real characteristics of phenomena: they are not born and do not perish, they are not permanent and yet are not annihilated, they are not one and yet are not different; they do not come and do not go. Do not conceive discriminatory ideas, even between learning and the state beyond learning."

So this classic statement of light illumining the world should be heard all the way through your bones, all the way through your marrow. It is the subtle body in which the great function of the Buddhas of all times becomes manifest. Taking it upon yourself to put it into practice, would not everyone be overjoyed?

However, as I see students today, being grounded on ignorance, they spend their lives polishing day and night, expecting to eventually see through to the light in this way. Then again, some try to see this radiant pure light by practicing meditation to get rid of random thoughts flying around, repeatedly trying to beat out the flaming fires, hoping to see the eternally silent light thereby. If you think the total nonarising of thought to be right, then are wood, stones, and clods of earth right? All of you are the lowest kind of hearer, who drowns while trying to avoid being burned. How foolish! Clinging to the sitting of the two vehicles and the inclinations of ordinary people, you want to realize supreme universal enlightenment; there is nothing more stupid and perverse.

For this reason it is said, "Those on the two vehicles may be diligent but lack the spirit of enlightenment; outsiders may be intellectually brilliant, but they lack wisdom. Ignorant and stupid, petty and fearful, they think there's something real in the empty fist."

To cultivate the mind or seek the mind in this manner is to be obstructed by calculating and figuring, burying the inherently perfect light. Not only that, it repudiates the true teaching of the Buddha and makes for uninterrupted hell.

Furthermore, countless abbots of monasteries from the sixth century even up until now have been mere ignoramuses, deficient in wisdom, taking in the unseeing masses of egotistical and possessive people. Can we not pity them? Can we not feel sorry for them? Even those who from time to time emerge from that nest see spirits and ghosts, their thieving mind not yet dead.

Some of them may wrongly give definite approval to a temporary surge of energy, or it may happen that through a temporary inspiration they sit for a long time without laying down, so that the mind and consciousness are thoroughly fatigued, everything becomes the same to them, activity and function stop for a while, and thoughts quiet down; then they misunderstand this state, which resembles the solitary radiance where inside and outside become one, the original ground of the fundamental state of the essential self.

Taking this interpretation to Zen teachers who have no true perception, they present this view. Since the teachers have no eyes to perceive people, therefore they go along with the words of those who come to them, giving them worthless approval, so that they call themselves graduate Zen monks. Countless followers of the Way with shallow consciousness and little learning fall into this poison. Truly, even as we say it is the age of dereliction of the teaching, is it not all pathetic?

I humbly say to people who are real seekers, who have the same aspiration, do not cling to one device or one state, do not rely on intellectual understanding or brilliance, do not carry around what you learn by sitting. Plunging body and mind into the great treasury of light without looking back "sit gradually under the eaves" without seeking enlightenment, without trying to get rid of illusions, without aversion to the rising of thoughts, and yet without fondly continuing thoughts.

If you do not continue thoughts, thoughts cannot arise by themselves. Like an empty spacem like a mass of fire, letting your breathing flow naturally out and in, sit decisively without getting involved in anything at all.

Even if eighty-four random thoughts arise and disappear, as long as the individual does not get involved in them but lets go of them, then each thought will become the light of spiritual power and wisdom. And it does not only while sitting; every step is the walk of light. Not engaging in subjective thinking step after step, twenty-four hours a day, you are like someone completely dead, utterly without self-image or subjective thoughts.

Nevertheless, outgoing breathing and incoming breathing, the essence of hearing and the essence of feeling, without conscious knowledge or subjective discriminations, are silently shining light in which body and mind are one suchness. Therefore when called there is an immediate response. This is the light in which the ordinary and the sage, the deluded and the enlightened, are one suchness. Even in the midst of activity, it is not hindered by activity. The forest flowers, the grasses and leaves, people and animals, great and small, long and short, square and round, all appear at once, without depending on the discriminations of your thoughts and attention. This is manifest proof that the light is not obstructed by activity. It is empty luminosity spontaneously shining without exerting mental energy.

This light has never had any place of abode. Even when buddhas appear in the world, it does not appear in the world. Even though they enter nirvana, it does not enter nirvana. When you are born, the light is not born. When you die, the light is not extinguished. It is not more in Buddhas and not less in ordinary beings. It is not lost in confusion, not awakened by enlightenment. It has not location, no appearance, no name. It is the totality of everything. It cannot be grasped, cannot be rejected, cannot be attained. While unattainable, it is in effect throughout the entire being. From the highest heaven above to the lowest hell below, it is thus completely clear, a wondrously inconceivable spiritual light.

If you believe and accept this mystic message, you do not need to ask anyone else whether it is true or false; it will be like meeting your own father in the middle of town. Do not petition other teachers for a seal of approval, and do not be eager to be given a prediction and realize fruition. Unconcerned even with these things, why then concentrate on food, clothing, and shelter, or about animalistic activity based on sexual desire and emotional attachment?

This absorption in the treasury of light is from the very beginning the site at which all Buddhas realize the ocean of enlightenment. Therefore it is sitting as Buddha and acting as Buddha, carried on in its utter simplicity. Those who are already Buddhist should sit at rest only in the sitting of Buddha. Do not sit in the sitting of hells, the sitting of hungry ghosts, the sitting of beasts, the sitting of antigods, humans, or celestial beings; do not sit in the sitting of hearers or those who awake to conditioning.

Simply sitting in this way, do not waste time. This is called the enlightenment site of the straightfoward mind, absorption in the treasury of light of inconceivable liberation.

This essay should not be shown to anyone but people who are in the school and have entered the room.

My only concern is that there should be no false and biased views, whether in one's own practice or in teaching others.

*Absorption in the Treasury of Light, written by Zen Master Ejo (1198-1282).*

*Translated by Thomas Cleary, text taken from Minding Mind.*