

Tenborin Zoom 30 May 2026

'All is emptiness; there is nothing sacred.'

Such was Bodhidharma's reply when the Emperor asked him about ultimate truth.

Reflecting on this reply, Koun Ejo tells us:

'This is the great ball of fire, the light of the Chan founders' transmission, clear as crystal in all directions, without there being anything within it.'

'There is no practice that is separate from this light, no different teaching, nor any knowledge or object of any kind. How could there be anything else to know; what practice could you cultivate to cure yourself of your imaginary illnesses?'

Bodhidharma's reply proclaims, in a few words, the one truth we need to hear and realise in order to put an end to our ignorance, and satisfy our inherent desire for happiness.

The truth has been transmitted to us through an unbroken lineage of Patriarchs. In their lives, they all realised the ultimate principle of emptiness. They all spoke of it in their teachings so that we might - during zazen *and* in our daily lives - direct our attention towards the emptiness of our own light. A light that is never absent. A light that is self-sufficient, without any need to add to or to subtract anything from it.

....

Our practice of zazen draws us toward the recognition of what emptiness *is*. We must go beyond all concepts and mental analysis.

This practice leads us into the very heart of the sensations that bear witness to the life within our impermanent bodies.

It teaches us the immutable, from which impermanence springs forth and subsides.

It is the very seat of all the perceptions that resound in our mind.

It is the source of every thought that arises in this mental space.

It is closer to us than the distance between *here* and *here*.

To actualise what it is, we must enter into the mystery of ourselves and disappear into it. This is *Komyozo Zanmai*, absorption into our Treasury of Light.

Absorbed into our Treasury of Light, we finally rediscover who we are.

'Who is it who addresses Us?' demanded the Emperor of Bodhidharma.

'I do not know,' responded Bodhidharma.

....

'It is simply light that is empty,' concludes Koun Ejo.

Beyond words and conditioned categories, there are no longer any limits. In this rediscovered freedom, we are light without even needing to know it. What words could describe the mystery of emptiness without reducing it to a concept or an object of the mind?

....

Bodhidharma is credited with this exhortation that he addressed to his disciples:

"Wonder of wonders, go quickly toward the mystery and become One with it."
