

The Platform Sutra of Sixth Patriarch Huineng

(Zongbao Edition)

六祖惠能大師法寶壇經 (宗寶本)



Hui Neng

(image by Chan/Zen Artist Rob Inglis)

The Treasury of the True Dharma Eye was transmitted generation to generation directly from Shakyamuni Buddha through twenty-eight Indian and five Chinese Patriarchs to Sixth Patriarch Dajian Huineng. This unbroken lineage has continued without interruption to the present day. Under his direction, the Chan/Zen sect acquired a new flavor of mind training and realization. Therefore, Patriarch Huineng is considered the founder and most central figure of Suddenness Chan/Zen.

Translated by Beishi Guohan (Old Teacher Tsao)

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Chapter 1: The Patriarch's Autobiography

Realizing the Mind Dharma; Receiving Dharma Transmission; Preaching the Dharma of Teachings from the Platform

Once, when the Great Patriarch had come to Baolin Monastery, Governor Weiqu of Shao County and other local government officers went into the mountains to invite the Patriarch to go to the city and expound the essential principle of Chan Dharma to a gathering at the lecture hall of Dafan Monastery.

After the Patriarch took his seat, the assembly, including the Governor, over thirty officers, over thirty Confucian scholars, and more than one thousand Bhikshus (monks), Bhikshunis (nuns), non-Buddhist practitioners, and laypeople all bowed together and were eager to hear the essential principle of Chan Dharma.

The Great Patriarch said to the assembly:

Good fellow-practitioners, the self-nature of Bodhi is intrinsically pure; merely apply this pure mind (i.e. the prajna wisdom of emptiness) for direct realization and attaining Buddhahood. Good fellow practitioners, listen briefly to a short account of my history and the experiences through which I realized the Dharma of Mind and received the Dharma Transmission.

My father was originally from Fanyang, but later he lost his status and was banished to Lingnan, where he became a resident of Hsin County. Unfortunately for me my father died early. With my elderly mother I moved to Nanhai County, where we suffered from hardship and poverty as I sold firewood in the market to make a living.

One day a customer purchased some firewood and instructed me to deliver it to an inn. After the delivery was made, I left with the payment. On the way out of the inn, as I passed through the gate, I saw a guest reciting a sutra. Upon hearing the words of the sutra, I became completely enlightened at the very moment of the statement.

Then, I asked the guest, "What sutra are you reciting?" He said, "It is the Diamond Sutra." I further asked, "Where have you come from and how did you get to know this Sutra?" He said, "I came from the Eastern Chan Monastery in Huangmei County to the east of Qi County, where Grand Master Hongren, the Fifth Patriarch of the Chan Sect, is unfolding the Chan Teachings for over a thousand disciples. I went there to pay homage to him and listened to his discourse on this Sutra. The Grand Master always exhorts both monastics and laypeople, saying that if they follow the sudden approach of the Diamond Sutra, they will spontaneously see into their self-nature, directly realize the original mind, and attain Buddhahood."

After I heard this, I was given ten taels for providing food and clothing for my mother by a guest who urged me to go right to Huangmei to call on the Fifth Patriarch, and I felt that this was due to a preexisting karmic affinity. After having made all the necessary arrangements for my mother, I departed right away and arrived at Huangmei within thirty days, where I paid respects to the Fifth Patriarch.

The Grand Master asked, "Where do you come from? What do you want?" I replied, "I am a citizen of Hsin County in Lingnan. I have come from far away to pay my respects to you, and I seek nothing but Buddhahood." The Grand Master said, "You are a native of Lingnan and an uncivilized aborigine. How can you expect to be a Buddha?" I replied, "Although people may be southerners or northerners, in the intrinsic Buddha-nature fundamentally there is no distinction between south or north. An aborigine is different from Your Holiness physically, but what difference is there in our Buddha-nature?"

The Grand Master wanted to talk further with me, yet he saw that his followers were all around, so he instructed me to accompany them to work. I then said to him, "May I share with Your Holiness that (prajna) wisdom constantly manifests within my mind, and it is not apart from the self-nature so that it is itself a field of blessings. What work would you ask me to do?" The Grand Master said, "This aborigine is too sharp in karmic potentiality! Speak no more and just go work in the mill." So I withdrew myself to the back yard, where a lay practitioner directed me to split firewood and pound rice. I spent over eight months at the mill.

Then one day, the Grand Master came to see me and said, "I think your realization is genuine, but I was afraid that vexed practitioners would harm you, so I didn't talk with you. Do you understand the situation?" I said, "I do understand your concern. That is why in order to prevent others from becoming suspicious I didn't dare walk to the Chan Hall."

One day the Grand Master assembled all his disciples and said to them, "For all human beings in this world the cycle of birth and death is the great matter of their life. All day long all of you just seek fields of blessings, and do not seek to free yourselves from the ocean of suffering of birth and death. If you are confused about your self-nature, how can blessings free you from samsara? All of you go now and apply your own prajna wisdom, which manifests from the self-nature of true suchness, to compose a verse to show me. If you have realized the great meaning of Mind Dharma, I will transmit the robe and the Dharma to you to make you the Sixth Patriarch. It is urgent, so go now quickly! Do not procrastinate or let yourself stagnate! Discrimination is of no use. Those who have seen into the self-nature should see into it at the very moment of the statement. Such a person is able to realize it even if engaging in the crisis of a battle of whirling swords."

After having received this instruction, all the disciples withdrew and said to one another, "We do not have to calm our minds and put in effort to compose these verses. What would be the benefit even if we submitted verses to His Holiness? Venerable Shenxiu, our current head instructor (i.e. 'acharya' of the monks division), will surely attain the Patriarchate. If we compose verses heedlessly, it will only be a waste of mental energy." Upon hearing this, all put their minds of composing verses to rest and said, "Hereafter, we will follow Venerable Teacher Shenxiu. Why should we bother to compose verses?"

Shenxiu thought it over, "The reason all the others won't submit verses is because I am their head instructor; therefore I have to compose a verse to submit to His Holiness. If I do not submit a verse, how will His Holiness know the profundity or shallowness of the views and insight within my mind? If my motive in submitting a verse is to seek confirmation and Dharma transmission, then that is good. If it is to seek the Patriarchate, then that is bad. In the latter case, how would it be different from capturing the rank of a saint with the mind of an ordinary person? But if I will not submit a verse, I will never have a chance to receive Dharma transmission. This is indeed very difficult! Extremely difficult!"

In front of the Fifth Patriarch's Chan Hall, there were three corridors, where they planned to have the court artist Luzhen paint pictures of the "Lankavatara Sutra Discourse Ceremony" and the "Lineage Chart of the Five Patriarchs of Chan" to pass on to future generations and let them make offerings.

After Shenxiu had composed his verse, he made several attempts to submit it to the Grand Master. But as soon as he went near the Chan Hall, he was so nervous that he sweated all over and dared not to submit it. In this way, over a period of four days he made thirteen attempts, yet was still unable to submit it. Finally Shenxiu thought, "It would be better for me to write the verse on the corridor wall, where His Holiness can see it for himself. If he approves of it, I will come out to show respect for him and acknowledge that it was composed by me. If he disapproves of it, then I have wasted several years on this mountain receiving respect from others, but what have I cultivated on the Chan path?" That night, around midnight, he went secretly with a lamp and wrote his verse on the wall of the south corridor in order to reveal his insight.

The verse said,

*The body is the Bodhi tree,
And the mind a mirror bright.
Diligently polish it all the time,
And let no dust alight.*

After having written this verse, Shenxiu went back to his room, and nobody knew what had happened. Shenxiu thought again, "If the Grand Master sees my verse tomorrow and is pleased with it, then I have affinity with the Dharma transmission. If he says it is unbearable, then I am still in delusion and not suitable to receive the Dharma transmission, owing to heavy karmic obstructions from the past. A saint's mind is unfathomable!" While he was thinking incessantly in his room, he could neither sleep nor sit at ease. This continued until the break of dawn.

In fact, the Grand Master already knew that Shenxiu had not yet entered the gateless-gate and also had not yet seen into the self-nature. In the morning he sent for the court artist Lu and took him to paint the wall of the south corridor. When he suddenly saw the verse, the Grand Master said to the artist, "You do not need to paint the wall now, and I am sorry to have troubled you to come from afar. The Sutra says that 'all forms are illusory.' Just leave this verse for people to recite and cultivate. If they act in accordance with this verse, they will be able to avoid falling into the evil realms of transmigration and to attain great benefit." Then he instructed his disciples, "All of you light incense, pay respect to the verse, and do your utmost to cultivate the verse so that you can become able to see into the self-nature." Then, after the disciples had recited the verse, all of them praised it, "excellent!"

Later that evening around midnight, the Grand Master called Shenxiu into the Chan Hall and asked, "Was this verse composed by you?" Shenxiu said, "It really was composed by me, but I dare not to make a vain attempt to seek the Patriarchate. I wish Your Holiness would compassionately tell me whether or not I have any wisdom." The Grand Master said, "Your verse shows that you have not yet seen into your self-nature. So far you have only reached the outside of the gateless-gate, but you have not yet entered into it. If you seek supreme bodhi with such a view and insight as this, you will never be able to attain it. To attain supreme bodhi, first of all, at the very moment of the statement you have to spontaneously have an insight into the original mind and see into the self-nature, which is non-arising and non-perishing. At all times, you should see into the self-nature thought after thought, and realize that all things are free from obstructions. From the perspective of the Dharma Realm of One Reality, one is real and all is real, and the myriad realms are themselves of true suchness. The mind of true suchness is exactly the true reality of life. If your realization is like this, then you have genuinely realized the self-nature of supreme bodhi. Withdraw for now and think it over for a couple of days, then submit another verse to me. If your verse shows that you have entered into the gateless-gate of Chan, I will transmit the robe and the Dharma to you." Shenxiu bowed and left. For several days, he could not succeed in writing another verse, and he felt nervous and unstable in spirit and thought as though he were in a dream. He could not even find ease or

comfort in walking or sitting.

Two days later, a young boy passing by the pounding mill recited the verse. As soon as I heard it, I knew this verse did not reveal the realization of the original self-nature. Although I had not received instruction, I had already realized the great meaning. So I asked the boy, "What verse is this?" The young boy said, "You aborigine! Don't you know that the Grand Master said that for all human beings in this world the cycle of birth and death is the great matter of their life, and that those who want to receive transmission of the robe and the Dharma should submit a verse to him. If anyone has realized the great meaning of the Mind Dharma, the Grand Master will transmit the robe and the Dharma and make him the Sixth Patriarch. Thus Elder Shenxiu wrote this formless verse on the wall of the south corridor. The Grand Master instructed everyone to recite and cultivate it, saying that if one acts in accordance with this verse, that person will be able to avoid falling into the evil realms of transmigration and will attain great benefit." I said, "I also wish to recite the verse in order to develop an affinity with its Dharma of Teachings in a future life. Venerable Dharma brother, I have been pounding rice here for over eight months and have never been to the Chan Hall. Please lead me to where the verse is so that I can pay my respects to it."

Once the young boy had led me to the corridor where the verse was to pay my respects, I said, "I am illiterate, venerable Dharma brother, please read it for me." At that time an assistant officer of Jiang County named Zhang Riyong, who happened to be there, read the verse aloud to me. After I had heard it, I said, "I also have a verse, and would like to ask you to write it out for me." The assistant officer said, "How extraordinary that you also are able to compose a verse!" I said to him, "If you genuinely want to attain supreme bodhi, do not look down upon beginners. A person of the lowest rank may have the profoundest wisdom, while a person of the highest rank may be short on wisdom. If you look down upon people, you commit innumerable sins." The assistant officer said, "Please dictate your verse, and I will write it for you. If you receive the Dharma transmission, you should deliver me first. Don't forget this promise."

My verse said,

*Bodhi intrinsically has no tree,
Nor the mind a mirror bright.
Originally there's not a single thing;
Where can dust alight?*

After the verse had been written down, all the disciples were surprised, and they

said to one another with praise and amazement, "How marvelous! We should not evaluate a person on the basis of his appearance! How can it be that in such a short time he has become a living bodhisattva?" Seeing that the assembly was overwhelmed with surprise, the Grand Master became afraid someone might do me harm, so he erased the verse with his shoe and said, "The author of this verse has still not yet seen into the self-nature." The assembly took his response at face value.

The next day the Grand Master sneaked into the mill, where he saw me bearing a stone at the waist and pounding rice. He said, "Practitioners seeking the Way forget their bodies for the sake of the Mind Dharma. They should be as diligent as this!" Then he asked, "Is the rice ready yet?" I replied, "The rice has been ready for a long time, but it still lacks sifting." The Grand Master knocked the mortar three times with his stick and left.

Immediately comprehending the Grand Master's meaning, I went to his room at midnight. Using the robe as a screen in order that no one could see us, he expounded the Diamond Sutra to me. When he came to the sentence, "The mind arises without abiding in anything," at the statement I experienced the ultimate and complete enlightenment that all dharmas/Dharmas do not depart from the self-nature. Then I said to the Grand Master, "Who would have expected that the self-nature is intrinsically pure! Who would have expected that the self-nature is intrinsically non-arising and non-perishing! Who would have expected that the self-nature is intrinsically self-sufficient! Who would have expected that the self-nature is intrinsically immovable! Who would have expected that the self-nature can manifest all things!" Knowing that I had realized the true nature, the Grand Master said to me, "It is of no use to train the mind with the Chan approach if one does not have an insight into the mind. On the other hand, if you are able to ultimately have an insight into the mind and ultimately see into the self-nature, you are a great tamer, a teacher of heavenly beings and human beings, a buddha."

Unbeknownst to everyone, I received the Dharma transmission at midnight. The Grand Master passed on to me the mind-to-mind transmission of Suddenness Chan as well as the robe and the bowl, saying, "You are the Sixth Patriarch now. Take good care of the real person of no level [by means of profound 'maintaining effortlessness & spontaneousness'] and effortlessly deliver innumerable sentient beings, in order to popularize and transmit the Dharma of Suddenness to inexhaustible generations so that it will not come to an end. Listen to my verse:

*Sentient beings explore the mind ground of Buddhahood with the pure mind
of self-nature;*

The mind ground of simultaneous causality manifests all dharmas/Dharmas.

*Originally there are no sentient beings and no prajna wisdom of ultimate emptiness;
There is also no self-nature and no arising."*

The Grand Master further said, "In the past when the Patriarch Bodhidharma first came to China, people did not yet believe in the Dharma transmission. For this reason, he handed down this robe as a testimony, which has been carried on in each successive generation. As for the Mind Dharma, it is transmitted from mind to mind, and the recipient has to have self-realization and self-insight. Since ancient times, all Buddhas have merely transmitted the original quintessence of self-nature, and all Patriarchs have intimately imparted the original mind of self-nature. The robe is a cause of contention; let it stop with you and not be handed down anymore. If you were to pass down this robe, your life would be in great danger. You have to leave immediately; I fear lest someone should harm you." I asked, "Where should I go?" The Grand Master said, "Stay when you are in Huai County, and seclude yourself when you are in Hui County."

After receiving the robe and bowl at midnight, I said, "Being originally a Southerner, I am not well acquainted with the mountain tracks here. How can I get to the mouth of the river?" The Grand Master said, "You need not worry. I'll send you off myself." The Grand Master then accompanied me directly to Jiujiang Wharf, where he had me get on a boat. The Grand Master himself took hold of the oars and rowed the boat. I said, "Venerable Master! Please sit down; I should row the boat." But he said, "It is definitely right for me to deliver you." I said, "While I am still in delusion, it is quite right for you to deliver me. But after realization, I have to deliver myself. Although the name 'deliver' is the same, its usefulness is different. As I grew up in the borderlands, I am sorry that my pronunciation is abnormal. I am indebted to Your Holiness for transmitting the Mind Dharma and have already become ultimately enlightened; as such it is only appropriate to apply self-deliverance by way of maintaining the spontaneous effortlessness of the self-nature." The Grand Master said, "Thus it is! Thus it is! Hereafter it is for you to let the Chan Dharma become prevalent. You should start on your journey now and strive towards the South. You should not preach too soon, as the Chan Dharma is hard to make flourish."

After I had bid farewell to the Grand Master, I walked toward the South. Having traveled about two months I reached Mount Dayu. There were several hundred people following after me and wanting to take the robe and bowl away by force. Among them there was a monk named Huiming Chen, who was formerly a four-star general and whose temper was rough. He joined in tracking me down with the utmost enthusiasm for investigating Chan and inquiring into the Way, and caught up to me

before anyone else. I threw the robe and bowl on a rock and said, "This robe is merely a symbol which represents the Dharma transmission. Is it appropriate to struggle for it with force?" Then I hid myself in the bush. When Huiming got over to the robe and bowl, he tried to pick them up, but found that he could not. Then he called for me, "Venerable lay practitioner! I come for the Dharma, not for the robe." I then came out and sat on a rock. Huiming bowed and said, "Please expound the Dharma of Teachings to me, venerable lay practitioner!" I said, "Since you have come for the Dharma, you should let go of all conditions and let not one thought arise; then I will tell you." After Huiming had done this for a long time, I said, "Do not think of either good or bad! At this very moment, what is your original face?" At the very moment of the statement, Huiming was greatly enlightened.

Then he further asked, "Apart from the inconceivable Mind Dharma transmitted by the Buddha and the Patriarchs from generation to generation, is there any further ineffable Mind Dharma?" I said, "What I have told you is not the ineffable Mind Dharma. If you turn inward to illuminate with the prajna wisdom of emptiness, then the inconceivable Mind Dharma is within you." Huiming said, "Although I was at Huangmei, I had actually not yet seen into my original face. Now that I am indebted to your instruction, I realize that it is none other than 'the taster knows the flavor of the water.' Venerable lay practitioner, you are now my Master." I said, "If you are like this, then we are fellow disciples of Huangmei. Take good care of the Mind by yourself." Huiming also asked, "Where should I go hereafter?" I said, "Stay when you are at Yuan, and take up residence when you are at Meng." Huiming bowed and departed.

Later I reached Caoxi, but I was again followed by wicked fellows, and thereupon took refuge among a team of hunters in Sihui. I spent about fifteen years [other accounts say as few as four years] among them and occasionally expounded the Dharma of Teachings to them in accordance with their potentialities. The hunters would have me watch over the hunting nets, but whenever I found living creatures therein, I would set them all free. At mealtimes I would put vegetables in the pot where they cooked their meat. If someone asked me about it, I would reply, "I just eat the vegetables beside the meat."

One day I thought, "The time has arrived to expound the Dharma of Teachings, and I should not hide in seclusion forever." Therefore, I left the area and went to the Faxing Monastery in Guang County. At that time Yinzong Fashi was expounding on the Mahaparinirvana Sutra in the monastery. It happened that there was a wind blowing that kept the pennants flying. One monk said, "The wind is moving." Another said, "The pennants are moving." They argued ceaselessly, so I came forward and said, "It is neither the wind nor the pennants that are moving; it is just

your own minds that are moving." The whole assembly was amazed.

Yinzong invited me to take the front seat and questioned me about the profound essence of the Dharma. He heard that my answers were simple and precise and did not rely on words or language. Yinzong said, "Venerable lay practitioner! You are surely an extraordinary person. For a long time I have heard that the recipient of the robe and the Dharma of Huangmei had come to the South. Most probably you are this very person, aren't you Venerable lay practitioner?" I said, "I dare not accept the honor." Then, Yinzong bowed and asked me to show the assembly the robe and bowl that had been transmitted to me.

Yinzong further asked, "What indication and transmission did you get when you received final instructions from the Fifth Patriarch of Huangmei?" I said, "There is no indication or transmission. It is merely a matter of seeing into the self-nature, not a matter of samadhi and emancipation." Yinzong asked, "Why is it not a matter of samadhi and emancipation?" I said, "Because these are the Dharma of duality and not the Buddhadharma. Buddhadharma is the Dharma of non-duality." Yinzong asked, "What is the non-dualistic Dharma of Buddhadharma?" I said, "You expound on the Mahaparinirvana Sutra, which indicates that seeing into Buddha-nature is the non-dualistic Dharma of Buddhadharma. For example, the Bodhisattva King of Noble Virtue asked the Buddha, 'Will those who violate the four grave prohibitions, those who commit the five rebellious sins, those who are heretics (i.e. Icchantika), and so forth, eradicate their karmic roots and Buddha-nature?' The Buddha said, 'The karmic roots are twofold: On the one hand they are permanent; on the other hand they are impermanent. Buddha-nature is neither permanent nor impermanent, such that it is of no eradication, and this is called non-duality. Furthermore, one is good, another evil. Buddha-nature is neither good nor evil, and this is also called non-duality. Regarding the five skandhas and the eighteen realms, ordinary people perceive them as duality, while the enlightened realize that their self-nature is of non-duality. The non-dualistic self-nature is Buddha-nature.'"

Upon hearing this discourse, Yinzong was highly pleased with my answer. Joining his palms, he said, "My discourses on the sutras are like worthless gravel, while your discourse on the Dharma is like genuine gold." Then, he conducted the ceremony of taking the tonsure for me and wished to regard me as his Master. So I finally preached the Dharma of Suddenness Chan of the Dongshan School under the bodhi tree.

Since the time that I received the Dharma transmission in Dongshan, I have gone through extreme hardship and my life has been in continuous danger as though hanging by a thread. Today, I have had the honor of participating in this assembly along with the governor and his officers, monks, nuns, and lay people; most probably

this is due to my karmic affinity with Chan Dharma accumulated over the course of innumerable kalpas. Meanwhile, it is due to our common accumulated merits in making offerings to all Buddhas and in planting karmic roots together in the past that we have had the chance to hear the causes and conditions for attainment of the Mind Dharma in this Suddenness School.

This Dharma of Teachings was transmitted by the past Patriarchs; it is not my own personal wisdom. Those who wish to hear the Dharma of Teachings of the past saints should apply pure awareness of the self-nature. After having heard it, they should put all of their deluded mind to full rest. Then, there will be no difference between them and the saints of former generations.

Having heard the Dharma of Teachings of the Sixth Patriarch, the whole assembly, full of Dharma joy, bowed and departed.



Chapter 2: Prajna Wisdom

Discourse on Dharma of Supreme Awakening of Great Wisdom; Direct Pointing at the Marrow of Patriarch/Matriarch Chan

The next day Governor Weiqu asked for more instruction. The Patriarch took his seat and told the assembly:

All of you recite "Mahaprajnaparamita" with pure mind of self-nature.

Then he gave the following discourse:

Good fellow-practitioners, the prajna wisdom of bodhi (enlightenment) is inherent in worldly people. It is because of confusion of the mind that they are unable to realize it themselves, and thus they have to make use of the advice and guidance of ultimately enlightened beings to be able to see into the self-nature. You should know that Buddha-nature is originally no different in ignorant people and enlightened people. The difference between ignorance and wisdom simply lies in the difference between confusion and enlightenment. Now let me expound to you the "Dharma of Mahaprajnaparamita" (i.e. "The Dharma of Supreme Awakening of Great Wisdom" or "The Dharma of Great Perfection of Buddha Wisdom"), so that all of you can be able to manifest the inherent Buddha-wisdom. Please devote your mind to listening with pure awareness, and I will expound it for you.

Good fellow-practitioners, worldly people who recite "prajna" all day long without having an insight into the prajna of self-nature are as if talking about food without appeasing their hunger. If they merely talk about emptiness (shunyata) but are unable to see into the self-nature for myriads of kalpas, it is ultimately of no benefit.

Good fellow-practitioners, Mahaprajnaparamita is a Sanskrit word and means "great wisdom having pure awareness of arising and perishing." This must be applied to mind training and not only to verbal recitation. Verbal recitation without mind training is like a phantom, a magical illusion, a dewdrop, or a flash of lightning. On the other hand, if both are combined together, then the mind will be in accordance with the mouth. The true self-nature is Buddha, and apart from this self-nature there is no other Buddha.

What is "Maha?" It means "great." The capacity of the mind is as great as that of empty space. It is infinite, neither square nor round, neither large nor small, neither green nor yellow, neither red nor white, neither above nor below, neither long nor short, neither angry nor joyful, neither right nor wrong, neither good nor evil, neither head nor tail. The realms of all Buddhas are entirely equal to empty space. The profound self-nature of true suchness of worldly beings is intrinsically empty, and not

a single dharma/Dharma is attainable. The genuine emptiness of the inherent self-nature is also like this.

Good fellow-practitioners, be sure not to abide in emptiness when you hear me talk about emptiness. First of all, do not attach to emptiness. If you sit quiescently with an empty mind, you abide in the emptiness of indifference.

Good fellow-practitioners, the empty space of the universe is capable of containing myriad things of various forms and shapes, such as the sun, the moon and the stars, the mountains, the rivers and the earth, the springs and the valley streams, the grasses, the trees and the forests, bad people and good people, evil things and good things, heavens and hells, the great oceans and all the mountains of Sumeru; all are within empty space. The true emptiness of the self-nature of worldly beings also contains myriad things.

Good fellow-practitioners, the self-nature is capable of embracing all things, so that it is truly great; and all things are within the self-nature of worldly beings. If you are aware of the badness and the goodness of all people and you do not grasp it, reject it, or attach to it at all, then your mind is as empty as empty space, and thus we say "greatness" or "maha" in Sanskrit.

Good fellow-practitioners, confused people merely focus on verbal speech, while enlightened people are devoted to the mind's effortless-effort. There is also a category of confused people who sit quiescently with empty minds and abide in the emptiness of indifference. They convince themselves that this is greatness. Such people are not worth teaching about the Dharma of Mahaprajnaparamita since they abide in their mistaken view.

Good fellow-practitioners, the capacity of the mind is so vast that it pervades the entire "Dharma Realm of One Reality" (i.e. the universe). When all of its functions are manifest with profound pure-awareness, it is able to realize all. All is one, one is all. It is at liberty to simultaneously merge into and be apart from all forms, and its essence is without hindrance. This is properly a state of prajna.

Good fellow-practitioners, all prajna wisdom manifests from the self-nature and not from an exterior source — be sure not to misuse your mind! — and this is called spontaneous manifestation of the self-nature of true suchness. One is real, all is real. Since fully exploring the capacity of mind is a great matter, we should not follow such a trivial path as sitting quiescently with an empty mind. Do not talk about emptiness all day long without applying mind training; that would be just like an ordinary person claiming kingship for himself while it is ultimately unattainable. People who behave like that are not my disciples.

Good fellow-practitioners, what is "prajna"? It means "wisdom" in Chinese (and also in English). If in all places and at all times you realize the emptiness of all things

without self-referential foolish delusion thought after thought, and always act with wisdom on all occasions, then this is precisely the Act of Prajna. If you are with deluded thinking in one thought, the prajna discontinues; if you are purely aware of deluded thinking in one thought, the prajna manifests. Worldly beings are in ignorance and confusion, so they do not have an insight into prajna. They talk about prajna, but their minds always remain ignorant. They always claim to train their minds with prajna, but while they talk about emptiness thought after thought, they do not see into true emptiness. Prajna has no form. The mind of wisdom is precisely the true reality of prajna, which is of formlessness and not of falling into nihilism. If you realize in this way, then this is called the wisdom of prajna.

What is paramita? This is a Sanskrit word which means "to the other shore of emancipation" in Chinese (and also in English). For the sake of your realization, it means "being apart from arising and perishing while merging into arising and perishing." If you abide in sense objects, arising and perishing occur just like water having waves, and we can call such a state "this shore." If you are apart from sense objects, there is no arising and no perishing just like water always flowing smoothly, and we can call this state "the other shore." Thus, it is known by its Sanskrit term "paramita".

Good fellow-practitioners, people in confusion verbally recite "Mahaprajnaparamita", and while they are reciting it deluded and impure thoughts arise. If they devote themselves to pure awareness thought after thought, at that very moment the mind that manifests is truly from the self-nature of true suchness. The Dharma realized is the Mind Dharma of Prajna, while devoting oneself to mind training in accord with the pure awareness of self-nature is the Act of Prajna. If you do not train your mind in this way, you are nothing but an ordinary person. If you do your mind training in this way even for just one thought, you yourself are equal to the Buddha.

Good fellow-practitioners, ordinary beings are Buddha, and vexation is bodhi (enlightenment). A confused preceding thought makes one nothing but an ordinary being, while an enlightened succeeding thought makes one precisely a Buddha. A preceding thought that attaches to the realms of sense objects is nothing but vexation, while a succeeding thought that is free from attachment to the realms of sense objects is precisely bodhi.

Good fellow-practitioners, Mahaprajnaparamita is the most honorable, the supreme, and the foremost Dharma. Those who supremely awaken to it realize that the three minds of the past, present, and future are non-attainable, and the Buddhas of the three times (i.e. past, present, and future) manifest from this Dharma of Prajna. You should apply great prajna-wisdom to make a breakthrough in the interactions

between the conditioning power of mind exhaustion and the conditioned realms of the six sense objects, which lead to all sorts of vexations related to the five skandhas. If you train your mind in this way, you will surely attain Buddhahood, and at this very moment the three poisons (i.e. greed, hatred, and ignorance) are themselves precisely discipline, samadhi, and wisdom.

Good fellow-practitioners, in my Dharma of the Supreme Awakening of Great Wisdom, one prajna manifests eighty-four thousand functions of wisdom. Why? It is because worldly beings have eighty-four thousand interactions between the conditioning power of mind exhaustion and the conditioned realms of the six sense objects. If they had no such interactions, then prajna wisdom would always be manifest, and would not be apart from the self-nature. Those who realize this Dharma of Mind are exactly of thoughtlessness. Being free of deluded thinking and attachment, they do not manifest deluded thoughts. Meanwhile, their self-nature of true suchness spontaneously manifests the functions of prajna according to causes and conditions, which enables them to apply Buddha's wisdom to be purely aware of all things, and to neither grasp the ultimate nirvana nor reject the world of transmigration. This is ultimately seeing into the self-nature and attaining Buddhahood.

Good fellow-practitioners, if you want to penetrate into the most profound Dharma Realm (i.e. the Dharma Realm of One Reality) and the Samadhi of Prajna, you should devote yourselves to your mind training with the Act of Prajna and the Essential Principle of the Diamond Sutra. Then you will be able to see into the self-nature. You should realize that the merits and virtues of this sutra are immeasurable and boundless; this is distinctly eulogized in the sutra and cannot be expounded in detail. This Dharma gate is the Supreme Vehicle, expounded for people of great wisdom and superior potentiality. When people of inferior potentiality and little wisdom hear it, they have suspicions and little confidence. Why is this? As an example, when it rains all over the earth (i.e. South Jambudvipa), all cities and villages drift about in the flood as grasses and leaves float about on water. But when it rains over the great ocean, the ocean water neither increases nor decreases. Furthermore, when people of the Mahayana Vehicle or of the Supreme Vehicle hear the Diamond Sutra, at the moment of the statement their minds become completely or ultimately enlightened. Therefore, we know that the self-nature intrinsically embodies the prajna wisdom, and this is evident in those who always apply pure awareness of prajna wisdom in daily life with inconceivability and ineffability. In accord with the above analogy, rainwater does not come out of nothing but is caused by the activity of moisture, refreshing all living beings, all grasses and trees, all sentient and insentient beings; the hundred rivers and myriad streams enter the great ocean, merging the waters into one

body. The prajna wisdom inherent in the self-nature of sentient beings maintains its effortless spontaneousness in the same way.

Good fellow-practitioners, when people of inferior potentiality hear this Dharma of Teachings of Suddenness, it is like when naturally shallow-rooted grasses and trees topple over in heavy rains and cannot proceed with growth. The people of inferior potentiality are like those grasses and trees. They inherently have prajna wisdom, which is no different from that of people of great wisdom, but why do they fail to enlighten themselves when they hear the Dharma of Suddenness? It is because the obstructions of their deluded awareness are heavy and the roots of their vexations are deep; thus it is similar to the sun when covered by a heavy cloud so that its light cannot be seen until the wind blows the cloud away. The prajna wisdom is intrinsically sufficient and is neither great nor small. What makes the difference is whether the minds of sentient beings are confused or enlightened. Those with confused minds and deluded awareness seek for Buddhahood outside the mind and are unable to realize the self-nature. Hence, they belong to the category of inferior potentiality. Those who enlighten to the Dharma of Suddenness and do not attach to outward seeking, and furthermore whose minds always manifest pure awareness of prajna wisdom such that they are steadfastly undefiled by the interaction between the conditioning power of mind exhaustion and the conditioned realms of the six sense objects, are said to [ultimately] see into the self-nature.

Good fellow-practitioners, when you have no abiding in the internal or external realms, are at liberty to simultaneously merge into and be apart from all forms, and are able to completely let go of mind of attachment, you will definitely penetrate into "ultimate no-self" without any obstruction. If you can devote yourself to your mind training with the Act of Prajna, then your practice will be fundamentally no different from the Dharma of Teachings expounded in all the Prajna Sutras.

Good fellow-practitioners, all sutras and other Buddhist scriptures, the teachings of the Mahayana and Hinayana Vehicles, as well as the twelve categories of the contents of all Dharma of Teachings were expounded for the different needs of all sentient beings. It was in response to the sharpness and dullness of sentient beings' wisdom capacity (i.e. karmic potentiality) that all forms of the Dharma of Teachings were established. If there were no worldly beings, all the myriad things would originally not exist of themselves. Therefore, we know that the myriad things originally arise from worldly beings, and all scriptures likewise owe their existence to worldly beings. Since there are both ignorant and enlightened people among worldly beings, the ignorant become the inferior persons, while the enlightened the superior persons. The ignorant question the enlightened, while the enlightened expound the Dharma of Teachings for the ignorant. When the ignorant suddenly awaken and their minds

become purely illuminated, then they are no longer different at all from the enlightened.

Good fellow-practitioners, so long as they are not ultimately enlightened, buddhas are merely sentient beings. At the very moment that they become ultimately enlightened, sentient beings are buddhas. Thus, we know that all things are completely inherent in our own minds. Why, then, do we not suddenly see into the self-nature of true suchness from within our own mind? The Bodhisattva-shila Sutra says, "The essence of discipline lies intrinsically in the purity of self-nature." If you ultimately have an insight into your true mind and see into your self-nature, then all of you will be able to attain Buddhahood. The Pure Name Sutra says, "At the very moment you have pure awareness of all things, you return to the ultimate source and have ultimate insight into the original mind."

Good fellow-practitioners, while I was in the monastery of Grand Master Hongren, when receiving the Dharma he expounded I instantaneously attained ultimate enlightenment at the statement, and suddenly saw into the self-nature of true suchness. For that reason, I now popularize this Dharma of Teachings of Suddenness Chan to enable those who are on the Way to suddenly awaken to bodhi and have an insight into the true mind as well as see into the self-nature themselves. If you are unable to realize it on your own, then you have to seek out an ultimately enlightened being — one who has ultimately actualized the Supreme Dharma — to receive a direct pointing to the right path of Suddenness Chan. Such an ultimately enlightened being has a great matter of causes and conditions, which serves to guide practitioners to see into the self-nature, since all great Dharmas can be manifested by the ultimately enlightened being. The wisdom of the Buddhas and the Dharma of Teachings are sufficiently inherent in the self-nature of human beings. Thus, if people cannot realize it on their own, they need to seek the guidance of an ultimately enlightened being for direct pointing so that they can be able to have an insight into it. On the other hand, those who can realize it on their own do not have to make use of outward seeking. What is more, if you consistently attach to the notion that an ultimately enlightened being is necessary for you to attain emancipation, then you are certainly mistaken. Why? This is because there is inherent wisdom within the minds of sentient beings, which allows for their spontaneous realization. If you confuse yourselves with deluded thinking and inverted views, then even if an ultimately enlightened being affords you guidance, he or she still cannot help you. If you can manifest the pure awareness of genuine prajna wisdom, all deluded thoughts immediately take a full rest in an instant. As soon as you ultimately realize the self-nature, you instantly penetrate into the stage of Buddhahood in a single realization.

Good fellow-practitioners, when you always live every moment with genuine pure

awareness of prajna wisdom, you are truly able to penetrate into the brightness and purity of both inside and outside, and furthermore you have an ultimate insight into the true mind. If you have an ultimate insight into the true mind, this is precisely the great emancipation of intrinsic no-bondage. If you attain great emancipation, this is precisely the Samadhi of Prajna, which is exactly thoughtlessness. What, then, is thoughtlessness? If you are profoundly aware of all things with pure mind which is free from the defilements of attachment, then this is thoughtlessness. Its manifested functions merge into pervading everywhere and simultaneously are apart from pervading everywhere. What you must do is manifest the pure mind such that the six consciousnesses, after passing through the six sense faculties, are neither defiled by nor attach to the six sense objects. When your pure mind is simultaneously merging into and being apart from the realms of the six sense objects at liberty, and functions freely without obstructions, this is precisely the Samadhi of Prajna. It is the state of freedom and emancipation and is also called the act of thoughtlessness. However, if you do not think about anything at all, you will entirely cut off all thoughts; that is the bondage of Dharma and is also called the extreme view of duality.

Good fellow-practitioners, those who ultimately enlighten to the Chan Dharma of thoughtlessness ultimately penetrate into all dharmas/Dharmas. Those who ultimately enlighten to the Chan Dharma of thoughtlessness ultimately see into the realms of all Buddhas. Those who ultimately enlighten to the Chan Dharma of thoughtlessness ultimately arrive at the stage of Buddhahood.

Good fellow-practitioners, the Dharma heirs who receive my Dharma transmission in later generations should transmit this Dharma of Suddenness Chan among those with the same insight and the same volition, so that they vow to accept and uphold it just as though serving the Buddha. So long as those practitioners diligently devote themselves throughout their lives without regression, they will definitely enter into the stage of the saint. Furthermore, the Dharma heirs should transmit this Dharma onward according to the instructions about mind-to-mind transmission handed down from generation to generation, and should not conceal the genuine sectarian Dharma of Teachings. For those people who are not of the same insight and the same volition, but are of a different system or sect, do not transmit it to them, for after all it is of no benefit to disrupt their sectarian transmission; and moreover, this prevents those ignorant persons who misunderstand our sectarian teachings from slandering our Dharma gate and thereby cutting off their seed of Buddha-nature for hundreds of kalpas and thousands of lifetimes.

Good fellow-practitioners, I have a Formlessness Verse for all of you to recite and memorize. Whether you are lay people or monastics, just train your minds in accord with it. If you do not apply yourself to the mind training but merely memorize my

words, then it is of no benefit. Listen to my verse:

*Mastery of the Dharma of Teachings and mastery of the Dharma of Mind,
Are just like the sun situated in the empty sky.
Merely by transmitting the Dharma of seeing into the self-nature,
One can emerge into the world and shatter the unorthodox sects.*

*In the Mind Dharma itself there is no suddenness or gradualness,
But in confusion and enlightenment there is slowness and speediness.
It's simply that this gateway of seeing into the self-nature.
Cannot be fully realized by the ignorant.*

*Although there are myriad Dharmas of Teachings,
In accord with the essence they are ultimately one.
Within the dark abode of vexations,
One should always manifest the pure awareness of prajna wisdom.*

*When deluded awareness manifests, vexation is vexation;
When pure awareness manifests, vexation is wisdom.
If there is no abiding in the non-duality of pure awareness and deluded
awareness,
The purity of mind reaches the ultimate and complete realm of no attainment.*

*Bodhi is originally the ultimate realization of self-nature;
The manifested mind is exactly deluded.
Since the pure mind is in the midst of deluded mind,
Just let the mind simultaneously merge into and be apart from the four
statements of "delusion is purity" and "no delusion, no purity" so that
there are no three barriers.*

*If worldly beings tread the Way of no cultivation with pure awareness of
prajna wisdom,
All conditions of the realms of sense objects are ultimately of no obstruction.
Always purely aware of their abiding in the four statements of deluded mind
and true mind,
At the very moment they are exactly in harmony with the Way.*

All sentient beings have their own intrinsic self-nature (the Way);

*They will not interfere with one another once they each see into the Way.
If they depart from the Way to seek outwardly for another Way,
They will never see into the Way even to the end of their life.
Passing their entire lifetime being busy and rushing about in vicissitudes,
Ultimately they will still be vexed by themselves.*

*If they want to really see into the genuine Way,
Acting uprightly with the ordinary mind of pure awareness is precisely the
Way.
If they do not have the mind of the Way (the ordinary mind),
They act in the dark and are unable to see into the Way.*

*People who are real persons of the Way,
Always merge into and are apart from seeing the faults of worldly beings.
If they merge into seeing other people's wrongs without simultaneously being
apart from seeing them,
Their crooked actions will eventually turn into deviated action.
Real persons of the Way should merge into and simultaneously be apart from
seeing others' wrongs,
Otherwise the crooked actions are their own faults.*

*They just let go of the mind of not applying the action of straightforwardness;
Thus Buddha's wisdom which dissolves all vexations spontaneously
manifests.
At the very moment they ultimately cease to abide in hatred and love,
They merely stretch out their legs and recline freely with ultimate resting.*

*Those who intend to guide and awaken all Chan practitioners,
Should have the various expedients of sequential wisdom.
Fully cutting off doubts in the stream of consciousness of Chan practitioners,
Is precisely the manifestation of sequential wisdom from self-nature.*

*Buddhadharma (Chan Dharma) always abides in the world;
Chan practitioners ultimately realize it without departing from the world.
Seeking ultimate enlightenment (i.e. bodhi) apart from the world,
Is just like searching for horns on a rabbit.*

Pure awareness is the transcendental wisdom,

*While deluded awareness is the worldly confusion.
When all deluded awareness and pure awareness are completely let go of,
The self-nature of bodhi spontaneously manifests.*

*This verse is the Dharma of Teachings of Suddenness Chan,
Also called the Dharma Vessel of the Great Perfection of Wisdom.
Confused beings listen to it with confusion for innumerable kalpas,
While enlightened beings suddenly awaken to it in an instant.*

The Patriarch further said,

Now that I have expounded this Dharma of Teachings of Suddenness Chan at Dafan Monastery, I make a universal vow for all sentient beings of the Dharma Realm to see into the self-nature and attain Buddhahood at the moment of the statement.

At that time Governor Weiqu, the officers, the monastics, and the laypeople all had insightful comprehension after hearing the Patriarch's discourse. They all bowed at once and eulogized, "Excellent! Who would have expected that there is a buddha appearing in the world at Lingnan!"



Chapter 3: Questions & Answers

What are Merits and Virtues? How to See the Pure Land Right Here and Right Now? The Formlessness Verse for Mind Training

One day Governor Weiqu arranged a feast of the general Dharma assembly for the Patriarch. After the feast, the Governor asked the Patriarch to take the seat. The Governor, the officers, and the assembly all adopted a respectful expression and bowed again, and then Governor Wei asked,

I have heard your Dharma of Teachings, which is truly inconceivable and ineffable. Now I have a few questions and I hope Your Holiness will be so compassionate as to answer them.

The Patriarch said,

If you have any questions, please ask, and I will answer for you.

Governor Wei asked,

Is it not the case that what you expound is the essential principle of Great Patriarch Bodhidharma?

The Patriarch replied,

Yes, it is.

Governor Wei said,

I have heard that when First Patriarch Bodhidharma initially instructed and guided Emperor Wu of Liang, the Emperor asked, "For all my life I have been building monasteries, giving new monks permission to receive ordination, cultivating almsgiving, and holding feasts of the general Dharma assembly. What merits and virtues have I attained?" Bodhidharma said, "In reality, there are no merits and virtues at all." I cannot penetrate the principle of this answer, so please expound on this for me.

The Patriarch said,

There really are no merits and virtues at all. Do not be suspicious of the words of the ancient saint. Emperor Wu had a deluded mind and did not comprehend the true Dharma of Teachings. Good acts such as building monasteries, giving new monks permission to receive ordination, cultivating almsgiving, and holding feasts of the general Dharma assembly belong to seeking the blessedness of human and heavenly beings, which should not be taken as merits and virtues. Merits and virtues are embodied within the Dharma Body (Dharmakaya in Sanskrit) and do not pertain to the cultivation of blessedness.

The Patriarch further said,

[Ultimately] seeing into the self-nature is merit, and the mind of [ultimate] equality is virtue. Merits and virtues entail not being obstructed thought after thought, and always having an [ultimate] insight into the true subtle-functions [and profound-actions] which are originally inherent in the self-nature of true suchness. Maintaining the mind in humility is merit, and behaving oneself in accord with etiquette is virtue. Establishing all things in the self-nature is merit, while merging into and simultaneously being apart from all thoughts in the quintessence of mind is virtue. Non-departing from the self-nature is merit, and functioning without defilement is virtue. If you seek the merits and virtues inherit in the Dharma Body, just act according to what I have said, and that is the true merits and virtues.

People who indeed intend to penetrate merits and virtues do not despise others in their minds but always show universal respect for all sentient beings. If they despise people in their mind and their attachment to both the self and the Dharma has not been let go of, then they naturally have no merit. If their self-nature is still illusive and has not yet been genuinely realized, then they naturally have no virtue. This is due to the fact that their attachment to both the self and the Dharma has always been great, and they constantly show disdain for all.

Good fellow-practitioners, complying with the Dharma nature thought after thought without interruption is merit, and acting with straightforwardness of the mind is virtue. Training the mind with pure awareness of self-nature is merit, and training behavior with prajna wisdom of emptiness is virtue. Good fellow-practitioners, merits and virtues are to be seen within the self-nature, and they cannot be sought through cultivating almsgivings or making offerings. Therefore, blessedness is different from merits and virtues. In fact, it is mainly because of this that Emperor Wu did not realize the true reality, and not that our Patriarch was mistaken.

Governor Wei then asked,

I often see monastics and laypeople reciting "Amitabha Buddha" and vowing to be reborn in the Pure Land of the Western Paradise. Please expound on this. Will those practitioners be able to attain rebirth there? I hope Your Holiness can end my doubts!

The Patriarch said,

Listen carefully, sir, and I will expound on it for you. When the World-Honored One was in Shravasti city to proclaim the sutra about leading and delivering people to the Pure Land of the Western Paradise, he clearly indicated that "The pure land is not far from here." However, according to the discourse of forms its distance is 108,000 miles away, which exactly represents the ten evil karmas and eightfold heterodox paths of sentient beings; owing to these obstructions it can be said that the Western Paradise is far away. Saying that it is far away is intended for people of inferior potentiality, and in compliance with forms, while saying that it is near is intended for

people of superior potentiality, and in compliance with self-nature. People's karmic potentiality may be of sharpness and dullness, but the Chan Dharma is not. Because sentient beings have differences in regard to confusion and enlightenment, there is slowness and speediness in respect to their seeing into the self-nature. While confused people recite "Amitabha Buddha" with attachment to forms and seek to be reborn in the Western Paradise, enlightened people merely purify their own minds. Therefore, the Buddha said, "The purity of the mind is tantamount to the purity of the Buddha's land."

Although you are a native of the East, you are truly sinless so long as your mind is pure. On the other hand, even though other people may be natives of the West, their impure minds are unable to free them from sin. When people of the East commit sins, they recite "Amitabha Buddha" and seek to be reborn in the Western Paradise. However, when people of the West commit sins, where should they seek to be reborn when reciting the Buddha's name? Ordinary ignorant people realize neither the self-nature nor the pure land inherent within themselves, so they vow to be reborn in the Eastern Paradise or the Western Paradise. As for enlightened people, everywhere is the same pure land, therefore the Buddha said, "No matter where they are, they are always in true peace and true happiness." Sir, if your mind ground is free from evil, the Western Paradise is not far from here. If you harbor an evil mind, then it is difficult to reach even if you recite "Amitabha Buddha" and seek to be reborn in the Western Paradise.

Now I exhort you, good fellow-practitioners, first of all to let go of the source of the ten evil karmas, which is equivalent to traveling one hundred thousand miles. Then, let go of the origin of the eightfold heterodox path, which is equivalent to traversing eight thousand miles. If you can see into the self-nature thought after thought and always act with straightforward mind, then as quick snapping your fingers you reach the Western Paradise and see Amitabha Buddha. Sir, if you merely conduct the ten good karmas with the prajna wisdom of emptiness, what necessity will there be for you to vow to be reborn there? On the other hand, if you do not let go of the source of the ten evil karmas, what Buddha would come to receive you? If you realize the Suddenness Dharma of Non-arising, it takes you only an instant to see the Western Pure Land. If you do not realize the Suddenness Dharma in Non-arising, how can you get there by reciting "Amitabha Buddha" and seeking for rebirth, since the distance is so remote? I will shift the Western Pure Land right here in an instant so that all of you can see it in this very moment. Would everyone like to see it?

The congregation bowed and said,

If we are able to see the Western Pure Land here, what need would there be for us to vow to be reborn there? We hope that Your Holiness is so compassionate as to

guide us to manifest the Western Pure Land right here, and to make it possible for all of us to see it.

The Patriarch said,

Sirs, as an analogy, the physical body of a worldly being is a city, while the eyes, ears, nose, and tongue are the gates. There are five external gates and one internal gate, which is the gate of consciousness. The mind is the ground; the self-nature is the king who lives on the mind ground. When one is not apart from the self-nature, the king is there and the body and mind exist. When one is apart from the self-nature, the king is not there and the body and mind do not exist. Buddhahood is attainable within the self-nature, and you should not seek for it apart from yourselves. If your self-nature is confused, you are an ordinary person; if your self-nature is realized, you are a buddha. Kindness and compassion are precisely the Avalokitesvara of the self-nature; joyfulness and equality (or freedom from attachment) are precisely the Mahasthamaprapta of the self-nature; manifested Buddha-wisdom and ultimate purity are precisely the Shakyamuni of the self-nature; equality and straightforwardness are precisely the Amitabha of the self-nature.

Attachment to both the self and the Dharma is Mount Meru; deluded mind is the water of the ocean; vexations are the waves; the mind that harms others is the evil dragon; the obstructions of illusions are ghosts and spirits; the interactions between the conditioning power of mind exhaustion and the conditioned realms of the six sense objects are fishes and turtles; greed and hatred are hells; ignorance is an animal. Good fellow-practitioners, if you always conduct the ten good karmas with the prajna wisdom of emptiness, paradise appears to you spontaneously. When attachment to both the self and the Dharma is totally let go of, Mount Meru topples simultaneously. If you put the deluded mind into full rest, the ocean water dries up instantaneously. When vexations are non-arising, the waves disappear naturally. When the poisonous minds are forgotten, fishes and turtles become extinct immediately. Thereupon, the Buddha of the enlightened self-nature of your own mind ground spontaneously manifests great wisdom of brightness. This brightness externally illuminates the gates of the six sense faculties and the six sense objects with undefiled purity, and is able to penetrate through the six heavens of the realm of desire. Meanwhile, when the bright wisdom illuminates internally, the three poisons are spontaneously dissolved, and all karmic obstructions which can lead us to the hells or other wicked realms instantly disappear. Since the great wisdom illuminates externally and internally with brightness and thoroughness, the right here and right now is no different from the Western Pure Land. If you do not train your mind in this way, how can you reach the pure land?

Upon hearing these answers, the great assembly clearly comprehend the thus-

called "seeing into the self-nature." All of them bowed and eulogized, "Excellent!" Then they chanted,

May all sentient beings in the entire universe (i.e. Dharma Realm) who have heard this realize it in an instant.

The Patriarch said,

Good fellow-practitioners, those who want to train their mind can do it at home as lay practitioners; it is not necessary to become monastics. Those who can train their minds with pure awareness as lay practitioners seem like a native of the East with pure mind, while those who do not train their minds with pure awareness as monastics are not different from a native of the West with deluded mind. So long as your own mind is of genuine purity, where you are is the Western Pure Land of the self-nature.

Governor Wei then asked,

How can we train our minds with pure awareness as lay practitioners? Please instruct and guide us.

The Patriarch said,

I will tell all of you a formlessness verse. If you integrate it into your mind training, there is no difference from always being with me. On the other hand, if you do not put it into your mind training, what benefit can you receive on the Way even if you become monastics?

The verse is:

*Once the mind is in equanimity, why would it be necessary to continue
keeping discipline?*

*Once actions are in accord with the mind of straightforwardness, why would
it be necessary to cultivate Chan?*

Being purely aware of gratitude, take good care of your parents filially.

*Being purely aware of righteousness, the superior and inferior are
compassionate to one another.*

Being purely aware of courtesy, you are in true harmony with precedence.

Being purely aware of patient-rest, a myriad of evils cause no disturbance.

If it is possible to make a fire by diligently hand-drilling wood,

Red lotuses will definitely arise from the mud.

Earnest words, which are hard to take, are clearly good remedy.

Frank words, which jar the ear, are certainly sincere advice.

*By changing deluded awareness into pure awareness, you definitely manifest
the inherent wisdom.*

*By concealing mistakes and obscuring shortcomings, you surely reveal your
mind of impurity.*

Always act purely with true altruism in daily activities;

Attaining Buddhahood does not come by way of almsgiving with money.

Bodhi is only to be found within the mind,

Why bother to seek outwardly for the inconceivable principle?

After hearing my Dharma of Teachings, train your mind in accord with this,

And the Pure Land is right here at the very moment.

The Patriarch added,

Good fellow-practitioners, all of you should put the Dharma of this verse into your mind training, so that you can see into the self-nature and directly attain Buddhahood. Chan Dharma waits for no one. The assembly may disperse now, and I will go back to Caoxi. If you have any questions, you are welcome to come and ask.

At this moment the governor, the officials, and lay practitioners in the assembly all attained intellectual comprehension, accepted it confidently, and put it into their mind training.



Chapter 4: Samadhi & Wisdom

The Non-duality of Samadhi & Wisdom; the Samadhi of One Act; the Dharma Gate of "Three Nos" of Suddenness Chan

The Patriarch told the assembly,

Good fellow-practitioners, my "Dharma of Supreme Awakening of Great Wisdom" is based on simultaneous samadhi and wisdom. But do not be confused and say that samadhi and wisdom are different from each other, for they are of one essence and originally of non-duality. Samadhi is the quintessence of wisdom, while wisdom is the function of samadhi. When merging into wisdom, samadhi is in wisdom. And when merging into samadhi, wisdom is in samadhi. If you realize this principle, that is the equivalent and simultaneous manifestation of samadhi and wisdom.

All practitioners of the Way, do not talk about any deluded view of discrimination such as "samadhi first, and manifest wisdom afterwards" or "wisdom first, and manifest samadhi afterwards". Those who have this deluded view abide in the dualistic forms of dharma/Dharma. If you speak compassionate words without the mind of pure awareness, then it is in vain even if you have samadhi and wisdom [in sequence], because this is not the equal and simultaneous manifestation of samadhi and wisdom. On the other hand, if your speech is in accord with the mind of pure awareness, and the interior and the exterior are of one true suchness, then this is exactly the equal and simultaneous manifestation of samadhi and wisdom. The importance of this Dharma of Teachings lies in self-training and self-realization, but not in argument about precedence. If you argue about the precedence of samadhi and wisdom, then you are exactly the same as confused and ignorant people. In this way you not only do not let go of the mind of self-centered discrimination such as victory and defeat, etc., but also increase attachment to both the self and the Dharma, being unable to depart from the "four forms" of both the "consciousness-realm" and the "wisdom-realm".

Good fellow-practitioners, what are samadhi and wisdom analogous to? They are analogous to a lamp and its light. While there is the lamp, there is light (i.e. brightness). While there is no lamp, there is darkness. The lamp is the quintessence of the light, while the light is the function of the lamp. They are two things in name, but they are originally one and the same in essence. It is the same for the Dharma of samadhi and wisdom.

The Patriarch told the assembly,

Good fellow-practitioners, the Samadhi of One Act means always acting with a

straightforward mind in all places, no matter whether we are walking, standing, sitting, or reclining. The Pure Name Sutra says, "The mind of straightforwardness is the Site of the Way (Dao), the Pure Land." Make sure not to be merely flattering and crooked in mind while being straightforward in speech, and do not merely talk about "Samadhi of One Act" without acting with the mind of straightforwardness. Just act with a straightforward mind and have no attachments to all things. Deluded people abide in the forms of dharma/Dharma, and attach to the Samadhi of One Act, which they misapprehend as "always sitting immovably and not letting deluded thoughts arise in the mind." Those who make this misapprehension are equivalent to insentient beings. This is causes and conditions that obstruct the realization of the Way.

Good fellow-practitioners, the Way should be free-flowing. Why does it become stagnant? If the mind does not abide in the forms of dharma/Dharma, then the Way is free-flowing. If the mind abides in the forms of dharma/Dharma, that is called self-binding. If you say that always sitting without moving is right, why was Shariputra scolded by Vimalakirti for sitting immovably in the forest? Good fellow-practitioners, some people teach Chan sitting as contemplating deluded mind, as contemplating pure mind, or as sitting immovably. They instruct students to perform their skills in this way. There are many confused people who do not comprehend, so that they attach to these teachings and become ignorant. Therefore, it is a great mistake to conduct these teachings of forms.

The Patriarch told the assembly,

Good fellow-practitioners, the orthodox Chan Dharma is originally neither sudden or gradual, rather it is practitioners' karmic potentialities that may be sharp or dull. The deluded practitioners do mind training gradually, while the enlightened realize suddenly. As for having an insight into the original mind and seeing into the original nature, there is no difference. Therefore, the provisional terms suddenness and gradualness are set up.

Good fellow-practitioners, my Dharma of Teachings is the same as that of the Suddenness School of the former Patriarchs, which establishes "no thought" as the principle, "no form" as the essence, and "no abiding" as the foundation. The so-called "no form" means being apart from forms while merging into forms. The so-called "no thought" means having no self-referential thoughts while merging into thoughts. Moreover, the so-called "no abiding" is the inherent self-nature of worldly beings. When regarding the world's goodness and badness, beauty and ugliness, and even when one's enemies and intimates are offensive or mocking in speech, or deceive or dispute with one another, Chan practitioners should regard all as empty and should not think of reciprocation or harm.

Thought after thought, do not think of the previous state of mind. If the previous,

present, and subsequent thoughts are in succession without interruption, this is called bondage. On the other hand, if thought after thought there is no abiding in any dharma/Dharma, then there is no bondage. This is the reason for taking "no abiding" as the foundation.

Good fellow-practitioners, being outwardly apart from all forms is called "no form". If you are able to be apart from forms, then you realize that the essence of all dharma/Dharma is pure. This is the reason for taking "no form" as the essence.

Good fellow-practitioners, if in all states [of environment, body, and mind] the mind is free from defilement, this is called "no thought". You should always be apart from all states in your own thoughts, and do not let the mind arise over the states. If you merely do not think of anything at all, and completely cut off all thoughts, then once all thoughts are cut off in one moment, you pass away and thereafter are reborn elsewhere. This is an extremely great mistake. Those who determine to realize the Way should think about it. If you do not realize this essential principle of the Dharma of Teachings, then the errors you commit by yourself may still be excusable, but you may furthermore render wrong advice to others. You not only are unaware of your own confusion, but also slander the Buddhist canon. Therefore, we establish "no thought" as the principle.

Good fellow-practitioners, why do we establish "no thought" as the principle? It is because confused people, who merely talk about "seeing into the self-nature", have an awareness (one thought) over a state, and then further deluded awareness arises from this one thought, which is the source of all deluded thinking related to interactions between the conditioning power of mind exhaustion and the conditioned realms of the six sense objects. Originally there is not a single dharma/Dharma that is attainable in the self-nature of bodhi. To think that there is attainment and to speak absurdly on blessedness and misfortune are exactly the deluded awareness that induces interactions between the conditioning power of mind exhaustion and the conditioned realms of the six sense objects. Therefore, this Dharma of Teachings of the Suddenness School establishes "no thought" as the principle.

Good fellow-practitioners, regarding the "no" of "no thought", what should we let go of? And regarding the "thought" of "no thought", what should we be aware of? We should let go of the attachment to the forms of duality and the mind of interactions between the conditioning power of mind exhaustion and the conditioned realms of the six sense objects, and simultaneously should be aware of the self-nature of true suchness. True suchness is the quintessence of thought, and thought is the function of true suchness. The self-nature of true suchness manifests thought, rather than the six sense faculties manifesting thought. The true suchness has the nature of emptiness, therefore it is able to manifest thought in accordance with conditions. If it were the

case that true suchness had no empty nature, then simultaneously the six sense faculties and six sense objects would lose their functions.

Good fellow-practitioners, the self-nature of true suchness manifests thoughts. Though the six sense faculties have the functions of seeing, hearing, and awareness, they are not defiled by the myriad objects, and the self-nature of true suchness is always liberated. Therefore, the Pure Name Sutra says, "One is adept at differentiating the forms of all dharma/Dharma, while simultaneously resting immovably in the Ultimate Principle."



Chapter 5: Sitting Chan

*Sitting Chan is not Contemplation of Delusion, Purity, or Immovability!
What is Sitting Chan & Chan Samadhi?*

The Patriarch told the assembly,

The Sitting Chan of the Suddenness School fundamentally does not lie in the contemplation of mind, purity, or immovability. As to the contemplation of mind, the mind is primarily delusive. Once we are aware that mind is in delusion, there is no need to contemplate it. As to the contemplation of purity, the self-nature of worldly beings is intrinsically pure, and it is the deluded thoughts that cover the true suchness. Once we let go of all self-referential deluded thinking, we realize that the self-nature is spontaneously pure. If we intentionally manifest the mind to contemplate purity, we actually create the delusion of purity. This delusion has no fixed abode, yet the contemplation itself is the delusion. The purity itself has neither shape nor form, however some practitioners set up pure form, and consider it to be the accomplishment of mind training. Those who have such understanding will obstruct their realization of self-nature and will be bound by the form of purity.

Good fellow-practitioners, if those who train themselves with immovability, at the very moment of their awareness of all people, have no discrimination and attachment toward people's rightness and wrongness, goodness and badness, contributions and faults, or gains and losses, then this is the true immovability of self-nature. Good fellow-practitioners, confused people may have physical immovability, but as soon as they open their mouths they talk about other people's rightness and wrongness, strengths and weaknesses, as well as goodness and badness. Thus, they turn their back on the Way. Moreover, if they abide in the contemplation of mind or purity, then this contemplation just obstructs the Way.

The Patriarch told the assembly,

Good fellow-practitioners, what is "Sitting Chan"? In the Dharma gate of Suddenness Chan, all is of liberation and without obstruction. Deluded thoughts do not arise over the awareness of all good or bad external states, and this is the so-called "Sitting". Meanwhile, seeing into the immovability of self-nature internally is the so-called "Chan".

Good fellow-practitioners, what is "Chan Samadhi"? Being apart from external forms is called "Chan", while being free from internal disturbance is called "Samadhi." If people attach to forms externally, their mind is disturbed internally. On the other hand, if people are apart from external forms, then their mind is not

disturbed. The self-nature is of intrinsic purity and spontaneous samadhi, and it is only because of the deluded awareness of all states that the mind becomes disturbed. If people apply non-abiding awareness to all states to prevent their mind from becoming disturbed, this is true samadhi.

Good fellow-practitioners, being apart from forms externally is Chan, and being free from disturbance internally is Samadhi. The outward Chan together with the inward Samadhi is called "Chan Samadhi". The Bodhisattva-shila Sutra says, "The essence of discipline intrinsically lies in the purity of self-nature." Good fellow-practitioners, in every moment thought after thought, see into the intrinsic purity of self-nature by yourselves, maintain spontaneousness & effortlessness by yourselves, and attain supreme Buddhahood by yourselves.



Chapter 6: On Renewal

Five Kinds of Dharma Body of Self-nature; Formless Renewal; Four Great Vows of Self-nature; Formless Precepts of Three Refuges; Three Bodies of The Buddha of Self-nature

Another time, seeing the scholars and commoners from the regions of Guang County, Shao County, and the four quarters gathered on the mountain to listen to the Dharma of Teachings, the Great Patriarch took the seat and told the assembly:

Good fellow-practitioners, this great matter of attaining Buddhahood should start from the realization of self-nature. At all times, if you always act with non-abiding awareness of self-nature thought after thought in order to see into your own Dharma Body and have an insight into the Buddha of your own mind, and also use the discipline of self-nature toward your self-deliverance, then this is your genuine visit to Caoxi. Since all of you have come from afar to meet here together, this shows that we all have in common a deep affinity with Chan Dharma. Now each of you please kneel down! First, I will transmit to you the "Five Kinds of Dharma Body of Self-nature," then instruct you in the "Formless Renewal."

The assembly knelt down, and the Patriarch said,

1. The Discipline incense: Being with no impurity, no badness, no jealousy, no greed and hatred, no robbery and killing in the mind ground is the Discipline incense of self-nature.

2. The Samadhi incense: Being aware of all forms of good and bad states with no disturbance in the mind ground is called the Samadhi incense of self-nature.

3. The Wisdom incense: Being with no obstruction in the mind ground, always avoiding all badness and doing all good with non-abiding awareness of prajna wisdom of emptiness, as well as always respecting elders, considering the young, and delivering the lonely and the poor with pure mind of compassion is the Wisdom incense of self-nature.

4. The Emancipation incense : Being with no clinging, no thinking of good or bad, and having freedom without obstructions in the mind ground is the Emancipation incense of self-nature.

5. The Emancipated Wisdom incense: Ultimately enlightened practitioners should not cling to good and bad, and also not abide in the ultimate emptiness in the mind ground. They should realize profoundly and experience extensively, have an ultimate insight into the true mind, and attain mastery of the Mind Dharma and the Dharma of Teachings of all Buddhas. Meanwhile, when interacting with worldly

people, the ultimately emancipated one should apply "no attachment to the four forms of the wisdom-realm" as the manner of harmoniously and completely mixing with the common people, so the self-nature of true suchness is always unchangeable until the realization of supreme bodhi. This is called the Emancipated Wisdom incense of self-nature.

Good fellow-practitioners, each individual should inwardly and directly fumigate the mind ground with this one-fold real incense of merit and virtue, and should not seek for it outwardly by departing from the self-nature.

Now I will instruct you in the "formless renewal", which will exterminate the sins of past, present, and future lives, and enable you to attain ultimate purity of the three kinds of karma (of body, mouth, and mind). Good fellow-practitioners, please follow and repeat after me:

"May I, Chan practitioner so and so, from the preceding thought, the present thought, and the subsequent thought, be always undefiled by ignorance and confusion thought after thought. I sincerely repent of and renew all previous bad karma and sins owing to ignorance and confusion, and vow that they are dissolved all at once and will never arise again.

May I, Chan practitioner so and so, from the preceding thought, the present thought, and the subsequent thought, be always undefiled by arrogance and delusion thought after thought. I sincerely repent of and renew all previous bad karma and sins owing to arrogance and delusion, and vow that they are dissolved all at once and will never arise again.

May I, Chan practitioner so and so, from the preceding thought, the present thought, and the subsequent thought, be always undefiled by envy and jealousy thought after thought. I sincerely repent of and renew all previous bad karma and sins owing to envy and jealousy, and vow that they are dissolved all at once and will never arise again."

Good fellow-practitioners, this instruction is the "formless renewal." What is "repentance?" What is "renewal?" Repentance refers to fully repenting of previous faults, such as all bad karma and sins owing to ignorance, confusion, arrogance, delusion, envy, and jealousy, and forever not letting them arise again. Meanwhile, renewal refers to from now on fully realizing previous faults, such as all bad karma and sins owing to ignorance, confusion, arrogance, delusion, envy, and jealousy, and completely putting them into full rest, so as to never act in the same way again. Therefore, together this is called repentance and renewal. Ordinary people who are under ignorance and confusion only know to repent of their previous faults and do not know to renew the subsequent actions, so that their previous faults have not been dissolved, and further subsequent faults arise. If the previous faults have not been

dissolved and further subsequent faults arise, how could this be called "repentance and renewal?"

Good fellow-practitioners, once you have done renewal, I will instruct you in the "Four Great Vows of Self-nature". Every one of you should listen attentively:

"I vow to deliver innumerable sentient beings of self-nature.

I vow to dissolve endless vexations of self-nature.

I vow to master limitless approaches to Dharma of self-nature.

I vow to attain supreme Buddhahood of self-nature."

Good fellow-practitioners, don't all of us say, "I vow to deliver innumerable sentient beings?" Speaking in this way doesn't mean that I, Huineng, am going to deliver all of them. Good fellow-practitioners, the sentient beings within the mind include the confused mind, the deluded mind, the bad mind, the jealous mind, and the malicious mind. All these kinds of mind belong to the sentient beings of the mind. Every one of you has to deliver yourself by means of the self-nature, only then is it called genuine deliverance. What is the "self-deliverance by means of the self-nature?" It is to apply pure awareness for delivering the sentient beings of the mind of deluded awareness, vexation, and ignorance. Once you have pure awareness, you are able to apply the prajna wisdom of emptiness for individual self-deliverance of all ignorant and confused sentient beings. Let the deluded awareness be delivered by pure awareness, the confusion by enlightenment, the ignorance by wisdom, and the malevolence by benevolence. Such deliverance is the genuine self-deliverance. As to "I vow to dissolve endless vexations," it refers to substituting the prajna wisdom of self-nature for the deluded mind. As to "I vow to master limitless approaches to Dharma," it refers to you having to see into your self-nature and always act in accord with the true Dharma of Mind and Dharma of Teachings, which is called "genuine mastery." As to "I vow to attain supreme Buddhahood," it refers to you having to always be able to humble your mind, act with straightforwardness in all places, depart from both confusion and enlightenment, and always manifest prajna wisdom to be purely aware of reality and delusion, so that you will see into the Buddha-nature, and attain Buddhahood at the very moment of the statement. Furthermore, you will always be purely aware of spontaneousness and effortlessness, which is the Dharma of the vow and the power.

Good fellow-practitioners, since we have generated the "Four Great Vows," let me further instruct all of you in the "Formless Precepts of The Three Refuges." Good fellow-practitioners, we take refuge in the supreme enlightenment, which is the most honorable one of the complete embodiment of blessedness and wisdom. We take

refuge in the supreme orthodoxy, which is the most honorable one of departing from desire. We take refuge in the supreme purity, which is the most honorable one of greatest respect by human and heavenly beings. Hereafter, we should address supreme enlightenment as our intrinsic teacher, take no more refuge in demons and non-Buddhists, and always confirm ourselves with the "Three Jewels of Self-nature." I would advise all good fellow-practitioners to take refuge in the "Three Jewels of Self-nature", which embraces "Buddha", the supreme enlightenment; "Dharma", the supreme orthodoxy; and "Sangha", the supreme purity. Let your own mind take refuge in the supreme enlightenment, so that deluded and confused thoughts do not arise, desires [of attachment to the four forms of the wisdom realm and the consciousness-realm] decrease and you are content in all situations, and you are apart from the wealth [of the world and the Dharma] and all forms. This is called the most honorable one of the complete embodiment of blessedness and wisdom. Let your own mind take refuge in the supreme orthodoxy, so that there is no deluded awareness thought after thought, and there is no attachment to the greed, arrogance, and forms of the wisdom-realm. This is called the most honorable one of departing from desire. Let your own mind take refuge in the supreme purity, so that the self-nature is not defiled by any states of greed, craving, and interactions between the conditioning power of mind exhaustion and the conditioned realms of the six sense objects. This is called the most honorable one of greatest respect by human and heavenly beings. If you follow this approach, you are taking refuge in the self-nature. Ordinary people who do not realize this take the Precepts of the Three Refuges day and night. If they say they take refuge in the Buddha, where is the Buddha? If they do not see the Buddha, how can they take refuge? Their words would then amount to deluded speech.

Good fellow-practitioners, every one of you should be clearly aware of yourself. Do not misapply your mind. The sutra distinctly says that we should take refuge in the Buddha of self-nature, and should not take refuge in other buddhas. If you do not take refuge in your intrinsic buddha of self-nature, then there is nothing to rely on. Now since you have realized by yourselves, every one of you should take refuge in the Three Jewels of Self-nature. Nurturing the true mind inwardly and showing respect for others outwardly is called taking refuge in self-nature.

Good fellow-practitioners, since you have taken refuge in the Three Jewels of Self-nature, let every one of you listen attentively, and I will instruct you in "Three Bodies of the Buddha of Self-nature" in order to enable you to see into the "Three Bodies of the Buddha" and ultimately realize the self-nature. Everyone please repeat after me:

*"I take refuge in the Pure Dharma Body of Buddha within my physical body.
I take refuge in the Perfect Reward Body of Buddha within my physical body.*

I take refuge in the Myriad Transformation Body of Buddha within my physical body."

Good fellow-practitioners, our physical body is likened to a house, and therefore we cannot take refuge in it. The above-mentioned "Three Bodies of the Buddha" are always within our self-nature and are inherent in all worldly beings. However, because their minds are confused, they cannot see into their intrinsic self-nature. So they seek outwardly for the Three Bodies of the Buddha, and cannot see into it being within their own bodies. Please listen attentively! I will help all of you see into the Three Bodies of the Buddha of self-nature in your own bodies. These "Three Bodies of the Buddha" are manifested from the self-nature, and are unable to be attained by seeking externally.

What is the "Pure Dharma Body of Buddha?" The self-nature of worldly beings is intrinsically pure, and all dharmas/Dharmas manifest from the self-nature. When you think delusively about any bad things, you manifest bad deeds. When you think delusively about any good things, you manifest good deeds. Thus all things within self-nature are like the sky, which is always clear, and also like the sun and the moon, which are always bright. While they are covered by floating clouds, there is brightness above and darkness below. If suddenly a wind blows away the clouds, then the brightness reappears both above and below, and the myriad things are fully manifested. The minds of worldly beings are confused and always wafting, just like floating clouds in the sky. Good fellow-practitioners, wisdom is like the sun, insight is like the moon, and both of them are always bright. But if you attach to the external sense objects, you have your self-nature covered by the floating clouds of deluded thoughts, so that the brightness and clarity of your wisdom and insight cannot be manifested. On the other hand, if you meet an ultimately enlightened being and hear the authentic Dharma of Teachings, then you let go of the confused attachment and deluded thinking so that both the interior and exterior are spontaneously bright and clear, and the myriad things manifest from the self-nature. Those who have seen into the self-nature are like this. This is what is called the "Pure Dharma Body of Buddha."

Good fellow-practitioners, your own mind taking refuge in the self-nature is taking refuge in the genuine Buddha. To take refuge in self-nature is to let go of the evil mind, the jealous mind, the flattering mind, the self-referential discriminating mind, the deceiving and deluded mind, the disrespectful mind, the snobbish mind, the heterodox mind, and the arrogant mind, as well as all bad deeds at all times, of the self-nature. Also, always being purely aware of your own faults and not criticizing others' goodness or badness is taking refuge in the self-nature. Furthermore, always maintaining humble mind and universal respect with pure awareness is the mastery of

seeing into self-nature without obstructions, and is also taking refuge in the self-nature.

What is the "Perfect Reward Body?" Just as for instance one lamp's light can break up one thousand years of darkness, one wisdom can dissolve ten thousand years of ignorance. Do not have deluded awareness of the backward moment since the past is non-attainable, but always have pure awareness of the forward moment with perfect awareness thought after thought so as to spontaneously see into the self-nature. Although good and bad are different, nonetheless their self-nature is non-dualistic. The self-nature of non-duality is called the true nature, which is not defiled by good or by bad. This is what is called the "Perfect Reward Body of Buddha." When the self-nature manifests one bad thought, it can eliminate good causes accumulated in countless kalpas. When the self-nature manifests one good thought, it can exterminate all bad karma, as much as the grains of sand in the Ganges. To see into the self-nature thought after thought, and to always maintain spontaneousness & effortlessness until we attain supreme and complete enlightenment, is called the "reward body."

What is the "Myriad Transformation Body?" If we have no awareness of the myriad things, the self-nature is intrinsically empty. If we have awareness of the myriad things in one thought, then it is called "transformation." When we are aware of bad things, our mind is transformed into hell. When we are aware of good things, our mind is transformed into paradise. When a poisoned thought arises, our mind is transformed into the state of dragons and snakes. When a compassionate thought arises, our mind is transformed into the state of a Bodhisattva. When wisdom manifests, our mind is transformed into a state of the upper realms. When ignorance manifests, our mind is transformed into a state of the lower realms. The transformations of the self-nature are indeed numerous, but confused people cannot realize it, so they manifest bad view thought after thought and always act in a bad way. If they would turn around and come back to the good view even for one thought, then the wisdom would instantly manifest. This is what is called the "Transformation Body of the Buddha of Self-nature."

Good fellow-practitioners, the Dharma Body is intrinsically sufficient in the self-nature. Spontaneously seeing into the self-nature thought after thought is the Reward Body of Buddha. The manifested functions of wisdom from the Reward Body are the Transformation Body of Buddha. "Self-realization" and the "spontaneousness & effortlessness" of the merits and virtues of self-nature is the genuine "taking refuge". Skin and flesh are the physical body, and the physical body is likened to a house, therefore we cannot take refuge in it. Just to realize the "Three Bodies of Self-nature" is to have an insight into the Buddha of self-nature. I have a formless verse for you. If you can realize it, then at the very moment of the statement your confused sins

accumulated from numerous kalpas will be dissolved suddenly and simultaneously.

The verse is:

*Confused people merely cultivate blessedness without realizing the Way;
They only say that cultivating blessedness is itself the Way.
The boundless blessedness of almsgiving and making offerings is attainable,
While the karma of the three poisons is still created all the time in the mind.*

*If you try to apply cultivated blessedness for exterminating karmic sins,
The karmic sins are still there even though you attain blessedness in the
subsequent life.
Just let go of the conditions of karmic sins within your mind;
That is to act with the genuine renewal of self-nature.*

*Once you suddenly realize the genuine renewal of the Mahayana Vehicle,
You are free from sin at the very moment of letting go of deluded awareness
and acting with pure awareness.
Those who are treading the Way always manifest non-abiding awareness
from the self-nature,
And they are classified just the same as all the Buddhas.*

*Our Patriarchs merely transmitted this Suddenness Chan Dharma,
Universally vowing that all followers can see into the self-nature and become
one with the Buddhas in essence.
If you are going to seek for the realization of the Dharma Body,
Be apart from the forms of all dharma/Dharma to purify the mind.*

*Exert yourself to the utmost in order to see into the self-nature, and do not
dream away your life;
Your life is terminated when the subsequent thought suddenly discontinues.
Those who have realized the Dharma of Teachings of the Mahayana Vehicle
and thus have seen into the self-nature,
Should reverently and sincerely join their palms and effortlessly seek for the
Dharma Body.*

The Patriarch said,

Good fellow-practitioners, all of you should take this verse and use it in your mind training. Once you see into the self-nature at the very moment of the statement, then it

is as if you are always by my side even though you are actually a thousand miles away from me. If you cannot get enlightened at the very moment of the statement, then we are a thousand miles apart even though we are face-to-face. Therefore, why take the trouble to come here from so far away? Please take good care of yourselves, and so long!

After hearing the Dharma of Teachings, all the assembly had intellectual realization and joyfully put it into their mind training.



Chapter 7: Matching Conditions

Chan Practitioners' Seeking of Advice and Guidance; the Patriarch's Pure Awareness Of and Appropriate Responsiveness To the Conditions; Mind - Dharma Transmission

After he had received Dharma Transmission from Huangmei, the Patriarch returned to Caohou Village in Shao County, where he was unknown to everyone. At that time a Confucian scholar, Liu Zhilue, courteously gave him preferential treatment. Zhilue had an aunt named Wu Jicang, who was a nun and always recited the Mahaparinirvana Sutra. Hearing her, the Patriarch realized the profound principle of the Sutra all in a single listening, and thereupon began to expound it to her. Then, the nun took the scripture and asked him about the words.

The Patriarch said,

I am illiterate. Please ask about the principle.

The nun said,

If you don't even know the words, how can you realize the principle?

The Patriarch said,

The profound principle of all Buddhas has nothing to do with language and words.

The nun was so surprised that she announced to the old worthies in the village,

This is a special man who has attained the Way. We should invite him and make offerings to him.

Therefore, a lay person Cao Shuliang, who was the descendant of Weiwu, together with local residents, strove in regarding the Patriarch with respect and making obeisance to him.

At that time the ancient Baolin Monastery, which had fallen into ruin after the wars at the end of the Sui dynasty, was rebuilt on its original foundation. They invited the Patriarch to live there, and all at once it became a famous monastery. The Patriarch had lived there for more than nine months when he was traced and pursued again by a group of wicked people. The Patriarch concealed himself on the mountain in front, but they set fire to the woods and bushes. Therefore, the Patriarch squeezed into a crack among large rocks, and narrowly escaped disaster. The rock there still has the knee prints of the Patriarch's sitting posture and the impressions of his clothing's texture, and thus it has been known as the "Rock of Refuge" since that time. Recollecting the fifth Patriarch's instruction about "staying at Huai County and secluding at Hui County", the Patriarch concealed himself in these two districts.

The monk Fahai, a native of Qujiang in Shao County, asked in his first interview with the Patriarch,

"The mind itself is Buddha" — please compassionately show and explain this to me.

The Patriarch said,

The non-arising of the preceding thought is mind itself, while the non-perishing of the succeeding thought is Buddha. To manifest all forms is mind itself, while to be apart from all forms is Buddha. If I were to expound this in detail, I would never finish even in innumerable kalpas. Hence listen to my verse:

*The mind itself is wisdom,
While being Buddha is samadhi.
When samadhi and wisdom are equally and simultaneously manifested,
Then the mind is always in spontaneous purity.
The realization of the Mind Dharma of this Suddenness Chan,
Depends on your established [orthodox] habitual pattern.
The function of samadhi and wisdom is originally of non-arising;
Simultaneous manifestation of both is precisely the orthodox Way.*

At the very moment of the statement, Fahai was greatly enlightened. He then eulogized with the following verse:

*The mind itself is intrinsically Buddha,
No seeing into the self-nature is the self-centered hindrance.
Now I have realized the true reality of samadhi and wisdom;
Simultaneous manifestation of both enables us to [simultaneously merge into
and] be apart from all forms of phenomena.*

The monk Fada was a native from Hong County. He had become a novice at the age of seven, and used to recite the Lotus Sutra. When he came to make obeisance to the Patriarch, he failed to prostrate with his head touching the ground.

The Patriarch reproached him,

If you prostrate without your head touching the ground, how does this differ from no prostration at all? There must be something in your mind causing your self-conceit. What have you accumulated in your mind?

Fada said,

I have recited the Lotus Sutra three thousand times.

The Patriarch said,

If you recite it ten thousand times and realize the principle of the sutra without better-than-others self-conceit, then you walk hand-in-hand with me. At present you are conceited about your accomplishment and have no awareness at all of your fault. Listen to my verse:

Prostration is originally to tame the mind of arrogance;

Why should one's head fail to touch the ground?

Karmic sin instantly arises when you have self-centered arrogance in your mind;

The blessedness is incomparable once you let go of the mind of accomplishment.

The Patriarch also said,

What is your name?

Fada replied,

Fada.

The Patriarch said,

Your name is Fada, but when have you ever attained mastery of Mind Dharma?

Then he uttered another verse:

Your present name is Fada,

And diligently you recite the sutra without taking a rest.

Your effort is in vain if you simply recite in accord with the sounds,

And only those who have an ultimate insight into the mind are called bodhisattvas.

You have deep affinity with the Chan Dharma,

Thus I now expound this for you:

Just have great confidence that the Buddha has no discourse,

And the lotus flower spontaneously blossoms from his mouth.

After having heard this verse, Fada offered an apology to the Patriarch and said,

From now onward I will be humble and respectful to all. I have recited the Lotus Sutra without having realized its principle, and have always had questions in my mind. The wisdom of Your Holiness is broad and profound, thus I sincerely ask you to preach the principle of the sutra to me in brief.

The Patriarch said,

Fada, the Buddhadharma is originally of extremely profound mastery, only your mind has not attained mastery of the Dharma. The sutra itself is originally of no question, only your mind has given rise to questions. In reciting this sutra, do you realize what its essential principle is?

Fada said,

I have dull potentiality, and I have always just recited the sutra according to the text. How could I realize its essential principle and intention?

The Patriarch said,

I am illiterate. Please recite the sutra once for me, and I will expound the principle for you.

Fada then recited the sutra aloud until the Chapter of Analogy. The Patriarch said,

Stop! This sutra fundamentally takes "the appearance in the world for one great matter of causes and conditions" as its principle. Even if it presents many kinds of analogies, none of them surpasses this principle. What are the "causes and conditions"? The sutra says, "All the Buddhas, the World Honored Ones, merely appear in the world for one great matter of causes and conditions." The so-called "one great matter" is the Buddha's wisdom. Worldly people are confused outwardly owing to abiding in forms, and also are confused inwardly owing to abiding in emptiness. If you are able to simultaneously merge into and be apart from forms, and also to simultaneously merge into and be apart from emptiness, then you are not confused either inwardly or outwardly. If you realize this Mind Dharma, your mind ground reveals its brightness in one thought, and this is called revealing the Buddha's wisdom.

The word "Buddha" is equivalent to "supreme enlightenment". Therefore, the "one great matter of causes and conditions" can be divided into four gates, which are revealing, manifesting, realizing, and penetrating the "wisdom of supreme enlightenment". Providing that when you are purely aware of the revealing and manifesting you are able to effortlessly attain the realizing and penetrating, then the "wisdom of supreme enlightenment" (i.e. Buddha wisdom) of "intrinsic self-nature of true-suchness" can genuinely emerge.

Don't misinterpret the principle of the sutra! When you see that it says "revealing, manifesting, realizing, and penetrating", you mistake it as indicating Buddha's wisdom which has no connection with worldly people like us. Such a misinterpretation amounts to slandering the sutra and defaming the Buddha. Since the Buddha was already a supremely enlightened Buddha, he was already in possession of Buddha's wisdom. What need to further reveal it? Therefore, you should have confidence that the Buddha wisdom is just your own mind, and there is no other Buddha outside your mind. It was because all sentient beings had covered up the brightness of their own mind grounds, had been greedy for states of the six sense objects, had been clinging to external conditions and disturbed by internal deluded thinking, and had been willingly experiencing the spurs of mind exhaustion and the six sense objects, that they troubled the World Honored One to rise from Mahayana genuine samadhi in order to exhort them with various earnest words to put all their self-referential deluded thinking and attachment into full rest and cease seeking outwardly, so they could be one with all Buddhas. This is why the Lotus Sutra speaks of revealing the Buddha's wisdom.

I also strongly advise all people to always reveal the Buddha's wisdom within their own mind. The worldly beings' mind grounds are deluded, so that they commit sins under ignorance and confusion, they are good in speech but evil in mind, they have greed, hatred, jealousy, flattery, and arrogance, and they infringe on others and damage property. In this they reveal sentient beings' consciousness. If they can purify their mind ground, they always reveal the Buddha's wisdom so that they are purely aware of their own mind, and avoid evil actions and follow good actions. In this they reveal the Buddha's wisdom. Thought after thought, you should reveal the Buddha's wisdom, which is supra-mundane, and should not reveal sentient beings' consciousness, which is mundane. If you just wearily attach to the recitation and consider it as your daily practice, how is this different from a yak caring for its tail?

Fada said,

Does this mean that so long as I can realize the principle of the sutra then I do not have to recite it?

The Patriarch said,

What fault does the sutra itself have? Is it possible that it obstructs your recitation? It is just that confusion and enlightenment lie in the individual, and gain or loss depends on yourself. If you recite it and also realize the principle, then you turn around the sutra. On the other hand, if you recite it and do not realize the principle, then you are turned around by the sutra. Listen to my verse:

When the mind is confused, the Lotus Sutra turns you around.

*When the mind is enlightened, you turn the Lotus Sutra around.
To recite the sutra for a long time without realizing its principle,
Implies that you are an enemy to the principle.
"Thoughtlessness" means that the thought is pure,
"Thoughtfulness" means that the thought is deluded.
When thoughtfulness and thoughtlessness both are not attached to by the
mind,
You always ride the vehicle of the great white ox of self-nature.*

Upon hearing the verse, Fada involuntarily shed tears and was greatly enlightened at the very moment of the statement, and told the Patriarch,

All along I have really never turned the Lotus Sutra around, but have been turned around by the Lotus Sutra.

Then he further asked,

The sutra says, "Even if all the great arhats and the bodhisattvas exhaust their realization to the utmost to speculate about it together, they still cannot fathom the Buddha's wisdom." Now you preach that once ordinary people ultimately enlighten to their own mind, they are said to spontaneously penetrate the Buddha's wisdom. Except for those who have superior potentialities, ordinary people could not help having doubt and slandering the sutra. Moreover, the sutra speaks of three vehicles. How to ultimately distinguish between the vehicles of goat, deer, or ox, and that of the great white ox? Please render me some more discourse.

The Patriarch said,

The principle of the sutra is originally clear. It's just that you are in confusion and turn your back toward it. The people of the three vehicles cannot fathom the Buddha's wisdom because they have faults in their speculation. Even just allowing them to exhaust all their speculations, they only become farther away from the true reality. The Buddha originally spoke of this principle for ordinary people, but not for other buddhas. As to those who are unwilling to believe the principle, they are allowed to leave the assembly. In fact, they scarcely realize that they originally ride in the vehicle of the great white ox, yet still seek outwardly for the three vehicles.

Moreover, the sutra clearly tells you, "Ultimately there is only one buddha-vehicle, and there are no other vehicles. It is all for the sake of the one buddha-vehicle that Shkyamuni Buddha taught the worldly people with innumerable Dharma of Teachings, such as the two vehicles or three vehicles, the countless expedients, as well as all speech of causes, conditions, and analogies." Why are you unable to realize that the three vehicles are provisional expedients, which are for the past sentient beings who were still in confusion, while the one vehicle is the true reality, which is for the

present sentient beings who have become mature in mind training? This teaching merely tells you to let go of the provisional expedients and return directly home to the true reality. Having returned home to the true reality, you realize that even the true reality has no name. You should actualize that all the valuable treasures entirely belong to you, and their benefits are fully subject to your enjoyment. Furthermore, do not abide in the thought of the father (i.e. Buddha), the thought of the son (i.e. sentient beings), or the thought of the enjoyment (i.e. mind/function of Buddha's wisdom). This is called genuine devotion to your mind training with the Lotus Sutra. Therefore, you should never put down the sutra from preceding kalpa to succeeding kalpa, and should keep on your mind training with the Lotus Sutra from morning till night.

After being awakened, Fada had zealous joy and eulogized with a verse:

*Having recited the Lotus Sutra over three thousand times,
All delusions are entirely dissolved at one statement of Caoxi.
Without realizing the principle of the Buddha's appearance in the world,
How can the wild mind accumulated in many lives be put into full rest?
The three vehicles of the goat, deer, and ox are expedient means,
They are expounded for arhats, pratyeka-buddhas, and bodhisattvas
respectively.
Who could know that ordinary people within the burning house,
Have always intrinsically been the genuine King of Dharma?*

The Patriarch said,

From now on you are worthy to be called a genuine monk of sutra-recitation.

Henceforth, Fada realized the profound principle, and never stopped reciting the sutra.

The monk Zhitong was a native of Anfeng in Shou County. He had read the Lankavatara Sutra about one thousand times, but he could not realize the Three Bodies and the Four Wisdoms. Therefore, he paid respects to the Patriarch and asked for an interpretation of their essential meanings.

The Patriarch said,

As to the Three Bodies, the Pure Dharma Body is your self-nature, the Perfect Reward Body is your wisdom, and the Myriad Transformation Body is your action. If you speak of Three Bodies apart from the self-nature, this is just called Bodies without Wisdom. On the other hand, if you realize that the Three Bodies have no self-nature, you attain bodhi of the Four Wisdoms. Listen to my verse:

*The self-nature embodies the Three Bodies,
Which are able to manifest as the Four Wisdoms.
Without departing from the conditions of the six sense faculties and the six
sense objects,
You are able to transcendently ascend to the stage of Buddhahood.
As for what I just expounded to you,
You should have profound confidence without confusion forever.
Do not follow those who seek after Buddhahood outwardly,
And vainly talk about bodhi all day long.*

Zhitong asked again,

May I ask to hear about the essential meaning of the Four Wisdoms?

The Patriarch said,

Once you realize the Three Bodies, you should also spontaneously actualize the Four Wisdoms. Why do you further ask this question? If apart from the Three Bodies you additionally talk about Four Wisdoms, this is called Wisdoms without Bodies. Even though there is considered to be wisdom, it is still equivalent to no wisdom.

The Patriarch then uttered another verse:

*The Wisdom of Great-Perfection Mirror is the pure essence of self-nature,
The Wisdom of Universal Equality has the wisdom-mind of non-obstruction.
The Wisdom of Profound Awareness has an insight of functionlessness,
The Wisdom of Accomplishing Action manifests all actions like a perfecting
mirror.
The first five and the eighth consciousnesses are transformed in the buddha
stage,*

The sixth and the seventh in the bodhisattva stage.

But this is merely the name of transformation without the real application.

If you awaken yourself to the superlative (i.e. ultimate enlightenment) in one shot,

You are always in the great samadhi of Buddha while experiencing all deluded and pure conditions in daily life.

Zhitong suddenly had an insight into the prajna wisdom of self-nature, and submitted a verse to the Patriarch:

The Three Bodies are intrinsically within my self-nature,

And the Four Wisdoms are originally the brightness of mind ground.

While the Three Bodies and the Four Wisdoms are in perfect harmony without obstructions,

They are able to respond to all things and naturally manifest all forms in accord with conditions.

To cultivate them is deluded thought and action,

And abiding in them is not the genuine marrow of Chan.

I am able to realize the profound principle through the guidance of Your Holiness,

And hence I finally put the provisional name of defilement into rest.

The monk Zhichang was a native from Guixi in Xin County. He became a monastic in his childhood and was zealous in his effort to see into the self-nature. One day, he came to investigate with and make obeisance to the Patriarch.

The Patriarch asked,

Where have you come from? What are you seeking for?

Zhichang replied,

I recently went to Baifeng Mountain in Hong County to have an interview with Master Datong, and met with his proclamation on the essential principle of seeing into the self-nature and attaining Buddhahood. But I still have not yet resolved my doubts, so I have come from afar to pay my respects to Your Holiness, and hope to receive your compassionate guidance.

The Patriarch said,

What instruction did he give you? Please try to quote it.

Zhichang said,

After having stayed there for three months, I still had not received any instruction or guidance. Being earnest for the Dharma, I went alone into the abbot's room one night and asked, "What is my original mind and original nature?" Datong then said, "Do you see the empty space?" I replied, "Yes, I do." He said, "Do you see the empty space having any form?" I replied, "The empty space is formless, so what form does it have?" He said, "Your original nature is like the empty space. That there is not a single thing to be seen into is the right insight, and that there is not a single thing to be realized is the true realization. It is neither green nor yellow, neither long nor short. Just realizing the purity of the original source and the perfect illumination of the enlightened essence is called seeing into the self-nature and attaining Buddhahood, and is also called the Buddha's wisdom." Although I heard this proclamation, I still have not yet resolved my doubts. Your Holiness, please instruct me.

The Patriarch said,

*Your teacher's Dharma of Teaching still remains with insight and realization,
therefore it fails to let you get enlightened. Now listen to my verse:*

"Not a single thing to be seen into" remaining with "non-insight",

Is just like floating clouds covering the surface of the sun.

"Not a single thing to be realized" attaching to "realization of emptiness",

Is still like the vast empty space emitting a flash of lightning.

*When such concepts as "remaining with non-insight" and "attaching to
realization of emptiness" arise in a instant,*

*How can these misapprehensions ever be skillful means for settling the
issue?*

*You should realize in one thought that there is no non-insight and no realization of emptiness;
Then your inherent wisdom of self-nature will always manifest.*

Having heard the verse, Zhichang's mind was suddenly enlightened. Thereupon, he gave a verse:

*Giving rise to the concepts of insight and realization for no reason at all,
I seek for enlightenment by attaching to the forms.
If the mind still remains with a single thought of enlightenment,
How could I transcend my former confusions?
The self-nature is the original essence of enlightenment,
But I uselessly wander from place to place by following the awareness.
Had I not entered into the room of the Patriarch,
I would have bewilderedly headed toward the duality of insight and realization.*

One day Zhichang asked the Patriarch,
Buddha discoursed the Dharma of Teachings of Three Vehicles and also that of the Supreme Vehicle. As I still do not comprehend this, please instruct me.

The Patriarch said,

You should be purely aware of your own true mind, and not attach to the forms of external things. Chan Dharma does not have the differentiation of four vehicles, but human minds spontaneously have their own degrees of disparity as follows: To see, to hear, and to recite the sutras is the Hinayana Vehicle. To comprehend the essential principle of all dharmas/Dharmas is the Middle Vehicle. To train the mind in accord with the Dharma of Teachings is the Mahayana Vehicle. To penetrate ultimately into all dharmas/Dharmas, to possess sufficiently all dharmas/Dharmas, to be free from all defilements, to be apart from the forms of all things, and to have no ultimate attainment is the Supreme Vehicle. "Vehicle" means "putting into action", and it is not a matter of oral argument. You should train your mind on your own, and do not need to ask me. At all times your self-nature is of spontaneous true suchness.

Zhichang bowed to show gratitude, and for the rest of his life acted as the Patriarch's attendant.

The monk Zhidao was a native from Nanhai in Guang County. Asking for instruction, he said,

Since becoming a monk, I have read the Mahaparinirvana Sutra for more than ten years, but I have not yet realized its great meaning. Your Holiness, please afford me compassionate instruction.

The Patriarch said,

Which part of it do you not realize?

Zhidao said,

I have doubts about the following part: "All volitions are impermanent, and they belong to the dharma of arising and perishing. When both arising and perishing perish, the perfect rest and cessation is bliss."

The Patriarch asked,

What makes you have doubts?

Zhidao replied,

All sentient beings have two bodies, which are known as the physical body and the Dharma Body. The physical body is impermanent, so it has arising and perishing. The Dharma Body is permanent, so it has non-realization and non-awareness. The sutra says, "When both arising and perishing perish, the perfect rest and cessation is bliss," but I don't know which body is of perfect rest and cessation, and which body experiences the bliss. If it is the physical body, when it perishes, the four great elements disperse. This dispersal would result in complete suffering, and this suffering cannot be called bliss. If it is the Dharma Body that is of perfect rest and cessation, then one would be identical to the grass, trees, tiles, and rocks, and who would experience the bliss?

Furthermore, the Dharma-nature is the essence of arising and perishing, while the five skandhas are the functions of arising and perishing. There is one essence and five functions, so the arising and perishing should be permanent. The arising is the manifestation of functions from the essence, while the perishing is the reversion of functions to the essence. If allowed to take its own course so that there is arising once again, then this implies that sentient beings are subject to neither annihilation nor cessation. But if not allowed to take its own course so that there is arising once again, then this implies that sentient beings permanently revert to perfect rest and cessation, which makes them identical to inanimate objects. If this were the case, then all dharmas would be imprisoned and hidden by nirvana, and their arising is even non-attainable. How could there be bliss?

The Patriarch said,

You are a Buddhist, so why do you cultivate the false view of nihilism and eternalism of the non-Buddhist path and comment on the Dharma of Teachings of the

Supreme Vehicle? According to what you say, there is a Dharma Body separated from the physical body, and one seeks for perfect rest and cessation of the Dharma Body apart from the arising and perishing of the physical body. Furthermore, you conjecture the everlasting bliss of nirvana as though there is a body that experiences its function. But this merely is the attachment to and affection toward the samsara of life, as well as the greediness for and abiding in worldly pleasure.

You should now know that all confused people delusively take the temporary harmony and unity of the five skandhas to be the form of their own essence, and discriminate all dharmas (phenomena) as the form of external sense objects. They

are greedy for arising and have a distaste for perishing, and are drifting about thought after thought. They do not know the unreality of life, which is like dreams and illusions, and vainly suffer the cycle of transmigration. Therefore, they turn the nirvana of everlasting bliss over and mistake it for the form of suffering, and all day long hasten to seek for temporary happiness.

It is due to taking pity on these sentient beings that the Buddha preached "the real bliss of nirvana": There is no form of arising in an instant, there is no form of perishing in an instant, and there is also no arising and perishing to be extinguished. It is thus the manifestation of perfect rest and cessation. Furthermore, at the time of manifestation, there is no abiding in manifestation. Thus it is called the everlasting bliss, which has neither receiver nor non-receiver. How could there be the two categories of one essence and five functions? Moreover, how could you further speak of nirvana imprisoning and hiding all dharmas and causing them to be permanently non-arising? This is slandering the Buddha and destroying the Dharma.

Listen to my verse:

*The supreme great nirvana (mahaparinirvana),
Is of perfection, brightness, and everlasting silence-illumination.
The ignorant ordinary people designate it as death,
The non-Buddhists attach to it as annihilation,
And people of Two Vehicles who seek after nirvana mistake it for no action.
All these belong to the discrimination and attachment of sentient beings,
And are the foundation of the sixty-two evil views.
All these people delusively establish false names:
What could be the genuine meaning?
Only those who have unfathomable potentiality,
Can penetrate into the great nirvana of no abiding.
Therefore they do realize that the Dharma of the five skandhas,
The self within the skandhas,*

*And all sorts of physical forms and all kinds of forms of sound manifested in
the outer environment,
Are on an equality in emptiness and like a dream or an illusion.
They do not give rise to the view of discrimination between ordinary people
and saints,
And do not have the view of attachment to nirvana,
So that the duality of existence and non-existence, as well as the three times
of past, present, and future, are all absolutely non-arising.
They always respond to the six sense faculties and give rise to great
functions,
Yet do not give rise to thoughts of any functions.
They differentiate all dharmas/Dharmas with prajna wisdom,
Yet do not give rise to thoughts of differentiation.
Even if the aeonic fire burns to the ocean floors,
And the catastrophic wind blows the mountains to pound upon one another,
Nevertheless the real and everlasting bliss of perfect rest and cessation,
Is still truly the same form of great nirvana.
I have just now reluctantly explained the form of great nirvana,
So as to let you give up your bad views.
If you do not have intellectual understanding along with this explanation,
Then I am willing to confirm that you realize the Mind Dharma a little bit.*

Upon hearing this verse, Zhidao was greatly enlightened. He enthusiastically made obeisance and withdrew.

Chan Master Xingsi was born to the Liu family of Jian County. Upon hearing that the preaching of the Dharma Seat at Caoxi was flourishing, he came directly to visit and make obeisance.

Xingsi asked the Patriarch,

What should a Chan practitioner do so that he will not fall into levels and stages?

The Patriarch asked,

What have you done?

Xingsi replied,

I have effortlessness even in the noble truth.

The Patriarch asked,

What level and stage have you fallen into?

Xingsi replied,

I haven't even engaged in the noble truth. What level or stage is there?

The Patriarch regarded him with deep reverence as a Dharma Vessel, and made him the leader of the assembly.

One day the Patriarch said to Xingsi,

You should share in the spreading of Dharma of Teachings over a whole region, and not let the true Dharma discontinue.

Since Xingsi had received the Dharma Transmission, he returned to Mount Qingyuan in Ji County, where he spread the true Dharma of Teachings, and perpetuated its dissemination.

Chan Master Huairang was a son of the Du family in Jin County. He first visited and investigated with National Teacher Huian at Mount Song. Huian sent him to Caoxi to have an interview with the Patriarch Huineng. When Huairang arrived there, he made his obeisance.

The Patriarch asked,

Where have you come from?

Huairang said,

Mount Song.

The Patriarch asked,

What thing is it that has come in this way?

Huairang said,

To say it as a single thing is to miss the true reality.

The Patriarch again asked,

Can it still be cultivated and realized?

Huairang again said,

It is not non-existent of cultivation and realization, but it is non-attainable of defilement.

The Patriarch finally said,

It is exactly this non-defilement that all Buddhas take good care of. It is so for you, and it is so for me as well. In India, Patriarch Prajnatara predicted, "A colt will spring up from your Dharma Lineage, and trample everyone all over the world to death." It will be fulfilled within your mind, and you should not preach too quickly.

Huairang suddenly got enlightened. Thereupon, he became the Patriarch's attendant for fifteen years, and gradually reached the abstruse profundity. Afterwards, he went to Nanyue, where he widely popularized the Patriarch Chan.

Chan Master Yongjia Xuanjue was a son of the Dai family in Wen County. When he was young, he studied sutras and sastras, and he mastered the Dharma gate of non-duality of samadhi and wisdom of Tiantai. He realized his mind ground as he read the Vimalakirti Sutra. By chance, Xuanjue was visited by the Patriarch's disciple Xuance, who had a delightful talk with him. What Xuanjue said was in spontaneous accord with the essential principle of all the Patriarchs.

Xuance said,

From whom did you receive the Dharma Transmission?

Xuanjue said,

When I studied the sutras and the sastras of the Vaipulya and Maha Vaipulya, I had different teachers to instruct me. Later I realized the essential principle of Buddha-mind by reading the Vimalakirti Sutra, but I have not yet had anyone to confirm my realization.

Xuance said,

Before the time of Bhisma Garjitashvara Raja Buddha, it was possible to attain enlightenment without a master. But after that time, those who attain enlightenment without a master are all naturalistic non-Buddhists.

Xuanjue said,

I would like you to confirm my realization.

Xuance said,

My words carry no weight. In Caoxi there is Great Master Huineng who is the Sixth Patriarch. Those who assemble there from the four quarters are all recipients of the true Dharma. If you would like to go there, I would be pleased to accompany you.

Thereupon, Xuanjue came together with Xuance to have an interview with the Patriarch. He circled the Patriarch three times, and stood loftily with his staff.

The Patriarch said,

A monk should embody the three thousand demeanors and eighty thousand trifling behaviors. Great Worthy! Where do you come from with such great arrogance?

Xuanjue said,

The matter of birth and death is great, and impermanence is swift.

The Patriarch said,

Why don't you realize non-arising and no swiftness?

Xuanjue said,

My realization itself is of non-arising and no swiftness.

The Patriarch said,

That is indeed so! That is indeed so!

At this time Xuanjue made obeisance to the Patriarch with all demeanors, and then took his leave a few moments later.

The Patriarch said,
Isn't this leaving too swiftly?
Xuanjue said,
Intrinsically there is [genuine] immovability, so how could there be swiftness?
The Patriarch said,
Who is purely aware of the immovability?
Xuanjue said,
Your mind has just given rise to discrimination.
The Patriarch said,
You have profoundly realized the essential principle of non-arising.
Xuanjue said,
How can non-arising have an essential principle?
The Patriarch said,
If there is no essential principle, who is it that differentiates?
Xuanjue said,
[Being adept at] differentiating [the forms of all dharmas/Dharmas] itself is not an essential principle.
The Patriarch said,
Excellent! Please stay at least for one night.
From that time Xuanjue was called the "One-night Awakened One".

The Chan monk Zhihuang first investigated with the Fifth Patriarch, and claimed that he had already attained samadhi. He lived in a small temple and practiced Chan Sitting for twenty years. When the Sixth Patriarch's disciple Xuance was wandering to Heshuo, he heard about Zhihuang and called at his temple.

Xuance asked,

What are you doing here?

Zhihuang said,

I am cultivating "entering into samadhi."

Xuance said,

When you say "entering into samadhi," does the "mind" enter or does the "no mind" enter? If it is the "no mind" that enters, then all insentient plants and rocks should accord with attaining samadhi. If it is the "mind" that enters, then all sentient beings who have consciousness should also attain samadhi.

Zhihuang said,

When I have entered into samadhi, I am not aware of the existence of "mind" and "no mind".

Xuance said,

If you are not aware of the existence of "mind" and "no mind", then this is permanent samadhi. How can you enter into it or come out of it? If there is entering and coming out, then it is not the great samadhi.

Zhihuang was dumbfounded. After a very long time he asked,

From whom have you succeeded to the Chan Dharma?

Xuance said,

My master is the Sixth Patriarch of Caoxi.

Zhihuang said,

What does the Sixth Patriarch take as samadhi?

Xuance said,

According to my Patriarch's Dharma of Teachings, the Dharma Body is of profound clarity and perfect rest, and its quintessence and its function are of one true suchness. The five skandhas are intrinsically empty, and the six sense objects are non-existent. The mind is intrinsically neither entering into nor coming out of samadhi, and is also intrinsically neither meditatively concentrated nor disturbed. The Chan nature is intrinsically non-abiding, so the mind should be apart from abiding in Chan silence. Likewise, the Chan nature is also intrinsically non-arising, so the mind should be apart from arising Chan illumination. The mind is like empty space, yet there is no abiding in empty space.

Having heard this, Zhihuang went directly to have an interview with the Patriarch.

The Patriarch asked,

Where have you come from?

Zhihuang narrated these events in full. The Patriarch said,

What Xuance said is quite true. You merely let your mind be like empty space, and do not attach to the view of emptiness. You function freely without obstruction, and have no mind in either movability or immovability. Your discrimination between ordinary people and saints is all forgotten, and your abiding in the duality of subject and object is totally let go of. Just let the self-nature and forms be of one true suchness, and then you are in great samadhi all the time.

At this Zhihuang was greatly enlightened. All the mind of attainment he had possessed for the previous twenty years had no impact whatsoever. Zhihuang later respectfully took his leave and returned to Hebei, where he taught the fourfold assembly.

One monk asked the Patriarch,
Who has attained the essential principle of Huangmei?
The Patriarch said,
Someone who realizes the Buddhadharma attains it.
The monk asked,
Have you attained it?
The Patriarch said,
I have no realization of the Buddhadharma.

One day the Patriarch wanted to wash the robe that had been transmitted to him, but couldn't find a good spring, thereupon, he went to a place about half a kilometer behind the monastery, where he saw that the plants and trees of the mountain forest grew luxuriantly in clumps, with a seasonable atmosphere lingering over it. The Patriarch held up his staff, standing it upright on the ground, and a spring immediately welled up smoothly, gathering into a pond. Then the Patriarch knelt down and washed the robe on a rock.

Suddenly a monk appeared and bowed to him, and said,

I am Fangbian, a native of Xishu. I have come from afar, and want to see the robe and bowl you inherited.

The Patriarch showed them to him, and asked,

What kind of work do you do?

Fangbian said,

I am adept at sculptural work.

The Patriarch said,

Try to make a statue of me.

At the time Fangbian was bewildered. But after several days he finished a life-like statue of the Patriarch, which was about seven inches high and a great masterpiece of sculpture. When he showed it to the Patriarch, the Patriarch laughed and said,

You only understand the nature of sculpture, but not the Buddha-nature.

Then the Patriarch reached out his hand and patted Fangbian on the head, saying,

This will always be a field of blessings for human and heavenly beings.

Moreover, the Patriarch rewarded Fangbian for his service with the robe, which Fangbian divided into three parts, one for putting on the statue, one for himself, and one for burying in the ground after having been wrapped up in a palm leaf. Then Fangbian vowed,

In the future a person who gains this robe will be my appearance in the world, and then I will be the abbot of the monastery rebuilt here.

A monk quoted a verse of Chan Master Wolun:

*Wolun has a skill,
Which is able to cut off hundreds of thoughts.
When the mind does not arise in the face of the sense objects,
The bodhi (enlightenment) grows day by day.*

When the Patriarch heard this, he said,

The composer of this verse has not yet realized the mind ground. If you act accordingly, you will directly increase your bondage.

Thereupon, he spoke a verse that said,

*Huineng has no-skill,
Which is unable to cut off hundreds of thoughts.
The attributes of mind arise again and again in the face of the sense objects;
How can the bodhi (enlightenment) grow?*



Chapter 8: Suddenness & Gradualness

*The Separation and Flourishing of Southern Suddenness and Northern Gradualness; the Arguments Between the Southern and Northern Schools
Lie In the Masters' Disciples*

While the Sixth Patriarch abode at Baolin Monastery in Caoxi, the Great Master Shenxiu lived at Yuquan Monastery in Jingnan. At that time both schools were extremely flourishing, and everyone called them Southern Huineng and Northern Shenxiu. Therefore, there was a division into these two schools of Southern Suddenness and Northern Gradualness. However, ordinary Chan practitioners did not comprehend the sectarian tenets and traditions of both schools.

The Patriarch said to the assembly,

For Chan Dharma, fundamentally there is only one sect. But for Chan practitioners, there is a distinction of Southerner and Northerner. Meanwhile, for Chan Dharma itself, fundamentally there is only one kind. But for its realization, there is a difference of slow and swift. What are the designations of Suddenness and Gradualness? As for Chan Dharma, there is no distinction of Suddenness and Gradualness. But for Chan practitioners, there is a difference of sharp and dull in their karmic potentiality. Therefore, there are the designations of Suddenness and Gradualness.

Nevertheless, the followers of Shenxiu frequently ridiculed the Patriarch of the Southern School and said,

He is an illiterate, so what strong points does he have to lead people to accept him?

Upon hearing this, Shenxiu said,

He has attained the Buddha-wisdom without a Master and has profoundly realized the Supreme Vehicle, so that I am inferior to him. Furthermore, my Master, the Fifth Patriarch, transmitted the robe and the Mind Dharma to him in person. How could this have been in vain? I regret that I cannot go on a long journey to receive his instructions personally, and vainly receive the nation's beneficence. All of you should not linger here, but should go to Caoxi to investigate with him and seek the resolution of seeing into the self-nature.

One day, Shenxiu said to his disciple Zhicheng,

You are intelligent and wise by nature, so you can go to Caoxi on my behalf and listen to Huineng's discourse of the Dharma. Devote yourself to memorizing whatever you hear, then tell me about it when you return.

Carrying out the command, Zhicheng went to Caoxi, where he followed the assembly and began to investigate with Huineng without saying where he came from. At that time, the Patriarch said to the assembly,

At present there is someone who plans to steal the Dharma secretly staying concealed in the assembly.

Zhicheng promptly came forward from the assembly, made his obeisance, and explicitly stated the conditions related to his coming. The Patriarch said,

Since you have come from Yuquan Monastery, you should be considered a spy.

Zhicheng said,

No, I am not.

The Patriarch said,

Why not?

Zhicheng said,

Before I explained clearly to you, I would have been a spy. Since I made it clear to you, I am not.

The Patriarch asked,

How does your Master instruct the assembly?

Zhicheng said,

He always instructs the assembly to "abide in the mind to contemplate purity, and always cultivate Chan sitting without lying down."

The Patriarch said,

Abiding in the mind to contemplate purity is Chan sickness and not Chan. And how could it be beneficial to your realization of the Chan principle to always cultivate Chan sitting to constrain the body? Listen to my verse:

After birth you always cultivate Chan sitting without lying down,

After death you nevertheless will always lie down without sitting.

Originally there is merely a stinking skeleton,

Why should one set this task up?

Zhicheng bowed again and said,

I have cultivated the Way with Great Master Shenxiu for nine years without being compatible with enlightenment. At the very moment of hearing this statement from Your Holiness, I became awakened to the original mind. For me the great matter of

birth and death is most important, so please render me more discourse with your great compassion.

The Patriarch said,

I have heard that your Master gives his disciples instructions on the Dharma of "discipline" (shila), "samadhi" (dhyana), and "wisdom" (prajna). What forms of cultivation of them has your Master indicated? Please tell me how they are practiced.

Zhicheng replied,

Great Master Shenxiu says that "refraining from all evils is discipline, practicing all good is wisdom, and purifying one's own mind is samadhi." This is the way he teaches. May I know the teaching of Your Holiness?

The Patriarch said,

If I said that I had a discourse of Dharma to render to people, I would be deceiving you. What I do is merely to liberate them from bondage in accordance with expedient means, which is provisionally labeled as the Samadhi of Prajna. The kind of discipline, samadhi and wisdom that your Master discourses is really inconceivable, but my realization of discipline, samadhi and wisdom is another matter entirely.

Zhicheng said,

Discipline, samadhi, and wisdom should have only one kind. How could there be any further difference?

The Patriarch said,

Your Master's discipline, samadhi, and wisdom are for practitioners of the Mahayana Vehicle, while mine are for those of the Supreme Vehicle. Their enlightenments are not the same, and their realizations may be slower or swifter. Please listen to my discourse and see whether or not it is the same as his. In expounding the Dharma, I do not depart from the self-nature. Expounding apart from the essence of mind is discourse with abiding in forms, so that the self-nature is always confused. We should realize that the functions of all things manifest from the self-nature, and this is the genuine Dharma of discipline, samadhi, and wisdom. Listen to my verse:

No impurity of the mind-ground is the discipline of the Self-nature.

No ignorance of the mind-ground is the wisdom of the Self-nature.

No disturbance of the mind-ground is the samadhi of the Self-nature.

Neither increasing nor decreasing is the vajra essence of the Self-nature.

*The free coming and going of the body are the inherent functions of Prajna
Samadhi.*

Upon hearing this verse, Zhicheng expressed renewal and offered gratitude. Then

he presented the following verse:

*The five skandhas provisionally unite together into the illusory body,
How can the illusory dharma/Dharma be ultimate?
Even turning around to proceed toward the self-nature of true suchness,
The Dharma is still impure.*

The Patriarch praised him for what he said.

The Patriarch further said to Zhicheng,

Your Master's discipline, samadhi, and wisdom are to exhort practitioners of small potentiality, while my discipline, samadhi, and wisdom are for those of great potentiality. If Chan practitioners ultimately realize the self-nature, they do not set up bodhi, nirvana, or wisdom of emancipation (sequential wisdom). And only those who do not attain even a single dharma/Dharma are able to set up all dharmas/Dharmas. If they actualize this meaning, then it is called the Buddha Body, and [it is] also called bodhi, nirvana, and wisdom of emancipation. Chan practitioners who see into the self-nature can set them up or not set them up. Enlightened practitioners are free to simultaneously merge into and be apart from all forms, and are free from obstructions or impediments. In response to the manifested function, they take action in accord with the conditions of the circumstance; while in response to inquiry, they give answer in accord with the conditions of the inquirer. They universally manifest all Transformation Bodies, which are one with the self-nature, and thus they attain the samadhi of playfulness in free spiritual powers. This is called "seeing into the self-nature."

Zhicheng then respectfully asked the Patriarch,

What is the meaning of no setting up?

The Patriarch said,

For those who ultimately realize no impurity, no ignorance, and no disturbance in their self-nature, they are able to be purely aware of all dharmas/Dharmas thought after thought with prajna wisdom, and are always apart from all forms so as to be completely free and liberated. While the most profound "pure awareness" is fully attainable in the ten directions and three times, what is there to set up? Both "the self-nature is ultimately self-realized" and "sudden ultimate-realization and sudden maintenance of spontaneousness & effortlessness" are approached instantaneously without any gradual process, so there is no setting up any dharmas/Dharmas. As all dharmas/Dharmas are intrinsically in "perfect rest and cessation", what gradation is there?

Zhicheng made obeisance to the Patriarch and voluntarily acted as his attendant,

doing so from morning till night persistently.

The monk Zhiche was a native of Jiangxi, with family name Zhang and given name Xingchang. He acted as a wandering swordsman when he was young. Since the Southern and Northern Schools were divided in their Chan teaching, although the two sectarian Masters had already let go of their attachment to the self and the other, nonetheless their followers became competitive and hostile toward each other. At that time, the followers of the Northern School established Great Master Shenxiu as the Sixth Patriarch by themselves, and were afraid of the fact that Patriarch Huineng's receiving of the transmission of the robe and the Dharma was known throughout the whole nation. Thereupon, they bribed Xingchang to assassinate the Patriarch.

Foreseeing what would happen in advance through his ubiquitous power, the Patriarch placed ten taels of gold by his seat. That night Xingchang entered the Patriarch's room to kill him. The Patriarch leisurely stretched out his neck to receive the sharp sword. Xingchang swung the sword three times, but failed to hurt him at all.

The Patriarch said,

Applying the sword with straightforward mind you have no crooked action, while applying the sword without straightforward mind you have no straight action. I owe you just a debt of money, but I don't owe you a debt of life.

Xingchang fell to the ground with fright. He revived after quite a considerable time. Then he begged for renewal and was willing to leave home at once and follow the Patriarch. The Patriarch gave him the gold and said,

You had better go away for the time being, for fear that my disciples might harm you. You can come to see me later by changing your looks, and I will take you in.

Xingchang accepted the instruction and ran away during the night. Subsequently, he became a monk in another monastery, received the complete disciplines and trained his mind diligently. One day, recollecting what the Patriarch had said, he took a long journey to make his obeisance to the Patriarch.

The Patriarch said,

I have been thinking of you for a long time. Why do you come so late?

Xingchang said,

Previously I met with Your Holiness' compassion in forgiving my sin. At present, although I have become a monk and have undergone rigorous ascetic training, after all it is hard to repay your gracious virtues. Is it merely by transmitting the Dharma and delivering sentient beings that I can repay even one part in ten thousand? I frequently read the Mahaparinirvana Sutra, but I still cannot realize the essential meanings of permanence and impermanence. Therefore, I beg for your compassion to render me a brief explanation.

The Patriarch said,

The so-called impermanence is the Buddha-nature. And the so-called permanence

is all the good and evil dharmas associated with the mind of discrimination.

Xingchang said,

What you have said greatly runs counter to the text of the sutra.

The Patriarch said,

I transmit the Mind-Seal of the Buddha. How could I dare to go against the Buddha's sutra?

Xingchang said,

The sutra says that the Buddha-nature is permanent, but Your Holiness says it is impermanent. Good and evil dharmas, as well as the mind of Bodhi are all impermanent, yet Your Holiness says they are permanent. This is contradictory, and has made me even more confused.

The Patriarch said,

In the past I once heard the Mahaparinirvana Sutra recited by the nun Wu Jincang, and then expounded it to her without one word or one principle being not in accord with the sutra. As for the explanation I offered you, it is still no different from the text.

Xingchang said,

The capacity of my knowledge, views, and experience is shallow, and I am ignorant. Therefore, I would like to ask Your Holiness to compassionately reveal it to me in detail.

The Patriarch said,

Do you realize? If the Buddha-nature were permanent, then what good and evil dharmas would there be to talk about? Even as for "nobody generating the mind of Bodhi for a very long kalpa", what would there be to talk about? Therefore, my discourse of "the Buddha-nature is impermanent" is exactly "the Way of true permanence" discoursed by the Buddha. Furthermore, if all dharmas were impermanent, it would imply that since all things have this self-nature, and are subject to arising and perishing, therefore the true and permanent nature of all things would not be omnipresent. Therefore, my discourse of "all things are permanent" is exactly the "principle of true impermanence" discoursed by the Buddha.

Ordinary people and non-Buddhists attach to impermanence as permanence, and all followers of the Two Vehicles attach to true permanence as impermanence, so that both kinds of attachments together form the eight inverted views. Therefore, in order to eliminate their biased views, the Buddha preached the Mahayana Teaching of the Ultimate Truth in the Mahaparinirvana Sutra, and clearly revealed the four virtues of nirvana, that is true permanence, true bliss, true self, and true purity. You are now relying on the words and turning your back to the true meaning. With attachment to nihilistic impermanence and rigid permanence, you have miscomprehended the Buddha's complete and profound essential-principle of his last teaching in the

Mahaparinirvana Sutra. Even if you have read the sutra a thousand times, what benefit can you get?

Suddenly Xingchang was greatly enlightened. He uttered a verse, as follows:

*Because we abide in the mind of impermanence,
Buddha discoursed about the nature of permanence.
Those who do not realize his expedient means,
Are like they are picking up pebbles by a spring pond.
Now with my own effortlessness,
The Buddha-nature manifests itself.
It was not transmitted by the Patriarch,
And neither have I had any attainment.*

The Patriarch said,

You have now completely realized. You should be named Zhiche.

Zhiche made his obeisance with gratitude, and departed.

A young boy named Shenhui was a child of the Gao family in Xiangyang County.
At the age of thirteen, he came from Yuquan Monastery to make obeisance to and investigate with the Patriarch.

The Patriarch said,

Good fellow-practitioner, you have come from afar and have experienced all sorts of hardships. But have you brought the "foundation" with you? If you have the foundation, then you should have an insight into the "master" (i.e. "host"). Please say something about it!

Shenhui said,

No abiding is the foundation, and the insight is the master.

The Patriarch said,

How is it appropriate for this novice to speak so heedlessly?

Shenhui then asked,

When Your Holiness is in sitting Chan, do you have an insight or don't you have an insight?

The Patriarch hit Shenhui three times with his staff and asked,

When I hit you, do you feel pain or no pain?

Shenhui replied,

Both painful and not painful.

The Patriarch said,

I both have an insight and have no insight.

Shenhui asked,

What is it to both have an insight and have no insight?

The Patriarch said,

My insight is such that I always have an pure insight into the faults of my own mind, while I have no insight into the right and wrong or good and bad of other people. Thus I both have an insight and have no insight. You say you feel both pain and no pain. How about that? If you do not feel pain, then you are the same as wood or rock. If you feel pain, then you are the same as an ordinary person, who gives rise to the mind of hatred. What you just said about having an insight and not having an insight is the view of duality, while having pain and having no pain belong to the dharma of arising and perishing. You still have not yet seen into your own self-nature, so how dare you annoy people in this way?

Shenhui made obeisance, did renewal, and offered an apology.

The Patriarch also said,

If your mind is confused and you are unable to see into the self-nature, then you should ask the guidance of an ultimately enlightened being for realizing the Way. If your mind is [completely] enlightened, then you have seen into your own self-nature,

and just maintain spontaneousness & effortlessness in accord with the Dharma. You are confused and have not had an insight into your true mind, but on the contrary you come to ask about my having an insight or having no insight. In fact, my having an insight is merely my own realization. How can it replace your confusion? Similarly, if you are able to see into the self-nature for yourself, then you are unable to replace my confusion either. Why not go ahead to realize for yourself whether you have an insight into it instead of asking about my having an insight or having no insight?

Upon hearing this, Shenhui made obeisance and offered apologies for his fault more than one hundred times. After that, he served as an attendant for the Patriarch without ever leaving his side.

One day, the Patriarch said to the assembly,

I have a single thing with no head and no tail, no name and no title, no back and no front. Do all of you realize what it is?

Shenhui stepped out and said,

This is the original source of all Buddhas and the Buddha-nature of Shenhui.

The Patriarch said,

I have just told you that it has no name and no title, but you have instantly called it the original source and the Buddha-nature. In the future, even if you confine yourself in a thatched shed, you will merely become a sectarian follower of intellectual understanding.

The Patriarch saw that many critics from various sects, who had asked around about the Chan Dharma with evil mind, had gathered in the assembly. He discoursed to them with compassion as follows,

The followers of the Way should face all good and evil thoughts with the pure awareness of prajna wisdom. This Chan realm of no name can be provisionally named the "self-nature". And the self-nature of non-duality is called the "true nature". Therefore, all "Dharma of Teachings" are established on the basis of this true nature, and all of you should see into your "Mind Dharma" (i.e. self-nature) at the very moment of the statement.

Upon hearing the discourse, all the sectarian followers made obeisance and begged to serve the Patriarch as their Master.



Chapter 9: Dharma Protection

The Emperor Issues an Imperial Edict to Invite the Patriarch; Xuejian Delivers the Imperial Edict and Inquires about the Dharma; the Emperor Bestows a Robe & Bowl to Commend the Patriarch

On the fifteenth day in January of the first year of Shenlong, the Empress Zetian and Emperor Zhongzong issued an edict which said,

Since we have invited Grand Masters Huian and Shenxiu to stay in the palace to receive our offerings, we have always investigated the Dharma of Teachings of the One Vehicle with them every day at our leisure after being occupied with myriad affairs. The two Grand Masters have humbly yielded and said, "There is Chan Master Huineng in the South, who secretly received Great Master Hongren's robe and Dharma and transmitted the Mind-Seal of the Buddha. You should invite him here and investigate with him." We now send Xuejian, who is an Inner Attendant of the Palace, to deliver the imperial edict to invite you. We wish Your Holiness will be so compassionate as to swiftly come to the capital.

After receiving the edict, the Patriarch formally sent a reply to decline the offer on account of illness and to petition to spend his entire life in the forests.

Xuejian said,

The Chan worthies in the capital have all said, "If we want to realize the Way, it is necessary to practice sitting Chan and to cultivate samadhi. No one has ever attained emancipation but for meditative concentration." What is the Dharma that you expound?

The Patriarch said,

The Way is realized through the mind. How could it rest with sitting Chan? The Diamond Sutra says, "If someone says that the Tathagata is either sitting or reclining, then this one is acting in accordance with a heterodox path." Why? Because neither coming nor going and neither arising nor perishing is the Tathagata Pure Chan, while the emptiness of all dharmas/Dharmas is the Tathagata Pure Seat. Ultimately there is no realization, so how could it rest with sitting Chan?

Xuejian said,

When I return to the capital, their Majesties will by all means ask me about my visit with you. Please be so compassionate as to indicate to me the essential principle of the Mind Dharma, so that I may transmit it to their Majesties and to the practitioners of the Way in the capital. It would be analogous to a single lamp lighting hundreds or thousands of lamps, so that all the darkness is illuminated and all the

illuminated brightness is inexhaustible.

The Patriarch said,

The Way has no discrimination of brightness or darkness. Brightness and darkness merely have the meaning of supersession. "All the illuminated brightness is inexhaustible" is still exhaustible, because the two dharmas are set up by way of duality. Therefore, the Pure Name Sutra says, "The [Chan] Dharma is incomparable, because it is of non-duality."

Xuejian said,

Brightness is allegorized as wisdom, while darkness is allegorized as vexation. If practitioners who cultivate the Way do not use the illumination of wisdom to eliminate vexations, what would be proper for them to lean on in order to depart from beginningless transmigration?

The Patriarch said,

Vexation itself is Bodhi, and they are of non-duality and non-discrimination. If one uses wisdom to eliminate vexations, this belongs to the realization of the Two Vehicles, which are the Hinayana potentialities categorized by the vehicles of goat and deer. Those of superior wisdom and potentiality have entirely different realization.

Xuejian said,

What is the realization of the Supreme Vehicle?

The Patriarch said,

Ordinary people see brightness and ignorance as duality, while the wise realize that their self-nature is of non-duality. The self-nature of non-duality is the true nature. The so-called "true nature" (i.e. "true reality") is realized as follows: It neither decreases for ordinary and ignorant people, nor increases for awakened sages and saints. It is neither disturbed in vexation, nor silent in samadhi. It is neither nihilistic nor permanent, neither coming nor going, and neither in the middle nor inside nor outside. It is of non-arising and non-perishing, its nature and forms are of one true suchness, and it is of permanent abiding and immutability. Therefore, it is called the Way.

Xuejian said,

How does the non-arising and non-perishing that you indicate differ from that of non-Buddhists?

The Patriarch said,

The non-arising and non-perishing of the non-Buddhists is using perishing (i.e. annihilation) to stop arising, and using arising to show perishing. Thus, perishing is still non-perishing, and arising is said to be non-arising. The non-arising and non-perishing of mine is that intrinsically there is non-arising and now there is also non-

perishing. Therefore, it is different from that of the non-Buddhists. If you want to realize the essential principle of the Mind Dharma, merely do not delusively think about any dualities such as good and evil dharmas. Then, you will spontaneously be able to penetrate into the essence of the pure mind, which is always in simultaneous illumination and silence, with myriads of subtle functions as many as the grains of sand of the Ganges River.

Upon receiving this instruction, Xuejian suddenly experienced great enlightenment. Then, after making his obeisance, he returned to the imperial palace, where he submitted the memorial of the Patriarch's words to the Emperor.

In the same year, on the third day of September, an imperial edict to reward the Patriarch was issued with the following terms:

The Patriarch has declined the invitation due to old age and illness. Voluntarily cultivating the Way in the forests for us is a field of blessings for the nation. The Patriarch is like Vimalakirti, who gave a pretext of illness and stayed in Vaishali to spread the Mahayana Buddhadharma, transmit the Mind-Seal of all Buddhas, and discourse on the Dharma of non-duality. Xuejian has transmitted the Patriarch's instruction on the Buddha's wisdom. It is our fortune, through having accumulated enough blessings by way of doing enough good deeds, and having planted good karmic roots in the past, that we encounter Your Holiness's appearance in the world and sudden realization of the Supreme Vehicle. We are grateful to receive Your Holiness's kindness, and will bear an endless debt of gratitude.

The Patriarch was then presented with a fine vestment and a crystal bowl, and the Governor of Shao County was ordered to renovate the monastery. The Patriarch's old abode was conferred the title of Guoen Monastery.



Chapter 10: Dharma Transmission & Final Instructions

*The Dharma Transmission and Final Instructions of the Sixth Patriarch
Near to His Nirvana; the Traversing of Situations Before and After His
Passing Away*

One day, the Patriarch called together his disciples Fahai, Zhicheng, Fada, Shenhui, Zhichang, Zhitong, Zhiche, Zhidao, Fazhen, and Faru, and said,

All of you differ from the general followers. After my passing away, you will each become a Chan Master who takes charge in a part of the country. Therefore, I will now teach you how to expound the Chan Dharma so as not to miss the essential principle of Suddenness Chan.

First and foremost, you have to cite the three categories of Dharma gate and the thirty-six matching dharmas/Dharmas of manifested functions. Then, when appearing in and disappearing from a duality, you should simultaneously merge into and be apart from both sides of this duality, and should not abide even in the Middle Way. Meanwhile, in expounding all Dharmas, do not deviate from the self-nature. Whenever someone unexpectedly asks you about the Dharma, you should always answer them with both sides of the duality, using matching dharmas/Dharmas, and appropriately guide them with both "coming in to merge into the duality" and "going out to be apart from the duality" as the mutual causes. Then, when their attachments to even the ultimate matching-dualities are completely let go of, the inquirer all the more has no place to abide in.

The so-called three categories of Dharma gate are skandha, entrance, and realm. "Skandha" refers to the five skandhas, which include form, sensation, perception, volition, and consciousness. "Entrance" refers to the twelve entrances, which include the six external sense objects of sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, and thought, and the six internal sense faculties of the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. "Realm" refers to the eighteen realms, which include the six sense objects, the six sense faculties, and the six consciousnesses. Since the self-nature is capable of embracing all things, it is thus called the "storehouse consciousness." Provided that the self-nature manifests thoughts, then it is the "transformation consciousnesses". Furthermore, the self-nature also manifests the six consciousnesses, which are able to exit the gates of the six sense faculties to contact the six sense objects. Therefore, those eighteen realms all are functions manifested from the self-nature. If the

manifested thought of self-nature is deluded, then it gives rise to the eighteen-fold deluded functions. If the manifested thought of self-nature is pure, then it gives rise to the eighteen-fold pure functions. Supposing the functions are deluded, then they are the functions of sentient beings. Supposing the functions are pure, then they are the functions of the Buddha. All in all, where do the functions originate from? They manifest from the self-nature.

Regarding the thirty-six matching dharmas/Dharmas, they are listed as follows:

1. The five matching dharmas of the "external realm" and "insentient beings": heaven and earth, sun and moon, brightness and darkness, yin and yang, water and fire. These are the five matching dharmas.
2. The twelve matching dharmas/Dharmas of the "form of dharmas/Dharmas" and "languages/words": words and dharmas/Dharmas, existence and non-existence, material and immaterial, form and formlessness, outflow and no outflow, form and emptiness, movability and quiescence, purity and defilement, ordinary people and saints, monastics and laypeople, old and young, great and small. These are the twelve matching dharmas/Dharmas.
3. The nineteen matching dharmas/Dharmas of "manifested functions from the self-nature": long and short, deluded and pure, ignorance and wisdom, foolish and wise, disturbance and samadhi, kindness and viciousness, discipline and impurity, straightforwardness and crookedness, reality and delusion, partiality and equality, vexation and bodhi, permanence and impermanence, compassion and malevolence, joy and hatred, generosity and meanness, progress and regression, arising and perishing, Dharma Body and physical body, Transformation Body and Reward Body. These are the nineteen matching dharmas/Dharmas.

The Patriarch further said,

If you realize the functions of these thirty-six matching dharmas/Dharmas, you are able to penetrate thoroughly into the all-pervading Dharma of Teachings in all the sutras. Meanwhile, while entering and exiting, you are able to simultaneously merge into and be apart from the matching duality, and to not abide even in the Middle Way. When the self-nature manifests functions in accord with conditions and you have conversation with people, you should be apart from forms in the midst of forms externally, and should be apart from emptiness in the midst of emptiness internally. If you completely abide in forms, then you will increase deluded views. If you completely attach to emptiness, then you will increase ignorance.

Those who attach to emptiness often slander the sutras, and say plainly that they have no need to use words. Since they say that they have no need to use words, then people should not use languages either, because languages are exactly the forms of

words. They also say that the "straightforward Way" (i.e. orthodox Chan Dharma) does not rely on languages and words, but these words "not rely on" are also language. Moreover, upon hearing what Dharma other people expound, they then immediately make the slander that others attach to the words in the expounding. All of you should know that those in self-confusion are still recoverable, but in addition these people have the audacity to slander the Buddha's sutras. Be sure not to slander the Buddha's sutras, for the induced karmic obstructions are countless.

For those who externally abide in forms and create the dharmas of effortfulness to seek for reality, and for those who extensively establish Chan centers and debate about the mistakes of expounding existence and non-existence, it will be impossible to see into the self-nature for innumerable kalpas. All of you merely have to listen to and comply with the orthodox Chan Dharma for your genuine mind-training. But you also should not apply empty mind to the training so as to obstruct the realization of the nature of the Way. If you only listen to the teaching without practical application to the mind-training, you will actually give rise to deluded thoughts. Just do the mind-training in accord with the orthodox Chan Dharma, and carry out the almsgiving of Dharmas with no-abiding in forms.

If any of you have ultimately realized the self-nature, then rest on it to expound the Dharma of Teachings, rest on it to apply the functions of wisdom, rest on it to fulfill the actions of compassion, and rest on it to maintain spontaneousness & effortlessness, so that you would not miss the essential principle of Suddenness Chan. Whenever someone asks you about the essential meaning of the Dharma, if they ask about existence, give a counter-reply with non-existence; if they ask about non-existence, give a counter-reply with existence; if they ask about ordinary people, give a counter-reply with saints; if they ask about saints, give a counter-reply with ordinary people. In this way, appropriately guide them with both "coming in to merge into the duality" and "going out to be apart from the duality" as the mutual causes, so that the essential principle of the Middle Way is spontaneously revealed. As a result, by way of one such pair of question and answer, all other questions without exception are answered in compliance with this way, and your answer will not miss the essential principle of the Middle Way. For example, supposing that someone comes and asks you, "What is darkness?" You should answer, "Brightness is the cause, while darkness is the condition. When brightness disappears, there is darkness. Darkness is revealed by brightness, and brightness is revealed by darkness. At that very moment, you are able to maintain both 'coming in to merge into the duality' and 'going out to be apart from the duality' as the mutual causes, so that the essential principle of the Middle Way spontaneously manifests." All other questions should be answered in the same way. From now onward, when all of you expound the Dharma of Teachings and

transmit the Dharma of Mind, you should hand the Dharma of Teachings downward in accord with this way and make sure not to miss the essential principle of the Middle Way.

In the seventh month of the year 712, the Patriarch sent some of his disciples to the Guoen Monastery in Xin County to build a stupa, and told them to hasten the workers to finish construction early. By late summer of the next year, it had been duly completed. On the first day of the seventh month of 713, the Patriarch assembled his followers and said,

I will leave this world next month. If any of you have any doubts, you have to ask about them as early as possible, so that I will be able to free you from your doubts and completely resolve all your confusions. Otherwise, after my passing away, there will be no one to instruct you.

Upon hearing this, Fahai and the others all wept together. Only Shenhui appeared unperturbed and did not weep.

The Patriarch said,

Young monk Shenhui has actually attained the mind of equality toward good and evil, has become able to be unmoved by slander or praise, and has become able to not give rise to sadness or happiness. The rest of you have not succeeded in this. What Way have you ultimately attained in all these years on the mountain? Who are you worried about at present so as to weep with sorrow? If you are worried that I do not know my future whereabouts, I naturally realize my own whereabouts. If I had not realized my future whereabouts, I would after all never have informed you in advance. Your weeping with sorrow is mainly because you do not know my future whereabouts. If you knew it, then it would be unsuitable for you to weep with sorrow. You should realize that the Dharma-nature is intrinsically without arising and perishing, without going and coming. Please all sit down, and I will give you a verse, which is called "The Verse on Genuine and Provisional Movability and Immovability." When you receive this verse, you should have the same comprehension as me. Once you train your mind in accord with this verse, then you will not miss the essential principle of Suddenness Chan.

All the followers made obeisance and asked the Patriarch to tell them the verse. The verse was as follows:

All things have no true-reality,

Do not abide in having seen into the true reality.

If you attach to having seen into the true reality,

Then your insight is entirely not the true reality.

If you have realized that all things are the intrinsic embodiment of the true

reality,
"Merging into the mind" with simultaneous "being apart from provisionality"
is genuinely seeing into the true reality.
If you are unable to be apart from provisionality at the very moment of
merging into the mind,
Where could you genuinely realize the true reality in the midst of no true-
reality?
Sentient beings inherently have the potentiality to realize movability,
While insentient beings are intrinsically unable to realize it.
If you apply immovability to your mind training,
Then you are the same as insentient beings who cannot realize movability.
If one seeks for genuine immovability,
There is immovability within movability.
The immovability of insentient beings means being unable to realize
movability,
Because insentient beings are intrinsically without the seed of Buddhahood.
One is adept at differentiating the forms of all dharmas/Dharmas,
While simultaneously resting patiently and immovably in the Ultimate
Principle.
As long as one realizes in this way,
The realization is the function manifested from the self-nature of true
suchness.
I would like to inform all treaders of the Way,
You should make an effort in accord with the essential meaning of this verse.
Being within the Chan Sect of the Supreme Vehicle,
Don't nevertheless attach to the worldly wisdom of transmigration.
If all of you match with each other at the very moment of the statement,
Then you can discuss the essential principle of Buddhadharma together.
If you are in fact not in unison with each other,
Then you should still join your palms to make others joyful.
The Chan Sect is originally of non-contention,
But you miss the essential principle of the Way once you have contention with
each other.
By attaching to opposites for contention about the Dharma of Teachings,
Your manifested thoughts of self-nature then enter into the cycle of
transmigration.

Having heard the verse, the followers all made obeisance. Moreover, they all

comprehended the essential meaning of the Patriarch's verse, and everyone acted and trained his mind in accordance with this Dharma of Teachings, and dared not to have any further disputation. Knowing that the Patriarch would be unable to remain in the world for long, Elder Fahai prostrated again and asked,

After Your Holiness's passing away, to whom will the robe and the Dharma be transmitted?

The Patriarch said,

My expounding of the Dharma, which has been given at Dafan Monastery up to now, has been transcribed and edited for circulation and titled as the "Platform Sutra of the Treasury of the Dharma". All of you should protect this Sutra, and should hand the Dharma of Teachings downward in order to deliver all sentient beings. In your delivering, merely preach in accordance with this Sutra, and this is called the orthodox Dharma of Suddenness Chan.

Now I just transmit the Dharma to you, and do not transmit the robe and the bowl. Because your capacities of confidence are pure, mature, and beyond all doubts, therefore all of you are adequate for the great matter of expounding the Dharma of Teachings and transmitting the Dharma of Mind. Thus, in compliance with the meaning of the "verse on transmission" by the First Patriarch Bodhidharma, it is no longer suitable to transmit the robe and the bowl. The verse is as follows,

*I originally came to this eastern land,
To transmit the Mind Dharma for the deliverance of confused sentient
beings.
A single flower opens into five leaflike petals,
The outcome of this flourishing comes into being naturally.*

The Patriarch further said,

All good fellow-practitioners, every one of you listen to my expounding of the Dharma with pure awareness of self-nature. If you intend to accomplish the Wisdom of All Aspects, you have to attain mastery of the Samadhi of One Form and the Samadhi of One Act. If in all places you do not abide in any forms, in other words, while merging into all forms, you simultaneously are apart from all forms by means of not manifesting the thoughts of either hatred or love, either grasping or rejecting, either gain or loss, or either creation or destruction, then at every moment you are always at leisure, in peace, in harmony, and with effortlessness, so that this is called the Samadhi of One Form. If in all places, no matter whether you are walking, standing, sitting, or reclining, you always simply act with a straightforward mind, at that very moment you patiently abide in the Site of the Way of genuine immovability

and truly accomplish the Pure Land, so that this is called the Samadhi of One Act.

If people have realized these two kinds of samadhi, it can be likened to the earth possessing seeds, which are further nurtured and mature into fruits. It amounts to the same thing for the samadhis of One Form and One Act. My expounding of the Dharma can be likened to timely rain universally moistening the great earth. And your Buddha-nature may be compared to the seeds, which will become supremely mature through nurturing after being moistened by the rain of Dharma. Those who undertake the essential principle of my preaching will certainly attain supreme Bodhi. Those who act with the "effortlessness & spontaneousness" of my Dharma of Teachings will definitely awaken to the profoundest fruit of supreme Buddhahood. Please listen to my verse on "Accomplishing Wisdom of All Aspects" :

*The mind ground contains the inherent seeds of Buddha-wisdom,
All will spontaneously manifest upon receiving the all-pervading rain of
Dharma.*

*When the Chan practitioner suddenly awakens to the great "blossoming" (i.e.
emancipated) mind,
The fruit of supreme and complete enlightenment will naturally become
mature.*

Having uttered this verse, the Patriarch said,

Chan Dharma is of non-duality, and so is the Mind. The Way is pure, and has no forms. All of you should be cautious and should by no means abide in contemplating purity and "emptying the mind" (i.e. contemplating immovability). The mind is intrinsically pure, and there is not a single thing to grasp or reject. Every one of you should exert yourself to the utmost in accordance with conditions.

At that time all the followers made obeisance and withdrew.

On the eighth day of the seventh month, the Patriarch suddenly said to his disciples,

I want to go back to Xin County. All of you, get a boat ready for me quickly.

The whole assembly resolutely and sadly entreated him to stay.

The Patriarch said,

Even the Buddhas who appeared in the world manifested nirvana. It is inevitable and right that "while there is coming, there is certainly going." My physical body necessarily has a place to return to.

The assembly said,

Since Your Holiness goes from here, you still can come back sooner or later.

The Patriarch said,

Summing it up in one statement, there is no discourse in this life.

They further asked,

To whom has the Treasury of the True Dharma Eye been transmitted?

The Patriarch said,

Those who have actualized the ultimate Way attain it. Those who have realized ultimate no-mind penetrate it.

They further asked again,

Is there likely to be any misfortune afterwards?

The Patriarch said,

About five or six years after my passing away, someone will come to steal my head. Please listen to my prediction:

Taking the head to make offerings as showing filial piety to parents,

Steeling for others for the sake of food.

The misfortune to be encountered will be associated with Zhang Jingman,

At that time the County Officials will be Yang Kan and Liu Wutian.

The Patriarch also predicted,

Seventy years after my death, two bodhisattvas will come from the East. One will be a monastic, the other a layperson. They will simultaneously popularize the Dharma to establish the Chan Sect, and will construct monasteries to make the Dharma transmission flourish.

The assembly asked,

Since the Buddhas and the Patriarchs manifested in the world, how many generations has the Dharma Transmission been handed down? Please reveal and proclaim it to us.

The Patriarch said,

The ancient Buddhas who manifested in the world have already been immeasurable and innumerable. Now let us begin with the last Seven Buddhas: In the past Kalpa of Adornment (Alamkarakalpa), there were Vipasyin Buddha, Sikhin Buddha, and Visvabhu Buddha. In the present Kalpa of Virtue (Bhadrakalpa), there were Krakucchanda Buddha, Kanakamuni Buddha, Kasyapa Buddha, and Shakyamuni Buddha. These were the Seven Buddhas.

After Shakyamuni Buddha, the Dharma Transmission went as follows:

1st Patriarch: Venerable Mahakasyapa

2nd Patriarch: Venerable Ananda

3rd Patriarch: Venerable Sanakavasa

4th Patriarch: Venerable Upagupta

5th Patriarch: Venerable Dhrtaka
6th Patriarch: Venerable Micchaka
7th Patriarch: Venerable Vasumitra
8th Patriarch: Venerable Buddhanandi
9th Patriarch: Venerable Buddhmitra
10th Patriarch: Venerable Parsva
11st Patriarch: Venerable Punyayasas
12nd Patriarch: Bodhisattva Asvaghosa
13rd Patriarch: Venerable Kapimala
14th Patriarch: Bodhisattva Nagarjuna
15th Patriarch: Venerable Kanadeva
16th Patriarch: Venerable Rahulata
17th Patriarch: Venerable Sanghanandi
18th Patriarch: Venerable Gayasata
19th Patriarch: Venerable Kumarata
20th Patriarch: Venerable Jayata
21st Patriarch: Venerable Vasubandhu
22nd Patriarch: Venerable Manorhita
23rd Patriarch: Venerable Haklena
24th Patriarch: Venerable Simha
25th Patriarch: Venerable Basiasita
26th Patriarch: Venerable Punyamitra
27th Patriarch: Venerable Prajnatarā
28th Patriarch: Venerable Bodhidharma
29th Patriarch: Grand Master Huike
30th Patriarch: Grand Master Sengcan
31st Patriarch: Grand Master Daoxin
32nd Patriarch: Grand Master Hongren

I, Huineng, am the Thirty-third Patriarch. Each of the Patriarchs have had a Dharma successor. Hereafter, all of you should pass on the Dharma Transmission from generation to generation, and must admit no contrariness or delay.

On the third day of the eighth month of 713, after a vegetarian meal at the Guoen Monastery, the Patriarch said to all his followers,

Each of you remain seated, for I am going to bid you farewell.

Fahai said,

Your Holiness, what Dharma of Teachings will you leave to confused future generations in order to enable them to see into the Buddha-nature?

The Patriarch said,

All of you, please listen attentively. If confused posterity are able to realize the sentient beings of the mind, then they have seen into the Buddha-nature. If they are unable to realize the sentient beings of the mind, then it will be hard to accomplish the actualization of Buddha-nature even if they seek for ten thousand kalpas. At present, I would like to tell you how to have an insight into the sentient beings of the mind and see into the Buddha-nature of the mind. If you want to see into the Buddha, you merely need to have an insight into the sentient beings of the mind. This is just because the sentient beings are confused about the Buddha of the self-nature, and not that the Buddha is confused about the sentient beings of the mind. If the self-nature is enlightened, the sentient beings are the Buddha. If the self-nature is confused, the Buddha is sentient beings. Moreover, if the manifested thought of self-nature is pure and impartial, the sentient beings are the Buddha. If the manifested thought of self-nature is deluded and partial, the Buddha is sentient beings. If your mind is partial and crooked, it is equivalent to the Buddha staying in concealment within sentient beings. If your mind is impartial and straightforward, it is exactly equivalent to the sentient beings attaining Buddhahood. We inherently have a Buddha within our mind, and this Buddha of the self-nature is the genuine Buddha. If you had no Buddha-mind, where could you seek for the genuine Buddha? All of you should know without any further doubt that "the mind is Buddha". There is not a single thing outside the mind that can be established, and it is the original mind that manifests all things. Therefore, the sutra says, "At the moment the mind arises, all things arise. At the moment the mind perishes, all things perish." Now, I will leave a verse to bid all of you farewell, which is called "The Verse on the Genuine Buddha of Self-nature". If future generations realize the essential principle of this verse, they will spontaneously have an ultimate insight into the original mind and spontaneously attain Buddhahood.

The verse was as follows:

*The self-nature of true suchness is the genuine Buddha,
While the three poisons of the deluded mind are the Devil King.
The Devil King stays inside your mind while you have deluded mind,
The genuine Buddha sits within your mind ground while you have pure mind.
When the three poisons arise from the manifested deluded-mind of self-nature,
This is exactly the Devil King coming to stay inside the mind.
When the manifested pure-mind of self-nature spontaneously dissolves the
three poisons,
That the Devil King is the genuine Buddha is real and not provisional.
The Dharma Body, the Reward Body, and the Transformation Body,*

All the Three Bodies are originally one body.

If you can spontaneously see into the Three Bodies embodied in the self-nature,

This is exactly the cause of bodhi for attaining Buddhahood.

Originally the Transformation Body can manifest the pure self-nature,

And the pure self-nature is always inherent in the Transformation Body.

The pure self-nature enables the Transformation Body to act on the orthodox Way,

So the completion which is to come will be truly inexhaustible.

The self-nature of sensuality is originally the cause of pure self-nature,

The very moment of dissolving the sensuality is exactly the realization of the body of pure self-nature.

Every one of you should depart from the five desires in the midst of the self-nature;

The instant you see into the self-nature is exactly the true insight into the Buddha.

If you have devoted yourself to your mind training with Suddenness Chan in this lifetime,

You are to ultimately realize the self-nature and see into the World Honored One.

If you want to cultivate in order to seek for the attainment of Buddhahood,

How would you know where to seek for seeing into the genuine Buddha?

If you are able to see into the genuine Buddha in your own mind,

This true insight into the Buddha is exactly the cause of attaining Buddhahood.

If you have not seen into the self-nature and seek outwardly for Buddhahood,

Your arising mind is always like that of a great ignoramus.

At present the Dharma gate of Suddenness Chan has been left for you;

You should first train your mind in accord with it for delivering worldly beings.

I would like to announce to all future practitioners of the Way,

You have completely wasted your time if you get no mastery of this Dharma of Teachings.

After the Patriarch had finished the verse, he said to the assembly,

All of you should properly and patiently abide in daily life from now on. After my passing away, do not follow the worldly customs and mourn with tears streaming

down like rain drops. If you accept people's condolences and put on mourning clothes, you are not my disciples, and this is not the orthodox Dharma. What you should do is merely to have an insight into the original mind and see into the original nature, which is neither movable nor immovable, neither arising nor perishing, neither going nor coming, neither right nor wrong, and neither abiding nor non-abiding. Lest any of you still have a confused mind and are unable to realize the essential principle of my Dharma of Teachings, at present I would like to instruct you again in order to let you see into the self-nature. After my passing away, you should train your mind in accord with this just as if I were still alive. If you transgress my Dharma of Teachings, it would be of no benefit even if I were in the world.

Then he further said another verse as follows,

Being in genuine immovability, there is no cultivation of goodness.

Being in spontaneous effortlessness, there is no creation of evil.

Being in profound silence, there is no deluded awareness.

Being in profound illumination, there is no attached mind.

After the Patriarch had uttered the verse, he sat upright until midnight. Then he suddenly told his disciples, "I am going now!", and passed away suddenly. At that time, an odd fragrance pervaded the room, a white rainbow reached the earth, the trees in the forest turned white, and birds and animals wailed in mourning.

In the eleventh month, the officials of Guang County, Shao County and Xin County, as well as the monastic and lay disciples, vied with one another to receive the Patriarch's corporeal body, and they could not come to a final conclusion. Therefore, they burned incense to pray and said, "The place pointed to by the incense smoke is where the Patriarch's body should return."

Thereupon, the incense smoke wafted straight toward Caoxi. On the thirteenth day of the eleventh month, the Patriarch's shrine and the transmitted robe and bowl were moved back to Baolin Monastery in Caoxi.

In the seventh month of the next year, the Patriarch's body was removed from the shrine, and the disciple Fangbian plastered it using fragrant paste. The disciples remembered the prediction about the head being stolen, and thereupon they protected the Patriarch's head solidly with iron sheets and lacquered cloth, and then put his body into the stupa. At that moment, a flash of white light suddenly appeared from the stupa, soared straight upward into the sky, and lasted for three days until its final disappearance. The Governor of Shao County reported this incident to the Emperor, and acted on an imperial order to set up a monument commemorating the Patriarch's spiritual attainments.

The Patriarch lived to the age of seventy-six years. He received the Dharma Transmission at the age of twenty-four, and became a monk at the age of thirty-nine. He expounded the Dharma of Teachings to benefit sentient beings for thirty-seven years. Those who realized the essential principle and received the Dharma Transmission were forty-three, while those who enlightened to the Way and transcended ordinary beings were innumerable. The transmitted robe from Bodhidharma, the fine vestment and crystal bowl presented by Emperor Zhongzong, the statue of the Patriarch sculpted by Fangbian, and all related Buddhist implements, etc, were put under the charge of the keeper of the stupa, and were permanently kept to guard Baolin Monastery. The Platform Sutra has been circulated and transmitted to reveal and proclaim the essential principle of Suddenness Chan. All this is for the purpose of making the Three Precious Jewels of Buddhism flourish, and for universally benefiting all sentient beings.

