

## Transmission, Ancient and Contemporary

(Spotlights on Zen)

This writing comes forth from profound gratitude and deep concern and responsibility. In fact, it is this gratitude which induces me to reveal a concern which has been growing through more than ten years. It is an act of concern for Zen and the Dharma of my Master, and also one of responsibility regarding Westerners who enter this Path of spiritual training. Moreover, it is an act of trust in my Master, to whom I owe so very much.

The subject is so important in my eyes that it has to be dealt with somewhat thoroughly. May I be forgiven that it has become lengthy.

23 years ago, Yasutani Hakuun Roshi accepted me into the Zen practice and later I have also received the guidance of Yamada Kōun Roshi. To both Masters I am deeply indebted and grateful. It is more than I ever could deserve.

During all these years I have been hearing about the transmission from India to China, from China to Japan through the generations of Zen masters who are the living “Sutra”, i.e. “guiding threads”, to whom we owe that the most precious Path of the Buddha is still alive today.

Thanks to the *koan* we also get some insight into the ways and means of guidance and transmission, starting with Bodhidharma who, when he had not found the understanding of the Chinese Emperor, Wu of Liang, went to the monastery Shao Lin (Shōrin) and sat there for nine years. There was no external activity to spread Zen, just full trust in the strength of the Inner Way. Even when Eka came to him for guidance, Bodhidharma was not eager to accept him. Only after having severely tested Eka’s endurance and resolution and when being convinced of the deep urge that had Eka driven to him, Bodhidharma

accepted him. Finally, after six years of training under Bodhidharma, Eka was authorized as the Second Patriarch in China. After Bodhidharma's death, Eka, so we hear, stayed on for a while and then went to live, withdrawn from the Zen scene, among simple folk for some time, before he finally settled down and accepted disciples who came in large numbers.

China was indeed fortunate to receive the transmission at such a high level. Quite a number of great masters appeared in the succession, the greatest probably being the Sixth Patriarch, Enō.

Enō was not given robe and bowl because he wished to receive them to be able to guide others. The Fifth Patriarch, however, recognizing Enō's outstanding spiritual depth, appointed him his successor – and that against any practical considerations. Would it not have been so much easier and more practical to appoint e.g. Myō who seems to have been so eager for it? The Fifth Patriarch even had to admonish Enō to stay in hiding for some time, which turned out to be fifteen years. The Fifth Patriarch knew of no haste and was not motivated by any utilitarian concern, so it seems. There was just the trust in the Inner Way. As we may see, it was fully rewarded.

Nangaku Ejō trained under the superb guidance of the Sixth Patriarch for fifteen years, and it is said that it took him eight years to come to deep realization (see Bankei).

We hear about Nanyō Echū, a disciple of the Sixth Patriarch for many years, who, after having been appointed Dharma successor, lived for forty years in solitude until finally, at an advanced age following the call of the Emperor, he agreed to guide people. He is also known as Chū Kokushi.

We hear about Nansen Fugan who, after having received “inka shomei”, stayed in solitude for quite some time before he started to guide people, among them the outstanding Jōshū.

As we know, Jōshū Jūshin, after his first breakthrough at the age of eighteen trained himself for forty years under Nansen Zenji and then twenty more years by “mondo” with many masters all over China. After sixty years of training he settled down in Jōshū, ready to guide disciples. His *koan* “Mu” has become world-famous and has since helped thousands of people to a breakthrough. Veneration and gratitude to this outstanding master!

We hear about Mumon Ekai, author of the “Mumon Kan”, that it took him six years of arduous practice with just this koan “Mu” to come to realization.

We hear about Isan Reiyū that he had experienced deep realization under the great master Hyakujō Ekai with whom he stayed for about twenty years. When authorized and sent to found a new monastery, he just went to that mountain and sat there in a small hut all by himself for seven or eight years. “Of course he made no effort to advertise”, we read in our Master’s Teisho. There was no haste, just trust in the Inner Way. – Later, when a monastery had grown around Isan Zenji, among many others the learned Kyōgen came to him for guidance. When Kyōgen could not respond to Isan’s demand “Show me your face before the birth of your father and mother” and after having searched the Sutra and commentaries in vain for an answer, he came back to Isan, saying “I don’t know the answer. Please tell me what it is.” Isan: “It would not be difficult for me to tell you. But if I did you would doubtlessly reproach me afterwards.”

No hints, no explanations. Kyōgen left dejected and started to live in a small hermitage. When later he suddenly experienced deep enlightenment, he profoundly thanked Isan bowing in Isan’s direction: “...If you had explained to me those things at that time, I never would have had this wonderful joy!” Yes, Isan had not deprived him of his development. Later, Kyōgen became Isan’s Dharma successor.

These are just a few spotlights on guidance and transmission in Chinese Zen and they may suffice here.

-----

As we hear, through Esai Zenji and Dōgen Zenji Zen was transmitted to Japan.

Esai Myōan had lived at a monastery since his boyhood and he went to China after having become well-versed in the Tendai tradition. According to my Master it took him about 8 – 9 years in China until he received “inka shōmei”.

Dōgen Eihei as well entered a monastery as a boy. At the age of fifteen his real search is said to have begun. Under Esai he experienced a first breakthrough. Esai having died shortly afterwards, Dōgen was trained for eight years by Esai’s Dharma successor Myōzen and finally received Myōzen’s “inka shōmei”. Far from being content with his experience so far, Dōgen went to China where he spent four or five years altogether. After having experienced deep satori under Master Nyōjō, he stayed on for two years before returning to Japan.

Japan was very fortunate indeed to receive the transmission on a very high level by these two masters. Consequently the Zen tradition began to spread and flourish there.

About a hundred years later, we find e.g. the remarkable Master Bassui Tokushō who, though he had received “inka shōmei” from his Master Kohō, proceeded with traveling around. For quite a while he withdrew from all would-be disciples, feeling not yet ready to guide them.

Among many renowned masters there is e.g. Bankei Eitaku. After having received “inka shōmei” from Master Dōsha Chōgen, he lived a number of years wandering around, withdrawn from the public, until he finally started to act as a Zen-master. Then he guided hundreds of people, monks and laymen, men and women for their sake.

One of the well-known masters of Japanese Zen is doubtlessly Hakuin Ekaku who in spite of several breakthroughs seems to have never received an official confirmation by his Master Dōkyō Etan. Yet he is considered to be his Dharma successor. Hakuin Zenji, who is regarded to be the key figure in the renewal of Zen of 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> century Japan, is said to have left certain instructions for his line. In those, so we hear, it was also

demanded that a monk, after having received “inka shōmei”, should live some years in solitude to deepen his experience before starting to guide disciples.

This seems to have been the tradition. After Myōshō Shūhō (known also as Daitō Kokushi) had received “inka shōmei”, he is said to have wiped out his traces on instruction of his master. He then lived for years among beggars and simple folk in utmost poverty, before he settled down to guide people.

And so it has been with many others in China and Japan, as with Bokūshū, the master of Ummon in China or with Ikkyū Sōjun in Japan for instance.

In modern times we can see that e.g. in the line of Harada Sōgaku Daiun Roshi via Yasutani Hakuun Roshi to Yamada Koun Roshi the transmission was handled with great care, maintaining the Dharma through deeply enlightened masters generation by generation. As far as I know, our Master started to guide others only about seven or eight years after his “daigo tettei”, then often acting in Yasutani Roshi’s place.

The same care we find in the line of Yamamoto Gempō Roshi via Nakagawa Sōen Roshi to Suzuki Sōchū Roshi.

These days, we see that our Master is deeply and most carefully considering the succession at the Sanun Zendo, and almost none of his and Yasutani Roshi’s disciples of long standing – some of more than thirty years and with genuine insight – seems to be regarded as sufficiently up to the standard. Is it not said, “the succeeding disciple should not only equal his master but even surpass him, else the line will decline”?

-----

For the first time now in its long and renowned history, Zen has come into contact with the countries of the West, i.e. for the first time it encounters people of those cultures which are the most dualistic ones on earth. What will come of it?

23 years ago, Westerners in Japanese Zen were few and far between. Thanks to the guidance of both my Masters, I had the opportunity to undergo a regular training of about nine years – and then further in another way. I cannot be grateful enough for that.

About 21 years ago, young Americans arrived, flung themselves into zazen almost in a fury, then left after two, three years and were never seen again.

By the end of the sixties, Europeans started to come and also Americans of a different kind than those young ones before. In the seventies more and more Westerners arrived and also the clergy began to discover the usefulness of zazen.

While all these people have come for zazen, their purposes varied – and vary – widely. There were – and are – some who follow a deep urge, a blind drive to discover THAT what they really ARE. Some of them have learned some Japanese, a few to an outstanding degree. This gives them the possibility to enter to some degree Japanese culture, the consciousness of the people of this country, the soil from which zazen has grown.

During the eighties, more and more Europeans have arrived, several ones as a kind of visitor. They never have let go of their solid hold on Western ground, never have given up any security. Solidly anchored in the West, they – so to speak – occasionally stretch an arm across to Japan.

When we hear from our Master – and other spiritual masters – that poverty of some degree is helpful for the practice, it seems to me that the basic and important factor of poverty is insecurity. And insecurity is beneficial. It helps us to abandon ourselves. But most of the visitors are not interested in abandoning themselves. They also make no effort to enter Japanese culture, being convinced that their own culture is the best. However, here they have the possibility to “get something”, a method which can well be used for a purpose of their own. And this purpose, as far as I can see, has in many cases hardly anything to do with the Dharma of my Master.

The koan often give laconic remarks such as “when Tōzan came to Ummon...”. Looking it up on the map, we find that it is a journey of about 2000 miles – and that mostly on foot through the wilderness of ancient China. However, that did not make any difference to Ummon – or to other masters with disciples having come from afar. Ummon e.g. deals

very roughly with Tōzan. But thanks to Ummon's rough compassion, the end of the story is: "Tōzan experienced great enlightenment". (Mumon Kan 15)

In Shōyō-roku 87 we read: "...Sōzan said, 'I have made an arduous journey of 4000 ri and even sold my clothes. Why, Master, do you treat me like that?' Isan called his attendant and said: 'Get some money and give it to this monk.' "Is Isan cruel? Just on the contrary! It would not have been compassion to pity the monk and to try to explain things to him.

We hear about Hindu- and Sufi-masters or of those of Tibetan Buddhism who test their would-be disciples as severely as Bodhidharma did with Eka. And as a remnant of this, is it not the custom that an applicant to a Zen monastery has to lie prostrate for days in the "genkan"?

These days Westerners having come by airplane to Japan, the return ticket often paid for by their institution, are very differently dealt with and immediately accepted. Sometimes during their short stay they are rewarded by a quick "kenshō".

On January 11<sup>th</sup>, our Master said in his Teishō:

"By zazen, the ego slowly is diminished and finally vanishes. But here are also people who seem to build up their ego on it." (quoted from memory). In fact, this belongs to what is called "spiritual materialism" (as mentioned in my letter June 1986).

At the same Teishō our Master said:

"May be I am too mild in admitting kenshō....but I am old".

There is probably nobody who doubts the great kindness and warm-heartedness of our Master and his wish to give, to give. But the "mildness" mentioned has its dangerous side.

How would it be, if the renowned head of the medical department of a German university said, "As to the Japanese and Korean students of medicine who come from afar – some

each year for a few months – let us quickly have them pass their first examination, then rush them through further training, award to them the Dr. med. (M.D.) as quickly as possible and send them back to their countries to treat the patients there. If they treat patients in the Far East under the banner of “Classic German medicine” while in training here, all the better.” Would there not be severe damage? Is that mildness not ultimately ruinous? Well, this concerns the body. But is the human heart-mind less important than its physical aspect?

The same day, our Master also read to us from Yasutani Roshi’s book on the “Genjō Koan”, p. 91:

.....This is because the person’s spirit of seeking the Way is not sincere. It might be a desire to make a big show of having practiced Zen or a haughty heart-mind of wanting to become a Zen-guide in a hurry. Both are vicious thoughts connected with the desire to become well-known and they allow a person to become content with a false experience.”

With Westerners, there are still other unessential desires in this respect, but they come down to the same thing.

In most lines of spiritual teaching, people whose first and foremost aim is to teach are not even accepted by the master. Why not? There is clearly not the dominating urge for the most Essential, for the “Great Matter”, other secondary aims being in the foreground. From the outset, there is rather the tendency towards external activity. With Westerners, as our Master writes in “Kyō Shō” 203, p.5:

“The strong point ....is to relentlessly pursue the external world.” All too true! The dominating desire from the outset to teach others belongs to “pursuing the external world”, and not the urge to “grasp the pursuing heart-mind in its living essence”.

Of course, while in training, no teaching is permitted.

When Prince Siddharta, later to become Buddha Shakyamuni, felt the overwhelming urge to find a way that would liberate mankind, all beings, from suffering, he left all and went

deeply into himself, totally interiorized, until his Supreme Enlightenment resolved his profound quest. To help mankind, he first had to forget mankind.

This seems to be the general pattern. All the spiritually great ones and also all genuine seekers, of whatever Path, were in no hurry to teach. Rather, they were totally engaged in solving the fundamental questions within themselves. However, the more shallow a person, the more eager to teach right away, just as our Master has pointed out by quoting Yasutani Roshi's text.

But people "in a hurry to become Zen-guides" are welcome at the Sanun Zendo, and our Master exerts himself especially for them – and that in spite of his advanced age. Our Master, I am sure, did not start his own Zen practice decades ago dominated by the wish to teach.

Now it seems strangely enough, that the intellectuals of the most dualistic cultures, desiring to teach right away, are the most apt to quickly come to "kenshō", i.e. to realize to some degree the world of Emptiness.

What was wrong with the renowned ancients in China and Japan that it took them such severe practice for many years until they came to a breakthrough, and often decades until they started to guide others? And that even under such superb masters as Bodhidharma or the Sixth Patriarch and other great masters – and through living in a culture far more congenial to their strivings, far less dualistic than the Western one?

When going to transplant a tree from one area to another, one carefully studies the soil and climate of the area into which the sapling will be planted. In my eyes, this equally applies to the transmission of a spiritual Path: how about the old "soil and climate", and how about the new ones?

As far as I can see, Japan so far has been an exceptionally artistic country (which does not mean that there were no great scientists). Europe, the West, has been dominated by science so far (which does not mean that there were no great artists). What is measured

and explained – that, one is convinced, one knows. It is ignored that this kind of knowing is based on agreements about certain “isolated closed systems” and it is ignored that there is an entirely different way of knowing by Direct Knowledge which does not resort to discursive thinking and which transcends the subject object split.

All scientific knowledge so far has been objectifying. Significantly enough, for a number of decades now, this shows signs of changing (see Louis de Broglie, Heisenberg, Schrödinger, etc.). But people in general have not yet taken this step. (This is a vast and most important subject and I cannot go into it here any further, but have done so in other papers years ago.)

This scientifically dominated consciousness is quick to jump at hints and explanations and ends up with the “thumb trick” of Herrigel (see “Zen and the Art of Archery”) which his “kyūdō” master was quick to discover and, regarding it as cheating, he dismissed Herrigel.

For the honest ones, i.e. for those with a true feeling for value, hints and explanations rather block the Way, since they address the agile Western intellect and with it become an additional obstacle.

If there is nothing in a person to warn him, a Westerner can go through most koan intellectually. It sometimes happens that someone comes to “dokusan” with a correct answer and yet has to be dismissed, since it is clear that the answer is mostly intellectual. To accept such an answer would be depriving a person of his/her true development. Alas, the Western mind is a highly endangered and dangerous one....

Since most of our Master’s Western teaching disciples are members of the clergy, some other differences probably should be touched.

Certainly there was no Japanese or Chinese Zen master who professed and was obliged to profess anything equivalent to the numerous Church dogmas. Here just one example of these dogmas:

“God’s existence is not merely an object of natural rational knowledge, but also an object of supernatural faith. (De fide)”<sup>1</sup>

“God’s existence” – an object of knowledge and even an “object of supernatural faith”. Here it becomes evident that the “supernatural” is regarded as in the realm of the subject object split.

Throughout Ott’s classic on dogma, which is part of the education of theologians and priests, there is the division into “natural” and “supernatural”. In my eyes, the natural itself is the supernatural, the supernatural itself the natural. Moreover, who can fathom nature? The one who could, could fathom life. Without overcoming this dualistic view about the difference between natural and supernatural, how can one readily chant “form is nothing but Emptiness, Emptiness nothing but form?”

Ecclesiastical literature is full of the “merely natural” versus the “supernatural”. Here an example:

Fr. Dumoulin in his book “A History of Zen Buddhism” calls Zen “natural mysticism” in contrast to “supernatural mysticism”. He writes, “Christian mysticism is a matter of grace and is essentially supernatural. As a supernatural manifestation it belongs to a higher order than natural mysticism.” (p.282/283) Frequently, I have heard other priests in the West classify Zen as “merely natural mysticism” and among them even some who themselves practice zazen somewhere.

Fr. Dumoulin’s statement is interesting in another respect. More often than not, the Church has persecuted just those who had come to an experience of this “supernatural mysticism”.

Several times, when speaking about those persecutions of deeply enlightened Christians in the West, my Master added: “That would be dangerous for me.” Probably – our Master being in accord with the words of just those who were persecuted.

---

<sup>1</sup> De fide: dogma in all form through the Pope or a General Council.

But now, he receives kind and flattering letters from this or that clergyman. Is this not telling him something, I wonder.

In my European eyes, it says: ‘We are happy to have found a renowned Oriental Master who willingly and quickly attests the enlightenment of almost each priest or nun who comes his way. Since no dangerously deep spirituality is involved with them, zazen serves us as a useful method.’

In my opinion, it almost indicates the death of my Master’s Dharma in the West. Truly heartbreaking .....

Another dogma may be interesting in this context:

“Membership of the Church is necessary for all men for salvation (De fide).”  
(ibid. Ott, p.312)

In recent years, this dogma was modified, exempting those who never had heard about the Catholic Church. But:

“...Those men cannot be saved who know about the Catholic Church and her necessity for salvation by God through Christ...”

(Handbuch des katholischen Kirchenrechts” by  
Listl, Mueller, Schmitz, 1983, p.46 [= Handbook of  
Catholic Canon Law“])

And Dogma: „Fallen man cannot redeem himself. (De fide)”

(ibid. Ott, p. 17)

Alas, it is clear that our Master cannot be saved ....But under certain conditions, one evidently may overlook such a shortcoming.

Frequently I have heard my Master say that Westerners in general are less gifted with regard to the main Zen experience. We also read in “Kyō Shō” 203, p.5:

“Here (Sanun Zendo) there are many priests and scholars of repute from

abroad. However, saying it d i s t i n c t l y, foreigners - with certain exemptions – do not know the world of Zero...”

So it is. This is as I see it. More than ten years ago, I looked deeply into the difference between Oriental and Occidental consciousness as revealed in everyday life – customs, habits, language, physical movements, buildings, etc., etc. – and this was also the subject of my conversation class at the Todai. Each of those observations manifests the difference that we find at the roots of the respective cultures. For me there is not the slightest doubt that the subject object split is far greater with us Westerners than with the people of the Far East. However, there are exceptions and to name them would make a rather long list.

Now I wonder: if, according to the words of our Master, those Western “priests and scholars.....do not know the world of Zero”, how can they teach Zen?

In my eyes: without any experience of the “world of Zero”, of the “Unborn”, of the world of no-qualities, of Emptiness, there is no Zen.

While Westerners in general are less talented regarding this main Zen experience, according to my Master’s and my own view, being steeped in objectifying knowledge, they are evidently the most gifted ones to arrive at a quick “kenshō” at the Sanun Zendo, to pass through the koan at a rapid pace and to teach Zen.

With my Zen companions I go through different experiences.

A breakthrough does also not predominantly occur with members of a certain profession or standing. Many years ago, my Master asked me several times, “Which Westerners do you think, are the most apt for Zen?” The answer: “People with an artistic mind” – which must not necessarily be reflected in their profession. And so it is. (Isn’t it also revealing that so many Zen masters of ancient and modern times found an artistic expression of their inner state?)

But among those of my Zen companions who have broken through the imaginary wall, there are also scientists and priests of repute – not rarely after having gone through quite an inner ordeal and “dramatic transformations” (quoted from an abbot’s statement concerning a practicing monk-priest of his monastery. I have great respect for such people.

Though the Japanese, no doubt, are more talented, we do not see a single Japanese who has accomplished the same feat of rapid “kenshō”, rapid “shitsunai”, rapid “teaching Zen”.<sup>2</sup> The “kenshō” of Westerners at the Sanun Zendo, as far as I can see, outnumber those of the Japanese and Western teaching disciples are far more numerous than the Japanese ones. Why? Because the standard is different.

What is the effect on the West?

During the last few years I have heard several Westerners of depth, education and insight (priests and scholars among them) reveal their deep disappointment concerning the present Zen scenery. For instance:

“So far I had great respect for Zen. But most of what I see going on here recently under the name of “Zen” has changed that. If this is Zen, my respect is gone.”

Or:

Most of the so called Zen here comes down to the same old stuff we have always had in this or that form. Now again there is another form under other terms – but for the rest....It is like a new game played by the old rules.”

Or:

“What a shame that Zen, in general, has not come to the West at a high standard!”

Yes, Zen escapes haste. Some years ago, our Master has said very clearly, “Prematurely ripened fruits never have a good taste.” The “Zen chūsha” (injection) is quickly changed by the body of Western systems into something very different. What “arrives” abroad is hardly Zen any more. It is not the “Zen chūsha” that changes the establishment, but the establishment that changes the Zen injection to something hardly recognizable as Zen.

---

<sup>2</sup> In my eyes, Zen is not teachable, there is a very different process of guidance at work.

It is evident that the saying “the succeeding disciple should not only equal his master, but surpass him” is not applied to Westerners. There is nothing of “equal”, let alone “surpassing”. That means, Zen has entered the West in an already diminished state. Starting out like that, what can we expect of it later? Deplorable Europe! Deplorable West! You have missed your chance regarding Zen at an extremely important turning point in history. You have distorted Zen from the outset, as you have distorted other paths of spiritual training since ancient times. What a pity! What a pity! I pray that this will not have the consent of our Master. This kind of “Zen” will not have any significant influence on the transformation of consciousness at stake these days.

I wonder whether our Master thinks so little of us, that the standard for Westerners is so strikingly lowered – whether in Canada, the U.S.A. or Europe – that e.g. also a person “whose eyes are not straight” on his request is given “san motsu”, because, as our Master told us all at the Zendo, “he wanted to be able to perform wedding ceremonies etc. fully authorized”.

Many Westerners are quickly authorized to “teach Zen” in the West, e.g. they are entrusted with our Master’s most precious Dharma – but in most cases they are not really trusted (which seems quite justified). So far it has been my impression: when fully trusted, then authorized – when not fully trusted, then not authorized. This understanding of mine seems to have been an error.

On January 25<sup>th</sup> of this year, at “question-and-answer”, our Master said that through zazen, “nayami” (suffering) is lessened and finally vanishes. True, no doubt! But for me in recent years, deep sadness has arisen about the deterioration of my Master’s Dharma in the West. This suffering has helped to drive me deeper and deeper and so I can be grateful for it.

But this is not the whole picture: to be aware that hundreds and thousands of Westerners are – and will be deprived of their true development regarding the “most important matter”, drives the tears to my eyes.

One may say: Well, if all these people are content with what is offered, isn't it all right? But, may be, one should not overlook the fact that for centuries Westerners have been educated in a way which has diminished the intuition of many (by far not of all) for true spiritual value. So they cling to labels: "authorized Zen teaching" – that must be good.

One may say: These peoples are just victims of their own consciousness. But there is also what is called compassion. If I "love my neighbor as myself" (in fact as being myself), one can hardly lean back, saying: so they reap what they have sown...It is rather a very painful sight. What makes it even more painful is the fact that the Western line of my Master to a good deal is responsible for that. What a terrible pity!

From the bottom of my heart I pray that our Master may re-consider our Western situation, so that from now on at least there will be the same standard for the transmission as in the Japanese line. Else my Master's Dharma will be mostly lost in the West, used as a method for other ends. It will be close to a miracle if only a thin thread of it will survive. For the rest: Zen may be a stillbirth in the West.

My Master's ears and eyes are not those of an ordinary man which are open only to praise and closed to everything else. So there is much hope.

The French Benedictine monk-priest, Henri Le Saux, known as Swami Abhishiktananda who went to India where he experienced deep enlightenment and stayed on for decades until his death, writes in his book "The further shore":

"Unfortunately those who are searching for spiritual experience are all too often attracted by mere substitutes like the European version of Zen, Yoga,....." (p.98)

Yes, the "European version"...

And further:

"But in fact, its experience (=that of non-duality) as a means of liberation and joy for mankind will only be possible at the present juncture in human history if it is interpreted by seers who are at home in two languages: the language of the Upanishads ....and the language of the seekers themselves." (p.100)

“Seers”, that is deeply realized people.

What Henri Le Saux – Abhishiktananda hints at by “at home in two languages”, as far as I can see, comes down to “at home in two cultures”, familiar with “soil and climate” of two cultures.

The diary of Henri Le Saux – Abhishiktananda tells us what he had gone through on his Path away from the dualism of the Western establishment to the Indian “Advaita” (non-duality, Oneness). Among my Zen companions I see similar things happening – slow, deeply-going transformations until finally in an instant a breakthrough may occur.

The “transmission” first happens within oneself, set off by the Zero experience of some degree into which in an instant everything is sucked – and from which each and all emerge again – no, not from IT, as IT! This, of course, includes and concerns the two cultures involved in the transmission as well. Although One, each keeps its particular uniqueness – in fact, this uniqueness is even seen more clearly now. There is no “binding together of the branches”, to quote what my Master often said 16, 15, 14 years ago – no mixing things, no wishy-washy, no “aku-byodo”.

EmptyOneness-Uniqueness! This then is the Zero-multitude – this then is “form-Emptiness” - the quality-Qualityless. It is time-TIME, it is i-I, it is world-WORLD, - it is japan-JAPAN, it is Europe-EUROPE.

TIME-I-WORLD-JAPAN-EUROPE – the same; time-i-world-japan-europe – each of particular uniqueness, different. But: TIME-I-WORLD-JAPAN-EUROPE-time-i-world-japan-europe.....

Where this vital experience is lacking, there is no transmission, no Zen, but only “nisemono”, a Zen corpse.

In my eyes, this vital direct experience is the intrinsic basis of any genuine transmission which ultimately is not a transmission “from here to there”, but a transmission “on the spot”. So it was in ancient times, and I wish this spirit pervaded Zen today.

Kamakura, February 15, 1987

Brigitte D'Ortschy (Koun-An Doru Chiko Daishi Roshi)