



## **Question and Answer Series:**

**The Legacy of Bodhidharma**

**By Grandmaster Wong Kiew Kit**

## Question 1

When Bodhidharma originally taught the monks at the Shaolin Monastery, was his intention simply to help them achieve Enlightenment, or was there more to it? Did he realize that his teachings would evolve and be built on, that the Shaolin Legacy would last for a thousand years and more, that millions of people would benefit from his art? Did he know that one day a master like you would take the core of his teachings and openly share it with the entire world? That all this would still be only the beginning?"

- Tapio Raevaara

## Answer

I believe that Bodhidharma's intention was simply to help the monks at the Shaolin Monastery to achieve Enlightenment. He was a Zen patriarch. He lived for the present moment, not in the past nor the future. Although he had the "wisdom eye" to see that his Zen teaching, i.e. teaching monks to attain Enlightenment, would one day branch into five Zen schools, which it did, he never planned it. The development was natural. Although Bodhidharma, as a crown prince, was a great martial artist himself, he did not teach kungfu at the Shaolin Monastery. Shaolin kungfu and chi kung later evolved from the Eighteen Lohan Hands and Sinew Metamorphosis which was originally taught by him for spiritual cultivation.

Though he did not actively engineer it, with his "wisdom eye" he would have realized that his teaching would evolve and be built upon, and that the Shaolin Legacy would benefit posterity. Indeed that was what his own teacher had told him to do, resulting in his voluntarily and gladly renouncing his kingship to spread his teaching to the East. Thank you for your compliments on me spreading Bodhidharma's teaching. Although our school Shaolin Wahnam, has spread to many countries in all the six continent, our expansion was due to meeting expedient needs, and not due to prior planning.

Seeing the real possibility of genuine Shaolin Kungfu being lost to posterity, my original intention of establishing Shaolin Wahnam was to preserve it and teach it to deserving students irrespective of race, culture and religion. Then, seeing that many sick people could have recovered from their illness if they could practice Shaolin chi kung but they did not have the opportunity because Shaolin chi kung at that time was taught only to advanced Shaolin kungfu practitioners, I broke tradition and taught Shaolin chi kung to the public. Later when some disciples had convinced me that we should also

preserve genuine Taijiquan, we included it in our Shaolin Wahnam repertoire.

Like the great Bodhidharma before us and drawing inspiration from him, although we did not actively plan it to happen, we can foresee that our Shaolin Wahnam legacy will be preserved for and benefit posterity. But we operate at a much lower level than what Bodhidharma did. Bodhidharma taught monks, i.e. those who voluntarily renounced worldly affairs to cultivate for the highest spiritual attainment, to achieve Enlightenment.

We teach lay people how to be healthy and happy in the phenomenal world.

## Question 2

In kungfu and chi kung circles lineage is important, especially in Eastern culture. In the West this is generally not given as much attention.

We can trace our lineage back to the venerable Bodhidharma not only through historical documentation, but mainly the arts we practise that he taught and initiated at the Temple some 1500 years ago. I'm sure a lot of people in our school are aware, but probably many other people do not know that as the Shaolin arts can be traced back to Bodhidharma, his lineage went in a direct line back to the Buddha.

I wonder if we could receive some insight on why maintaining a lineage is worthwhile, and not vanity and attachment as some people mistakenly think.

Perhaps in addition some thoughts on how the teachings and arts may have evolved over time from the Buddha to Bodhidharma. And after the institutionalization of the arts at the Shaolin temples came to an end, have we seen the zenith of the Shaolin arts from Bodhidharma as they are no longer institutionalized and developed in such an environment or could they continue to develop and crystallize further in the future?"

- Sifu Omar Iversen

## Answer

While lineage is important, there are other factors to consider too. One important factor is where the essence of the art has been lost in the lineage. This, unfortunately, is the case in most schools today. They can trace their lineage to great masters in the past, and the forms they practice are genuine, but they have lost the essence.

Most schools not only have lost the essence of their lineage, they have lost the essence of kungfu and chi kung in general too. How many kungfu schools today use their kungfu forms for combat, and how many chi kung schools have experience of chi? Indeed, it is shocking that modern masters who use kick-boxing for combat, and who do not believe in chi are just three generations from great masters in the past famous for their kungfu combat efficiency and internal force.

We were incredibly generous in wanting to help practitioners of such lineages recover the essence of their arts. We went to the extent of saying they could learn from us and return to teach in their own schools what they

found useful without mentioning the material was from us. Such generosity was rare in the whole of kungfu and chi kung history. But either they do not believe us or are too proud to learn from us.

While it is true that the Shaolin and Taijiquan arts are non-religious, and many Shaolin and Taijiquan masters were and are Christian, Muslim and of a religion other than Buddhism and Taoism, not many people, especially those outside our school, know this fact. Therefore, we are particularly careful not to hurt the sensitivities of followers of other religions.

Buddhism and Taoism are not religions in the way most Westerners conceptualize what a religion is. The gist of Buddhism is avoiding evil, doing good, and cultivating the mind. A Taoist is one who cultivates the way to attain Truth. There is no requirement whatsoever to believe or not to believe in any particular Teacher.

Maintaining a lineage is not vanity or attachment, though some schools regard lineage in this way. They may have descended directly from great masters in the past, but if they claim that kungfu cannot be used for fighting and internal force is not true, as many of them do, they are actually insulting the great masters of their own lineage.

Other schools may not make such claims, but if they cannot use kungfu for combat and have no internal force, like what past masters of their lineage used and had, and they make no effort to restore the great achievements of their own past masters, they are not paying due respect to the masters of their own lineage even though they may have much attachment to their lineage, possibly to boost their reputation.

Maintaining a lineage is a good way to show respect and gratitude to the masters who passed down the arts to us. In our lineage, except for the Venerable Chee Seen and Uncle Righteousness, who were well known in Chinese kungfu circles but not in the West, the other masters were not well known. This is testimony that we did not attempt to use our lineage to glamorize ourselves. Rather we maintain our lineage because we honour and are grateful to our past masters. Indeed, the past masters in our lineage are becoming more well known now because of our effort in honouring them.

Stretching our history to the remote past from the Buddha to Bodhidharma, there are two invaluable lessons worth noting, though many people may not be aware of them.

Followers of the Buddha's teaching right down to the time of Bodhidharma never called their practice "Buddhism"! What did they call it? In Sanskrit it was called "dharma", and in Chinese it was called "jiao". Both "dharma" and "jiao" mean "teaching". There was no connotation of religion at all.

Bodhidharma, like the Buddha, was Indian, not Chinese. When I first taught Shaolin kungfu and later chi kung to non-Chinese, many Chinese masters fiercely opposed my action. I could readily reduce, if not totally erase, their objection by reminding them that the great Bodhidharma, whom we sincerely and gratefully honour as the First Patriarch of the Shaolin arts, was Indian, not Chinese.

If there was any objection left, I could remove it by subtly suggesting that if they were still not happy, they could always spar with me. It was not logical, but the general attitude was that if your kungfu sparring was superior to them, especially if you demonstrated it gracefully without them losing face, they would “moh wah ho kong” (Cantonese), which means “have nothing more to say”.

Before I present my thoughts on how the teaching had evolved over time from the Buddha to Bodhidharma, please bear in mind that the teaching of both the Buddha and Bodhidharma aimed at helping students attain Enlightenment, not attain good health, vitality, longevity, peak performance and combat efficiency as we now do in our school

The Buddha’s teaching was described as “Buddha’s Zen”, and Bodhidharma’s teaching as “Patriarch’s Zen”. More poetically, the Buddha’s teaching was described as “teaching within the tradition”, whereas Bodhidharma’s teaching as “teaching outside the tradition”.

In Buddha’s Zen an aspirant first stilled his mind in sammadha meditation. Then he used his one-pointed mind to investigate into Ultimate Reality in visspasana meditation. Eventually he “saw” Ultimate Reality and attained Enlightenment.

In Patriarch’s Zen an aspirant aimed to attain no thought or no mind. There were two main approaches, using Zen meditation and using seemingly illogical questions known as “gong-an” (koan). Eventually he “saw” his Original Face and attained Enlightenment.

Buddha’s Zen was described as “teaching within the tradition” because it was orthodox, and was systematically practiced in a monastery. Patriarch’s Zen was described as “teaching outside the tradition” because it was unorthodox even when it occurred inside a monastery. For example, a monk might ask his master what was the meaning of Bodhidharma coming from the West, and the master might suddenly barked like a dog!

Yes, with the burning of the Shaolin temples, the Shaolin arts have deteriorated to a ridiculous level now. Instead of practicing Zen, people now study Zen – and they do not even know what the difference is. Instead of using kungfu for combat, they bounce about and use kick-boxing. Instead of

using chi kung to develop internal force, they lift weights and build big muscles.

Yet, there is real hope that we may continue to develop and crystallize the Shaolin arts further. Others may call us boastful or presumptuous, but we are honest with ourselves. The standard of our attainment is still far below that of past Shaolin monks and masters, but the speed and efficiency of our accomplishment is truly astonishing.

For example I just came back from a “Cosmic Breathing” class in Spain. About half the class experienced their spirit expanded beyond their body! This is simply incredible, and we can understand if other people think we are lying. If Shaolin monks in the past could have similar results after five years of cultivation, it would be considered remarkable.

In the Shaolin Kungfu class concluded yesterday, relative beginners experienced internal force on the first day of training, and were able to use Shaolin Kungfu in free sparring on the third day. It is true their force is nowhere near that of an external martial artist at black-belt level, and our beginning students would be badly beaten by him in free sparring.

But these are not the issues in question. We never say that we are more powerful than others or will beat others in free sparring. We say we have internal force and can use kungfu in free sparring. Whether we are more powerful or are better fighters is another issue. In comparison to our students now, it took me many years of dedicated training before I could experience any internal force, and also many years before I could use my kungfu in free sparring, and I was generally regarded as a fast learner.

### **Question 3**

If the Great Bodhidharma were alive today, rather than 1500 years ago, how and what do you think his teaching would be?

- Andrew

### **Answer**

I think the teaching of the great Bodhidharma would be similar to what we teach in our school.

This is so because both Bodhidharma and we use the same principles, or more correctly we follow Bodhidharma's principles, namely being simple, direct and effective.



## Question 4

I was just wondering did great and famous masters in the past such as Lam Sai Wing or Wong Fei Hung practice any of these arts you are so kindly going to teach at this historical Legacy of Bodhidharma -course?

- Jani

## Answer

The chi kung courses I shall teach in the Legacy of Bodhidharma courses will be the Eighteen Lohan Hands, Sinew Metamorphosis and Bone Marrow Cleansing.

I believe the two great masters, Wong Fei Hoong and Lam Sai Weng, did not practice these arts. They practiced the Iron-Wire Set which made them very powerful.

Bodhidharma taught these arts in the 6th century. Wong Fei Hoong and Lam Sai Weng lived in the 20th century. There was a wide gap of 1400 years between them, during which time the arts would have evolved greatly.

I believe Yuan Zhong and the other twelve Shaolin monks who helped Li Shi Ming to established the Tang Dynasty, practiced these arts.

By the time of the next dynasty, the Song Dynasty, the Eighteen-Lohan Art would have evolved from the Eighteen Lohan Hands. But the Eighteen-Lohan Art did not replaced the Eighteen Lohan Hands. Those who focused on health practiced the Eighteen Lohan Hands, whereas those who focused on martial art practiced the Eighteen-Lohan Art.

It was probably during this time that the first eight exercises of the Eighteen Lohan Hands were practiced as Ba Duan Jin or the Eight Pieces of Brocade. Interestingly, the Eight Pieces of Brocade were popular amongst Taoist cultivators to the extent that it is now regarded as a Taoist art.

The First Emperor of the Song Dynasty, who was a Shaolin master, practiced the Eighteen-Lohan Art. The Eighteen-Lohan Art became the main method for force training in Taizuquan, or First Emperor Kungfu, the style of Northern Shaolin Kungfu developed by and named after the First Song Emperor.

Yue Fei, a Shaolin master and great Song Dynasty general probably practiced all the chi kung exercises of Bodhidharma's legacy, though he was well known for the Eight Pieces of Brocade and Sinew Metamorphosis. Three styles of kungfu issued from him, namely Xingyiquan, Eagle Claw Kungfu and Ngok Ka Kungfu (Kungfu of Yue Family).

The internal force of Xingyiquan probably came from the Eighteen lohan Hands and stance training. The special internal force training of Eagle Claw Kungfu came from a particular pattern in the Eighteen-Lohan Art. Ngok Ka Kungfu is famous for Tiu Harng Kung, which literally means the Art of Suspension. It was developed from Sinew Metamorphosis.

Zhang San Feng, the First Patriarch of Internal Arts, practiced all styles of Shaolin chi kung and developed a new methodology of internal force training using continuous graceful movement. No special name was given to this methodology at his time, but now it is generally known as Taijigong, or Taiji Art. Our "form-flow-force" approach or "flow method" is close to it.

Eighteen-Lohan Art was widely practiced during the subsequent Ming Dynasty, and was the principal internal force training method in Praying Mantis and other northern Shaolin styles like Lohanquan, Huaquan, Hongquan and Chaquan.

Southern Shaolin styles like Hoong Ka and Wing Choon used the "triple-stretch" method derived from Sinew Metamorphosis. The force training method of the Iron-Wire Set of Wong Fei Hoong and Lam Sei Weng was developed from the "triple-stretch" method. Nevertheless, Dragon Style Kungfu and Pak Mei Kungfu from Pak Mei, Wudang Kungfu from Fung Tou Tuck, as well as Choy-Li-Fatt used the Eighteen-Lohan Art.

It is interesting to trace the different modes of force training employed by different masters at different times. We in Shaolin Wahnam are very lucky. We have collected these different force training methods and made them available to those who are interested in them.

## Question 5

Given that many Buddhists feel that the phenomenal realm is an illusion, why is there also emphasis on mindfulness in Zen? What benefit comes from being so keenly aware of an illusion?

- Chiahua

## Answer

By “illusion” we do not mean we imagine something to be there when it is actually not there. Illusion means appearance. The same thing appears differently to different being.

If you look at your hand, you see your hand. But a scientist looking at your hand through a gigantic electron-microscope will not see your hand; he sees a pattern of sub-atomic particles. A fairy passing by may not see your hand or you at all.

Your hand is an illusion. All the other things, living and non-living, in our phenomenal world are illusions. They appear differently to different beings.

To be gently mindful of the present, which is an important aspect of Zen training, brings us a lot of benefits. Instead of lamenting over the past or worrying about the future, we live our present as best as we can, wholesomely enjoying every moment of it.

This does not mean we do not care about our past or future, we just do not lament or worry over them. If you release that you have done something wrong in the past, which can be manifested in the present, correct the mistake if you can and don't repeat it. If you are doubtful about your future, which can also be manifested in the present, make appropriate changes in the present so that your future will unfold the way you would like it to be, taking care that whatever you do will not bring any harm to yourself and others.

But why should we be mindful of the present, despite the many benefits it brings, when the present as well as the past and future is an illusion. Unless you are enlightened or in moments of spiritual awakening, describing the present as illusory is a process of intellectualization.

In practical terms, as long as you live in the phenomenal world, the present (as well as the past and future) is real – subjectively real, subjected to how universal energy, the stuff that makes up the universe, enters your six entries,

i.e. how you perceive everything around you and beyond through your eyes, ears, mouth, nose, skin and mind.

When you look at your hand, no matter how you intellectualize that it is just a mass of energy not separated from all the energy around, which is actually true, you will still perceive your hand as your hand and not something else.

If you wrote a cheque, no matter how you intellectualize about it now as being an illusion, the reality remains that you wrote a cheque. If you do not have enough money in the bank to honour the cheque, no matter how you intellectualize about the bank being an illusion, the reality remains that your cheque will bounce.

The reality is subjective – subject to the types of six entries of the people involved with the cheque and the bank. Millions of micro-organisms in the ink of your pen would perceive the same interaction of energy differently. They may perceive reality – subjected to their six entries – as being transport from (what we call) your pen to a cheque to a distant land for vacation.

Living in the phenomenal world, being mindful of the present enables you to live your life to the full. If you are ready, being mindful may help you to break through the illusion and have a glimpse of Ultimate Reality, even for a momentless moment, to attain a spiritual awakening.

## Question 6

Considering that there were already prior Buddhas ( e.g Lao Tse ) with lineage in China , why did Bodhidharma go East ?

- Damian

## Answer

The Zen answer is to enjoy a cup of tea.

Depending on your realization, it can be Bodhidharma enjoying a cup of tea, you enjoying a cup of tea, I enjoying a cup of tea, everybody or nobody enjoying a cup of tea.

An intellectual answer is to spread Zen, i.e. to teach people in the East attain Enlightenment.

There are different ways to attain Enlightenment, called by different names by different peoples of different cultures. People in China at that time, both followers of Taoism and Confucianism called it attaining the Way or attaining the Tao. Yoga practitioners in India called it union with Brahman, and people in the West today call it returning to God the Holy spirit.

As people are different there are countless different ways to achieve the same supreme goal, though it may be called by different names. So, although there were already enlightened beings in China, like Lao Tzu, Zhuang Tzu, Confucius and Mencius, teaching deserving students how to attain the highest spiritual fulfilment, Bodhidharma still went there to contribute to the rich and extensive repertoire of spiritual cultivation methods.

Judging from the number of aspirants attaining the highest spiritual fulfilment documented in historical records, Bodhidharma's method was the most successful. There were more adepts attaining the highest spiritual fulfilment using Zen than any other methods.

We in Shaolin Wahnam certainly have benefited from Bodhidharma coming to the East. Even when we are not ready to attain Enlightenment now, his teaching has enriched our lives in so many ways.

## Question 7

Sifu, would you say that the Bodhidharma's arts have changed over time, or have they changed at all?

- Markus Kahila

## Answer

As in many other questions concerning chi kung, the answer can be yes and no.

In principle, Bodhidharma's teaching is timeless. It was as valid then as it is now. Fundamentally, both the methods and the benefits have remained the same throughout time.

Regarding methods, it is getting into a chi kung state of mind and use appropriate form to generate energy. Regarding benefits, it is employing energy to clear blockage to attain good health, vitality and longevity, to enhance performance in whatever we do, and to break through the illusory physical body to attain spiritual goals.

Even the form is similar. The chi kung patterns we practice now in our school are similar to those taught by Bodhidharma as recorded in classic texts and pictures.

We don't mean to be presumptions, but it appears that we are even more cost-effective than the Shaolin monks in the past, though their level of attainment was much higher due to the amount of time they dedicated to the arts. Our students experience chi flow, internal force and spiritual expansion into the Cosmos in much shorter time than past Shaolin monks as described in classical records.

## **Question 8**

Sifu, do you think there are lineages other than ours who practice genuine, high-level chi kung of Budhidharma's teaching today?

- Markus Kahila

## **Answer**

Yes, there are but they are rare.

They are also not as generous as we do in giving our teaching, and not as wide spread as our school. Aspirants would have to spent much more time and effort to find them than to find us.

## Question 9

Sifu, there are fantastic stories of past practitioners of Sinew Metamorphosis. Do you think it would be possible or feasible for modern practitioners to attain marvellous feats through diligent Sinew Metamorphosis training.

- Markus Kahila

## Answer

Of course. Not only it is possible and feasible, it is actually happening in our school – on a routine basis. Those attending the Legacy of Bodhidharma courses in the coming Winter Camp in Norway are expected – not just hoped – to have similar results.

Today many people suffered from so-called incurable diseases, like cancer, high blood pressure, diabetes, asthma, chronic pain, depression and addiction to alcohol and drugs. Many of our students have overcome such diseases by practicing chi kung from Bodhidharma's Legacy.

Breaking a brick with a palm strike is quite a feat; breaking the lower of two bricks without breaking the top one is considered impossible by many people. But many of our students have done that. Sinew Metamorphosis is excellent for developing the internal force required for such a seemingly impossible feat.

Many people have read that past masters could spar for hours without feeling tired and without panting for breaths. They wonder how this could be done, seeing many martial artists today out of breath after 10 minutes of sparring. It may be incredible but true that most of our students can do this! This feat can be derived from practicing chi kung of Bodhidharma's Legacy.

It is fantastic to read about stories of elderly female kungfu masters beating able-bodied young men. How could a small-sized person defeat a much bigger, much stronger opponent? The answer lies in internal force. The chi kung in Bodhidharma's Legacy is excellent for developing internal force. Those interested can find a lot of videos on my website showing free sparring where size, age and gender are not important.

Bathed in celestial light, inner light radiating out of the body, seeing God, expanding into the Cosmos, being nowhere and everywhere – these are fantastic experiences of great masters in their spiritual training. Some people may wonder whether these experiences are real. We know for certain that



these are real, because many of our students have such beautiful, spiritual experiences in our Sinew Metamorphosis courses. Understandingly, many other people may not believe it, but it is true. We are going to have such beautiful, spiritual experiences at the coming Winter Camp.

## **Question 10**

Sifu, can I start practicing Zen effectively after attending the Legacy of Bodhidharma courses?

- Markus Kahila

## **Answer**

Yes, those attending the Legacy of Bodhidharma courses can start practicing Zen effectively after the courses. They will derive wonderful benefits from their practice.

The practice needs not even be formal. It becomes part of their daily life.

The hallmark of Zen is being simple, direct and effective. These qualities will be inculcated at the Legacy of Bodhidharma courses so that almost effortlessly they can apply these qualities in their daily life to enhance their work and play. They will also have a lot of energy and mental clarity.

## **Question 11**

If you had to summarise the Great Bodhidharma's teachings in a single sentence, what would that sentence be?

- Sifu Andrew Bartnett

## **Answer**

Bodhidharma's teaching, when practiced correctly, will give you good health, vitality, longevity, mental freshness, combat efficiency and spiritual joys.

## Question 12

Regarding the Arts of Energy and Mind that Bodhidharma transmitted some 1500 years ago, why did it take so long for them to be made available to the general public at the high level taught in Shaolin Wahnam?

- Sifu Andrew

## Answer

These arts were elite, taught only to emperors, state ministers, generals and special disciples. Not only the general public had no chance to learn these elite arts, they did not even have the chance to learn mediocre arts of energy and mind.

This is a fact many people in the West may not be aware. Many people in the West mistakenly think that most, if not all, Chinese knew kungfu, chi kung, and Zen. They also mistakenly think that all kungfu, chi kung and Zen were the same; they do not realize that there was a huge difference in both the types of kungfu, chi kung and Zen practiced, as well as the quality of benefits derived.

The truth was that only very few privileged Chinese had a chance to learn even mediocre kungfu, chi kung and Zen, and of course to learn the highest arts was a very, very rare opportunity. China was a feudal society. Most people were poor farmers or labourers whose time was fully occupied with finding enough to survive.

The kungfu practiced by a privileged few was mainly physical. Meanwhile the highest arts of energy and mind were taught inside the Shaolin Monastery, not available to the public. Nevertheless, some techniques of these arts of energy and mind were brought out of the Monastery by secular Shaolin masters and taught to very few selected disciples.

However, over time the essence was lost, only the outward forms remained. This problem was aggravated by the fact that, unlike in Shaolin Wahnam, in traditional Chinese culture, students did not ask questions, and both teachers and students believed in long, dogged training. Concepts like smart learning and improving methodology, which we benefit from in Shaolin Wahnam, were alien in traditional Chinese thinking.

## **Question 13**

Sifu - Did Shaolin Kung fu evolve out of the Qi Gong patterns themselves? Or were they a result of the Qi Flow from these exercises?

- Sifu Christina

## **Answer**

Some Shaolin Kungfu evolved from the Eighteen Lohan Hands, some from the chi flow resulting from these chi kung exercises, and some from former generals who cultivated as monks at the Shaolin Monastery to attain Enlightenment.

The patterns from the Eighteen Lohan Hands evolved into the Eighteen Lohan Fist, which was the prototype set of Shaolin Kungfu. But the monks who evolved these Lohan Hands into Lohan Fist were already very proficient in kungfu. They introduced many of their kungfu techniques into the Eighteen Lohan Fist. They also created techniques to meet various combat situations.

Later, Zhan San Feng formalized his chi flow movements into kungfu patterns which contributed to the extensive repertoire of Shaolin Kungfu.

## Question 14

Sifu, were the 18 Lohan Hands taught to the monks at a more physical level than what you teach us now?

- Sifu Roeland Dijkema

## Answer

Based on records still in extant, yes, I believe the Eighteen Lohan Hands taught to the monks at the Shaolin Monastery in the past were at a more physical level than what I am teaching now.

It was similar to what I first taught about 30 years ago (about 1980s). My early students had to repeat the forms many times in a relaxed manner without thinking of anything and with appropriate breathing. After practicing for about 4 to 6 months, they would have some slight chi flow. Gradually their chi flow became more and more vigorous.

Today in a regional course, students can have a vigorous chi flow in the first hour! It is incredible how much we have improved in our teaching methodology.

And now we realise that it is the chi flow, not the techniques themselves, that gives us the benefits of good health, vitality, longevity, mental freshness and spiritual joys. It took me more than 25 years to realize that, which was remarkable, considering that most other chi kung practitioners, including masters, may not know this important fact.

## Question 15

When the great Bodhidharma came to Shaolin he found the monks too weak to practice meditation adequately;

- If the great Bodhidharma were alive today, what do you think his opinion would be of the general public's spiritual condition?

- If the great Bodhidharma were alive today, what do you think he would teach openly to the general public?

- Sifu Andy

## Answer

This may be a surprise to some people, but I think people today, especially in the West, are more knowledgeable in spiritual matters than people in the past. Modern people are also more spiritual in practice.

For example, today people have access to spiritual literature that was unthinkable in the past. If they want to, they can read up great varieties of techniques for spiritual cultivation – though they may not have the necessary skills to practice them correctly.

In spiritual practice, despite the many cruelties still abound, I believe people today are more kind to others, including strangers they have never met. Charities and volunteer work are more now than in the past.

Hence, if Bodhidharma were alive today, he would be very pleased. Both people and conditions are more suitable for spiritual cultivation now than before. Nevertheless, I am sure of one thing. He would tell many people, especially those in the West who “study” or read about spiritual cultivation, “Stop intellectualizing; practice.”

I am not sure whether he would teach openly to the general public, as his teaching was elite. But if he were to teach openly to the general public, he would teach the same arts he taught at the Shaolin Monastery as these arts were the best. A great teacher always teaches his best.

## Question 16

Sifu,

For the four arts of 18 Lohan Hands, Sinew Metamorphosis, Bone Marrow Cleansing and Zen:

- What are the differences in outcome one can expect if practised correctly and diligently
- What criteria would a person use to decide which art to practise at any given time
- What effect has each art had in your life
- In what order and at what pace did Bodhidharma introduce these arts to the Shaolin monks?

If someone was a "fresh beginner" to this whole area how would you suggest they include each of these arts into a daily practice initially, after 6 months, after one year?

- Sifu Barry Smale

## Answer

Holistically all these four legacies of Bodhidharma have the same outcome if one practices them correctly and diligently, i.e. it gives him good health, vitality, longevity, mental freshness and spiritual joys, though the depth and intensity may be different.

Hence, we would consider their thematic aspects. Relatively, the Eighteen Lohan Hands provide good health, Sinew Metamorphosis provides a lot of internal force, Bone Marrow Cleansing is excellent for purification physically as well as emotionally and spiritually, and Zen training gives mental clarity and spiritual expansion.

Please note the qualifier "relatively". All the four great arts give all the benefits mentioned above, but each art is more cost-effective in some particular results. If a person is sick, for example, he can regain good health by practicing Zen or any of the other Bodhidharma's legacies, but it would be most cost-effective if he practices the Eighteen Lohan Hands. On the other hand, if a healthy person wishes to have mental clarity or to expand into the



Cosmos, he can derive these benefits by practicing the Eighteen Lohan Hands or any other Bodhidharma's legacies, but it would be most cost-effective if he practices Zen training.

Three criteria a practitioner should consider when deciding which one of Bodhidharma's legacies to practice are his needs and aspirations, resources available and his developmental stage.

If his objective is to develop a lot of internal force so that he can win free sparring competitions, for example, the best choice is Sinew Metamorphosis. However, if this course is not available or the instructor teaching it only teaches external form, the next best choice is Bone Marrow Cleansing.

However, if he is new to chi kung (genuine chi kung, not just chi kung forms), Bone Marrow Cleansing may be too powerful for him. He should then choose Eighteen Lohan Hands even though relatively it provides less internal force than Bone Marrow Cleansing and sinew Metamorphosis.

Obviously, one needs some background understanding to be able to benefit from the advice above. For many people outside our school, even when they trust our advice and understand the dictionary meaning of all the words used in the advice, they may still not benefit from it.

For example, because they do not really understand the difference between genuine chi kung and external chi kung forms, they would not understand why practicing Eighteen Lohan Hands as genuine chi kung would give them more internal force than practicing Sinew Metamorphosis as external forms, or why correctly practicing Bone Marrow Cleansing as genuine chi kung may be harmful if they are not ready for it. Our Shaolin Wahnam students will have no difficulty understanding all this and benefit from it.

For me personally, and speaking generally, the Eighteen Lohan Hands was my first introduction to these four arts of Bodhidharma. It laid the foundation for my training and development in the other three arts. Without the training in the Eighteen Lohan Hands, I would not be able to develop into the depth and richness of the other three arts that I have.

When I first practiced Sinew Metamorphosis myself and taught it to a few selected disciples, it was at a physical level. I myself had to perform all the 12 exercises in the Sinew Metamorphosis set, performing each exercise 49 times, yet the internal force I generated then was less than the internal force I can now generate by performing any one of the exercises only 3 times! Understandably, many people outside our school will find this hard to believe.

The effect is most impressive and has far-reaching consequences in both my personal life as well as the benefits our students get as a result of my teaching. It manifests the great importance of mind. It clearly demonstrates the great difference between practicing any chi kung exercise at the mind level or as external physical forms. It took me more than 10 years from the time when I was already an accomplished Shaolin master to arrive at this stage when I perform and teach at the mind level. It is ridiculous (in a good sense) that now Shaolin Wahnam students can get similar benefits in less than 4 hours.

My development of the mind level as a result of Sinew Metamorphosis led me to my “discovery” of Bone Marrow Cleansing. I was wondering at the debate whether Bodhidharma taught Bone Marrow Cleansing as there was no record of its form though there was record of its effects. It suddenly dawned on me that unlike in Eighteen Lohan Hands and Sinew Metamorphosis, there were no specific forms in Bone Marrow Cleansing but there were specific effects.

For me personally, the singular effect of Bone Marrow Cleansing, not obvious at the time of its development but more noticeable from hindsight, is to highlight the important difference between form and effect, between techniques and benefits. This concept enables us in Shaolin Wahnam to be very cost-effective.

I did not learn Zen formally from any of my sifus, but I had much Zen training from them informally. Thus the material I am going to teach in the Zen course at Winter Camp as well as in a few Zen courses I taught before, is gathered from my own experience and practice which I have found to be very useful.

Many people have commented on my mental clarity, and also many people are inspired by my experiencing joy in daily living. These are the effect of my Zen training.

Bodhidharma first taught the Eighteen Lohan Hands, then Sinew Metamorphosis to the Shaolin monks at a pace that was most suitable for their progress. Different monks would progress at different rates, just as our Shaolin Wahnam students nowadays do. But it can be safely said that both the rate of learning and the rate of accomplishing the result of the Shaolin monks were much slower than ours.

It was never recorded, in fact it was unthinkable, that any of the Shaolin monks could learn any of the four great arts or attained any of the results in a course of four hours!

Our understanding of techniques and benefits has changed, in fact has revolutionized, the whole concept of a practice schedule. If we want to, we can choose any one or more exercises from any one or more of Bodhidharma's legacies, and practice according to our objectives, aspirations and sometimes whims and fancies, and still attain better results in less time than most other people.

For example, if we want mental clarity, we may choose "Pushing Mountains" or "Big Bird Flaps Wings" or "Carrying the Moon" or sitting on a chair, and enjoy our practice, gently focusing on keep out all thoughts. At the end of a 10-minute session we will find our mind crystal clear, besides attaining other benefits.

But this advice is not for a "fresh beginner". It is for someone, like you (Barry), who has a good grasp of both the philosophy and the practice of our arts.

A fresh beginner will need a more conventional practice schedule like the following.

For the first six months, he should focus on the Eighteen Lohan Hands, practicing any one or two exercises from the remaining arts he has learnt once or twice a week to maintain them.

For each practice session, he can choose any one of the exercises from the Eighteen Lohan Hands. Sometimes he may choose more or all the Lohan exercises. But irrespective of the number of exercises he chooses, the time for one practice session should be about 15 minutes where at least 5 minutes, but can be more, should be for enjoying a chi flow.

From six months to a year, when he has progressed from being a fresh beginner to an intermediate student, he can spend about half his practice time to focus on the Eighteen Lohan Hands, and the other half to any one, or two or all the remaining three Bodhidharma's legacies.

After a year, if he has been practicing daily following our instructions he would have become an advanced student by today's standard. As an advanced student he would be able to formulate his own practice schedule.

He would be more proficient in chi kung skills and enjoy more benefits than most other students who have practiced for more than five years. Those who say that they are still beginners after having practiced for ten or more years do not know what they are saying. They also have wasted their time and insulted their teachers and their art, implying how inefficient their teachers have been and how useless their art is.

## Question 17

How did Bodhidharma learn the 18 Lohan Hands?

- Alex

## Answer

There was no record on how the great Bodhidharma learned the Eighteen Lohan Hands. So the answer is my guess.

But there are still classical records in extant showing how the Eighteen Lohan Hands were practiced in the Shaolin Monastery in the past. They were a few different versions, and some of them were not called Eighteen Lohan Hands. Some were called Twelve Pieces of Brocade, and some Sinew Metamorphosis and Eighteen-Lohan Art (not our present version), though it is clear that many of the exercises depicted were similar to the patterns in our Eighteen Lohan Hands.

Many of the patterns, especially in the Twelve Pieces of Brocade Seated Version and the Eighteen-Lohan Art (classical version) were similar to yoga exercise. I clearly remember the first time we had a chi kung course in Switzerland that many course participants, like your Sipak Darryl, spontaneously performed yoga-like exercises during chi flow, and I could clearly feel the divine presence of Bodhisattvas and past masters guiding us.

I believe the Eighteen Lohan Hands Bodhidharma taught were from yoga. I also believe that Bodhidharma modified some of the exercises as well as invented some new ones to suit the needs of the Shaolin monks.

You may be interested to know that I did not learn the complete set of Eighteen Lohan Hands from my sifu, Sifu Ho Fatt Nam. I learned only a few patterns, like Lifting the Sky, Separating Water and Big Windmill, as part of Shaolin Kungfu.

When I first decided to teach chi kung to the public, which was revolutionary at that time (1980s) as chi kung, more commonly known as nei kung then, was normally taught only to selected disciples, I chose to teach the Eighteen Lohan Hands.

The set of Eighteen Lohan Hands in our school was devised by me. I researched into whatever classics I could find to select what I considered the best 18 exercises for the purpose, starting with the Eight Pieces of Brocade

which I first thought were Taoist exercises and which I found to be very beneficial in my own practice.

It is also interesting to note that in my school days as a boy scout, the health exercises I practiced and which were a requirement for the basic Tenderfoot Test, were similar to the Eight Pieces of Brocade! These health exercises can be found in the book, "Scouting for Boys", written by the founder, Lord Baden Powell, himself. Of course at that time, and even when I practiced the Eight Pieces of Brocade, I performed them as gentle physical exercise and not as high-level chi kung.

I remember being amused to think that people in future would point to our set of Eighteen Lohan Hands and say, "Hey, these Shaolin chi kung exercises, which are supposed to be Buddhist, start with Taoist exercises." But I was very surprised to find later that a classic listed the eighteen exercises in the Eighteen Lohan Hands in the exact order I had devised them!

That started me wondering whether it was Buddhist monks who learned the exercises of the Eight Pieces of Brocade from Taoist masters, or the Taoist priests who learned the exercises from Buddhist masters. I still haven't found the answer. But the answer, in the spirit of Zen, is not important; what is important is that the exercises bring the desired results.

And they did. Even in my early chi kung classes, when the level of chi kung was probably about one-tenth of what we are attaining now, students told me they overcome so-called incurable diseases, including cancer! I was quite surprised.

## Question 18

According to Bodhidharma,

MANY roads lead to the Path, but basically there are only two: reason and practice.

To enter by reason means to realize the essence through instruction and to believe that all living things share the same true nature, which isn't apparent because it's shrouded by sensation and delusion.

To enter by practice refers to four all-inclusive practices: Suffering injustice, adapting to conditions, seeking nothing, and practicing the Dharma.

(from Bodhidharma's teachings)

1. To which road that the legacy of Bodhidharma (18 Lohan Hands, Yi Jin Jing, Bone Marrow Cleansing, and Zen) will lead us to, to enter the Path by reason, by practice, or both?

2. Why did the Great Bodhidharma put the emphasize on the Path, and not the destination?

- Sifu Joko Riyanto

## Answer

We need to appreciate the limitation of words. Firstly, words may not convey the exact meaning the speaker or writer intends them to be. Secondly their interpretation is much influenced by the experience and understanding of those who hear or read the words.

In this case, we have a third factor of time and a fourth factor of translation. Bodhidharma's teaching was given more than 1500 years ago, and translated from Sanskrit to classical Chinese to modern Chinese and then to English.

Considering these four factors we can better appreciate that what many people understand by reading Bodhidharma's teaching today may not be what Bodhidharma himself meant.

To help modern readers, I shall change some words which I believe better express what Bodhidharma meant, as follows:

" Many methods lead to Enlightenment, but basically there are only two: wisdom and cultivation.

To enter by wisdom means to realize the Supreme Reality through philosophy and to know that all living things share the same true nature, which isn't apparent because it's shrouded by sensation and delusion.

To enter by cultivation refers to four all-inclusive practices: tolerance, perseverance, renouncing world affairs, and practicing the Dharma."

Bodhidharma taught that there are many ways to attain Enlightenment, but all these ways can be classified into two main categories, namely wisdom and cultivation.

To attain Enlightenment through wisdom, an aspirant realizes that everything in the phenomenal world shares the same True Nature, called differently by different people such as Tathagata, God the \Holy Spirit, and the Great Void.

This True Nature is not apparent to people because it is shrouded by people's sensation and delusion due to their interpretation of the True Nature through their gross sense organs.

In modern scientific terms, it means that everything in our phenomenal world is undifferentiated energy, but after going through their eyes, ears, nose, mouth, skin and mind, people interpret this undifferentiated energy as differentiated entities like individual persons, cats, elephants, mountains and countless other living and non-living things.

To attain Enlightenment through cultivation, an aspirant has to be tolerant (including tolerant of other people's beliefs which may be different from ours), persevere against all odds, renounce all world pleasures like eating meat and enjoying sex, and practice the teaching as taught by established masters.

The road via wisdom is the road of Zen. It is pointing directly at the mind and attaining Buddha Nature in an instant.

The road via cultivation is the road of other Buddhist schools, especially Theravada Buddhism. It is poetically described as "teaching within the tradition".

It is pertinent to note that the above teaching was given by Bodhidharma to Shaolin monks, who had voluntarily renounced worldly lives. If you are a lay practitioner, it is fine if you eat meat and enjoy sex. But if one is a Shaolin monk, or claims to be, eating meat and having sex, regardless of whether he enjoys it, are not only against Bodhidharma's teaching but are two of the five cardinal sins in Mahayana monkhood.

With this background understanding, we can now better answer your two questions.

1. To which road that the legacy of Bodhidharma (18 Lohan Hands, Yi Jin Jing, Bone Marrow Cleansing, and Zen) will lead us to, to enter the Path by reason, by practice, or both?

As is often the case in our school, the answer can be by reason, by practice, by either one road, by both or by none, depending on various factors.

Although the Shaolin arts were taught by Bodhidharma to enable Shaolin monks to attain Enlightenment, this is not our aim in Shaolin Wahnam. We are still worldly. We still wholesomely enjoy eating meat, having sex and other worldly pleasures. So to us the answer is neither road. Practicing the legacy of Bodhidharma does not lead us to the road of reason or practice to enter the Path – at least not now when we are not monks.

Nevertheless, though we are not ready yet to enter the path of monkhood, practicing the legacy of Bodhidharma will give us not only a glimpse but the actual benefits that Shaolin monks in the past received from Bodhidharma. These numerous benefits may be summed up into two categories, namely giving us meaning in life, and enabling us to live lives more rewardingly. Hence, the legacy leads us to both the road of reason and the road of practice.

In practical situations, Bodhidharma's legacy may lead some of our students to the road of reason, and some to the road of practice. While practicing any of the arts, some of our students may expand into the Cosmos, and realize experientially that everything is of the same True Nature. Other students may not have such a spiritual experience, but become more tolerant and determined in whatever they do.

Now we come to your second question.

2. Why did the Great Bodhidharma put the emphasize on the Path, and not the destination?

It is a matter of interpretation. You may interpret that the "Path" as the journey, some may interpret it as the destination, yet others may interpret it as both the journey and the destination.



This is a hallmark of great teaching. It fulfils the aspirations of practitioners according to their needs and developmental stages.

Basically, Bodhidharma's teaching is as follows. You can attain Enlightenment by realizing cosmic wisdom or following established practice. The destination is the same, though people may call it by different names. There are many ways to reach the destination, but the many ways may be classified as by wisdom or by practice.

## Question 19

Sifu, some Zen masters were very open about what school of Zen they practiced, or what their lineage was. Did Sigung Ho ever discuss how he received Zen teachings, or whether he was inclined toward one school or the other?

- Chiahua

## Answer

I did not learn Zen formally from my sifu, Sifu Ho Fatt Nam. My Zen training from him was indirect, like over tea or meals. But the most important source of my Zen training was his personal example.

My sifu thought, spoke and lived the life of a Zen master. When food came, for example, he ate and enjoyed it no matter how simple the food might be. He did not speculate what the food would do in his stomach, or how the cook prepared it.

When I asked him a question, he answered it straight-away and matter-of-factly. Often his answer was in action rather than words. For example, I asked him how to counter a certain attack. He would say, "Attack me", then demonstrated the counter.

He did not tell me how he received his Zen teaching and what school he was inclined towards to. In hindsight, I reckon that if I had asked him the two questions, he would have said, as typical of Zen masters, "Now, drink your tea."

If I had politely persisted with the questions, he might have said, "Does it matter much whether I was initiated with full regal in a temple or while practicing kungfu? Does it matter much whether I am inclined toward the teaching of Bodhidharma, Hui Neng or Lin Chi? What is important is that your practice, whether you call it Zen, Tao or by any other name, brings you and other people benefit."

It may be of interest to mention that not many people, even amongst many of his own students, knew that he was a Zen master. Interestingly, the public knew him as a very high-level Taoist master with incredible powers.

How did I know he was a Zen master? He told me so! He did not say he was a Zen master. He told me that he valued and practiced Zen more than Tao. Most obviously his daily living showed without doubt he was a great Zen master.

## Question 20

Did the one finger zen hand form originate with Bodhidharma's teachings at the Shaolin Temple?

The one finger zen is used in many force training arts: One Finger Shooting Zen, Iron Wire and Golden bridge to name a few. What is the significance of one finger zen in force training and generally what effects does it have on ones daily life/combat/spiritual training?

I believe Sigung Ho's favourite art was One Finger Shooting Zen. Over other treasures such as Sinew Metamorphosis, Small Universe and meditation, what makes One Finger Shooting Zen such an amazing art?

Finally, we've read some interesting stories about Sigung Ho's expertise in one finger zen, do you perhaps have any more stories to share with us?

- Ish

## Answer

I am not sure whether the One-Finger Zen hand form originated from Bodhidharma's teaching. One of the patterns in the Eighteen Lohan Hands, "Shooting Arrows", uses the One-Finger Zen hand form, but I am not sure whether this pattern was originally taught by Bodhidharma at the Shaolin Temple or it was developed later. The many pictures in kungfu and chi kung classics showing the Eighteen Lohan Hands and Sinew Metamorphosis that I have, do not show the One-Finger Zen hand form.

The One-Finger Zen is a very high level technique in force training. Only those who are quite advanced in internal force can appreciate it. I remember that in my young days when I went looking for black belts for free sparring, Taekwondo masters often told their students to always hold their fists.

When I asked why, they said that firstly their fingers would be sprained by kicks, and secondly fists were more powerful than fingers. I was discrete enough not to argue with them that if their opponents could kick their fingers, their opponents could also kick other parts of their body, and that according to kungfu philosophy the fingers were the most powerful, followed by the palms, and then only the fists.

The lung meridian runs through to the tip of the index finger used for One-Finger Zen. According to Chinese medical philosophy, the lungs are the

organs for generating energy. When one uses the One-finger Zen in training, he enhances the lung meridian, thus generating a lot of energy.

Hence, its training which results in a lot of energy enhances every aspect of daily life and combat. When one is well trained in One-Finger Shooting Zen, it doesn't mean that only his index finger is powerful. His palms, his fist, his arms, in fact his whole body is powerful.

A lot of energy will strengthen the spirit, thus contributing to spiritual training. Not many people realize that spiritual cultivation demands a lot of energy.

My sifu, Sifu Ho Fatt Nam, once told me that lower spirits were very scared of the One-Finger Zen. He advised me not to use it on them unless it was absolutely necessary as it would cause them much injury.

I used the One-finger Zen once on a monster, which was many times more powerful than lower spirits. It was troubling a student. I asked it to go away but it refused. I pointed my One-finger Zen at it, and immediately it flew away in a hurry.

A very special feature of One-Finger Shooting Zen is that besides being very effective for combat, it is also very effective for healing. I believe that a main reason why I could help many people relieved from their suffering and recover from their so-called incurable diseases is my long training in One-Finger Shooting Zen.

The application is not necessary direct. In fact, if I wish to transmit chi I often use the sword-finger instead of the One-Finger Zen. The application is indirect. Because of the tremendous internal force I have developed in my One-Finger Shooting Zen training, I become a more efficient healer.

Here are two short stories about my sifu and his One-finger Zen, the first told to me by my sifu himself, and the second told to me by my siheng, Ah Heng, who practice Taoist cultivation from my sifu.

A strong, big-sized man insulted my sifu's mother. When my sifu intervened and advised the man to stop, he attacked my sifu. My sifu dotted a vital point at the base of his throat with One-Finger Zen. The man immediately collapsed and white foam issued continuously from his mouth.

My sifu jokingly said, "I caused me more trouble than him." My sifu had to carry the big-sized man upstairs to a room to revive him.

One day my sifu was invited to a house troubled by a monster. When my sifu and Ah Heng arrived the monster had entered the body of a woman.

On-lookers could see that the face of the woman changed immediately and her eyes became fiery red.

My sifu reasoned with the monster, asking it to leave. Suddenly the monster attacked my sifu, attempting to slap my sifu with its right hand. Instantly my sifu gripped the monster's right wrist with his left tiger-claw. Immediately the monster attempted to slap my sifu with his other hand. My sifu gripped it with his right tiger-claw.

I still remember the occasion my siheng told me this story. The incident must be quite funny as my siheng was quite amused when relating it. But the next instant was not amusing. The monster changed into a gigantic black spider, filling the whole room. (It is understandable that many people may not believe it. They can choose to believe that I talk non-sense.)

My sifu immediately used his One-Finger Zen to dot the navel of the gigantic spider. The monster immediately fled away. This incident was witnessed by many people.

## Question 21

Dear Sifu, how closely related are the teachings of Confucius and Zhang San Feng? And, are the teachings of Confucius related closely to other well known Masters in history?

- Sifu Mark Blohm

## Answer

The teachings of Confucius and of Zhang San Feng are worlds apart.

Confucius, the founder of Confucianism and regarded by many as China's top philosopher, was pragmatic and taught good living in this phenomenal world. The hallmarks of his teaching were loyalty to the state and filial piety to parents.

Zhang San Feng, a great Taoist master and regarded as the first patriarch of internal arts, did not care much about worldly affairs. The hallmarks of his teaching were internal cultivation and attaining the Tao.

Confucius also talked about attaining the Tao. But the Tao of Confucianism and the Tao of Taoism are vastly different. To Confucians, attaining the Tao means living a long and righteous life here and now. To Taoists, attaining the Tao means attaining immortality or blissfully integrated into the Cosmos.

The famous master most closely related with Confucius was Mencius. Mencius taught Confucian teachings, but what distinguished him from Confucius was that while Confucius emphasized rituals to attain a glorious state, Mencius focused on humanity to lead a meaningful life. In other words, one worked for the king, the other worked for the people.

## **Question 22**

In the Bloodstream sermon, Bodhidharma points out “To find the Buddha you have to see your nature” Sifu, can we point directly to ‘the mind’ to ‘find Buddha’ through our practice of Chi Kung, Smiling from the Heart and Don’t Worry, Don’t Intellectualize, Enjoy your practice?

- Parveen

## **Answer**

Yes, we can. Our chi kung practice like smiling from the heart, not worrying and not intellectualizing, and enjoying our practice are the method which can be used to attain supra-mundane goals like pointing direct at the mind to find Buddha.

We can also use the same method for mundane goals like enjoying good health and vitality, and attaining peak performance in our work and play.



## Question 23

In the Breakthrough Sermon Bodhidharma mentions three precepts and the six paramitas. Sifu can one “dispel the three poisons drive away the six thieves” by ‘just being’ in the present moment?

- Parveen

## Answer

In Buddhist context, the three precepts are taking refuge in the Buddha, taking refuge in the Sanka, and taking refuge in the Dharma. The six paramitas are perfection of charity, morality, tolerance, effort, meditation and wisdom.

The three poisons are greed, anger and delusion. The six thieves are eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind. Why are these six sense organs called the six thieves. It is because they distort the Supreme Cosmic Reality, called the Spiritual Body of the Buddha, and cause us to experience it as differentiated entities, or the phenomenal world.

No, in conventional language, one cannot dispel the three poisons and drive away the six thieves by just being. In other words, by doing nothing, one cannot overcome greed, anger and ignorance, and perceive reality as an undifferentiated spread of energy.

We can overcome the three poisons with the first three of the six paramitas. In other words, when we are charitable, morally upright and tolerant of other people’s beliefs, we will not be greedy, angry and deluded. By practicing the other three paramitas, we can drive away the six thieves. In other words, when we persist in practicing meditation we will acquire the cosmic wisdom not just to know that the phenomenal world is an illusion but actually experience that everything is undifferentiated.

Bodhidharma also teaches that by merely following the three precepts one cannot attain Enlightenment. In Zen terms it is described as the three precepts are useless in pointing at the Mind. Those who do not understand the teaching deeply, which means most people, will find the teaching sacrilegious. In essence it is like saying, “If you meet a Buddha, kill him!”

The deep meaning is that by merely believing in Buddhism, even becoming a monk, and reciting sutras and sitting in a lotus position, one cannot attain Buddhahood. Similarly, if you still perceive someone in this world or in the

divine realm as a Buddha, differentiated from other entities, you still exist in the phenomenal. Only when you can break through the phenomenal and perceive everything as undifferentiated, you have attained Enlightenment.

Hence, in the cosmic sense, by just being one can dispel the three poisons and drive away the six thieves. By just being, one returns to the Original State, which is Buddhahood.

## Question 24

Sifu as you have mentioned in the teachings that Samsara is Nirvana and Nirvana is Samsara, does karma also arise in 'the mind'? does it only exist when 'the mind' arises to the three poisons of greed, anger and delusion? and thus not existing when the mind is 'empty' ?

- Parveen

## Answer

Much depends on what you mean by "mind". If we take mind here to mean your personal mind, yes, karma arises in the mind. Karma, or cause and effect, exists only in the phenomenal realm. In transcendental Cosmic Reality, there is no karma. In other words, karma does not arise in the Universal Mind.

No, besides the three poisons of greed, anger and delusion, karma also arises when the personal mind thinks of good thoughts, like generosity, peace and understanding. Evil karma arises from evil thoughts, and good karma arises from good thoughts. Indeed it is because of the thought or feeling of great compassion that Bodhisattvas postpone attaining Buddhahood, and Buddhas return to the phenomenal realm as Bodhisattvas.

Yes, karma does not exist if the personal mind is perfectly empty, in which case it merges with the Universal Mind as undifferentiated.

## Question 25

Sifu if everything we are surrounded by now in our phenomenal reality is a manifestation of our mind and from seeds sown in the past, yet everything is impermanent, can we instantly change our reality through our present thoughts or is always subject to karma?

- Parveen

## Answer

The answer to both questions is yes. Yes, we can instantly change our reality through our present thoughts. Indeed, this is happening all the time, though the manifestations are too minute or subtle to be noticed by most people.

When a sick person who previous thought that his illness could not be cured, suddenly thinks that his illness can be cured, reality instantly changes. Not only there is a change in his emotions and mental set-up, there is also change in his physical body.

Everything in our phenomenal world is subjected to karma. That does not mean that karma is rigid and unchangeable. Karma is the result of thoughts, words and actions. Every time you change your thought, speech or action, you change your karma.

## Question 26

Sifu could you please offer an insight into the Lankavatara sutra and if one can realize enlightenment through compassion alone as compassion is non-dualistic and egoless?

- Parveen

## Answer

The Lankavatara Sutra is a very important sutra in Zen Buddhism. It explains that the phenomenal world is the result of consciousness. Mind scientists as well as physicists will be amazed at the breadth and depth of knowledge about the mind presented in the sutra.

One may become a Bodhidatta through compassion alone, but not realize perfect Enlightenment. Compassion is not dualistic and egoless. The counterpart of compassion is cruelty. Thus compassion and cruelty constitutes an aspect of dualism. It needs a being like a kind person to be compassionate. Hence, it is not egoless.

As soon as there is a thought or feeling of compassion, the transcendental Cosmic Reality starts its transformation into the phenomenal realm. In transcendental Cosmic Reality experienced in perfect Enlightenment, there is no compassion, no cruelty, no ego to feel or receive compassion, and no anything else. It is an undifferentiated spread of Consciousness.