



In the Beginning and Before

The Collected Teachings of
the Way of Sudden Awakening
Founder Ch'an Master Bodhidharma

*A Living Recension for
The Way of Sudden Awakening
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*“The Nature of mind when understood,
No human speech or concept can encompass or disclose.
Clearly, Enlightenment is not to be attained,
And the ones who gain **it** do not say they know.”*

(Bodhidharma as quoted by Huang-Po)

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Biography

Bodhidharma was born around the year 440 in Kanchi, the Capital of the Southern Indian kingdom of Pallava. He was a Brahmin by birth and the third son of the Indian King Simhavarman. When he was young he converted to Buddhism. Later he received direct instruction in the Dharma from the Ekayana teacher Prajnatarā whom his father had invited from the ancient Buddhist heartland of Magadha. It was under Master Prajnatarā that Bodhidharma Awakened. Since the climate in the area was not sympathetic to Ekayana teaching, Master Prajnatarā told Bodhidharma to go to China. As the traditional overland route was blocked by the Huns, Bodhidharma left by ship from the nearby port of Mahaballipuram. After skirting the Indian coast and the Malay Peninsula for three years, he finally arrived in southern China around 475. According to some accounts Bodhidharma stayed in southern China for several years, possibly learning Chinese, before traveling north.

An early record of Bodhidharma's life, considered by many scholars to be relatively reliable, is a text entitled "Continued Biographies of Eminent Monks", authored by a famous monk named Tao-hsuan (596-667). It is believed to have been authored around 650 and introduces Bodhidharma as follows: "Bodhidharma was a Brahmin from southern India. His spiritual wisdom was vast and his clarity penetrating. All who heard him became wiser. He was dedicated to the Mahayana practice of the profound One Mind. He had attained comprehension of all aspects of Samadhi (the Principle). Through compassion for Chinese people he taught. He first arrived in South China during the Liu-sung dynasty (before 489). Wherever he went he taught Chan."

In various places in "Continued Biographies" Tao-hsuan offers evidence that Bodhidharma avoided contact with China's emperors and the Imperial Courts. While other missionary monks sought Imperial patronage, there is no evidence that Bodhidharma did so. The text also offers much evidence that Bodhidharma rejected the doctoral approach to Buddhism along with its rituals and instead upheld the solitary practice of meditating on the Nature of mind. It indicates that Bodhidharma generally did not make use of scriptures in his teaching.

At the time, interest in Buddhism was rapidly rising in China. When he arrived, there were already approximately two thousand Buddhist temples

and thirty-six thousand clergy in the South and an even larger number in the North. Following his arrival at the port of Nanhai, Bodhidharma seems to have visited some of the Buddhist centers in the South and began learning Chinese (although other accounts indicate he started learning Chinese aboard the ship from India). Still other accounts put the date of Bodhidharma's arrival on September 21, 527. It is said that he was then invited to the southern Capital of Chien-kang for an audience with Emperor Wu of the Liang Dynasty. The interaction with the Emperor is recorded as follows:

According to the legend the following conversation took place when Bodhidharma who is considered to be the founder of the Way of Sudden Awakening or of Ekayana in China, first met with Emperor Wu. After three years of traveling, Bodhidharma reached the Southern coast of China on September 21, in the year 527 CE. Soon after the local governor Kao of Kuang Province received him with official etiquette and sent a written message reporting the news of a visiting Buddhist master to Emperor Wu. When the Emperor received this report, he dispatched a messenger with an imperial mandate of invitation. Consequently, on October 1st, Bodhidharma arrived at Chin Ling which was then the capital of the northern empire. When Bodhidharma met the Emperor who was a devout Buddhist, the Emperor asked, "Since I came to the throne I have built countless temples, I have had countless scriptures transcribed and copied and given supplies to countless monks. What merit have I gained?"

Bodhidharma answered, "No merit at all!"

The Emperor replied, "Why no merit at all?"

Bodhidharma explained, "All these are only the small accomplishments leading to rebirth as men or devas (gods or angels). Such deeds bear but small fruits in the human and heavenly worlds and are causes of continued births, deaths and repetitive cycle of suffering. They are like shadows that follow a form, having no reality of their own."

The Emperor then asked, "What then is true merit?"

Bodhidharma answered, "It is pure Wisdom, wonderful, complete and perfect. True merit is subtle and complete pure Wisdom whose Substance or True Nature is non-objective (formless) and still. Its Essence is emptiness. True merit consists in the subtle comprehension of pure Wisdom whose Substance is silent and void. One cannot gain such merit by worldly means."

Thereupon the Emperor asked, "What is the First Principle of the sacred Teaching?"

Bodhidharma replied, "Vast emptiness with nothing sacred in it!"

The Emperor said, "Who is this who is before me?"

Bodhidharma replied, "I don't know."

It is said that Bodhidharma attempted to convey to the Emperor the teaching of Emptiness. The Emperor did not understand and Bodhidharma left. In one account, a subordinate to the Emperor chimed in, saying 'that Bodhidharma has a nose like a pig'.

Bodhidharma replied, "All things and beings have no essential self-nature. Whether a nose is pig-like or not is a function of the karma (tendencies) being made by the perceiver, not the perceived." The visit and dialogue ended at this point.

According to the fragmentary records, Bodhidharma then crossed the Yang-tze River and settled in the North. At first he stayed near the Northern Wei Capital of Ping-cheng. In 494 C.E., the Emperor Hsiao-wen moved the Capital south to Loyang on the northern bank of the Lo River. Most of the monks living in the Ping-cheng area moved too and Bodhidharma was probably among them. Some records list Bodhidharma as receiving official Chinese monk ordination during this period.

A few years later, in 496, the Emperor ordered the construction of the Shao-lin Temple on Mount Sung in Honan province, southeast of Loyang. It is said that Bodhidharma took up residence there and spent nine years in meditation utilizing an empty wall rather than a shrine. Some records also indicate that Bodhidharma may have stayed at the Yung-ming Temple in Loyang.

While residing at Shao-lin Temple, Master Bodhidharma was mostly silent. At that time there was a Buddhist monk named Shen-k'uang who was spiritually erudite and had been living in Loyang for a long time. He had read great quantities of all kind of spiritual books which spoke of the profound Principle. One day he sighed to himself and said, "The teachings of Confucius and Lao-tzu deal mostly with customs and etiquette. The Book of Changes (I Ching) and Chuang-tze still do not plumb the depths of the wonderful Principle. Lately I have heard that Master Bodhidharma is living in the Shao-lin Temple. With this wise man so near, I should be able to reach the deeper realms of understanding."

Then Shen-k'uang went to visit Bodhidharma and asked to be accepted as a student. Bodhidharma did not respond and so on the night of December 9th, Shen-k'uang stood firmly without moving in the yard of the Shao-lin Temple. By the dawn of the next day, the fallen snow had piled so deep that it reached his knees.

Master Bodhidharma then took pity on him and asked, “What are you seeking, standing in the snow for this long time?”

Shen-k’uang sobbed and in tears begged him, “Please, Master, have compassion on me. Please open the gate of the nectar of Wisdom. Please deliver the Teaching that Liberates ignorant human beings.”

Master Bodhidharma replied, “This Teaching of the Supreme Unequaled Way of the Buddhas is accessible only to those who are willing to strive to overcome the impossible and bear the unbearable. Those of small virtue or little wisdom or slight interest or a non-critical mind will not progress in this True Vehicle.”

After meeting with Shen-k’uang and realizing that he was a good vessel for the Dharma, Bodhidharma said, “You may have the right disposition.”

Master Bodhidharma then renamed him Hui-k’o.

Hui-k’o asked, “May I hear about the Supreme Dharma-seal of the Buddha?”

Bodhidharma answered, “The Supreme Dharma-seal is not some thing which can be given by others.”

Hui-k’o said, “My mind is not yet at peace. Pray set it at peace for me, Master!”

Bodhidharma responded, “Bring me your mind, and I will set it at peace for you.”

After a period of silence, Hui-k’o answered, “I have searched for it, but in the end it is not some thing that I can obtain.”

Bodhidharma replied, “Your mind has now been set at peace.”

Once while practicing under Bodhidharma, Hui-k’o remarked, “I have by now severed all my karmic ties and ended all my samsaric involvements.”

Bodhidharma replied, “You are not denying the law of karma, are you?”

Hui-k’o answered, “No, I am not.”

Bodhidharma asked, “Doesn’t that turn into nihilism?”

Hui-k’o responded, “No.”

Bodhidharma asked, “And how can you be sure of this?”

Hui-k’o answered, “I am always clearly aware. Therefore, words cannot reach *it* or even approach *it*.”

Bodhidharma said, “This is the Essence of the mind, which all Buddhas realize. *This* is the Original Nature and the Mind Substance – have no more doubts about it.”

The Buddhist historian Tao-hsuan claims Bodhidharma purposely avoided emperors and their courts. Tao-hsuan also recorded that one of

Bodhidharma's senior students, Seng-fu, avoided Emperor Wu's court during a long time span even though he lived only a short distance from the Imperial palace. Seng-fu did not avoid the world in general, so his avoidance of the Imperial religious and political scene in the Capital was spiritual in nature. Tao-hsuan also indicated that Bodhidharma himself lived in the vicinity of Nanking, not far from Emperor Wu's court, for an extended period of time. It is said that he too avoided the court. Seng-fu's record indicated that in his teaching, Bodhidharma did not rely on Sutras but instead emphasized "clearly seeing the Nature of mind". This was at odds with the Imperial Buddhism with its emphasis on Sutra studies and metaphysical interpretations of Buddhist doctrine. Ch'an masters of Bodhidharma's lineage, at least for a certain period of time, rejected Imperial sponsorship and metaphysics.

Although Buddhism was undergoing a sudden surge in popularity in China, Bodhidharma had few students. The names of the students listed mention Tao-yu and Hui-k'o, both of whom are said to have studied with Bodhidharma for at least five to six years. Tao-yu understood the Teaching but never publicly taught. It is recorded that it was to Hui-k'o that Bodhidharma entrusted the Mind Transmission as well as the robe and bowl of the lineage and perhaps a copy of the Lankavatara Sutra. Bodhidharma's teaching does not draw on that Sutra however, but instead utilizes the Nirvana Sutra, the Vimalakirti Nirdesa Sutra and the Avatamsaka Sutra.

According to the text "The Transmission of the Lamp", Bodhidharma met his death as a result of the machinations of two well-known spiritual teachers at the time – Vinaya Master K'uang-t'ung and Tripitaka Master Bodhiruci. Bodhiruci was a monk from northern India who came to China in 508 and became a famous translator of some thirty works. They strongly disagreed with Master Bodhidharma's teaching. As a result they schemed maliciously many times to poison him. It is said that after Bodhidharma completed the Transmission to Hui-k'o, he made no attempt to save himself from the sixth poisoning. It is recorded that Bodhidharma passed away, seated in meditation, on October 5th (possibly 536). It is said he was buried at Hsiung Erh Mountain on December 28th of the same year, and that a memorial pagoda was erected in his honor at T'ing-lin Temple. It is also said that Emperor Wu of the Liang Dynasty composed an inscription for a tablet when he heard of the Master's passing. Later, Emperor T'ai-tsung (763-779) conferred the posthumous title 'Completely Enlightened Master' and named the pagoda in his honor 'Empty Observatory'.



Tao-hsuan, historian and author of “Continued Biographies of Eminent Monks”, described the meditation tradition of Bodhidharma as follows:

“At that time there was Bodhidharma. His transforming of beings rested not in divinity but in the Truth. He carried out instruction in the Yangtse River area and the Lo-yang region. The results of his ‘true Mahayana meditation on emptiness’ were the highest. Students at that time committed themselves to his Teaching and looked up to him as different than the crowds of the spiritual marketplace. However, his Teaching was difficult for some to comprehend as they relied only on discipline and cleverness. When we examine what he was driving at, the intention to cut off or negate was the purport. When we examine the sayings he left behind, we find that the opposites of sin and merit are both rejected. In short, he taught that the Real and the conventional are like a pair of wings. Voidness and existence are two wheels on one axle. His Teaching avoided being trapped in the mesh of Indra’s net (samsara) nor can it be tainted by any view including those of spiritual craving. His approach to meditation tallied with this non-duality and so, transcended verbalization. Bodhidharma took as his Dharma the Teaching of emptiness. Bodhidharma’s purport was profound and so coming to an intellectual grasp of the Principle was difficult. Those who tried that erroneous approach got the fish trap (net) rather than catching the fish and forgetting the trap.”

In the “Transmission of the Lamp” it is recorded that Bodhidharma died in 528 on the fifth day of the tenth month, poisoned by a jealous monk; perhaps on the banks of the Lo River.



What Is Ekayana?

***“A special transmission outside the scriptures,
Not founded upon words and letters;
By pointing directly to one’s mind
It lets one see into its True Nature and thus attain Buddhahood.”***

(Bodhidharma)

**Entering the Buddha's Way
also known as Two Entrances
or Outline of Practice
or Two-fold Entrance into the Tao**

Preface by Student Tan-Lin

The Dharma teacher Bodhidharma was a man of southern India, the third son of a local monarch. His intellect was very incisive and clear, and he clearly understood what he taught. His intention was set on the Great Vehicle, and so he abandoned lay life and became a monk. He perpetuated the seed of the Buddhas and made it flourish. With deepest mind, empty and still, he saw through and comprehended the experiences, events and things of the world. Inner and outer, he was clear about it all. His virtue went beyond the world – his virtue, compassion and care reached every corner of the land. The true Dharma was in decline, so he came from afar across mountains and seas, traveling to teach in the lands of China. Those who sincerely cultivated mind or emptiness and overcame their preconceptions regarding their own mind, all believed in his Teaching. However, the types of spiritual persons who cling to forms and fixate on opinions began to slander and denounce him.

During this time Bodhidharma only had the two monk-students Tao-yu and Hui-k'o with him. Though they were younger, they brought with them intentions that were lofty and far-reaching. Being fortunate enough to meet Bodhidharma, they served him many years, respectfully seeking instruction. They learned well, understanding the Teacher's intent and instilled in their lives the spirit of his Teaching. Moved by their excellent energy and sincerity, Bodhidharma instructed them in the true Tao and the Way. He taught them how to find peace of mind, how to develop real practice, how to accord with other beings, and how to employ (spiritual) skillful means.

This is the Supreme Vehicle Teaching for finding peace of mind – let there be no error regarding this. Those who find the peace inherent in mind, see without seeing and empty their minds. Those who develop practice in accord with this do the four practices. Those who accord with other beings like this transcend slander and dislike. Those who accord with skillful means like this dispense with all spirituality that does not apply. Here I have abbreviated some of the Teaching – the message is in this text below.



Bodhidharma said, “There are said to be many different paths. However, to enter the Way of the Buddhas, there are essentially only two types of entrance.

The first is entrance by Wisdom or the Principle. It is also called entrance through inner Truth or by the Dharma-Principle. The second is entrance by spiritual practice inclusive of application in daily life. It is also called entrance by means of dharmic activity or by conduct.

Entering by means of Principle or inner Truth means using the Teaching directly to Awaken to the Source or the Essence. Entering by means of Wisdom is the direct experience of the Dharma through the simultaneous understanding and application of the Teaching, which is found in the highest Sutras. It includes the deep understanding that human beings, both ordinary and Buddhas, share one and the same Reality-Nature. This essential True Nature is not apparent or directly seen for what *it* is due to the false covering of delusive beliefs and false notions. To enter by means of the Principle requires a profound trust or understanding that all human beings, both the Enlightened and the ordinary, have the same True Nature of mind, which is obscured due only to mistaken perception.

Abandon the false and return to the True; turn from delusion back to Reality. With unity of mind, like gazing upon an empty wall with focused attention, practice meditation (on the Principle) and realize that there is neither self nor other, neither high nor low. All things and all beings are of one Essence. Firmly hold onto this understanding and remain unmoved, free from external seeking. Be not a slave to words (scriptures) and speech. Thus you will no longer fall into the limitations of verbal or written teachings. This is tacit accord with the real inner Truth or Principle. This is to be in silent communion with the Tao *itself*. Thus one is in direct contact with the Dharma-Principle *itself*, which is serene and nameless. Free from conceptual discriminations, there is serene perfection beyond the creation of obscuring notions. Without moving and without struggle, such is called the entrance by Principle or Wisdom.

Entrance by spiritual practice inclusive of application in all aspects of daily life consists of four skillful approaches. What are the four approaches? First is the practice of the abandonment of the generation of hatred for one’s condition. Second is living in accord with the understanding of karma, inclusive of learning to adapt to conditions. Third is the practice of not seeking anything externally. Fourth is the practice of according with the Dharma (Truth).

What is the practice of the abandonment of the generation of hatred for one's condition? When those who search for the Tao or who cultivate the Way find themselves suffering due to tendencies or encountering mental-emotional adversity, they should contemplate as follows: 'During countless ages past, I have abandoned the Root and pursued the branches. I have turned from the essential to the trivial, from the fundamental to the superficial. I have wandered through all manner of states of consciousness, tossed by currents and waves. I gave rise to much rancor and hatred, bringing harm and discord. I was often angry without cause and am consequently guilty of numberless transgressions against my fellow beings and other wrongdoings. Now, though I do no wrong, my inherited mental-emotional suffering is a result of ignorant deeds ripening from former lives (or former experiences in this life). This suffering is not something given to me by gods or other human or non-human beings. It is not meted out to me by some heavenly agency. I am reaping the natural consequences of my past offences, my bad karma. I accept it and patiently work with it without animosity or complaint'.

Throughout previous lives (or former experiences in this life) one has acted unmindfully or without Wisdom and has consequently generated the three poisons (craving or greed, hatred or ongoing resentment, arrogant ignorance of the effects of one's actions), which lead to suffering. Even if no ignorant deeds have been done in this present lifetime, the mental-emotional effects of past deeds will surely come to fruit as the tendencies one enters this life with. No-one can predict what appearance these take and when in one's life they will manifest. Understanding this, one must be prepared for dealing with these tendencies and accept, in Wisdom, what is experienced. You should experience the suffering fully, without bemoaning or complaining. In the Sutras you can read how such tendencies are generated and also come to understand that it is by penetrating your inner Wisdom that you come to directly know their real causes. Accept the experience of your tendencies with an open mind and without saying life is unfair. One of the Sutras says, 'When you meet with inner adversity, don't be upset, because it makes sense when surveyed by higher Wisdom'. (Alternative translation: 'When you are dealing with suffering, do not be sad. Why? Because you can comprehend the underlying reason behind it'.) With such understanding you are in harmony with Wisdom because you use it to open up your mind to the Essence. Cultivating this attitude, the student of the Way can consequently make the best use of his or her original feeling of hating one's tendencies. This approach is also called 'the way to abandon hatred'. Thus even your mental-emotional suffering allows

you to enter the Way because you come to directly understand the real causes of suffering. If and when such a realization is experienced, the student of the Buddha's Way will accord with true Wisdom and be able to turn tendencies into various skillful means of spiritual advancement.

Second is living in accord with the understanding of karma, inclusive of learning to adapt to conditions. This is also called being obedient to karma or going along with the causal nexus, accepting circumstances or according with the higher understanding of karma. The true Teaching or Dharma states that there is no permanent self. All experiences undergone are likewise impermanent and transitory. They are the intermingling of the energies and patterns of the past and present. Consequently, they are always liable to change or reverse themselves. For example, at one time, you may be rich and at another time be a beggar, or at one time have public acclaim and at another time public condemnation. According to the causal karmic forces present within the moment, there appears some amount of gain or loss, which fade only when that causal energy or force is exhausted.

Although human beings have no self, they are apparently transformed in a manner causally linked to their deeds. (Alternative translation: Although mind is empty of self, it is apparently transformed according to the karma produced by one's deeds.) Thus human beings appear to receive both suffering and happiness – however, both are born from causal conditions. If you get good rewards in terms of states of consciousness, this is brought about by past causes. You receive them for the moment but when that causal merit is ended or conditions change, that state will not be there. Consequently, one should never take pride in the concept of being independent of karma nor rejoice too much over temporary worldly gains. Remember that all kinds of gain and loss follow the causal nexus.

The Source, which is the True Nature of mind, is neither augmented nor diminished. Mind neither increases nor decreases with the karmic energies or forces. The winds of happiness and suffering do not blow Mind nor even disturb *it*. To understand this is to be in harmony with the Buddha's Way and the Tao. Therefore, this approach is called being obedient to the law of karma. It enables one to accept all experiences of loss and gain with understanding and to accord with silent Wisdom.

Third is the practice of not seeking anything externally nor craving anything. Worldly people are always deluded due to their extreme longing

for one thing or another. In other words, because they are deluded by craving, they can become attached. This is called seeking externally or craving. The wise wake up or Awaken to the Real. They choose Wisdom over custom or habit or conventional ideas. This practice includes the understanding that the generation of cravings is inseparable from mental confusion. Although a craving appears to incline your attention to only one thing, in experience it actually goes from one thing to another in unending and constant succession of pleasure and more craving. Those who see with Wisdom, however, recognize this and do not seek fulfillment outside of mind.

The wise practice meditation upon the Uncreate. When the mind can rest within the Uncreate, the body can move about in harmony with the conventional world without departing from inner Truth. They have the peace of mind, which is not a result of contrived worldly or spiritual activity. Consequently, their minds abide in the sublime serene Uncreate while their bodies move about in accordance with the laws of causation. They can change shape (of their functions) according to the need and they let their bodies change with the seasons. If you truly understand this Teaching, the myriad states of being (or consciousness) are thereby emptied.

All things and experiences are ultimately empty of permanence. All phenomena are also empty in that they contain nothing worth craving. Even in the craving for spiritual knowledge or light, there is the stupidity of ignorance or darkness. When one sees clearly, even the ignorance of seeking 'meritorious deeds', along with the craving for spiritual knowledge, which are based on dualistic views, is forever banished. Within the concept of the merit of brightness, there is the demerit of darkness.

Relatively, calamity forever alternates with prosperity – the goddesses* of good and bad fortune always travel as a pair. Do you think you will dwell for long in the Triple World (the experience: of form, of thought, of formlessness) – it is like a house on fire. All those who have bodies suffer impermanence. Who can find peace in the Triple World? The possibility of human birth also is the possibility of human suffering. Suffering inevitably comes with having one's own realm of personal experience. One who is thus enmeshed finds it difficult to have an untroubled mind. Those who understand this practice non-attachment to the Triple World. Using the highest Wisdom, they do not create ignorant cravings. They stop conceptual imaginings and seeking anything outside of mind. When this is completely comprehended, the conceptual thoughts of being an experiencer (or self) in various states ceases, and then there is no need for any further spiritual seeking.

[*Note: Calamity and Prosperity were two sister goddesses. Once the beautiful sister Prosperity entered a house and announced to the owner that she had the power to bestow all sorts of valuable things. The owner was very happy and made offerings to her. He then looked outside and saw the ugly sister Calamity outside the gate. Calamity came in and told him that her visit to the house would bring about a complete loss of wealth. The owner was very unhappy and threatened her with a knife in order to make her leave. However, both sisters only laughed at him and told him that he is very stupid. They explained to him that they always come and go together. If he wished to drive away one, he would have to drive away the other. The owner contemplated it and then said that he had no need of either and that they should leave. They departed and the owner experienced a peace deeper than temporal happiness.]

The Sutras proclaim that wherever there is craving and external seeking, there is suffering; and when such craving and seeking cease, there is joy. When you spiritually seek nothing externally, you are on the Buddha's Way. Understand that not to crave anything is indeed the way to Truth. When craving and external seeking vanish, suffering vanishes. Thus you should understand the Teaching or practice of not seeking anything externally nor craving anything.

Fourth is the practice of according with the Dharma (Truth and Teaching). You should understand that the Dharma or the Teaching of Absolute Reality (the Principle) is founded on the Teaching of emptiness. This Teaching or practice includes the understanding of the Truth that all phenomena (inner and outer) are inherently pure in their Nature. The practice of according with the Dharma is the use of Wisdom – the Wisdom that sees that the Essence of everything is pure. The Wisdom is also the Principle of emptiness in all that is manifested. Everything is empty (of selfhood). All characteristics are void. Because the concepts of subject and object do not apply, there is no attachment or defilement. Wisdom *itself* is transcendent of defilements and attachments. There is no 'self', no 'other' in *it*. The (Vimalakirti) Sutra says, 'In the Dharma there are no beings because *it* is free from the stain (impurity) of the concept of being; in the Dharma there is no 'self' because *it* is free from the stain (impurity) of the concept of selfhood'.

Those wise enough to embrace and understand the Truth of this Teaching practice and live according to the Dharma. Because of the understanding of emptiness, those who practice and live in accordance

with this Principle do not create sufferings or ignorance. Liberated from the belief in a permanent self, their minds are not stained with the three poisons (hatred or ongoing resentment, greed or craving, and ignorance or arrogant stupidity). Consequently, they do not even generate a desire for continued selfhood. Understanding this, the wise naturally live according to the Dharma, which is the Principle.

The Dharmakaya (Realm of Absolute Truth) is what is real and lacks nothing, so there is nothing worth begrudging. Consequently, the wise are not stingy. They give of their body, life and property in charity or generosity. When you practice giving, let there be no stinginess or holding back. Realizing that the one receiving the gift, the giver and the gift itself are all empty, you don't depend on them or get attached to them. Thus, the wise may practice charitable acts, offering their property or even their lives, without regret or reticence because they understand fully this three-fold emptiness. Seeing clearly the emptiness of being (self) and without conceptualizing the existence of characteristics and ignorant beings, they are beyond partiality (bias) or attachments.

The correct way to share the Teaching is only to help human beings rid themselves of conceptual impurities. The purpose of spiritually sharing is to embrace and transform sentient (human) beings without grasping at forms or appearances. It is only because of your desire to help Liberate suffering beings that you should share while being non-attached to the form of the sharing or their characteristics. Thus, through your own practice you are able to help others as well as yourself and glorify the Way and Truth of Enlightenment. Such is the majestic way of the true bodhisattva's compassionate work.

If the perfection (or the transcendental virtue) of giving is thus understood and practiced, so should the other five (2. ethics or moderation; 3. patience and tolerance; 4. energetic exertion and courage; 5. depth of meditation; 6. non-intellectual insight and Wisdom). The purpose of practicing the six perfections (or transcendental virtues) is only to remove false thinking or eliminate delusion – yet it is important to understand that there is nothing that needs be practiced. Even as delusion is eliminated, there should be no specific consciousness on your part that you are engaged in any meritorious deeds. Understanding this is practicing according to the Dharma. The wise perform the six transcendental virtues or perfect practices as needed and thus rise above confusion. However, ultimately they understand that in empty Mind, there is no-one to get confused. This is what is meant by being in accord with the Dharma.



[Note: The following text was recovered from the Tun-huang caves in China.]

Bodhidharma's Treatise on Contemplating Mind

Hui-k'o asked: If there are people intent on seeking the Tao or Enlightenment, what method should they practice? What method is most essential and direct?

Bodhidharma answered: Let them just contemplate mind. This one method takes in all practices, and is indeed direct and conclusive. This is the essential one.

Hui-k'o asked: How can one single method embrace all practices?

Bodhidharma answered: Mind is the root of the myriad phenomena and the source of all methods. All phenomena are born from (or experienced within) mind. All methods are simply products of the mind. If you can completely comprehend mind or comprehend what your mind really is, the myriad practices are completed. It is like a great tree – all the branches and flowers and fruits grow based on the root. The tree grows only if the root survives. If the root is cut, the tree is sure to die. If you cultivate the Tao by comprehending mind or a thorough comprehension of what your mind really is, you save effort (struggle) and success (Enlightenment) is easy. (Alternative translation: ...You will conserve your efforts and easily succeed in realizing Buddhahood.) If you cultivate the Tao without comprehending mind, then you waste your efforts and there is no ultimate benefit. Thus you can understand that all good and evil come from one's own mind. If you seek outside of mind, it is impossible to find the Tao and you will miss the point.

Hui-k'o asked: Why is contemplating mind or comprehending what my mind really is called complete comprehension?

Bodhidharma answered: When the wise (bodhisattvas) practice the profound Perfection of Transcendental Wisdom, they understand that the four great elements (of matter) and the five clusters (skandas) are fundamentally empty (void) and self-less (without any self). They clearly see that there are two different kinds of activity initiated by the inherent mind – pure states of thought or consciousness and defiled (or stained) states of thought or consciousness. The pure states are actually just the mind of the undefiled true Suchness reflected in activity. The defiled states are the same mind with concepts constituting defilement and ignorance. The True Nature of mind is there of *itself* from the beginning. Everything is produced by combinations of temporary causes, inclusive of temporary

ever-changing circumstances – with nothing ever independently self-produced. The pure states take delight in good causes, while the defiled states consist of constantly thinking of evil (unethical) deeds, which produce bad karma.

If true Suchness, which is the Buddha-nature, is aware of *itself*, this Awareness transcends defilement and this is called being a Buddha. This enables one to leave all suffering far behind and experience the joy of Nirvana. Of course, if you follow along with concepts and defiled states creating bad karma, you are subject to its bondage, which apparently veils the Buddha-nature. This is called being an ordinary or ignorant person. Then your mind appears to be submerged in the Triple World (of the experience of form, thoughts and desires and formlessness) and subject to all kinds of suffering with the apparent obscuration of the Buddha-nature. Why? Because clinging to those defiled states apparently blocks off the mind from true Suchness or the Essence of the unmovable True Mind as *it* is. The Ten Stages Sutra says, 'Within the realm of human beings there is an indestructible (diamond-like) Enlightened-nature (or adamant Buddha-nature). *It* is like the orb of the sun – *it* is bright, round (formless), full and vast without limit. (Alternative transl.: *It* is radiant, all encompassing, vast, infinite and unbounded.) Because it is covered by attachment to the dark clouds of the five clusters, it is like a lamp (candle) placed in a ceramic jar so that the light cannot appear'. The Nirvana Sutra says, 'All human beings have Buddha-nature. Because it is covered over by ignorance, they are not set free and do not realize Liberation. Buddha-nature is innately Enlightened. When *it* is aware of *itself*, it is seen that this Awareness, fully endowed with Wisdom and Compassion, is completely illuminated apart from what seems to veil *it* – this is called complete Liberation'. Thus we understand that all forms of good spring from the Enlightened Root. The tree of all spiritual merits and virtues appears based on this same Enlightened Root. Likewise the fruit of Nirvana. Contemplating mind like this can indeed be called complete or thorough comprehension of what mind really is.

Hui-k'o then asked: You have just stated that all the spiritual merits and virtues of the Enlightened-nature of true Suchness depend on the Enlightened Root. I also wonder what is the root for all the forms of evil and ignorance?

Bodhidharma answered: Though the states of ignorance manifest as eighty-four thousand afflictions (tendencies), sentiments, cravings and uncountable evils, they all have the three poisons as their root or source. The three poisons are craving (or greed), hatred (or ongoing resentment)

and gross ignorance (of the effects of one's actions). The views that form these three poisons include all forms of evil or unethical behavior. It is like a big tree – though there is one root, the branches and leaves are numberless. Similarly, each of the three poisons as a root can give birth to a multitude of evil (unethical) deeds. When the Fundamental Essence is not understood, the three poisons are sure to manifest through the six sense faculties which can also be called at that point 'six thieves'. The six thieves are the six consciousnesses (or forms of perceptual consciousness) that appear to go in and out via the sense faculties but are actually the result of attachment to the myriad phenomena, and it is this attachment that creates evil (unethical) deeds which apparently block off the Realm of True Suchness. So it is said that all ignorant beings are plunged into ignorance and confusion by these three poisons. Then body, experience and states of consciousness sink in the sea of birth and death and revolve endlessly through the six planes or realms of existence* thus experiencing all kinds of suffering, misery, woe and affliction. It is like a wild river that starts from small springs or many small streams but it can extend its flooding waves for thousands of miles. Of course, if a person cuts off the root or the source, then the many streams all stop. Those who seek Liberation should understand the one mind that is able to transform itself into the three poisons or the three forms of pure discipline or the six thieves or the six paramitas – thereby spontaneously leaving behind all forms of suffering.

[*Note: The six realms of samsaric existence are generally considered, in Buddhism, to be the six types of rebirth. However, in Mahayana, they are also considered to be symbolic of states of consciousness or modes of experience. The six are: 1) gods or devas, 2) the demi-gods or titans or asuras, 3) ordinary humans or manusa, 4) animals or tiryak, 5) hungry ghosts or preta, 6) hell denizens or naraka. Each of these realms or states of consciousness is considered to be brought about by a predominance of a particular spiritual defilement or klesa: as a god through pride, as a demi-god or titan through jealousy, as a human being through attachment, as an animal through stupidity, as a hungry ghost through craving or greed, as a hell denizen through hatred.]

Hui-k'o asked: The three poisons and the six thieves are said to be vast and limitless in their effects in the Triple World. So how can one avoid their substantial suffering by just contemplating mind?

Bodhidharma answered: The karmic consequences of the Triple World are just products of mind. If you can completely comprehend mind, within the Triple World you will escape the Triple World. The Triple World corresponds to the three poisons. Greed or craving corresponds to the realm of thought, hatred to the realm of form, and ignorance or delusion to the formless realm. From these three poisons the mind assembles the karmic consequences and forms the six planes (or realms) of samsara (on the wheel of transmigration). Thus the three poisons are called the Triple World. Since the ignorances created by the three poisons may vary in seriousness, the karmic consequences received are not the same, but are divided into six realms – hence the name ‘six realms of existence’.

Hui-k’o asked: How does it divide into six according to the relative seriousness of the deeds?

Bodhidharma answered: If human beings do not comprehend the correct basis for Enlightenment and try to cultivate goodness with the mind full of delusion, they do not avoid the Triple World and birth in one of the three less grievous realms of existence. This means that if in samsara they artificially cultivate the ten virtues (of sainthood or ‘bodhisattvahood’) while still indulging in false concepts seeking external happiness (such as through a ‘religious mission’ or organization), they will not avoid the realm of gross ignorance and arrogant delusion and thus birth in the realm of the devas (gods). If in the delusion of samsara they religiously uphold the fivefold precepts (of lay Buddhists) while still creating false concepts of attachment, thus clinging to the phenomenal world, they will not avoid the realm of craving or greed and hence birth in the realm of human beings. If in the delusion of samsara they cling to contrived beliefs and wrongly seek blessings externally in their struggles, they will not avoid the realm of hatred or ongoing anger (resentments) and thus birth in the realm of the asuras (titans or demi-gods). These three are sometimes called the less grievous realms of existence.

You may be wondering about the three heavy or more grievous realms of existence. The same is true. This means that if they indulge the concepts that form the basis of the three poisons and do nothing spiritually but instead perform unethical deeds, they will fall into the three heavy realms of existence. So if their deeds of greed and craving are serious, they fall into the realm of hungry ghosts. If their deeds of hatred are serious, they fall into the realm of the hells. If their deeds of gross ignorance or delusion are serious, they fall into the realm of animals. These three heavy grievous realms of existence together with the previous three less grievous realms make up the six realms of existence.

Thus we understand that all evil deeds and karmic suffering are born (or is produced) from one's own mind. If we can understand mind to be apart from (transcendent of) all evil deeds and falsity, then the sufferings of revolving in the Triple World and the six realms of existence with their karma will spontaneously melt away or dissipate. If we put an end to all suffering with this Wisdom, this is called Liberation or Nirvana.

Hui-k'o asked: What about the Buddha's statement 'Only after countless ages and immeasurable effort and suffering did I achieve Enlightenment'? Why do you now say that just removing the three poisons with this Wisdom is called Liberation?

Bodhidharma answered: In the words spoken by the Buddha there is no falsity. 'Countless ages' refers to the concepts that form the three poisons. In other words, the mind of conceptual thought contains countless ignorant thoughts and every thought is an age. Poisonous ignorant conceptual thoughts are like the sand grains of the Ganges River, so they are called countless. When the Nature of Reality, which is the Absolute True Suchness and the Buddha-nature, is apparently covered over by these three poisons, how can we expect Liberation unless we transcend all those countless ignorant thoughts? In the present moment being able to comprehend the mind as being transcendent of the three poisons of craving, hatred and ignorance, is called 'crossing over countless ages'. It is said that human beings in this last age are stupid, deluded and foolish and their faculties are dull so they do not understand the extremely profound and subtle meaning of the Tathagata's Teaching. Since they do not understand this esoteric non-literal meaning of 'countless ages', they say that one may become a Buddha only after passing through eons as numerous as dust motes. In the final analysis (of Wisdom), this can but cause doubts and misapprehension or impediments by people cultivating their spiritual practice and actually makes them retreat from the true Path (Way) of Enlightenment.

Then Hui-k'o asked: It is taught that bodhisattvas and mahasattvas become Buddhas or attain the Buddha-Tao by upholding the three combinations of pure discipline (ethics, meditation and insight) and by practicing the six perfections. Now you are directing students only to contemplate mind. If they do not cultivate the practices of discipline, how can they attain Buddhahood?

Bodhidharma answered: The three-fold combination of pure discipline is meant to help the mind transcend the three poisons. To transcend even one of the poisons achieves immeasurable good. In this Teaching the three disciplines are combined in this one approach which can be utilized in all

circumstances. The six perfections mean seeing mind as transcendent over the six sense faculties. The foreign word 'paramita' means in our language 'reaching the other shore'. This is because when the six sense faculties are seen to be pure and clean and not stained by worldly dusts, this is equivalent of escaping from affliction and reaching the other shore. That is why there is the name six paramitas or the six perfections.

Hui-k'o asked: The three aspects of pure discipline are also spoken of in the scriptures as vowing to cut off all ignorance, vowing to cultivate all good spiritual qualities, and vowing to deliver (or Liberate) all sentient beings. Now you are saying only to contemplate mind. Does this not contradict the meaning of the scriptures?

Bodhidharma answered: The scriptures (Sutras) expounded by the Buddha are true words, free from falsehood. When bodhisattvas or mahasattvas in the past were cultivating their gradual practices, they made those three vows in order to deal with the three poisons and to uphold the three aspects of pure discipline. So it is recorded that they always practiced the discipline of ethics to deal with the poison of greed or craving and hence their vow to cut off all ignorance. They always practiced the discipline of meditation to deal with the poison of hatred and hence their vow to cultivate all good spiritual qualities. They always practiced the discipline of insight or benevolent (compassionate) discernment to deal with the poison of gross ignorance and hence their vow to deliver all sentient beings. Because they upheld those three kinds of pure discipline – of ethics, meditation and insight – they went beyond the ignorant deeds of the three poisons and achieved the Tao of the Buddhas.

In light of this Ekayana Teaching, being able to transcend the three poisons means that all forms of ignorance dissolve; hence it is called cutting off ignorance or 'setting mind free'. Being able to truly perfect the three disciplines really means clearly seeing that all good spiritual qualities are already fully present in mind; hence it is called cultivating all good spiritual qualities. Thus the myriad practices are suddenly perfected, benefitting both self and others, and 'saving all sentient beings'; hence it is called delivering all sentient beings. Thus the Sutra (Vimalakirti Nirdeśa) says, 'When mind is seen as defiled, sentient beings are defiled. When mind is seen as pure, sentient beings are pure'. Therefore, understand that the essence of the disciplines and practices that you cultivate are not something existing apart from your mind. If you see that mind is immaculate, then the mind of all human beings is immaculate through and through. That same Sutra also says, 'To see the purity of the Buddha-land, first see the purity of your mind. As one's mind is seen to be pure, so the

Buddha-land is likewise pure'. If you are able to transcend the three kinds of poisonous concepts, the three aspects of pure discipline are spontaneously naturally perfected.

Hui-k'o then asked: As the scriptures explain them, the six perfections or six paramitas are giving or charity, discipline or ethics, patience or tolerance, energetic progress or zeal, meditation, and insight or wisdom. Now you have just said that if the six sense faculties are seen to be pure, this is the same as the six perfections. If we are to understand it according to this Teaching, what is the meaning of 'perfection'?

Bodhidharma said: If you want to truly understand the meaning of the six perfections, you need not be always trying to purify the six sense faculties. Mahayana (traditional Buddhism) regards the six sense faculties as thieves that must be subdued. Stated in those terms, this Teaching proclaims that you can abandon the eye-thief and transcend all objects of form by seeing that the mind is already free of stinginess – this is called the perfection of giving. You can abandon the ear-thief and transcend all sounds by seeing that the mind is already free of all dusts (concepts) caused by sounds (words) – this is called the perfection of discipline or ethics. You can abandon the nose-thief and transcend all smells by seeing that the mind is already free of all good and bad. It is independent, equal, tolerant and in balance – this is called the perfection of patience. You can abandon the tongue-thief and transcend all craving for flavors by seeing that the mind is already free of laziness or boredom, likes or dislikes, and its True Nature always extolls and expounds the True Dharma tirelessly – this is called the perfection of energetic progress or zeal. You can abandon the body-thief, so that amidst all kinds of sensory contacts and desires, the mind is seen as already profoundly clear, serene and unmoving – this is called the perfection of meditation. You can abandon the consciousness-thief and transcend all conceptual thought and enjoy the spiritual merits of insight by seeing that the mind is already free of ignorance and of the Nature of constant Enlightened Wisdom – this is called the perfection of Wisdom. Paramita means 'crossing over' and the six paramitas are likened to boats (or rafts) that convey sentient (ignorant) beings to the 'Other Shore' or Liberation. This Teaching reveals the mind of all beings to be Buddha already on the Other Shore.

Hui-k'o asked: According to the scriptures (Sutras), when Tathagata Sakyamuni was a bodhisattva, he attained Enlightenment only after drinking some milk gruel. That is, because he drank the gruel beforehand, he experienced the fruit of Enlightenment. So this seems to be not simply 'Liberation through contemplating mind' (as taught by you).

Bodhidharma answered: What the scripture says is true – there is no falsity. Sakyamuni had to drink the ‘milk gruel’ before he could become Buddha. However, the milk gruel the Buddha speaks of is not the relative worldly kind. It is the milk of the Tathagata’s pure Teaching (Dharma of Truth-as-it-is) which transcends even the three aspects of pure discipline and the six perfections. When the Buddha became Enlightened or attained the Tao, it was because of drinking this milk of the pure Teaching of Truth that he experienced the fruit of Enlightenment. It would be nothing but slander to claim that the Tathagata gained Enlightenment by partaking of worldly bad-smelling cow’s milk which is but a mixture of material elements. The Tathagata is actually the indestructible, imperishable, stainless diamond Realm of Reality (Dharmakaya) which is Mind, forever free from worldly sufferings. He had no need for such worldly milk to quench his spiritual thirst. That is why the scripture says, “The cow that gives the milk of the pure Dharma is not on the high plateaus nor in the low marshlands. It does not eat grain or chaff. The body of this cow is lustrous.” This cow refers to the luminous omnipresent Primordial Buddha (Vairocana Buddha). From his great compassion for everyone, he causes to pour forth the subtle wondrous pure Dharma-milk. This milk nourishes all who seek Liberation or the immaculate Dharmakaya. Not only did the Tathagata drink this pure milk from the ‘primordial cow’ to attain Enlightenment, but all ignorant human beings will achieve Ultimate Perfect Enlightenment or the Tao if they choose to drink it.

Hui-k’o asked: In the scriptures (Sutras) spoken by the Buddha, he commands ignorant human beings to build monasteries, to cast holy images, to burn incense and scatter flowers, to keep lamps burning brightly, to circumambulate the Buddha’s stupa six times a day, to maintain a vegetarian diet, to serve others by all kinds of meritorious activities and to attain Enlightenment by constantly practicing the Path. If contemplating mind subsumes all these various practices, it must have been false or empty words when the Buddha spoke of such things or your teaching must be a joke.

Bodhidharma answered: There are infinite skillful means (expedient teachings) in the scriptures that Buddha preached. Some ignorant human beings have dull faculties – they are narrow-minded and mean and do not understand very profound (deep) meanings and the sublime Truth. Therefore, Buddha made temporary use of expedient approaches involving contrived activities to metaphorically represent or point the way to the inner Truth, which is without any contrivances. If you do not cultivate this inner

practice of contemplating mind, but just concentrate on external seeking, hoping to acquire blessings, it will not work spiritually.

When Buddha talks of building immaculate monasteries, this means spaces of pure practice. If you remove the three poisons and see your experience and mind as profoundly clear, then the inner and outer are pure or immaculate and whole – and this is called ‘building a monastery’. As for ‘casting holy images’, this refers to all the various provisional forms of practice intended for Enlightenment. Ignorant human beings who truly seek the Buddha-Tao of Enlightenment contemplate mind. It certainly does not mean that the wondrous true Tathagata is something made out of cast metal. Therefore those who seek Liberation use their personal experience as the furnace, the Dharma as the fire, Wisdom as the smith, and contemplating mind as the gold. They thus smelt and refine the Enlightened Oneness of True Suchness or the Buddha-nature of Truth-as-it-is within their experiences. Practicing according to the Teaching, mind is revealed to be totally flawless and unstained, naturally complete – this is really seeing the Buddha. What is called the ultimate eternally-so subtle wondrous Realm of Reality (Dharmakaya) and the Original Face is not something contrived by doing nor something destructible. If people who seek Enlightenment do not know how to truly see the Buddha, on what basis can they claim to have achieved any spiritual merit?

As for ‘burning incense’, this is not the worldly physical incense that has form – rather it is the incense of the uncontrived transcendent Truth. It causes all defilements to be perfumed, cuts off all the stench of unethical deeds of ignorance, and makes all bad karma dissipate or be burnt away. There are five kinds of incense of the true Dharma. First, there is the incense of ethics which enables one to cut off all evil and cultivate good. Second, there is the incense of stable meditation which enables one to develop a deep certainty in the Ekayana (Supreme Vehicle) that reveals Mind – so that there is no retrogressing. Third, there is the incense of insight which includes the alert contemplation of experience and mind, internal and external. Fourth, there is the incense of dawning Liberation which enables one to cut off all the bonds of ignorance and entanglements. Fifth, there is the incense of Liberated Awareness. This means the seeing that the Awakened Awareness is ever clear, luminous and reaches everywhere unobstructed. These five kinds of incense are the supreme incense and no worldly kind can match them. When the Buddha was in the world he directed his students to take the fire of Wisdom and light this precious priceless incense to offer to all the Buddhas of the ten directions. Nowadays, ignorant human beings are foolish and have dull faculties - so,

not understanding the Tathagata's real meaning, they take external fire to burn worldly objective incense and hope for blessings and rewards. How silly their approach!

'Scattering flowers' is also like this in meaning. It refers to the flowers of the virtuous deeds of expounding the True Dharma for the benefit of human beings. This includes sprinkling them with the omnipresent water of the Nature of True Suchness which is the real adornment. Such was acclaimed by the Buddha as the ultimate and everlasting flowers that never fade and fall. If people scatter flowers like these, they get immeasurable blessings of immaculate virtue and merit. The Tathagata certainly did not direct his students to spend their lives scattering flowers by cutting off blossoms and injuring plants. To regard it like that is to miss the Tathagata's point. How do you know this? Those who uphold pure Buddhist discipline are not supposed to transgress against any of the myriad interwoven forms of heaven and earth. So to take joy in injuring or killing anything would only incur bad karma. So much the worse for those today who seek blessings and rewards by such external activities. They say they want to spiritually gain but then the means involve harm. So how could that ever succeed?

'To keep lamps burning brightly' is to discover the 'ever-bright Lamp', the Awakened Mind of true Enlightenment, which is the Original Nature. Enlightened Wisdom is likened to the lamp. Therefore, the wise who seek complete Liberation always make their experience the pedestal for the lamp and their use of mind the bowl of the lamp and relying on mind the wick of the lamp. Contemplating mind is the practice that is the oil. The clear penetration of Wisdom is likened to a lamp with its light constantly shining. This Absolute Lamp of Enlightenment shines through all the stupidity and darkness of ignorance. To be able to transmit this Dharma and open the Way for Awakening via awareness to *it* is 'one lamp lighting hundreds and thousands of lamps'. Since the Lamp shines *its* light endlessly, it is called 'the eternal Light'. According to the scriptures, in the past there was a Buddha called Lamp Lighter (Dipankara) – the meaning is similar. Ignorant human beings who are foolish and deluded do not understand what the Buddha said as skillful expedient means and end up entangled in the phenomenal. Consequently, they concentrate on practicing false, meaningless and contrived things (activities) that they cling to as attachments. Then they light lamps with fresh worldly oil to light a physically empty room and then they say they are abiding by the teachings. Isn't this wrong? What could be the reason for their approach? It is said that from between his eyebrows the Buddha emits a flame of light that

illuminates the eighteen thousand worlds in the ten directions. If the Light of the Buddha is fully revealed, *it* lights up everything in the ten directions naturally. How could the use of those external worldly lamps be considered spiritually beneficial? If one looks into the Principle, one sees that it is so.

‘Constantly practicing the Path during the six time periods of the day’ means to practice the Way of the Buddha constantly at all times amidst the experiences of the six senses. The word ‘Buddha’ means ‘Enlightened One’ and that is discovered in the present moment when the six senses and their experiences are seen to be pure – forever pure without the need to abandon anything. This is called ‘constantly practicing the Path’.

The stupa to be ‘circumambulated’ is the experience of body and mind. Let Enlightened Wisdom constantly patrol or examine the experience of body and mind unceasingly from moment to moment during the day. This is called ‘circumambulating the stupa’. All the Buddhas of the past traveled this Path (Way) to find the joy of Nirvana. Those who seek Liberation today do not understand these approaches, so how can they be said to be practicing the Path (Way)? It seems that these days, those of dull faculties never engage in inner practices; they just cling to outer (external) pursuits, using their material physical bodies to walk around worldly objective stupas – thus running around frantically, day and night, wearing themselves out in vain. There is no benefit at all in such an approach with regard to seeing the true Reality-Nature of mind. Those who are thus ignorant and deluded may truly be pitied.

As for ‘maintaining a vegetarian diet’, we are always sure to meet those who do not comprehend the inner meaning of this and so they apply wasted effort in vain. ‘Vegetarian diet’ really refers to evenness in one’s spiritual approach. It includes carefully directing experiences and mind and not letting them scatter in confusion. ‘Maintaining’ means preserving. It means to preserve and maintain this practice of contemplating mind according to the Dharma. This includes transcending the three poisons, being non-reactive to emotional sentiments, and scrupulously cultivating wise observation (or insight) into the experiences of body and mind so as to reveal their innate purity. Completely comprehending purity through Wisdom in this sense can be called a ‘vegetarian diet’. Moreover, it is said that those who maintain a vegetarian diet should consume the five kinds of food. The real meaning is as follows: first is the food of joy in the Dharma – meaning to practice or cultivate joyfully the Tathagata’s true Dharma (Teaching). Second is the food of contentment in meditation, so that the inner and outer are clear and tranquil and the Nature of mind is seen to be contented, bright (illuminative) and happy (joyful). Third is the food of

remembrance or mindfulness of the Buddha's Dharma so that intention and speech or actions are harmonized and mind is seen to be in accord with the Buddha. Fourth is the food of inner resolve (for Awakening for oneself and others) practiced whether walking, standing, sitting and lying down. Fifth is the food of Liberation which means seeing that mind is always pure (immaculate) and unstained by worldly dusts. So maintaining a diet of these pure five foods is called 'a vegetarian diet'. If people say that they maintain a vegetarian diet, but they do not eat these five kinds of pure food, then they are attempting an impossibility.

Regarding fasting or 'cutting off food': This means cutting off the concepts that lead to ignorance and unethical deeds. As soon as mind becomes preoccupied with those concepts, it is called 'breaking the fast'. Of course, if the fast is broken, how can you get spiritual merit? There are deluded and foolish people in the spiritual world (i.e. spiritual-worldly) who do not understand the meaning of this. Their experience of body and mind is inundated with ignorant concepts and unethical deeds caused by greed and craving without shame. However, when they cut off (or abstain from) external foods, they think they are maintaining a spiritual fast. However, they are just like foolish children who while seeing a rotting corpse, ignorantly think and say, 'it is alive', but it surely is not.

'Serving' or 'making obeisances' (or bowing in veneration) means always according with the Dharma. You must clearly understand the Essence of Truth within and transform the experience of phenomena without. Inner Truth does not abandon phenomena. It is bringing Wisdom to one's experience of phenomena that is the 'storehouse (treasure house) of Dharmic practices'. If you understand the meaning of this, this is called 'according with the Dharma'. Serving implies showing respect and subduing arrogance or pride. 'Bowing in veneration' also means respecting the true Reality-Nature (True Nature of Mind) and overcoming ignorance – this is truly 'serving'. Because of this respect, you will not damage your receptivity to the Dharma. Because ignorance is overcome, your mind does not indulge in conceptual thought. If you can see that Mind forever extinguishes emotional reactivity and ignorance and inherently preserves mindfulness and goodness – then you are always serving or paying reverence to the Dharma, even if you do not show the outward signs of it. For the ignorant, these signs of service are physical signs such as kneeling down in respect to an outer image of Buddha. Those expedient teachings were originally given to enable worldly conventional people to increase humility and subdue their arrogance. Such external signs of service or respect are to be used only as needed. Manifesting externals with the

intention to eliminate the internal (concepts) is in accord with this Reality-Nature.

If you do not practice this Dharma of inner Truth and just cling to external learning and activities, then internally you are deluded. This delusion will then give way to craving (or greed), hatred and gross ignorance which will then lead to committing evil (unethical) deeds. Those who approach externally vainly manifest the physical signs of service or respect, but how can this be called true service? Those who put on shows of service or obeisance have no shame before the Buddhas and deceive ordinary people. Such an approach will not help you avoid revolving through the lower planes of existence with their karmic consequences. How can this be considered accomplishing spiritually meritorious deeds? In the end, you will have achieved nothing and will have missed the opportunity to seek the true Path.

Hui-k'o also asked: In the Warm Room (Bathhouse) Sutra it says that the congregation gains immeasurable spiritual merit by ritual washing. Should we not serve (make obeisance to) the Dharma with this washing and thus gain spiritual merit? Why do you say that we can accord with Reality by just contemplating mind?

Bodhidharma answered: When the 'congregation washes', this does not refer to any artificially contrived worldly physical doings. The World Honored One (Buddha) expounded the Warm Room Sutra at that time for those who needed to receive his teaching on washing so as to facilitate their understanding of the Dharma. Thus he made temporary use of worldly phenomena as metaphors for the true meanings to expound the Truth (Dharma) and apparently spoke in a veiled manner about the seven forms of meritorious deeds to be offered up. The purpose was to encourage ignorant human beings to use these seven washing methods to adorn their lives so as to be able to eliminate the three poisons and remove the defilements of ignorance.

The seven are as follows: First, pure water – this is washing clean with pure ethics and is likened to pure water cleansing away all dusts and defilements. Second, fire – this is ardently examining and contemplating the inner and outer by means of Wisdom (or wise discernment) and is likened to fire that can heat up the pure water. Third, a dipper – this is the discerning of all forms of ignorance and getting rid of them through Wisdom and is likened to a bath dipper that can clear away the dirt and grease from the bath water. Fourth, willow branches – this is truly cutting off all false concepts and words and is likened to scrubbing with willow branches that can dissipate a bad or angry mood. Fifth, pure cleaning powder – this is the

correct faith (trust or reliance) that resolves doubts and leaves no worries and is likened to pure cleaning powder rubbed on the body to prevent infection. Sixth, unguents – this is the tempering of the use of the mind until it is supple and soft (fluid and receptive) thus subduing all forms of hardness and is likened to spreading penetrating unguent all over the skin to moisten it. Seventh, clothing – this is the attitude of honest self-critical examination and repentance towards all forms of ignorance and is likened to a garment beautifying one's form.

These seven items point to a repository of secret meanings in the Sutra. The Tathagata at the time expounded them for those who had sharp faculties for the Supreme Vehicle (Ekayana) – they were not spoken for ordinary adherents of the lesser vehicles who rely on knowledge that is shallow and inferior. These days no one seems to understand the real meanings. The 'Warm Room' is your experience. Therefore, light the fire of Wisdom and heat up the water of pure ethics to wash clean of concepts the mind and thus reveal the Enlightened identity of mind with the True Suchness – this is what is really within your experience. So, receive and uphold these seven methods of washing according to the secret meanings and thus adorn your practice.

At the time the Buddha spoke, the monks who were wise all understood his meaning. They practiced as he had explained and it can be said that the accomplished spiritual merit was complete. With this they all experienced the fruit of Buddhahood. These days ignorant spiritual beings are stupid, foolish, deluded, and their faculties are dull, and so none of them can fathom such things. They use worldly objective water to ritualistically wash their physical bodies and think they are abiding by the teachings. Is this not a mistake? The Enlightened Oneness or the Buddha-nature-as-it-is, which is the identity of mind and the True Suchness, is fundamentally formless – it is not the ordinary physical form with its afflictions and defilements that seem to be cleansing. How can you cleanse the 'body' (realm or experience) of ignorance with material water? If what you do is not in accord with Reality, how will you Awaken to the Tao or traverse the Path (Way)? If you think that the material body attains this Absolute Purity, then you should contemplate clearly. The body is basically something born and seems to contain impurity or filth. It is limited or blocked off inside and outside (by conditions and circumstances). If you seek the Absolute Purity by washing the body, it is like trying to wash mud with mud – it will never get clean. By such understanding we clearly realize that external washing was not what the Buddha was talking about.

Finally Hui-k'o asked: According to what the Sutras say, if we make our minds intent on remembrance of Buddha by reciting or chanting the Buddha's name, we are sure to find rebirth in the Pure Land in the West. By that wondrous gate it is said, we are sure to become Enlightened. So why contemplate mind to seek Liberation?

Bodhidharma answered: True remembrance of Buddha requires the cultivation of the correct view of mind. Comprehending the Truth is correct and not comprehending *it* is wrong or erroneous. Erroneous knowledge is believing that only certain ignorant beings will be Enlightened – that is unreliable thinking. With the correct view of mind, you are sure to find the Western Paradise (Pure Land). If the view of mind is wrong, how can you get there? 'Buddha' means 'Enlightened One' or 'being Enlightened'. It signifies aware observation of one's experience and mind so that ignorance does not arise. In the injunction to recite the Buddha's name, 'reciting' means true 'remembrance' or mindfulness. It means remembering to uphold the practice of contemplating mind in a manner of energetic application and forgetting all concepts. Completely comprehending the Truth is called the correct view of mind. Thus we understand that this remembrance is a matter of comprehending mind, not a matter of words. We use the bamboo trap to catch the fish; when the fish is caught we forget the trap. We use words to get the meaning; when the meaning is understood we forget the words.

If you adopt the practice of reciting the words of the Buddha's name, you must also include the practice of understanding the Substance of the Buddha (or Buddha-mind). Chanting is with the mouth but true remembrance is done with the sincere mind. Thus we understand that true remembrance arises from mind and it is called a gate or practice to Enlightenment. Chanting is done by the mouth via memory and is a form of sound. If your mind lacks sincerity, your mouth will speak empty and meaningless words – then your intentions are in vain and your spiritual endeavors are empty. What benefits are achieved by that? Those who are attached to such external manifestations and appearances, as they seek for blessings, have ultimately missed the point. Seeking spiritual merit by clinging to form inclusive of sound will never work. Thus the Sutra (Diamond) says, 'All forms are empty and false' and 'to seek the Mind (or Buddha) by means of form, to seek the Mind (or Buddha) by means of sound – such a person is traveling the wrong path and will not see the Tathagata' and 'if someone perceives a self on the basis of some physical form, or seeks for a personal freedom for a self on the basis of vocal sounds, this person walks a false path and will not see the Tathagata'.

Contemplating this, we understand that the form of things is not the eternal True Nature.

Therefore we understand that when the scriptures refer to the meritorious spiritual deeds or virtues cultivated by all the Buddhas of the past, it does not refer to external things (phenomena and activities) – the real meaning has to do with mind. Mind is the Source of all the Buddhas and the transcendent master of the myriad ignorances. The mind is the gateway for peering in, leaving and transcending the Triple World. So the mind is both the barrier and the ferry-dock to Liberation. The eternal joy and peace of Nirvana is born from inherent mind. Mind is the gate for transcending the ordinary world, and it is the passageway to Liberation. The one who understands this gate does not worry that it will be hard to succeed. The one who truly understands this gate or passageway is not concerned about not arriving.

I think that these days people of shallow understanding only recognize formalistic ritualized acts as being spiritually meritorious and merely make efforts on the basis of how things appear. Out of personal vanity, some of them squander a lot of wealth presiding over many ceremonies, usually for those who are dead, and vainly having images (statues) cast and stupas constructed. To no purpose are they putting people to work constructing these grandiose religious structures and gaudily decorating them. Unfortunately, wholeheartedly they use all their strength damaging themselves and deluding others (or misleading others through their example), without ever understanding the shame of their approach. When will they ever Awaken? When these people seek artificial contrived activities, they apply themselves scrupulously and become fondly attached to them. When we speak to them of *This* which is beyond what they see in front of them, they look stupid and seem lost like in a daze. What is more, they end up craving mere minor pleasures of this world and are unaware of the greater suffering (in theirs and others minds). Those who try to 'cultivate the Path' (Way) in this manner are wearing themselves out in vain - they have turned their backs on the straight way and given their allegiance to the crooked or false, seeking spiritual merit with lying words and deceiving themselves by thinking they will gain blessings.

Just manage to alertly contemplate mind. Reflect within and contemplate the eternal Illumination of Awareness. Cut off the mental concepts that form the basis of the three poisons and they will fade away and stop forever. This Awareness transcends the six senses and seeing so, they will no longer cause disturbance. Rather than trying one by one to perfect all the countless spiritual qualities and merits along with the many

kinds of adornments, contemplate these immeasurable Dharma-gates. Transcend the ordinary approaches and thus directly experience Buddhahood. What is truly right before your eyes (or in your immediate experience) is not far. Enlightenment is between now and the next blink of an eye. In this Teaching, Enlightenment is instantaneous (alternative transl.: In this Teaching, Awakening is but an instant away) – why wait until one’s hair is white? The profound secrets of this Way of Reality can hardly be related fully in words. This is but an outline account of a small portion of the details of the deep Teaching of contemplating mind.



In another record, it is said that Master Bodhidharma first lived at Shao-lin Temple for nine years. There he instructed his student Hui-k'o, "Simply stop all attachments regarding outside matters (phenomena) and stop grasping after inner phenomena. To enter the Tao, keep your mind empty like this wall".

Although Hui-k'o was acquainted with many different spiritual theories regarding the nature of mind, he was not yet in accord with the Tao *itself*. Bodhidharma dealt only with Hui-k'o's ignorance but said little regarding the Essence of empty mind.

One day Hui-k'o said, "I have now stopped my relationship with the notion of the plurality of things (phenomena)."

Bodhidharma asked, "Are you saying that you are dead?"

Hui-k'o replied, "No, I am not yet dead."

Bodhidharma responded, "What are you using to testify that you are not dead?"

Hui-k'o answered, "I understand that clearly and even more clearly all the time. It really cannot be put into words."

Bodhidharma replied, "This which cannot be put into words is the Mind Essence that has been transmitted from the Buddha. There is no doubt about it."

Sometime after that conversation, Master Bodhidharma went with his students to the Ch'ien-sheng Temple at Yu-men, and stayed there for three days.

Yang-hsuan, the Governor of the Walled City of Ch'ih, had been devoted to Buddhist teaching from early in his career. He asked, "In India, how did the five Grandmasters (Patriarchs) become Grandmasters? Was it through the authorization of a master?"

Bodhidharma answered, "One who truly comprehends the Teaching of the Buddha Mind School and whose conduct is in accord with this understanding is known as a 'Grandmaster'."

Governor Hsuan then asked, "Was there anything else?"

Bodhidharma explained, "Such a one must truly comprehend their own mind and understand *it* (Mind) to be Always-So in the past and present. They must be indifferent to the notion of acquiring something or not. They must not be attached to any doctrine. Such a one is neither a sage nor a fool, and is neither what is considered deluded nor 'enlightened'. Transcending all, such a one who understands deeply these matters is worthy to be a Grandmaster."

Hearing this, Governor Hsuan said with deep feeling, "I pray Master, that you will remain in this world and lead ignorant human beings forever!"

Bodhidharma replied, "I shall be gone soon and cannot stay here much longer. Because the Buddha-nature appears divided in a thousand ways, I have met with many calamities."

Governor Hsuan demanded, "Who has assaulted you? Tell me and I will remove them for you, Master."

Bodhidharma responded, "My carrying the secret message of the Buddha has caused deluded ones to try to harm me. It is surely unreasonable to expect to be save oneself when others are proclaiming that I am causing harm."

Governor Hsuan bowed low and took leave of Bodhidharma.



Many years passed. Bodhidharma had four students:

Tao-fu, who had understood "that the Tao and its functioning cannot be grasped through literal knowledge".

A nun named Tsung-ch'ih who had understood "that the Buddha may only be seen in oneness but never in duality".

Tao-yu who had understood "that the four elements are originally empty, that the five aggregates do not exist apart from mind, and that there is nothing objectively separately existent".

Hui-k'o whose understanding was conveyed with a silent bow.

Looking at Hui-k'o, Bodhidharma said, "In days gone by, the Tathagata transmitted to Mahakasyapa the true Dharma-eye. Through the lineage of the Grandmasters, from one to another, it has come to me. I am now transmitting it to you. Please take good care of it (alternative translation: Please see that it does not die out.) Besides this I will give you my yellow robe, which shall be a testimony for those lacking in faith. Each of these has its own significance."

Hui-k'o said, "Will you please reveal to me the significance?"

Bodhidharma answered, "By carrying this Teaching of the Dharma-seal you will be inwardly in accord with the Buddha-mind and the keeping of the robe will symbolize the outward manifestation of the spiritual message. In later generations, when trust is slight and doubts arise, people may say, 'Bodhidharma was a man from India and you are from this land – so how could the Dharma have been transmitted to you? What proof is there?' Now you are receiving the Dharma and the robe which can be produced if

needed as proof and so the Teaching of the message will be free from those types of obstacles.

After a number of years it will be time to stop transmitting the robe but not the Dharma. By then the Dharma will be spread all over. But although many people will know of the Tao, few will practice it. Although there will be many who preach about the Principle, few will penetrate *it*. Perhaps one out of a thousand or ten thousand seekers will concur with this innermost Teaching. Remember that when you share this Truth, do not slight the person who is not yet Enlightened. Should they awake to this Essential Nature, suddenly they would be equal in original Enlightenment (to myself and the Buddha). Listen to my poem:

‘I originally came to this land
to Transmit the Dharma for the Liberation of those under delusion.
One flower will open into five petals.*
Thereafter, the fruit will ripen of itself naturally’.”

[*Note: The one flower is Ekayana or the Supreme Vehicle. The one flower may also be considered the Wisdom of the Way of Sudden Awakening. The five petals refer to the Functioning of this Wisdom through the five aggregates of human experience which are experience of form, sensation, memory, volition and thoughts or states of consciousness.]

Bodhidharma concluded, “This Teaching contains the essentials of the Tathagata’s spiritual Dharma and allows all ignorant human beings to spiritually develop into Enlightenment. Since I have come here, I have been poisoned five times. I became willing to leave southern India for this eastern land because I had a ‘vision’ of this real Mahayana flourishing in China. I sailed on the sea and crossed the desert to seek for a true student for the sake of the Dharma. During my search I found mostly people who were like stammering fools, but now I have transmitted the message to you.



Dharma-talk: The Bloodstream (The Basis of Our Lineage)

Everything that appears in the Triple World (the experience of form, thoughts and formless experience) comes from the mind. So the Avatamsaka Sutra says, 'The Triple World is just the One Mind'. Hence Buddhas of the past, present and future teach the Mind to Mind Transmission, without bothering about definitions or depending upon the written word.

But if they don't define it, what do they mean by Mind - this you may ask? I respond – that's Mind. If I had no Mind, how could I answer? If you had no Mind, how could you ask? That which asks is Mind. Through endless kalpas (eons), without beginning – whatever you do, wherever you are – that's your Real Mind and that is the Real Buddha. (Alternative translation: From ancient beginningless time, each and every movement in all different times and places is your Original Mind which is the Original Buddha.) This Teaching is identical with 'This mind is the Buddha'. Beyond or outside this mind you will never find another Buddha. To search for Enlightenment or Nirvana beyond or outside this mind is impossible. The Reality of the perfect True Nature, transcendent of cause and effect, is what is meant by Mind. Your mind, as it is, is Nirvana and the mind in itself is the Buddha. You might think that you can find Buddha or Enlightenment somewhere beyond the mind, but such a place does not exist. This Mind is the Nirvana which is already completely and perfectly radiant and serenely self-luminous.

Trying to find Buddha or Enlightenment outside of mind is a critical fault and like trying to grab empty space. Where could both Buddha and Enlightenment be found? Empty space has a name but no form or size. It is not something you can pick up or put down and you certainly can't grab it. As if trying to hold empty space, so seeking Buddha outside of mind would be to no avail. Looking beyond this mind, you will never see Buddha. The Buddha is actually a product of your mind. So why look for a Buddha beyond this mind?

Buddhas of the past, present and future only talk about this mind. The mind is the Buddha and the Buddha is the mind. Beyond the mind there is no Buddha; and beyond the Buddha there is no mind. If you think there is a Buddha beyond or outside the mind, where is it? There is no Buddha beyond or outside the mind, so why envision (project or conceive of) one? You can't understand your real Mind as long as you deceive yourself. As

long as you are enthralled by a lifeless form (taking the body to be mind), you are not free. Without seeing the Original Mind and by exchanging false opinions for the Truth you stick to the dead form, such as a Buddha statue, and thus become bound. If you don't believe me, deceiving yourself will not help. Of course, it's not the Buddha's fault. People though are deluded. They are unaware of the fact that their own mind is already the Buddha. Otherwise they would not look for a Buddha outside the mind.

Buddhas don't save Buddhas. If you use your mind to look for Buddha outside of it, you will not see the Buddha. As long as you look for Buddha somewhere else, you will never see your own mind as the Buddha. Don't use Buddha to worship a Buddha. And don't use the mind to invoke a Buddha. Buddhas don't recite Sutras. Buddhas don't keep precepts and Buddhas don't break precepts. Buddhas don't keep or break any spiritual forms. Buddhas are not doing good (for spiritual merit) or evil.

To truly find the Buddha you have to see the True Nature of your mind. Whoever sees the True Nature of their mind is a Buddha. If you don't see the True Nature of your mind, invoking Buddhas, such as bowing in ceremonies, reciting and reading Sutras, making offerings and keeping precepts are all useless. Invoking Buddhas results in good karma for the next life; reciting and reading Sutras results in a good memory and much learned knowledge; keeping all the precepts results in a heavenly rebirth; and making offerings results in future blessings – but no Buddha.

If you don't understand by yourself mind clearly, you will have to find a teacher to get to the bottom of samsara inclusive of life and death. But unless such a one sees the True Nature of their mind, such a person is not a true teacher! Even if they can recite the twelve divisions of the Canon, they will not escape the wheel of samsara inclusive of birth and death. Consequently that one suffers in the Triple World (the experience of form, thought and formlessness) without prospect of release.

Long ago, the monk Good Star* was able to recite the entire Canon but he did not escape the wheel of samsara, because he did not see the True Nature of his own mind. If this was the case with Good Star, then people nowadays who recite a few Sutras or shastras (commentaries) and think it is the Dharma are fools. Some of these people even believe they can be Enlightened by studying the Sutras. How terribly wrong they are! Unless you understand your mind, reciting so much prose is useless.

[*Note: In Chapter 33 of the Nirvana Sutra, Good Star is said to be one of Shakyamuni's three sons. Like his brother, Rahula, he became a monk. Eventually, he was able to recite and explain the entire sacred literature of his time and even thought he had attained Nirvana thereby. However, when

the karmic support for such a so-called “attainment” ran out, he was transported to a hell of endless suffering.]

To find the Buddha, all you have to do is see the True Nature of your mind. The True Nature is the Buddha! The Buddha is actually the mind that’s free – free of spiritual plans and worldly cares. If you do not see the True Nature of your mind and run around all day looking for the Buddha somewhere else, you will never find the Buddha. The Truth is, there is nothing (objective) to find. But if to reach such an understanding, you find that you need a teacher and need to make serious effort to reach such an understanding, then so be it. The matter of life and death is important and a great mystery. Do not suffer samsara in vain or spend your life in vain. There is no advantage in deceiving yourself.

In this world, even if you have mountains of jewels and as many servants as there are grains of sand in the Ganges River, you only see them when your eyes are open. What about when your eyes are shut? You should realize that everything you see is like a dream or illusion or fleeting apparition. However, if you do not find a teacher soon but wallow in samsara, you will live this life in vain. It is true that you have the Buddha-nature but without the help of a teacher you may never understand it. Only one person in a million becomes Enlightened without a teacher’s help. If due to a conjunction of spiritually favorable conditions someone understands what the term “Buddha” really means, that person does not need a teacher. Such a one discovers the natural Awareness which is superior to anything taught. Unless you are so fortunate, study the Tao seriously and by means of the teacher’s instruction you will understand.

People who do not understand but think they can do so without serious study of the Tao, are no different from those deluded beings who cannot tell right from wrong. Falsely proclaiming the Buddha-Dharma and feigning mastery, such persons blaspheme the Buddha and subvert the Dharma. They preach as if they were bringing rain. However, theirs is the preaching of the devils, no matter how fluidly spoken, not the Teaching of the Buddhas. So it is said that their teacher is Mara, King of the devils (ego or sense of self) and their disciples are Mara’s minions. Deluded people who follow such teachings unwittingly sink deeper in the sea of samsara.

Unless they see the True Nature of their mind, how can people call themselves Buddhas or Awakened Ones? Essentially they are liars who deceive others into entering the realm of Mara or ignorant ways. Unless they see the True Nature of their mind, their preaching of the twelve divisions of the Canon is nothing but the preaching of devils. You could say

their allegiance is to Mara, not the Buddha. Unable to distinguish true from false or right from wrong, how can they escape samsara with its rounds of births and deaths?

Whoever sees the True Nature of their mind is a Buddha; whoever doesn't is an ignorant human being. However, can you find the Buddha-nature of your mind apart from the human nature? Our human nature is our Buddha-nature. Beyond this human nature there is no Buddha. The Buddha is our human nature. There is no Buddha beside or outside this True Nature and there is no (human) nature beside the Buddha-nature.

Question: But suppose I do not see the True Nature of my mind, can I not still attain Enlightenment by invoking Buddhas (chanting), reading and reciting Sutras, making offerings, observing precepts and disciplines, practicing devotions, or doing good works?

Bodhidharma: No, you cannot. It is impossible.

Question: Why not? Why is it impossible?

Bodhidharma: If you attain anything at all, large or small, with that approach, it is conditional and karmic. It results in more karma and turns the wheel of samsara. As long as there is a 'you', subject to birth and death, you will never attain Enlightenment. To attain Enlightenment or the Tao, you have to see the True Nature of your mind. Unless you see the True Nature of your mind, all this talk about spiritual causes and effects is nonsense. Buddhas did not practice nonsense. The Buddha is free of karma and free of spiritual cause and effect. Buddha has nothing to uphold nor to violate. To say he attained anything at all, old or new, is to slander the Buddha. What possibly could be attained? Even concentration of mind or the development of power or the cultivation of knowledge or the holding to a specific view is impossible for the Buddha. The Buddha has no one-sided views. The True Nature of his mind is basically empty, neither pure nor impure. The Buddha is free of practice and attainment (realization). He is free of spiritual cause and effect. The Buddha did not observe (maintain) or discard the precepts and did not accumulate good or evil karma. The Buddha was not driven or lazy. A Buddha is someone who does nothing inclusive of even concentrating his mind on the Buddha. So, the Buddha is not a 'Buddha'. Don't spend your time thinking about Buddhas. As soon as you raise the concept of mind abiding somewhere or attaching to something, there is no longer room for the Buddha. Clinging to views of internal phenomena or codes of conduct or opinions or even ideas results in no room being left for Buddhahood. If you do not see what I am talking about, you will never understand your own mind which is the Original Mind.

True Buddhahood has nothing to maintain or violate. The Mind-nature is originally void.

People who don't see the True Nature of their mind and imagine they can practice thoughtlessness or doing nothing all the time are liars and fools. They fall into a space that is like blank-minded nothingness. They are like drunks and cannot tell right from wrong. If you intend to cultivate such a practice, you may put an end to rational thought but you will not see the True Nature of your mind which is the real Attainment of tranquility and freedom. Again, to attain Enlightenment without seeing the True Nature of your mind is impossible.

Still others commit all sorts of evil or unethical deeds, claiming karma does not exist. They erroneously maintain that since everything is empty, committing evil is not wrong, thinking 'Since everything is originally empty, there is nothing wrong even though I do some bad things'. Such persons fall into a hell of endless darkness with no hope of release in sight. Those who are wise hold no such conception.

Question: But if every moment or state, whenever it occurs, is the Mind or Original Mind, why don't we see this Mind when the person's body dies?

Bodhidharma: The Mind or Original Mind is always present, clearly and directly revealed. You just do not see *it*.

Question: If the Mind or Original Mind is always present, why don't I see *it*?

Bodhidharma: Do you ever dream?

Question: Of course.

Bodhidharma: When you dream, is that your mind?

Question: Yes. That is my mind.

Bodhidharma: Is what you are doing and saying different from your mind?

Question: No, it is not.

Bodhidharma: If it isn't, then this experience is your real experience and shows that the Original Mind is the Dharmakaya. And this real experience is your mind. This Mind, through endless kalpas (eons) without beginning, has never varied. Mind, from the beginningless beginning, is not different from that which *it* is at this very moment. *It* has never been born or lived or died, has not appeared or disappeared, increased or decreased. *It* is not pure or impure, good or evil, past or future. *It* is not real or unreal, true or false. *It* is not male or female, not young or old. *It* does not appear as a man or a woman, a monk or layperson, an elder or a novice, a saint or a fool, a Buddha or a mortal human being. *It* strives for no 'liberation' and suffers no karma. *It* has nothing to attain and nothing to practice. *It* has no strength or weakness and is not form or nothingness or energy. *It* is like empty space. You cannot possess *it* and you cannot lose *it*.

Its functioning cannot be blocked by mountains, rivers or rock walls. *Its* unstoppable power penetrates the mountain of the five skandas (aggregates: form, sensation, memory, will or decision making and consciousness inclusive of thoughts) and crosses the river of samsara (repetitive cycle of suffering inclusive of birth and death). No karma can restrain or limit this real experience of the Dharmakaya. However, this Mind is subtle and hard to see conceptually. *It* is not the same as the mind (or brain) that processes sensory information. Everyone wants to see this Mind (or Buddha-mind) and those who move their experience by *its* light are as many as the grains of sand in the Ganges River; but when you ask them about *it*, they can't explain *it*. They are like puppets. However, *it* is theirs to use. So, why don't they see *it*?

The Buddha said, "All beings are confused and from this confusion produce their future karma, falling into the ocean of life and death (samsara). They are trying to escape from it, but instead they fall back into it. Why? Just because the True Nature has not yet been seen". So, the Buddha said that people delude themselves. This is why when they live they fall into the river of endless rebirths (samsara). When they try to get out, they only sink deeper. All of this is because they do not see the True Nature of their mind. If people were not deluded, why would they ask about something present right in front of them (so immediate in their experience)? Not one of them understands the container of their own experience. The Buddha was not mistaken. Deluded people do not understand their own mind. Only the wise understand this mind by Wisdom, which is bright (illuminative) and compassionate. This True Nature of mind is called 'the Dharma-nature' and 'Complete Liberation'. Neither life nor death can limit this Mind. Nothing can. *It* is also called the Unstoppable Tathagata, the Great-King-of-Freedom Buddha, the Unthinkable, the One Mind, Immortality, the Master of life and death and the Buddha. *Its* names vary but not *its* Essence. Buddhas (Awakened ones) apparently vary too, but none leaves the True Nature of their own mind.

The Mind's functioning is limitless and its manifestations are inexhaustible though not separated from the Mind. Seeing forms with the eyes, hearing sounds with the ears, smelling odors with the nose, tasting flavors with the tongue, every movement with the body as well as all states of consciousness – all is the Mind. At every moment, where language cannot go, that is the True Nature of your mind. Hence Buddha declared, "Here, word and utterance is for all time severed. Concept and its abiding place are also annihilated. It is our Mind".

The Sutras say, “The Tathagata’s manifestations are endless as is his Awareness or Wisdom.” The endless variety of experiences is due to the functioning of the aware mind. Its ability to distinguish phenomena (inner and outer), whether as an experience or a state, is the mind’s Awareness. The Mind has no form and Awareness has no limit. Each and every function and movement is all the Mind’s Wisdom. That is why it is said, “A Tathagata’s manifestations are endless as is his Awareness or Wisdom”.

Depending on a material body composed of the four elements is trouble. A material body is subject to afflictions and birth and death. However, the real experience exists without existing because the Tathagata’s real experience or real realm never changes. The Dharmakaya always abides nowhere, unchanging and continuous. So the Sutras say, “People should realize that the Buddha-nature is that Substance they have always had.” (Alternative translation: People should realize that the Buddha-nature is Always-so and intrinsic to mind.) Mahakasyapa only Awakened to the True Nature of his own mind and nothing else.

This Original True Nature is the mind and the mind is the True Nature. This True Nature is the same as the mind of all the Buddhas. Buddhas of the past, present and future only transmit this Mind. Beyond this Mind there is no ‘Buddha’ anywhere. However, deluded people do not realize that their own mind is the Buddha. Consequently, they keep searching outside (of mind). They never stopped their practices of invoking Buddhas or worshipping Buddhas or intellectually pondering. But where is the Buddha? Do not indulge in such illusions or concepts. Just understand your own mind. Beyond your mind there is no other ‘Buddha’. That is why the Sutras say, “Depending on phenomena, inclusive of form, is an illusion”. They also say, “Wherever mind is, there is the Buddha”. Your mind is the Buddha. Don’t use the Buddha to worship a ‘Buddha’.

In your meditation, even if a ‘Buddha’ or ‘Bodhisattva’ should suddenly appear in your experience, there is no need for formal reverence or regarding it as holy. This mind of ours is empty (void), serene and contains no such forms. Those who hold onto such appearances are following Mara’s (chief of the demons) path. They fall from the Way. Why worship illusions born of the conceptual activity of the mind? Those who worship don’t understand, and those who understand don’t worship. By practicing worship, you come under the ‘spell of Mara’. I point this out because I am concerned that you are unaware of it. The basic Original True Nature of Buddha has no such form or images. Keep this in mind, even if ‘something unusual’ or ‘some extraordinary outer perception’ should

appear. Don't grasp it and don't fear it. Don't doubt that the True Nature of your mind is basically pure. Where could such forms or images really exist? So, at the appearance of spirits, demons, or divine beings, do not conceive either respect or fear. Mind is basically empty (void) and serene. Grasping at appearances is illusion. Don't hold onto or follow appearances.

If you envision a 'Buddha' or a 'Bodhisattva' or 'the Triple Jewel' (Buddha, Dharma, Sangha), you relegate your mind to the realm of illusion or samsara. If you seek direct understanding, do not hold onto any appearance whatsoever and you will succeed. I have no other advice. So the Sutras say, "Depending on phenomena, inclusive of form, is an illusion". They have no fixed or real existence and no constant or eternal form. They are impermanent. Do not cling to such appearances and you will be of one mind (One Mind) with the Buddha. So the Sutras say, "*This* which is free of all phenomena, inclusive of all form, is Buddha".

Question: Why shouldn't we worship Buddhas and Bodhisattvas when they appear in our meditation?

Bodhidharma: Even devils and demons possess the power of manifestation. So they too can create the appearance of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in all sorts of guises. However, all of them are false – none of them are the Buddha. The Buddha is the True Nature of your own mind. Don't misdirect your worship.

Actually, 'Buddha' is just a Sanskrit word that people use to call Awareness – spontaneous Awareness. Responding, perceiving, arching your brows, blinking your eyes, moving your hands and feet – all of these movements are your spontaneous Aware Nature. This Aware Nature is the Mind. And Mind is the Buddha (or the Tao) and the Way (Path). And this Way is true meditation and the core of Ch'an. But the word Ch'an is one that remains a puzzle for both the ignorant and the learned or 'wise'. Seeing the True Nature of your mind is Ch'an. Unless you see the True Nature of your mind, it is not Ch'an. Hence, a Sutra says that, "Seeing the Original True Nature is Buddha".

Even if you can explain thousands of Sutras and shastras (commentaries), unless you see the True Nature of your own mind, you are only teaching ignorance not the Buddha Way (Buddha-dharma). The true Way (Buddha-dharma) is sublime. It cannot be expressed in language – so of what use are scriptures? But someone who sees the True Nature of his own mind finds the Way (Buddha-dharma) even if he cannot read a word. Anyone who sees the True Nature of their mind is a Buddha. The Original True Nature which is the True Nature of Reality is perfect, immaculate, clear and cannot be tainted – one who sees this is immediately the

Buddha. Since a Buddha's realm or experience is intrinsically pure and unsullied, everything a Buddha says is the functioning of Mind. Being basically empty, the Buddha (or Buddha-nature) cannot be found in words or anywhere in the twelve-fold Buddhist Canon. The Essence of Wisdom is ultimately void (or Void) and unattainable by means of anything that can be named or spoken.

The Tao is basically perfect and already apprehended clearly. *It* does not require perfecting, practice or attainment. The Tao has no form or sound or color. *It* is most subtle and so it is said 'hard to (objectively) perceive'. It is like when you drink water; you directly understand or are aware how hot or cold it is, but this understanding or Awareness cannot be put into words to tell others. *This* which the Tathagata (Buddha) understands, humans and gods remain unaware of. The understanding of ignorant beings falls short. As long as they are attached to appearances and hold narrow views, they do not understand or are unaware that their minds are empty (void or Void), illuminative and serene. By mistakenly clinging to appearances, one loses the Way and the Tao.

If you understand that everything comes from the mind, don't become attached or fixated. Once attached, you appear to be unaware or do not understand. However, once you see the True Nature of your own mind, the entire Canon is seen to be so many unnecessary words. Its thousands of Sutras and shastras only point to a clear mind. Consequently, understanding can come mid-sentence.

What good are doctrines? The Ultimate Truth is beyond words. Doctrines are words. They are not the Tao. The Tao is wordless. Words are illusions. They are no different from things that appear in your dreams at night, be they palaces or carriages or forested parks or lakeside pavilions – with trees, horses, elephants and so on. Just as you are non-attached to those things that appear in your dreams, likewise do not conceive any attachment for words. They are all cradles leading to rebirth, so do not become captivated by them or enraptured with them. Keep this in mind when you approach death. Do not cling to appearances, and you will break through all barriers and bewilderment. However, spiritual hesitation is caused by even a moment of clinging (or fixation) and then you appear to be under the spell of the demons. Your real experience or realm is the Dharmakaya which is pure and impervious and not an objective sense perception. It is only because of delusions that you seem unaware of it. Because of this unawareness or confusion, you suffer karma in vain. Wherever you find attachment, you will find bondage. But once you

Awaken to your original experience which is Original Mind, you are no longer bound by attachments or habitual tendencies.

Anyone who gives up the transcendent for the mundane, in any of its myriad forms, is an ignorant being. A Buddha is someone who finds true freedom in Mind whether experiencing good fortune or bad. Such is the power of Mind which is the Buddha and no karma can restrict *it*. Or we can say that no matter what kind of karma, a Buddha transforms it. So, even heaven and hell are nothing to the Buddha. However, the awareness of an ignorant being appears dim compared to that of a Buddha whose Awareness penetrates everything inside and out. Since such a being does not understand the Dharma, their understanding is not compatible with Reality. That is why no matter how hard they may try to become wise, they move in a counter motion to the Awakened View. In spite of chanting the Buddha's name or reading the Sutras with great effort, their ignorant view and their concept of self cannot escape karmic results.

If you are not sure how to progress, don't impulsively act or just do any practice. Once you proceed that way, you wander through samsara, with its births and deaths, and will regret having no real refuge. Spiritual poverty and hardship are created by false thinking. To understand this mind, you have to act without acting, practice without practicing. Only then will you understand from the Tathagata's perspective.

When someone first embarks on the spiritual path, their awareness or intention is not focused (on Wisdom and Enlightenment). So they may see all sorts of dreamlike scenes in their meditation. But if this occurs, you should not doubt that all such scenes come from your own mind and nowhere else. If, as if waking from a dream, you see the Light (of Awareness) that is more illuminative than the sun, your attachments will suddenly come to an end and the Nature of Reality will be revealed. But this is a direct experience in your mind and cannot be explained to others. If, whether you are walking, standing, sitting or lying in a quiet grove, you see this Light (of Awareness), regardless of whether it appears bright or dim, don't worry about telling others and don't fixate on it. After all, it is the Light of the True Nature of your own mind. If, while walking, standing, sitting or lying still, even if it is in the darkness of night, all phenomena (inner and outer) appear illumined as though in daylight, don't be startled. It is the True Nature of your own mind about to reveal *itself*. If, while you are dreaming or waking, you see the sun, the moon and the stars illumined by a greater clarity, it means the conceptual workings of your mind are about to end. But do not spend your time trying to tell others about it – it is your own experience. If the illumination is not yet clear and it feels as if you are

walking in the dark, it is because the Nature of your mind is masked by attachments. This is something only you know.

If you intend to see the Original True Nature of your mind, you do not need to read Sutras or invoke Buddhas. Erudition and spiritual knowledge are not only useless but also cloud your awareness. Doctrines, at best, are only for pointing to the Mind. Once you see the Original True Nature of your mind, why pay attention to doctrines? Of course, to go from ignorant being to Buddha, you have to put an end to karma generated by lack of ethics; you have to nurture your awareness and be non-attached by learning to accept what life brings. Those who are Awake or Buddhas move freely through experience, inclusive of life and death, entering and leaving as appropriate. They are not restrained by karma or overcome by devils (ignorant tendencies).

Once ignorant beings see the True Nature of their mind, all attachments end. Awareness is never hidden but only you can find *it* for yourself right now. *It* is only found in the timeless now. If you really want to find the Tao or the Way, don't hold or grasp onto any phenomena (inner or outer). Once you put an end to unethical karma and nurture your awareness, any attachments that remain will come to an end. Deep understanding or Wisdom comes naturally. You do not need to make any artificial or contrived effort to study or practice. But spiritual fanatics do not understand what the Buddha meant. The harder they try, the further they get from the Buddha's meaning and Wisdom. Instead, all day long, they invoke Buddhas and read Sutras, frequently with great effort. However, they remain blind to the True Nature of their own mind and consequently they do not escape the wheel of suffering (or samsara).

A Buddha or one who is Awake is someone with nothing to do spiritually. Nor does such a one run around after fortune and fame. What good are such things in the end? People who don't see the True Nature of their mind, think reading Sutras, invoking Buddhas or chanting six times a day, studying long and hard, formally practicing morning and night, never lying down, acquiring spiritual knowledge, is the Dharma (Teaching) – they actually blaspheme the Dharma. Buddhas of the past, present and future only teach the necessity of seeing the True Nature of your mind. All other practices are samsaric and impermanent. Unless they see the True Nature of their mind, people who claim to have attained Unexcelled Complete Enlightenment (Anuttara Samyak Sambodhi) are liars.

Among Shakyamuni's ten foremost disciples, Ananda was the most knowledgeable in learning. But he did not understand what the Buddha is. All he did was study and memorize. That is why the Buddha once

reprimanded him, saying, “All sravakas (literalist followers) and outsiders should try to become knowledgeable”. Arhats (Hinayana Buddhist saints) do not understand what the Buddha is. Buddha is actually knowledgeable. All they know are many practices preceding Liberation, and so they become trapped by cause and effect and their ‘attainment of knowledge’. Such is the karma of an ignorant human being which yields no escape from samsara (repetitive cycle of suffering inclusive of birth and death). By approaching the opposite way from what Buddha intended, such people actually blaspheme the Buddha. That is why some Sutras describe it as ‘killing the Buddha’. So the texts proclaim that since such beings do not believe in this direct Way, they are killing the Buddha, whereas people who believe in this Way reach Buddhahood.

Unless you see the True Nature of your mind, you should not just go around criticizing the goodness of others. There is no advantage in deceiving yourself. Relatively, good and bad are distinct; cause and effect are clear; heaven and hell are evident and right before your eyes. However, fools don’t believe in this Teaching and so they fall straight into the samsaric hell of darkness without end without even understanding what is going on or even noticing it. What keeps them from believing is the heaviness of their karma (tendencies produced by concepts). They are like blind people who don’t believe there is such a thing as light (or sunshine). Even if you explain it to them, they still do not believe because they are blind – so how can they possibly discern the light? (Alternative translation: Even if someone told them about it, they still would not believe because they do not have the eye to discriminate the sunshine from the darkness. So how can they possibly discern the sunshine even if placed in it?)

The same holds true for fools who end up among the lower orders of existence (animals, hungry ghosts and sufferers in hell), even if they are not poor and despised. Consequently, they cannot determine what they wish to be or how they experience life. They cannot live and they cannot die. Despite their sufferings, if you ask them, they say they are as happy as the gods. All ignorant human beings, even those who think well of themselves but do not understand the Origin, are likewise unaware. Because of the heaviness of their karma, such fools don’t believe in this Teaching and so apparently cannot get free – especially those who define their present condition as ultimate satisfaction or being in heaven.

People who see that their mind is the Buddha don’t need to shave their head. Truly, laypersons are Buddhas too. Unless they see the True Nature of their mind, people who shave their head are only fanatics or outsiders.

Question: Since laypersons don't give up sex, how can they become Buddhas?

Bodhidharma: I only talk about seeing the True Nature of your mind. I have no teaching about sex if you do not see the True Nature of your mind. Once you see the True Nature of your mind, sex is basically immaterial. The experience of it ends with your delight in it. If you see the True Nature, sexual desire would also already be void and serene – there would be nothing to cut out; there would be nothing to which to attach. Even if some apparent sexual desires remain, this cannot harm your mind because its True Nature is essentially pure nor would it be spiritually disruptive. This is so despite dwelling with a material body of the four elements along with the five aggregates (skandas) – the Nature of your mind is fundamentally pure, clear and bright (illuminative). *It* cannot be corrupted or tainted. Your real realm (or experience), which is none other than the Original Dharmakaya has no sensation, no hunger or thirst, no warmth or cold, no sickness or health, no craving or detachment, no pleasure or pain, no good or bad, no shortness or long length of life, no weakness or strength – and is of no religious sect. Actually, there is only Emptiness. It is only because you cling to the concept that mind is contained in the material body that experiences like hunger and thirst, warmth and cold, sickness and health appear to be happening to mind. If those experiences cannot deceive you anymore, then behave however you want.

If mind can recognize this Dharmakaya, the wheel of the Dharma can be turned in one easy movement (i.e. one can Awaken), as if you possessed magical powers and abilities – then the True Nature will be seen as void (or Void). Once you stop clinging and let all phenomena (inner and outer) be, your mind will be free, even from birth and death. You will find that your mind possesses the true spiritual powers that cannot be obstructed and so your mind will be at peace, regardless of whatever experience is going on. If you doubt this, you will never see through samsara. If the mind is still lacking clarity, then all kinds of outside phenomena will still appear as barriers to you and then there is no way to avoid karmic results. You are better off with this approach of doing nothing (wu-wei or seeing that there is no need to spiritually act). Once you conceptually intentionally spiritually act or practice, you cannot avoid the cycle of samsara, inclusive of birth and death. However, once one sees the True Nature of their mind, they are the Buddha even if they work as a butcher.

Question: But butchers create karma by slaughtering animals. How can they be Buddhas or attain Buddhahood?

Bodhidharma: I only talk about seeing the True Nature of your mind. I don't talk about creating karma or 'resulting karma'. Regardless of what spiritual or worldly actions we do, our karma has no real hold on our mind. Throughout endless kalpas (eons), it is only because people do not see the True Nature of their mind that they end up in hell (illusion and suffering). As long as a person creates karma, they keep passing through the endless cycles of samsara inclusive of birth and death. But once someone Awakens to the Original Nature, they stop creating karma (mental tendencies or habitual patterns). If such a one does not see this True Nature, invoking Buddhas, chanting and prayer will not release them from their karma, regardless of whether or not they are a butcher. But once they see the True Nature of their mind, all doubts and confusion vanish and karmic power is no longer created nor would it exist. Even a butcher's karma has no effect on such a mind. In fact, all the different varieties of karma cannot imprison such a mind.

In India, the twenty-seven Ancestors (Patriarchs) only taught the Transmission of Mind. The only reason I have come to China is to transmit the Sudden Teaching of the real Mahayana – this mind is the Buddha. I don't talk about precepts, devotions or ascetic practices such as immersing yourself in water or fire, treading on knives or even eating one meal a day and never lying down. Those are fanatical provisional teachings. Without seeing the True Nature, even chanting and prayers will not prevent you from experiencing that karma and its effects. Compared to this, the killing of animals for food is of no great concern. Once you recognize the functioning miraculously aware True Nature, yours is the Mind of all Buddhas. That is why Buddhas of the past, present and future only teach the Transmission of Mind. They teach nothing else. If someone understands this Teaching, even if they are illiterate, they are a Buddha. If you do not see your own miraculously aware True Nature, you will never find the Buddha even if you have the power to break your body into the smallest atoms.

The Buddha is your real Realm, your real experience, your Original Mind – the Dharmakaya (Realm of Absolute Truth). This Awakened Mind has no form or characteristics, no cause or effect, no tendons or bones. *It* is like empty space. You cannot hold *it*. *It* is not what materialists or nihilists consider to be mind. That is why it is said that no one except for a Tathagata, who transcends mortality and delusion, can fathom *it*. Mind is without structured concepts and has no destiny or even time nor is *it* bound by the material world.

However, this Mind isn't somewhere separate from the material body of the four elements. Without Mind, there is no movement. The body has no

awareness. Like a plant or stone, the body has no True Nature. So how does it move? It is the mind that moves. Language and behavior, perception and thinking (inclusive of feeling and experiencing) are all functions of the mind in motion. Actually, all motion (change) is the Mind's motion. Motion is *its* function. Apart from motion, there is no separate mind and apart from the mind, there is no motion. However, motion isn't the mind and the mind isn't motion. Motion appears to be basically mindless and the mind appears to be basically motionless. But motion doesn't exist apart from the mind and the mind does not exist as some thing separate from motion. There is no separate mind for motion to exist apart from and no separate motion for mind to exist apart from. Motion is the mind's function and its function is its motion. Ultimately, the Mind neither moves nor functions because the Essence (Origin) of *its* functioning is Emptiness and Emptiness is essentially motionless. So, motion is the same as Mind and Mind is essentially motionless. A Sutra says, "*It* moves without moving". All day and night *it* (Awareness or Mind) apparently goes and comes yet *it* has never gone and never come; all day and night *it* apparently sees but yet *it* has never been seen; apparently abiding yet *it* has never abided anywhere."

Hence the Sutras tell us to move without moving, to travel without traveling, to see without seeing, to laugh without laughing, to hear without hearing, to know without knowing, to be content without being content, to walk without walking, to stand without standing. This is why the Sutras say, "Go beyond language. Go beyond thought". Basically, seeing, hearing, feeling and knowing are completely empty yet completely serene. Your anger, happiness, and suffering are like that of a puppet. You can search forever, but you will not find a single thing (or being). This is the reason the Sutras say, "Words and utterances are for all time severed; conceptual thought and its abiding place are also annihilated". How possibly can anger, pleasure, pain, desire, itching and suffering be different from the Original Mind?

According to the Sutras, evil deeds result in hardships and suffering and good deeds result in blessings and happiness. So, angry people go to hell and happy people go to heaven. However, once you understand that the nature of anger and happiness is empty and you let them go, you free your mind from karma and its power. If you do not see the True Nature of your mind, quoting Sutras is of no help. So once more, if one has not seen the True Nature, no matter how well one teaches and lectures on the Sutras and shastras (commentaries), it would not be of any help to anyone. I could go on but this brief Dharma-talk will have to do.



Postscript Gatha

The Mind, which calls the Mind 'the mind'
Has no way to be seen.
When seen as expanded, *it* encompasses the whole universe.
When seen as contracted, *it* permits not even the tip of a needle.

I just searched for the Mind;
I never looked for the 'Buddha'.
Everything in the Triple World is empty (void);
I now truly understand that no thing exists.

If you are looking for Buddha,
Just search within your mind for the Mind.
This Mind which you are calling 'the mind',
Is the Buddha which is Mind *itself*.

Even though initially one is searching for the Mind,
The Mind in *itself* already understands all.
If you want to search for the Mind,
Do not try to understand with conceptual thought.

The True Nature of Buddha,
Cannot be attained outside of the mind.
As soon as conceptual thought arises,
(alt. trans.: As soon as a separate or individual mind arises)
Ignorance will also arise.



Dharma-talk: The Wake-up (also known as “The Breakthrough”)

The essence of the Way is non-attachment. The goal of those who practice this Way is freedom from appearances. So the Sutras say, “Non-attachment is Enlightenment because it transcends appearances”. Buddhahood means Awareness. Human beings whose minds are aware reach the Tao of Enlightenment and are therefore called Buddhas. So the Sutras say, “Those who free themselves from all appearances are called Buddhas”. The appearance of appearance which has no-appearance cannot be seen visually but can only be understood by means of Wisdom. Whoever hears and believes this Teaching embarks on the real Mahayana which is the True Nature of mind and leaves behind the three poisons.

The three poisons are greed or craving, hatred or ongoing resentment, and delusion or ignorance of the effects of one’s actions. To leave behind the three poisons means to go back to ethics, meditation and insight (wisdom). Craving, hatred and delusion have no nature of their own. They depend on the conceptions of human beings. Anyone capable of reflection in this Way is certain to see that the True Nature of even craving, hatred and delusion is none other than the Buddha-nature. So the Sutras say, “Buddhas only become Buddhas while living with the three poisons and nourishing themselves on the pure Dharma”.

This real Mahayana is the greatest of all spiritual vehicles. It is the vehicle of the true bodhisattvas, who use everything without using anything and who travel all day without traveling. Such is the vehicle of the Buddhas. That is why the Sutras say, “No-vehicle is the Vehicle of the Buddhas”.

Whoever realizes that the six senses are not real entities, that the five aggregates are fictions, that no such phenomena can be located anywhere in the body, understands the words or the teaching of the Buddhas. The Sutras say, “The cave of the five aggregates is the hall of meditation. The opening of the inner eye is the door of the real Mahayana”. Is this not clear?

Not conceptually thinking about any phenomena (inner or outer) is Ch’an. Once you understand this, walking, standing, sitting or lying down, everything is Ch’an. To understand that the mind is empty is to see the Buddha. The Buddhas of the ten directions have no-mind (no conceptual thought). To see no-mind is to see the Buddha.

To give up your sense of self (alternative translation: to give up your self...) without regret is the greatest charity. To transcend motion and stillness is the highest meditation. Worldly beings keep moving and saints

stay still. However, this highest meditation surpasses both that of worldly beings and that of saints. People who reach such an understanding free their minds from all appearances without effort and cure all illnesses without treatments. Such is the power of this great Ch'an.

Using the mind conceptually to look for Reality is delusion. Not using conceptual thought to look for Reality is awareness. Freeing one's mind from all words is Liberation. Remaining unblemished even in the midst of the dust of sensations is truly guarding the Dharma. Transcending life and death is truly leaving home. Not suffering through another lifetime is truly reaching the Way. Not creating delusions is truly Enlightenment. Not engaging in ignorance is Wisdom. The understanding that there are no afflictions is Nirvana. The non-appearance of conceptual thought is the 'Other Shore'.

When one is deluded, this shore (of samsara) appears to exist. When one wakes up, it does not exist. Worldly beings stay on this shore. However, those who discover this greatest of all spiritual vehicles stay on neither this shore nor the other shore. They transcend both shores. Those who see the other shore as different from this shore don't understand Ch'an. Delusion characterizes worldly beings. Awareness characterizes Buddhahood. Thus they are not the same yet they are not different. When deluded, there appears samsara to escape. When aware, there is nothing to escape.

In the Light (Awareness) of the impartial Dharma (Truth), human beings are no different from Buddhas. The Sutras say that the impartial Dharma is something that worldly beings do not penetrate and spiritual beings cannot practice. The impartial Dharma is only practiced by the great bodhisattvas and Buddhas. So to look on life as different from death or on motion as different from stillness is to be partial. To be impartial means to look upon samsara as no different from Nirvana, because the Nature of both is emptiness. By imagining that they are busy putting an end to samsara and entering Nirvana, saints end up trapped by that "nirvana". But bodhisattvas understand that samsara is essentially empty, so their empty minds remain in Nirvana. Nirvana means no-birth and no-death. Reality is beyond birth and death (samsara) and 'nirvana'. When the mind ceases conceptual movements, it enters Nirvana. Nirvana is an empty mind. Understanding delusions to be empty, the wise reach the Nirvana of the Buddhas. That space where afflictions do not bind is where bodhisattvas enter the space of Enlightenment (Bodhimandala).

The uninhabited space is the one without craving, hatred or delusion. Craving or greed binds one to the realm of form while hatred binds one to

the realm of thought or desire and delusion binds one to the formless realm. When a conceptual thought occurs, one appears to enter the Triple World (of forms, thoughts and formless experience). When conceptual thought ends, one appears to leave the Triple World. So, the beginning or end of the Triple World as well as the existence or non-existence of any phenomena (inner or outer) depends on the mind. This applies to everything, even to inanimate objects such as rocks and sticks.

Whoever understands that conceptual mind or thought is a fiction and devoid of anything real, understands that their own mind neither exists nor does not exist. Worldly beings keep creating conceptual thought or samsaric mind and then claim that it exists. Saints keep negating mind and claim it does not exist. However, the bodhisattvas and Buddhas neither create nor negate the mind. This is what is meant by the teaching that mind neither exists nor does not exist. The discovery of the Mind that neither exists nor does not exist is called the true Middle Way.

If you use conceptual thought to study Reality, you will not understand thought, your mind, or Reality. If you study Reality without using conceptual thought, you will understand mind and Reality. Those who don't understand, do not truly understand 'not-knowing'. Those who truly understand, understand not-knowing. People capable of clear seeing understand that the mind is empty. They transcend both knowing and not-knowing. The absence of both knowing and not-knowing is true understanding.

Seen with clear seeing, form (object) is not form because form depends on the subjective mind or thought (subject). Subjective mind is not simply mind because subjective mind depends on form. Subjective mind and objective form create and negate each other. That which appears to exist, exists in relation to that which does not exist and that which does not exist, is in relation to that which does exist. This is clear seeing. By means of such clear seeing nothing is seen yet nothing is not seen. Such clear seeing pervades the ten directions without subjective seeing. Because clear seeing is not subjective seeing, nothing is seen because such seeing is not subjective seeing. What ignorant beings see are delusions. True clear seeing is not related to subjective seeing.

The subjective mind (thought) and the world appear as opposites but clear seeing arises where the two become one. When your subjective mind does not stir conceptual thought, the world as objective does not arise outside. When the world and the subjective mind are both understood to be transparent (empty), this is clear seeing. Such understanding is true understanding.

So, to see nothing is to perceive the Tao. To understand nothing is to understand the Dharma. This is so because clear seeing is neither seeing nor not-seeing and true understanding is neither understanding (knowing) nor not-understanding (not-knowing). Seeing without seeing is clear seeing or true vision. Understanding without understanding is true understanding. True clear seeing is not just 'seeing' but it is also seeing 'not-seeing'. Likewise, true understanding is not just understanding "understanding" but also understanding 'not-understanding'. Only when you understand nothing (know nothing) is it true understanding. True understanding is neither understanding nor not-understanding (knowing nor not-knowing). That is why the Sutras say, "Not to let go of knowledge is stupidity". When it is seen that the subjective mind does not exist, understanding and not-understanding are both the Truth. When one conceives the subjective mind as existing, understanding and not-understanding are both false.

When you truly understand, the objective reality depends on your mind. When you do not understand, you appear to depend on objective reality. When objective reality depends on you, *that* which is Real appears false. When you depend on a so-called objective reality, everything is false or not clearly perceived. When it is seen that objective reality depends on your mind, everything (in its True Nature) is true. Thus the wise one does not use their subjective mind to look for objective reality nor objective reality to look for one's mind. In fact, a wise one does not use their subjective mind to look for Mind or objective reality to look for Reality. This is because both the subjective mind and the objective reality are empty, and that is the Always-so Samadhi (Principle).

When the ignorant subjective mind appears, Buddhahood seems to disappear. When the ignorant subjective mind disappears, Buddhahood seems to appear. When the subjective mind appears, Reality seems to disappear. However, when the subjective mind disappears, Reality seems to appear. Whoever understands that neither depend on each other has found the Way. Whoever understands that mind depends on nothing is always at the "place of Enlightenment" (Bodhimandala).

(Alternative translation: The Wisdom of clear seeing reveals that the experience of the object(s) is not the True Nature of objects. Objects (or objective experience) depends on the subject or subjective thought. The subject is not Mind because the subject depends on the object. Subject and object create and negate each other. The object appears to exist only in relation to non-existence and non-existence appears to exist only in relation to existence. This is the Wisdom of clear seeing. By means of this Wisdom

of clear seeing nothing is seen, yet nothing is not-seen. Such clear seeing (Awareness) pervades the ten directions without a subjective seer. Because the Wisdom of clear seeing is not the subject, nothing is seen because clear seeing is not subjective seeing or experience. What ignorant beings think as existing objectively are delusions. True clear seeing is not related to subjective seeing or experience.

The subject (or subjective seer) and the world appear as opposites but the Wisdom of clear seeing arises when the two are revealed as one. When the subject does not arise, the world as object does not arise 'outside'. When the object (or objective experience) and the subject (or subjective experience) are both understood to be transparently empty, this is the Wisdom of clear seeing. Such Wisdom is true understanding.

Consequently, to see nothing objective or subjective is to perceive the Tao. To understand nothing objective or subjective is to understand the Dharma. This is so because the Wisdom of clear seeing is neither a subject seeing something nor not seeing something and true understanding is neither a subject knowing or not-knowing something. So, seeing without subjective seeing is clear seeing or true vision. Understanding without knowledge is true understanding (Wisdom). True clear seeing (Awareness) functions through seeing and non-seeing, knowing and not-knowing. Only when the 'you' knows nothing is it true understanding (Wisdom). This true understanding (Wisdom) is neither knowing nor not-knowing. That is why the Sutras say, "Not to let go of knowledge is stupidity". When it is seen that the subject does not exist, both knowing and not-knowing (understanding and not-understanding) are both the Truth of Awareness. When one conceives of a subject (self) as existing, knowing and not-knowing are both false.

When you truly understand, the object depends on the subject. When you do not understand, the subject appears to depend on the object (or objective world). When objective reality depends on a 'you', *this* which is Real appears false. When you depend on a so-called objective reality, everything is false or not clearly perceived. When it is seen that objective reality depends on Mind, then everything in its True Nature is true. Thus the wise one does not use their subjective experience to look for an objective 'Reality' nor do they try to use objective experience to look for Mind. A wise one does not use subjective experience to look for the True Nature of mind nor do they use objective experience to look for Reality. This is because both the subject and the object are empty and that is the Always-so Samadhi.

When in ignorance a subject (self) appears, Buddhahood seems to disappear. When the subject disappears, Buddhahood seems to appear. In other words, when the subject appears, Reality seems to disappear. However, when the subject disappears, Reality seems to appear. Whoever understands that the Wisdom of clear seeing depends neither on the subject (or subjective experience) nor on the object (objective experience) has found the Way. The advanced student who understands that Mind depends on nothing is always at the 'place of Enlightenment' (Bodhimandala).

When you don't understand this Teaching, your approach is wrong. When you deeply understand the Wisdom of this Teaching, your approach is not wrong. However, even the nature of wrong is empty. When you don't understand, right seems wrong. When you truly understand, even wrong is not wrong because it does not exist. The Sutras say, "Nothing has a nature of its own". Live the Teaching. Do not spend your life endlessly doubting what has just been said – such an approach can be called wrong. Wrong is the result of endless doubting due to conceptual thought. When you reach this deep understanding, the ignorant effects of your past life or past lives are wiped away. When there is delusion, the six senses and five aggregates seem to be constructs of suffering and mortality. However, when you wake up, the six senses and five aggregates are the functions of Nirvana and immortality.

The wise one who seeks the Way does not look beyond their mind. They understand that mind is the Way. However, when they find mind, they find nothing. So, when one finds the Way, one finds nothing. If you think that you can use conceptual thought to find the Way, you are deluded. When you are deluded, Buddhahood seems to exist (externally or objectively). When there is full awareness it does not exist. This is because Awareness is the real Buddhahood.

If you are looking for the Way, the Way will not appear until your self-based sense of experience disappears. It is like stripping bark from a tree. One's karmic experience undergoes constant change. It has no fixed reality. Do not practice according to your thoughts (or old way of thinking). Do not hate life and death nor cling to life and death (alternative trans.: Do not hate samsara nor cling to it). Keep mind free of conceptual delusion, and in this life you will see the beginning of Nirvana and in death you will experience the assurance of no more 'rebirths' of suffering.

To see form but not to be conceptually corrupted by form or to hear sound but not be conceptually corrupted by sound is Liberation. So it can be said that eyes that are not attached to form are the 'gates of Ch'an'.

Ears that are not attached to sound are also the 'gates of Ch'an'. In short, those who perceive the emptiness and True Nature of phenomena and remain unattached are Liberated. Those who conceive of an external (to mind) appearance of phenomena are at their mercy. Not to be subject to such conceptual affliction is what is meant by Liberation. There is no other Liberation. When you understand how to correctly look at form, form does not give rise to mind and mind does not give rise to form. Both form and mind are the same Original Purity.

When delusions are absent, the mind is the land of Buddhas. When delusions are present, the mind appears as the hell realm. Ignorant human beings create delusions. By using the mind to give birth to conceptual thought, such beings always find themselves in the hell realm. True bodhisattvas see through such delusions. By not using the mind to give birth to conceptual thought they find the mind always in the land of Buddhas. If you do not use your mind to create conceptual thought, every state of mind is empty and every thought in its True Nature is tranquil. Relatively in experience, the mind goes from one Buddha-land to another. If you use your mind to create conceptual thought, every state of mind is off-balance or disturbed and every thought seems to be in motion. This is why people go from one hellish state to the next. When conceptual thought arises, there appears good and bad karma, heaven and hell. When no conceptual thought arises, there is no good or bad karma, no heaven or hell.

Experience, inclusive of the body, neither exists nor does not exist. Existence as a mortal being and non-existence or formlessness as an immortal being are both conceptions which the wise have nothing to do with. The mind of the wise is empty and spacious as the sky (or space).

This instruction is experienced in the Way and is beyond the knowledge of saints and ignorant beings. When the mind reaches Nirvana, Nirvana is not seen because the mind is Nirvana. If you try to see Nirvana somewhere outside the mind, you are only deluding yourself. Every experience of suffering is a Buddha-seed, because suffering impels ignorant beings to seek Wisdom. You can only say that suffering gives rise to Buddhahood, not that suffering is Buddhahood. The realm of your experience, inclusive of your body and relative mental functions are the field. Suffering is the seed, Wisdom the sprout and Buddhahood the fruit.

The Buddha in the mind is like the fragrance in a flower. Buddhahood comes from a mind that has freed itself of suffering, just as a fragrance comes from a flower free of decay. There is no fragrance without the flower and no Buddhahood without the mind. If there is a fragrance without a

flower, it is a different fragrance. Likewise, if there appears a 'Buddha' without your mind, it is a different 'Buddha'.

When the three poisons (craving or greed, hatred or ongoing resentment and ignorance of the effects of one's actions) are present in your mind, the mind appears to live in a 'land of filth'. When the three poisons are absent from your mind, the mind appears to live in a 'land of purity'. So the Sutras say, "If you fill a land with impurity and filth, no Buddha will appear". In this case, impurity and filth refer to the three poisons and Buddha refers to the mind empty of those poisons and Awake to its innate purity.

All language has the Nature of the Dharma. To be able to talk all day without saying a word is the Way. To be silent all day is still saying something and is not the Way. Hence, the Tathagata's speech does not depend on silence, nor does his silence depend on speech, nor does his speech exist somewhere apart from his silence. Those who understand the True Nature of both speech and silence have discovered the Principle (Samadhi). If you speak when you understand, your speech is free. If you are silent when you do not understand, your silence is tied or bound. The True Nature of language is essentially free. It neither creates nor needs to escape from attachment. In fact, attachment has nothing to do with language or its absence.

Reality has no high or low. If you see high or low, it is not real. A raft is not a permanent reality but it can carry passengers. A seeker who rides such a raft can cross that which is not real. So, the raft is both real and unreal. According to the world there is male and female, rich and poor. According to the Tao there is no male or female, no rich or poor. That is why when the Goddess realized the Tao (in the Vimalakirti Nirveda Sutra), she did not need to change her sex. Likewise when the stable boy Awakened to the Truth, he did not need to change his status. Free of gender and status, they share the same basic True Nature. Previously the Goddess searched twelve years for her womanhood but found nothing. To search twelve years for one's manhood would likewise be fruitless. Of course, the twelve years refer to the twelve entrances (of external experience – the six sense organs and the six sense consciousnesses).

Without the thought activity of the mind, there is no 'Buddha'. However, without the True Buddha-nature, there is no activity of the mind. It is like without water there is no ice. In ice there is only water. Whoever talks about leaving mind does not get very far. Do not become attached to appearances (inner phenomena) within the mind. The Sutras say, "When you see that an appearance in the mind is no appearance, you see the

Buddha”. This is what is meant by being free from appearances within the mind.

Without thought activity in the mind, there is no ‘Buddha’. The notion of ‘Buddha’ comes from the mind. So the mind gives birth to ‘Buddha’. Although the ‘Buddha’ comes from the mind, the mind does not come from the ‘Buddha’; just as fish come from the water, but water does not come from fish. Whoever wants to see the fish must see the water before they see the fish. Whoever wants to see the True Buddha(-nature) must see the mind before they will see the Buddha. Once you have seen the fish, you forget about the water. Once you have seen the True Buddha(-nature), you forget about the thought activity of the mind. If you don’t forget about that thought activity, the activity of the mind will appear to confuse you. Just like fixating on water will confuse you in the discovery of the fish, if you do not forget about it.

Ignorant human beings and Buddhahood are like water and ice. To be afflicted by the three poisons is considered to be an ignorant human being. To be purified by the release of those poisons is considered Buddhahood. However, that which freezes into ice in winter melts into water in summer. You cannot eliminate ice without eliminating the water. Get rid of ‘ignorant human being’ and there is no more ‘Buddhahood’. Clearly the nature of ice is the same as the nature of water and the nature of water is the substance of ice. The Nature of a human being is the Nature of Buddhahood. Human beings and Buddhahood share the same Nature like two apparently different plants sharing the same root. It is only because of the delusion of differences that we have the phrases ‘ignorant human being’ and ‘Buddhahood’. Just as when a snake becomes a dragon, it does not change its scales, so when a human being becomes a Buddha, they do not change their Original Face. The wise one understands their mind through internal Wisdom.

Ignorant human beings create Buddhas and Buddhas liberate human beings. However, it is Awareness that is truly impartial. Human beings create Buddhas because suffering or affliction creates or leads to insight or understanding. Buddhas liberate human beings because insight or understanding negates affliction or suffering. Just like there is the appearance of affliction, so there cannot help but be insight or understanding to address it. If it were not for insight or understanding, there would be nothing to negate the affliction or suffering. When you are deluded, it seems that Buddhas liberate human beings. When there is deep understanding, it is seen that ignorant human beings create Buddhas. Buddhas don’t become Buddhas on their own accord. They become so due

to the efforts of human beings. That is why it is sometimes said that Buddhas regard delusion as their father and craving as their mother. Delusion and craving are but different names for ignorance. They are like the left hand and the right hand of the same body. There is no other difference.

When mind is deluded, it is on this shore (of samsara). When mind understands deeply, it is on the 'Other Shore' (of Nirvana). However, once you are aware that mind is empty and that there are no appearances external to it, you are beyond delusion and knowledge. Once mind is beyond delusion and knowledge, the 'Other Shore' does not exist. That is why it is said the Tathagata (Buddha) is not on this shore or the Other Shore nor midstream. Ignorant human beings are usually considered to be on this shore, with arhats (saints) in midstream and 'Buddhas' on the Other Shore.

It is usually taught that Buddhas have three bodies or realms of experience: one of transformation (Nirmanakaya), one of the results of spiritual rewards or merits (Sambhogakaya) and one that is Real (Dharmakaya). The transformation realm is also called the one of incarnation and appears when ignorant human beings receive instruction to do good deeds. The reward realm appears when beings cultivate insight and Wisdom and the Real when they become aware of the most sublime. It is the transformation body that goes in all directions rescuing others wherever it can. It is the reward realm that puts an end to doubts and confusion – that is why it is said that the Great Enlightenment (of the Buddha) occurred as a result of previous practices. The realm of the Real does not do or say anything. *It* remains perfectly still. However actually, there is not even one Buddha-body or Buddha-realm, much less three. All teaching of the three bodies or realms is only and simply based on human understanding, which can be shallow, moderate, or deep.

People of shallow understanding imagine they are piling up blessings and mistake the transformation body for the Buddha. People of moderate understanding imagine they are putting an end to concrete suffering and mistake the reward realm for the Buddha. People of deep understanding imagine they are experiencing Buddhahood and mistake that experience of the Real for the Buddha. However, people of the deepest understanding, which is Wisdom, look within and consider all the rest distractions. They see that mind is always clear and is the Buddha. They attain the true Wisdom without using conceptual thought activity. The three bodies or realms, like all other spiritual imaginations, are not really attainable. The unimpeded mind is indescribable and thus easily reaches the Tao. So the

Sutras say, “Buddhas don’t preach the Dharma. They don’t liberate human beings and they don’t experience Buddhahood”. This is the true meaning of what I teach.

Individuals create karma (mental-emotional tendencies or patterns); karma does not create individuals. It is said that people create karma in this life and receive the results in the next. Within that framework, they never escape. Only someone who recognizes impersonal Perfection creates no karma in this life nor do they receive the results in this or the next. That is why the Sutras say, “Whoever creates no karma obtains the Dharma”. This is not an empty saying. The mind can apparently create karma but it cannot create a person. When the mind apparently creates karma, it is apparently reborn along with its karma. When the mind does not create karma, the self vanishes along with its karma. In other words, you vanish along with your karma. Hence, with karma dependent on the individual and the individual (or personhood) dependent on the karma – if an individual does not use their mind to create karma, karma has no hold on them (or their mind). In the same manner it is said, “A person can give testimony to the Tao. The Tao cannot give testimony to or enlarge a person”.

Ignorant beings keep creating karma but mistakenly insist that there is no retribution. But can they deny suffering? Can they deny that what the present state of mind with its conceptual tendencies sows, the next state of mind reaps. How can they escape? If the present state of mind sows nothing, the next state of mind reaps nothing. Don’t misconceive karma.

The Sutras say, “Despite believing in Buddhas, people who imagine that Buddhas became Buddhas through practicing austerities are not true Buddhists. The same holds true that Buddhas are produced through either wealth or poverty. They are holding to unwholesome views and have no real wish to attain Buddhahood”.

Someone who truly understands the Teaching of the Buddhas is a Buddha. Someone who understands or has knowledge of the spiritual teachings of ignorant beings is an ignorant being. An ignorant being who gives up the teachings of ignorant beings and follows the Teaching of the Buddhas becomes a Buddha. But the fools of this world prefer to look for Buddhas externally and far away. They do not believe that the Wisdom of their own mind is the Buddha. That is why the Sutras say, “Among men of no understanding, do not teach this Sutra.” The Sutras also say, “Mind is the Teaching (Dharma)”. However, people of no understanding do not believe in their own mind or that by understanding this Teaching they can become a Buddha. So they prefer to quest for distant knowledge and crave for phenomena appearing in space such as Buddha-images, light,

(celestial) incense and colors. As a result, they fall prey to falsehood and lose their minds to madness.

The Sutras say, “When you see that all appearances are not appearances, you see the Tathagata”. The myriad gates (or doors) to the Truth all come from and return to mind. When appearances in the mind are seen to be as transparent as space, their obstruction is gone.

Our endless sufferings are the roots of samsara and all types of mental illness. When ignorant beings are alive, they worry about death. When they are full, they worry about hunger. So it is said that theirs is the ‘great uncertainty’. But wise ones don’t dwell on the past and don’t endlessly worry about the future nor do they cling to the present. Wise ones moment by moment follow the Way. If you have not Awakened to this great Truth, you’d better look for a teacher on earth or in the heavens (historically). Be careful not to rely on yourself and so compound your own deficiency.



Dharma-talk: Excerpts from Question and Answer Sessions

Question: If someone is determined to reach Enlightenment, what is the most essential method they can practice?

Answer: The most essential method, which includes all other methods, is beholding the mind.

Question: But how can one method include all others?

Answer: The mind is the root from which all things grow. If you can understand the mind, everything else is included. It is like the root of a tree. All of a tree's fruit and flowers, branches and leaves depend on its root. If you nourish its root, the tree flourishes. If you cut its root, it dies. Those who understand the mind reach Enlightenment with minimal effort. Those who don't understand the mind practice in vain. All change, good and bad, comes from your own mind. To find something beyond the mind is impossible.

Question: How can beholding the mind be called understanding?

Answer: When a wise one delves deeply into Perfect Wisdom, they realize that the four elements (earth, water, fire, air) and the five aggregates (five skandas which are the experience of 1. form, 2. sensation, 3. memory, 4. will or volition, 5. thoughts, feelings, states of consciousness) are devoid of a personal self. The apparent activity of the mind seems to have two aspects: pure and impure. Until the True Nature of mind is seen, these two mental states seem to be always present. They alternate as cause and effect depending on conditions, the so-called 'pure mind' producing good deeds and the so-called 'impure mind' producing evil or ignorant deeds. Consequently, 'saints and sages' appear to be unaffected by impurity and the others appear trapped by the 'impure mind' and entangled by their own karma. They drift in the Triple World and suffer countless afflictions.

The Sutra of Ten Stages says, "In the realm of human beings is the indestructible Buddha-nature. Like the sun, its light fills endless space". The Nirvana Sutra says, "All human beings have the Buddha-nature. Our Buddha-nature is Awareness. To practice is to be aware; to teach is to make others aware. To Awaken to Awareness is Liberation". Every virtue and everything good has Awareness for its root. From this root of Awareness grows the tree of all virtues and the fruit of Nirvana. Those who behold the mind transcend suffering and experience the joy of Nirvana. Beholding the mind like this is understanding" (Wisdom).

Question: The Triple World and the six states of existence* are infinitely vast. How can we escape their endless afflictions if all we do is behold the mind?

[*Note: The six realms or states of samsaric existence are generally considered, in Buddhism, to be the six types of rebirth. However, in Mahayana, they are also considered to be symbolic of states of consciousness or modes of experience. The six are: 1) gods or devas, 2) the demi-gods or titans or asuras, 3) ordinary humans or manusa, 4) animals or tiryak, 5) hungry ghosts or preta, 6) hell denizens or naraka. Each of these realms or states of consciousness is considered to be brought about by a predominance of a particular spiritual defilement or klesa: as a god through pride, as a demi-god or titan through jealousy, as a human being through attachment, as an animal through stupidity, as a hungry ghost through craving or greed, as a hell denizen through hatred.]

Answer: The karma of the Triple World comes from the mind alone. However, the True Nature of mind is not within the Triple World, *it* is beyond them. The Triple World corresponds to the three poisons: greed or craving corresponds to the world of clinging thoughts, hatred or ongoing resentment to the world of form and delusion or gross ignorance to the formless world. Because karma created by the poisons can be light or heavy, these three worlds are further divided into six realms known as the six states of existence.

Question: How does the karma of these six realms differ?

Answer: Ignorant beings who do not understand this true practice of beholding the mind yet do good are born (or experience) the three higher realms of existence within the Triple World. Those who blindly perform the ten good deeds while foolishly seeking personal happiness are born as gods in the realm (world) of clinging thought. Those who blindly observe the five precepts while foolishly indulging their minds in craving and hatred are born as men in the realm (world) of form. Those who blindly cling to the phenomenal world, believe in false doctrines, and pray for blessings are born as asuras (titans) in the realm (world) of delusion. These are three higher states of existence.

As for the three lower states; those who persist in poisoned thoughts and evil deeds are born in the lower states. Those whose karma from greed or craving is greatest become hungry ghosts. Those whose karma from hatred or ongoing resentment is greatest become sufferers in hell. Those whose karma from delusion is greatest become beasts. These three lower states together with the previous three higher states form the six

realms of existence. From all this you should understand that all karma, good or bad, comes from your own mind. If you just behold your mind and transcend its conceptual falsehoods and ignorance, the suffering of the Triple World and the six states of existence will automatically disappear. Once free from this suffering, the mind is truly free.

You should understand that the practice you cultivate does not exist apart from your mind. If your mind is pure, all Buddha-lands are pure. So the Sutras say, "If your mind is pure, all Buddha-lands are pure", and "To reach the Buddha-land, see the purity of your mind".

If you can simply introspect your mind's inner light of Awareness and behold its True Nature which illumines inner and outer, you will dispel the three poisons once and for all. Without effort you will gain access to an infinite number of virtues, perfections (paramitas) and gateways to the Truth. Seeing through samsara and seeing the Sublime is less than an eye-blink away. Liberation is now. However, if you look physically, the true door appears hidden and unrevealed despite growing old. In this talk I have only briefly touched on beholding the mind.



Question: I am afraid of hell. I want to confess all my sins and discipline myself in the Tao.

Answer: Where is this 'I'? What does it look like?

Question: I do not know where it is!

Answer: If you do not know where your so-called 'I' is, who is it that falls into hell? If you do not understand what it is, just this is only illusory conceived existence. It is just because of this illusion that there is hell for you.

Question: If the 'I' itself is an illusion, how is this illusion formed in the Tao?

Answer: The Dharma (Truth) has no magnitude, no form and no location. Let me illustrate your predicament. Here is a big stone in the courtyard near your house. You sit on it, sleep on it and have no feeling of fear regarding it. One day, you suddenly ignorantly conceive the idea of painting a holy picture on it. You hire an artist and have the Buddha's figure painted on it and you now take it for the Buddha. No longer dare you sleep on it, as you are fearful of desecrating the image, which was originally nothing but a huge rock. It is due to the change in your mind that you no more can sleep on it. And what is this so-called mind that you used to form such a conception? It is but your own brush-work conceived out of your

imagination and that has turned the stone into the Buddha-figure. The feeling of fear is your own conceptual creation; the stone itself is indeed devoid of spiritual merit and demerit. All is thought-made. It is like a man painting a devil, or a creature from hell or a dragon or a tiger. He paints it, stares fixedly at it, and is frightened. There is, however, nothing at all in the painted figure itself which is fearsome. All is the brush-work of your own imagination or your own conceptual discrimination. From the first, none of that is there except what you have made out of the illusion produced by your own so-called mind.



Question: If the Tao or the Dharma (Truth) universally prevails everywhere and in all things, why is it criminal to destroy human life and not criminal to destroy plant-life?

Answer: To talk about the spiritual sin of a deed is an affair of human conceptual imagination and is only concerned about its effect in a world of events, and this is not at all the right way of viewing it. It is just because a person has not attained the Ultimate and is looking for a reason in the matter that such a one says that they have committed a spiritual sin which they may regard as a 'murder'. Such a one generates a 'personal mind' which bears the karma and then they feel guilty of a crime. In the case of plant-life, it has no conceptual imagination, and hence no self-consciousness. The one who destroys it remains impartial about it and conjures up no ghosts of conceptual imagination. The result is that no idea of spiritual sin is involved.

The one who is free from the idea of self, views the world of form as if it were the grass of the field and treats it as if cutting the grass. That is the real meaning behind the story of when Manjusri threatened Gautama with the sword, or Angulimala applied his weapon to the body of Gautama. Actually, they all belonged to the group of the wise whose minds are in perfect accord with the Tao. All is one in the realization of the Truth of no-birth (Unborn). They also understand that all phenomena are empty like the creations of maya (illusion). Therefore there can be no reference to the conceptual idea of sin.

It is like a fire in the field burning up all the vegetation, or like a gale blowing down all the trees before it, or like the earth sliding down the hillside, or like a flood drowning animals – when your mind is attuned to this Wisdom, all is consumed. If, on the other hand, there is a 'personal mind' in 'you' (self), which then makes you hesitate, deliberate, and feel so uneasy,

even the destruction of a mosquito will surely tie the knots of karma for you. It is like the bee sucking the flower, or like the sparrow pecking at grains, or like the cattle feeding on the beans, or like the horse grazing on the grass in the field – when your mind is free from the idea of self and private possession, all goes well. But as soon as there arises in the mind the conceptual thought of self and other and mine and thine, you are a slave to your karma.



First Letter

I had always admired the ancient wise ones. I had broadly cultivated all the practices that they are said to have recommended. I esteemed the Pure Lands of the Buddhas and looked up to those teachings that have come down to us as a thirsty man longs for water. It is wonderful that millions have heard of Shakyamuni Buddha and have treaded the Great Path laid out by him. Countless beings are said to have obtained the four fruits* as a result.

[*Note: The four fruits of traditional Buddhist spiritual practice are: stream-entrant or beginner; once-returner or those who will be reborn one more time; never-returner or now in last rebirth; and arhat or accomplished saint.]

I really thought that the heavenly lands with their palaces were another country and hells another place. I thought that if one were to attain the path and get the fruit, ones bodily form would change into a Buddha. I unrolled Sutra scrolls to seek blessings. Through my 'pure practices' I tried to produce karmic causes for spiritual growth. In confusion I went around in circles, chasing my mind and creating karma. Thus I passed many years without peace or finding rest. Then for the first time I had a direct experience of deep stillness and the settling of all phenomena in the Kingdom of Mind. However, I had been cultivating false conceptual thought for such a long time that my feelings led me to continue to see conceptual characteristics. I came to the point where I wanted to probe the difficulties inherent in these illusory transformations. In the end I clearly understood the Dharma-nature and engaged in an uncluttered practice of Suchness. For the first time I clearly saw that within my entire mind there is only Perfection. The bright pearl (of Awareness) comprehends clearly and mysteriously penetrates the tendency of conceptual thought and reveals the deep Mystery (the Principle). The notions of Buddhas above to the wriggling insects below are all just names for false conceptual thought. They are but the calculations of notions.

Here is a partial written expression to be used as an admonition for those seeking the same Awakening. If you have time, please unroll and read it.

Through this true meditation,
you will necessarily see the Original Nature.
Inevitably all will fuse and reveal
the Original Purity of Mind.
If a conceptual thought arises,
there appears to be a conditioned realm
of arising and extinguishing (birth and death).
In the midst of this birth and death,
to try to remember spiritual thoughts
like Buddhist aspirants do,
is engaging in an improper means.

You may search for Dharma
and surmise many various spiritual things,
but your karma or experience will not be changed.
In that approach, given revolving samsara,
and increasing defilements or tendencies,
mind finds it difficult to reach the Ultimate.
The wise one upon hearing that all phenomena are impermanent,
and are always arising and extinguishing,
Awakens to the Principle.
This is why Buddha understood for the first time
that his six years of ascetic practice were in vain.

All over the world spiritual people everywhere,
follow ignorance, clamor in vain and engage in meaningless arguments.
Teachers making ignorant explanations
claim to teach ignorant beings Buddhism.
Endlessly talking about remedies,
they cure not one disease.

All phenomena have always been in the State of Quiescence (Nirvana)
and there has never existed a perceiving subject.
So how could *it* contain good and evil,
false and correct?
Even arising is no-arising (Unborn);
even extinguishing is no-extinguishing (Undying).
Moving is no-moving;
meditation is no-meditation.

Second Letter

Delusion and Nirvana are related as is form to shadow or sound to its echo – one is the root of the other. Shadows arise from bodily forms; echoes follow upon voices. Some play with their shadows to the point of tiring their bodies, not realizing that their bodies are the shadows. Some raise their voices to stop the echoes, not realizing that the voice is the source of the echo. Searching for Nirvana by eliminating or purifying the ‘defilements’ is like searching for the shadow by getting rid of the body. Searching for Buddhahood by rejecting sentient (human) beings is like seeking for the echo by silencing the voice. (Alternative trans.: To try to be free from being a human being in order to seek the Buddha-nature is like dampening the sound to search out the echo.)

Therefore, in this Teaching, we understand that delusions and Enlightenment or Nirvana are one: one Way, one Tao. Ignorance and Wisdom are not different. Delusions are identical to Nirvana; sentient (human) beings are identical to the Buddhas. In the ‘space’ of No-name, spiritual people mistakenly think of erecting names, and because of these names existence (is) and non-existence (is not) are born. Not clearly seeing the Principle, they believe they live in a place without the Principle. Consequently, they mistakenly think of creating a new ‘Principle’ and because of this disputations endlessly flourish. Illusory transformations of illusory entities are not real, so who is right and who is wrong? One should understand that real obtaining has nothing to obtain and real losing is having nothing to lose. You should understand that true ‘mindfulness of the Buddha’ is no-mind (no-concept) and the true rebirth in the ‘Pure Land’ is at the same time no-birth. Having not been able to talk with you, I have composed these brief lines, but how can one discuss the profound deep Mystery (the Principle)?

Commentary by Awakened student Hui-k’o:

Master Bodhidharma’s presentation of the True Dharma is completely accurate. There is ultimately no difference between it (the Teaching) and the true profound Mystery of the Principle. Initially deluded, one calls the mani-pearl a potsherd. Suddenly mind is Awakened and it is recognized as the pearl. Ignorance and Wisdom are identical, not different. One should understand that the myriad phenomena (inner and outer) are all Suchness. Having compassion for those who hold discriminating views, the Master took up his brush to write this letter. Contemplating one’s experience and the Buddha’s to be no different, why should one further seek for the final state of Nirvana?



Record of Questions and Answers

Master Bodhidharma said: Buddhas speak of everything (all phenomena inner and outer) being void or empty in order to destroy views. However, if you are in turn attached to voidness as a view, you are one whom even the Buddha's Teaching cannot transform. At the point of conceptual views arising, only voidness arises. At the point of conceptual views extinguishing, only voidness extinguishes. In Reality, there is not one single phenomenon that arises or extinguishes. All conceptual phenomena arise due to clinging to views. Clinging is found neither inside nor outside, nor does it lie in between. Such discriminations are also void (empty) but common spiritual people are caught up in them. The false and the correct are found neither inside nor outside nor do they lie in between or in any direction. All conceptual phenomena are like this.

The Dharmakaya (Realm of Absolute Reality) is formless. Therefore, *it* is seen by no-seeing. The Dharma (Truth) is soundless. Therefore, *it* is heard by no-hearing. Wisdom does not have knowing. Therefore, *it* is understood by no-knowing. If one takes seeing to be seeing, then there is something that is not seen. If one understands no-seeing as seeing, then there is nothing that is not seen. If one takes knowing to be knowing, then there is something that is not known. If one understands no-knowing as knowing, then there is nothing that is not understood. Wisdom is incapable of objectively knowing itself, and so it is not something that has knowing; and yet, because it apparently knows things, it is not something that lacks knowing. If one takes apprehending (attaining), then there is something that is not apprehended (attained). If one takes no-apprehending (no-attainment) as apprehending, then there is nothing that is not apprehended (attained). If one takes 'is' as existence, then there will be something that 'is not' (voidness or Emptiness). If one takes the Emptiness as what really exists, there will be nothing that is non-existent.

One gate of Wisdom enters one hundred thousand gates of insight. For example, one may see a pillar and make an interpretation about it. In other words, one sees the characteristics of the pillar and makes the interpretation 'pillar'. Understand that the mind is the pillar of the Dharma (Truth) yet no pillar characteristics exist. Therefore, when one truly sees the pillar, it is the apprehension of the pillar of the Dharma (Truth). The seeing and experiencing of all forms is like this.

If someone says, "All phenomena are non-existent"; someone else objects saying, "Do you see existence?" Whether there is non-existence in existence or existence in non-existence, there is still 'your existence'. If

someone says, “All phenomena are non-arising”; someone else objects saying, “Do you see arising?” Whether there is non-arising in arising or arising in non-arising, there is still ‘your experience’ of arising. If someone says, “I see that all is no-mind”; someone else objects saying, “Do you see mind?” Whether there is no-mind in mind or mind in no-mind, there is still ‘your experience’ of the mind.

When one does not understand, the mind pursues phenomena; when one understands, phenomena follow the mind. When one understands, awareness encompasses forms; when one is deluded, forms draw in awareness. The non-production of conceptual consciousness (thought) due to forms is called ‘not seeing forms’. When there is an ignorant approach – whether there is no-seeking in seeking or seeking in no-seeking – there is still your (self) seeking. Whether there is no-taking in taking or taking in no-taking, there is still your (self) taking. When the mind conceives that it is in need of something to be complete, we call it the realm of craving. When mind is not aware of itself but seems produced due to forms, we call it the realm of form. Forms are not forms of themselves but are called forms by the mind (thought). The fact is that both mind and forms are the formless realm or the Dharmakaya.



Question: What is called the Buddha-mind?

Answer: Your mind is the Buddha-mind. Mind having no mark (characteristic) of variation from its True Nature is called Suchness. Mind’s unchangeableness is called the Dharma-nature. Mind’s not being restricted to any phenomena is called Liberation. The Mind’s unimpeded Nature is called Enlightenment. The Mind’s natural quiescence is called the Tao. The Mind’s not being born and therefore not perishing is called Nirvana.

Question: What is called Tathagata?

Answer: To understand Suchness, yet respond to the spiritual needs of human beings is called Tathagata. Tathagata is one that comes from nowhere and goes nowhere.

Question: What is called Buddha?

Answer: To Awaken to the Dharma (Truth), which is to Awaken to the fact that there is nothing to be Awakened to, is called Buddha.

Question: What is called Dharma?

Answer: Mind does not arise in accordance with the Dharma (Teaching) and Mind does not extinguish in accordance with Dharma. This is called the

True Dharma. *It* was never produced and will never be reduced; therefore, *it* is the Tao (or norm) of the universe.

Question: What is called Sangha?

Answer: The coming together, internally and externally, according to the Dharma is called Sangha. It is so named because of the beauty of its harmony.

Question: What is called the Voidness Samadhi (or true meditation in Emptiness)?

Answer: Clearly seeing all phenomena while abiding in Voidness is called the Voidness Samadhi.

Question: What is called abiding in Dharma?

Answer: Neither abiding in abiding (in Dharma) nor abiding in non-abiding (in Dharma) but abiding in Dharma (Truth) is called abiding in the Dharma. One should live naturally in Dharma.

Question: What does the phrase 'is male but not male, is female but not female' mean?

Answer: When we introspect on the basis of Dharma (Truth), the characteristics of maleness and femaleness cannot be apprehended. There is no difference in Buddha-nature between a man and a woman – nor is there really an entity designated as man or woman. This can be easily observed because all forms are not characterized by maleness or femaleness. If forms were characterized by maleness, all the grasses and trees would be male or they would all be female. Physical matter produces the grass and trees as it does human beings. Deluded people do not understand and through false conceptual thought see maleness or femaleness. However, this is an illusory maleness and an illusory femaleness – ultimately it is not so in Reality. This is why the Sutra on the Stillness of All Dharmas says, "If you come to understand that the notion of phenomena being separate from the Dharma (Truth) is like an illusion, you will quickly become the foremost of spiritual seekers".

Question: When one realizes Nirvana while embodied and obtains the fruit of arhat (perfect sainthood), is it Awakening or not?

Answer: It is a dream realization. Such a one is just dreaming and so are you.

Question: When one practices the six perfections (paramitas) through the ten stages (of bodhisattva practice) and the ten thousand associated practices and awakens to the non-arising and non-extinguishing Nature of

all phenomena and remains without any definition or knowing and has neither mind nor understanding, is it Awakening or not?

Answer: That is also a dream. Such a one is just dreaming and so are you.

Question: It is said that Buddhas have the ten powers, the four fearlessnesses, the eighteen special teachings (or practices) with the path culminating in perfect Awakening under the Bodhi tree and the capability of crossing over ignorant beings even to the point of entrance into Nirvana – how could these not be Awakening? Is not such a one who can save all sentient beings not the real Buddha?

Answer: They are also a dream. Such a one is just dreaming and so are you.

Question: All the Buddhas of the three times of past, present and future in unison teach numberless ignorant beings as many as the grains of sand of the Ganges River who then obtain the path and are saved from suffering – how could this not be Awakening?

Answer: That is also a dream. You have heard someone speak of dreams and you yourself are actually dreaming. It is only that whatever involves mental discrimination, calculation and the realm of phenomena manifested by one's own mind is a dream. When Awakened, there is no dreaming. When dreaming, there is no Awakening. These are false conceptualizations of thought, concepts and consciousnesses. They are no more than insights in a dream. Whatever you figure with your dualistic thoughts never is a true account of the Mind-essence – therefore, I call you a dreamer. Dream is one thing and Awakening (Enlightenment) is another. Do not mix them together. There is neither an awakener nor some thing to awaken to. When one Awakens according to the true Dharma, one truly Awakens to the fact that there is no self-awakening at all. Ultimately, no awakening exists. The so-called perfect awakening of all the Buddhas of the three times is but a conceptual discrimination of ignorant beings. This is why I call it a dream. If the consciousnesses and the conceptual thought are emptied, so there is not a single view of conceptual thought, it is called Perfect Awakening. Whenever there is conceptual thought and states of consciousness that have not been emptied it is but a dream. Knowledge in the dream is not the real Wisdom. Buddhas in the past, present and future are beyond cognition, concepts and consciousness. Cease dualistic thinking and Mind is instantly revealed. Until that time, whatever you spiritually think, whatever you say spiritually and whatever you do spiritually – all are nothing but foolishness in dreamland.

Question: In cultivating the path and cutting off delusion, what mental attitude should be employed?

Answer: Use the mental attitude of approaching with Wisdom.

Question: What is the mental attitude of approaching with Wisdom?

Answer: When one examines delusion and realizes that from the outset delusion has no place to arise from (inside of mind) and by this approach is able to cut off doubt and delusion, we call this the mental attitude of approaching with Wisdom. When you observe your delusions, you will understand that they are baseless and not substantial. They are not permanent or dependable.

Question: What types of delusion does the mind that is in accord with the Dharma cut off?

Answer: Delusions regarding conceptual interpretations such as mediocrity or stages of suffering about common people, heretics, literalists (sravakas), self-directed synthesizers (pratyekas), advanced seekers (bodhisattvas) and so forth.

Question: What are the two truths?

Answer: It is like the shimmering of heated air causing a mirage. Deluded people see the air waving due to the heat and understand it as water, but it is really not water. It is only the shimmering of heated air. The meaning of the two truths is also like this. Ignorant people see the Truth of the highest meaning as the same as the worldly truth of everyday life. The wise see even worldly truth or everyday life as the Truth of the highest meaning. Therefore the Sutra says, "When Buddhas speak the Dharma, they always rely upon the teaching of the two truths (of conventional truth and the Truth of the highest meaning)". The Truth of the highest meaning is of the same Nature as the worldly everyday truth, and the worldly everyday truth is of the same Nature as the Truth of the highest meaning. Now, the Truth of the highest meaning is voidness or Emptiness. If you still see phenomena in terms of the characteristics of existence, then you must tidy up your examination. If there is a self or an individual mind with arising or extinguishing, then you must do some further tidying up. If you see a self or a soul with birth and death, that should be tidied up.

Question: How does one tidy up?

Answer: If you rely upon the Dharma (Teaching) for the basis of your view, you will lose all the old ways of looking at things and not see any separate phenomena. So, Lao-tsu says, "Real virtue is wu-wei (not needing to do anything)". (Alternative translation: Establishing true virtue is done through wu-wei.) These words point us to Emptiness.

Question: What state of mind (consciousness) is called craving?

Answer: The attached state of mind of the common ignorant person.

Question: What state of mind is that in which one glimpses non-arising?

Answer: The state of mind of the literalist (sravaka) who is attached to a concept of egolessness.

Question: What state of mind is that which knows the essencelessness of all phenomena?

Answer: The state of mind of the self-directed synthesizers (pratyekas). They have not fully understood emptiness.

Question: What state of mind is that which engenders neither knowledge nor delusion?

Answer: The state of mind of the advanced seekers (bodhisattvas). They have not yet a complete understanding but have no painful delusions.

Question: What is the mind that does not awaken to any thing and does not harbor any knowing?

Answer: (No answer). It is the silence of Vimalakirti. The reason there is no answer is that the Dharma (Truth) cannot answer. The Dharma depends on no thought (no-mind) and an answer depends on thought. The Dharma is speechless and an answer depends on speech. The Dharma is without interpretation and an answer involves interpretation. The Dharma is without knowledge and an answer is the state of having knowledge. The Dharma is without this or that (subject or object) and an answer includes having this and that. Such notions and words are no more than conceptual calculations. The real Dharmakaya has no form; therefore, one hears *it* without hearing. The real Prajna (Wisdom) has nothing to be known; therefore, one knows *it* without knowing. If one thinks they are seeing *it*, they see *it* incompletely. If one thinks that they know *it*, they do not know *it* thoroughly. When one knows *it* without knowing, one knows *it* completely. If one does not understand this, they are not a true knower. If one thinks they are gaining something, they are not really gaining the entirety. When one gains non-gaining, one gains everything. If one thinks they are right, their righteousness is not perfect. When one transcends right and wrong, all virtues are naturally accomplished. Such Wisdom is the gate-opener to a hundred thousand gates of the Buddha-Wisdom.

Mind is not a form and *it* is not connected to forms, yet Mind is not formless and is not connected to formlessness. This clear seeing of the Mind not being connected to any phenomena (inner or outer) is Liberation. If one breaks the ethical precepts, they will become apprehensive (anxious or fearful). However, if such a one understands that the subjective mind

(self) cannot be grasped or apprehended, then even such a one will attain Liberation. Such a one will also understand that rebirth in a high heaven (as a result of spiritual practice) cannot be grasped or apprehended. Even though such a one understands voidness, voidness cannot be grasped or apprehended. All Buddhas teach voidness or emptiness. Why? Because they wish to crush the conceptual or concrete ideas of the students. If a student clings even to an idea of emptiness, they betray all the Buddhas. One clings to life, although there is nothing to be called life; another clings to death, although there is nothing to be called death. In Reality, there is no one to be born, consequently there is no one to perish. Although such a one also understands that nothing can be grasped or apprehended, this no-grasping or no-apprehension cannot be grasped or apprehended.

If mind clings to some phenomena as being spiritually valuable, it will surely have other phenomena to despise. If mind has something that it affirms, it must have something else that it negates. If mind takes only one phenomena to be good, then all other phenomena are non-good. If mind has affection or compassion for only one person, then all other persons become people whom one has a grudge against. Again, Mind does not abide in forms nor does *it* abide in formlessness. Mind does not abide in abiding nor does it abide in no-abiding. If mind has abiding, it will not avoid being confined. If mind has an interior space where it functions, then that is bondage. If mind values or is attached to phenomena, phenomena will keep you back. If mind honors one view as superior, it will necessarily have others that it considers inferior.

It is due to clinging that one fixates on an idea or a concept. Reality has neither inside, outside nor middle part. An ignorant person creates delusions and suffers from those conceptual discriminations. Right and wrong ideas do not exist in Reality. An ignorant person creates them, recognizes them as near or far, inward or outward. They then suffer from those conceptual discriminations. This is the general way of the world.

When you try to grasp the meaning of the Sutras and other treatises, you should not value knowledge. If there are spiritual things that you know, then your mind has become fixated or attached to something. In other words, if mind has some view to be connected to or fixated on, then that is bondage. The Sutra (Srimala Sutra) says, "It is not through inferior, middle or superior teachings that one attains Nirvana". Even if mind has apparently entered delusion, you should not produce the conceptual thought of 'delusionlessness'. If conceptual discrimination appears or conceptual thought arises, rely on Dharma to clearly see the place it arises from. Likewise, whether greed (or craving) or hatred (or ongoing resentment) or

ignorance (or gross stupidity) appear, rely on Dharma to clearly see the place they arise from. Seeking the place they arise from is truly cultivating the Way. If there is arising of any notions, then investigate and relying on Dharma, tidy up!

The Teaching of Buddha conveys the highest Wisdom. However, no one can truly describe *it* without experience or true understanding. Generation after generation, all the Grandmasters worked hard for this Wisdom. None of them wasted time on foolish teachings. They practiced what the ordinary seeker does not practice. They understood what the common spiritual seeker does not understand. If you happen to have some virtues and knowledge of the world, do not be conceited about it. With such petty attainment, how will you ever understand the true Essence of Ch'an?

Question: In cultivating and attaining Buddhahood, are some paths slow and some quick?

Answer: The two approaches are separated by millions of eons. In the case of those for whom mind is the path it is quick. For those practitioners who depend on producing thoughts for Enlightenment and practice, it is slow. People of sharp capacity understand that mind is the path. People of dull capacity seek everywhere for the path and knowledge but lack understanding of its true location. Moreover, they do not understand that mind from the outset is Unexcelled Perfect Enlightenment.

Question: How can one quickly attain Buddhahood?

Answer: Mind is the substance of the path and so one quickly attains Buddhahood. Mind is the essence of the path itself and the end of the path. When the practitioner realizes that delusion has arisen, then relying on Dharma, they introspect and bring about its exhaustion. Ignorant ones create their own timeline according to conceptual spiritual standards. Therefore, they create their own destination according to their own delusions.

Question: How is mind the substance of the path?

Answer: When not understood, mind appears like wood or stone on which a person paints an image. It is like someone who paints dragons and tigers with their own hand, and yet, upon looking at them, becomes frightened. Deluded people are like this. The brush of conceptual thought and attachment to various states of consciousness paints even the hell realms, and yet it is thought and consciousness that fears them. If you clearly see that Mind is fearless, then false conceptual thoughts will be eliminated. The brush of conceptual thought and states of consciousness discriminates and draws notions regarding forms, sounds, smells, tastes and touchables, and

upon looking through those notions produces craving, hatred and stupidity. Consequently, mind appears sometimes to be fixated or repelled by the accompanying likes and dislikes. Due to the discriminations of conceptual thought an ignorant individual mind and states of consciousness are produced with their accompanying various sorts of karma. If you understand that thought and consciousness from the outset have been void (empty) and yet quiescent (Nirvanic) and also avoid fixating on thought or consciousness, then you are cultivating the path. Some, by the discriminations of their own mind, draw tigers, wolves, lions, poisonous dragons, evil spirits, envoys of the five lower rebirths, king Yama, the ox-headed guards of hell, and even the cold hell. These phenomena are discriminations by their own minds but people appear to be then controlled by these phenomena and so they undergo various sufferings. Realize that whatever the mind conceptually discriminates are merely self-produced forms. If you Awaken to the fact that mind from the outset has been void (empty) and yet quiescent (Nirvanic), then you understand that mind itself is not a form and that mind is unconnected to those phenomena. Forms are not forms. They are only constructed in the manner of an illusion by your own mind. If you simply understand that the images are not real, then you will attain Liberation.

When at present you rely on the Three Treasures (Buddha, Dharma, Sangha) as part of treading the path, you must not hold views such as good-bad, craving-aversion, cause-effect, is-is not, keeping the precepts-breaking the precepts, and so forth. If you make these sorts of conceptual calculations, they are all delusions produced by your own mind. If you hold that nothing exists, it is also a delusion produced by your own mind. Perceptions experienced through 'is' and 'is not' are all deluded conceptual thoughts produced by your own mind. If you say that some sort of objective knowledge or wisdom of the Buddhas surpasses all, it is also a delusion produced by your own mind. So one's own mind in the manner of a slight of hand magic trick constructs or conceives of both existence and non-existence and then in turn is deluded by them. The Sutra says, "If you want to truly rely on the Dharmakaya of the Buddha to cultivate the path, conceive neither illusory sentient beings nor real sentient beings". Therefore, the Dharma-Realm is eternal sameness, having neither gain nor loss. If you rely on the Dharmakaya Buddha to cultivate the path, do not seek an objective 'Nirvana'. Why? Because the Dharma is Nirvana. How could you use Nirvana to seek 'Nirvana'? Also, do not seek Dharma because mind is the True Dharma-Realm. How could you use the Dharma-Realm to seek the 'Dharma-Realm'? If you wish to clarify mind, neither fear

phenomena nor seek phenomena. If you try to use the Dharmakaya Buddha objectively to try to cultivate some path, your mind will be like stone – dark, unaware, not wise, undiscerning and stupidly nonchalant about everything, like a very dull ignorant person. Why? The True Dharma is empty of consciousness and knowing. However, this True Dharma can reveal *its* own fearlessness and *it* is a place of great peace.

It is like someone who commits a mortal crime. He surely will be beheaded. However, if it happens that the king grants him a pardon, he avoids the anxiety of the death sentence. Ignorant human beings are also like this. They commit the ten evils and five transgressions and would surely fall into hell but the Dharma King grants them a pardon of great quiescence, and so they avoid the consequences of their sins. If someone who is a good friend of the king ventures off to another locale, kills children there and is grabbed by the local people who want to requite the injury, this person becomes fearful for he has no one to rely on. When he suddenly sees his great king, he obtains liberation. Likewise, even if someone breaks the precepts and commits crimes such as thievery or sexual improprieties and fears falling into hell, when he sees the Dharma King in his own mind, he will then obtain Liberation.

In trying to objectively cultivate the path of this Dharma, the vital energy of those who obtain their understanding through the medium of the written word is weak. On the other hand, if one obtains their understanding from experiences, their vital energy will be robust or lively. Those who see the Dharma via experiences never lose awareness anywhere. When those whose understanding is from the medium of the written word encounter experiences, their eyes are beclouded. To discuss experiences from the knowledge-based point of view in the Sutras and treatises is to be estranged from the Dharma. Although one may chat about experiences and listen to others tell of such, it is not as potent as personal direct experience. This is to be done with the present body and mind. If someone's understanding of these experiences of the Dharma is deep, then worldly and spiritual people will not be able to fathom them. However, they who uncover Wisdom are not bound up even by experiences and so can be called a bodhisattva of great power. If one wishes robust progress in cultivating the mind or the path, they should use mind outside the boundaries that are considered normal or usual.

Question: What experiences are outside the boundaries that are considered normal or usual?

Answer: The spontaneously-so peaceful Mind does not need to realize the understandings of the Mahayana or Hinayana paths; *it* does not need to

produce the intention for Enlightenment nor does *it* wish for the omniscience of a Buddha nor does *it* honor one even if they are accomplished in samadhi, nor does *it* disdain one who is attached or in a state of craving – *it* does not even wish for the Buddha-wisdom. If one does not grasp or seek outside of mind for understanding and Wisdom, they will avoid the delusions and confusions of spiritual and meditation masters. If one seeks the spontaneously-so peaceful Mind and directs one's intention accordingly, they will entertain no wish to be a spiritual person of high status nor a spiritual master nor seek Liberation outside of mind, nor fear the cycle of birth and death or even the hell realms. With no conceptual thoughts (no-mind) such a one directly carries out their responsibilities. If one approaches in this way, for the first time, they will uncover the perfection of what they previously conceived of as a dull mind with normal boundaries. Such a one can see all the transformations (miracles) of the spiritual masters and those of high status due to their supernormal powers - some extending through hundreds of thousands of eons – without producing a grasping mind, and so this one will avoid the deceptions and delusions that plague others.

Question: But how does one produce the state of being outside the boundaries of the norms?

Answer: Even the Confucian virtues of humanness, righteousness, correct performance of ritual, knowledge and faith are all called the mind yet are still within the boundaries of the norms. Viewing in terms of samsara and Nirvana is also called the mind within the boundaries of the norms. If you wish to go outside the boundaries of the norms, jettison the terms and concepts of 'common man' and 'sage'. You will not understand through having a method nor is it a matter of not having a method. It is closer to a state of not-knowing, whether having a method or not having a method. That which ordinary knowledge understands is also said to still be within the boundaries of the norms. When you do not conceptually produce the view of the common man nor the sravaka (literalist follower) nor of the bodhisattva and do not even produce the conceptual view of a Buddha-mind or any mind at all (as an entity) – then for the first time you can be said to have gone outside the boundaries of the norms. If you desire the ceasing of conceptual thought (no-mind), then you do not produce knowledge nor give rise to delusion – so for the first time your experience can be said to have gone outside of everything. When spiritual seekers who view things like worldly morons encounter a spiritual master who tells a cock-n-bull story and who babbles demonic spiritual lines, they come up with their own demonic interpretations which they use as a compass. This

is not worth commenting on. How could such a teacher perform the function of the Great Transmission? These seekers hearing that a certain person leads a large group, have their mind triggered into the motion of seeking externally. However, you should look deeply at your own mind to determine whether it grasps the spoken or written word, or whether it proceeds in this Way with non-grasping.

Question: What is the unadorned mind? What is the mind of clever artifice?

Answer: Relying on spoken and written words is called clever artifice or the product of the mind used in an artificial complicated manner. In Reality, forms and formlessness are the same or equal. Walking, standing, sitting or lying down – all behavior and activity are unadorned. It could be said that movement occurs innocently in the natural simple mind. Even when one encounters any sorrowful or joyful event (or experience), the mind remains immobile, natural and simple (uncomplicated). Seeing this for the first time can be called the unadorned mind.

Question: What is called correct and what is called false regarding mind?

Answer: Having no conceptual mental discrimination is called correct, and having the mind conceptually interpret phenomena (inner and outer) is called false. When you come to the point of emptying the notions of both false and correct, that for the first time can be called truly correct. So the Sutra (Vimalakirti Nirdesa Sutra) says, “Those who follow the correct path do not conceptually discriminate in terms of false or correct”.

Question: What are sharp spiritual capacities and dull capacities?

Answer: The one who, without relying on the literal teachings of a spiritual master, sees the Dharma (Truth and Teaching) in the midst of life's experiences is called one of sharp capacity. Such a one uses their own experience to find the Truth. The one whose knowledge comes from literally following the spoken teachings of a spiritual master in a gradual manner is called one of dull capacity. In hearing the Dharma through the spoken teachings of an Awakened teacher, there are also levels of sharpness and dullness in capacity. If hearing the Teaching from the teacher, one is not attached to existence and yet does not fixate on non-existence; if one is not attached to characteristics and yet does not fixate on characteristiclessness; if one is not attached to manifestation and yet does not fixate on the unmanifest, such a one has sharp capacity. To covet knowledge and grasp meanings, inclusive of views such as 'is' and 'is not', are more conceptual interpretations of the one of dull capacity. When one of sharp capacity hears of the Way, they do not produce the view of the

common worldling nor does such a one even produce the view of a spiritual high being or sage. Concepts of both the common person and the sage are both cancelled. This is how the one of sharp capacity hears the Teaching of the Way. Such a one craves not for material things and sensory experience but also craves not for a 'Buddha's Enlightenment'. If one craves for 'Buddha's Enlightenment', then they will reject disturbance and grasp quietude; reject not-knowing and grasp knowledge, reject the conditioned (the manifest) and grasp the unconditioned (unmanifest). When one approaches in that manner they do not cut off duality and so are impeded. Such is the experience of the one of dull capacity. To truly tread this Way is to go beyond all concepts of worldly and spiritual realms. The one of sharp capacity hears of the Way without producing a grasping or craving view. Such a one does not even produce 'right mindfulness', 'right thinking' and 'right reflection'. So it can be said that such a one hears of the Way without producing the view of the hearer (sravaka or literalist follower) and does not even produce the view of the bodhisattva (advanced seeker gradually progressing). The true bodhisattva takes the Dharmakaya (Realm of Absolute Truth) as their home and the Essence of the four immeasurable minds as the precepts-platform (stage).*

[*Note: The four immeasurable minds are friendliness, compassion, joy and equanimity.]

All behavior to the end of our lives does not exist outside of the Dharmakaya-Mind. Why? Even the body is in the Dharmakaya. Even if you say and do all sorts of activities including the highest dance leap and the best horse kick, none of them leaves or enters the Dharmakaya. If you try to conceptually use the Dharmakaya to enter the Dharmakaya, then you are a stupid seeker. The true bodhisattva clearly sees the Dharmakaya and so is said to have 'the Purity of the Dharma-eye'. That is why the Sutra (Vimalakirti Nirdeśa Sutra) says, "Without extinguishing stupidity and craving, such a one gives rise to Liberation". In Reality, craving from the outset is non-arising (in Mind), so how could it be extinguished? The stupid seeker has spiritual craving and seeks externally, internally or in between, but neither sees nor understands the True Nature of stupidity and craving. Even when such a one spends their life seeking in the ten directions, there is not the slightest fixed characteristic to be found. This is why it is unnecessary to extinguish anything in order to seek Liberation. Question: Ignorant people seriously apply themselves to various sorts of spiritual learning (knowledge). Why do they fail to obtain the Tao?

Answer: This is because they see a self and hence they do not obtain the Tao. If they were to avoid seeing in terms of a self, then they would obtain the Tao. Self means ego or personhood or individuality. The reason why a Buddha meets suffering without being truly sad and encounters pleasure without it being the true source of happiness is that such a one does not see a self. The reason why they have neither suffering nor happiness is that they have lost the sense of self. When you attain to Emptiness, even the self is lost, so what further characteristics can there be that are not lost? In the world how many even try to lose the sense of self? If you can lose the sense of self, everything is revealed to be non-binding and not independently existent from the outset. The notion of a self arbitrarily produces conceptual calculations, and then one is apparently affected by birth, aging, sickness, death, sadness, self-pity, suffering, defilements, and being a victim of cold, heat, wind, rain, and everything else that is not in accord with one's wishes. These are all manifestations of false conceptual thought. It is like a magician's sleight-of-hand – departing (dying) and staying are not under the control of a self. Why? Arbitrarily the self of ignorant people produces resistance and opposition, and they fail to acknowledge that departing and staying are not under the control of a self. The defilements (tendencies) apparently exist because of the grasping of the self and from this spring the concepts of departing and staying. If you understand that departing and staying are not under the control of the self, then in your experience even the appearance of 'mine' will be a sleight-of-hand phenomena incapable of spiritually holding you back. If you do not resist the sleight-of-hand phenomena, then no matter what may come, your mind will not be spiritually hindered. So, if you drop resistance to these transformations, then no matter what may happen, you will have nothing to repent of (or regret).

Question: Since all phenomena are void or empty, who cultivates the Tao?

Answer: If there were a who, then it would be necessary to tread a path and cultivate the Tao. However, if there is no who, then it would be unnecessary to tread a path and cultivate the Tao. The who is the sense of self or personhood or ego. If there is not a self, then no matter what might come, your mind would not produce concepts of 'is' (existence) and 'is not' (non-existence). Existence or 'is' is the self's affirming something; the phenomena are not doing the affirming. Non-existence or 'is not' is the self's negating something; the phenomena are not doing the negating. This can be understood whether examining the external examples like wind and rain or the internal examples like blue, yellow, red or white (internal Buddha visualizations) and so forth. Even craving is due to the self attaching to

some phenomena; the phenomena in themselves are not doing the craving. Why? This can be understood examining such examples as the sense organs, like the eye, ear, nose, and tongue, and the sense objects such as forms, sounds, and so forth.

Question: The (Vimalakirti Nirdeśa) Sutra says, “Walking on pathlessness, one comprehends the path of the Buddhas”. What does this mean?

Answer: Walking on pathlessness is to reject neither names nor characteristics. For the one who has truly comprehended, names are nameless and characteristics are characteristicless. That is why that Sutra also says, “One who walks on pathlessness rejects neither covetousness nor craving”. For the one who has truly comprehended, covetousness is covetousless and craving is cravingless. When walking on pathlessness, suffering is sufferingless and happiness is happinessless – this is called true comprehension. To reject neither birth nor death is called true comprehension. When walking on pathlessness, birth is birthless and yet one does not grasp birthlessness. Self is selfless and yet one does not grasp selflessness. This is called truly comprehending the path of the Buddhas. If you can attain the Wisdom that negation is negationless, and yet do not grasp negationlessness, then this is called truly comprehending the path of the Buddhas. In summary, Mind is no-mind and this is called truly comprehending the path of Mind.

Question: Then what is true comprehension of all things?

Answer: When in the midst of phenomena (outer and inner) your mind does not give rise to views, it is called true comprehension. True comprehension means not engendering conceptual thought in relation to phenomena, not engendering conceptual covetousness for phenomena, and not engendering a conceptual sense of defilement in connection with phenomena. When forms are understood to be formless, it is called truly comprehending forms. When existence is understood to be existenceless, it is called truly comprehending existence. When birth is understood to be birthless, it is called truly comprehending birth. When Dharma is understood to be ‘dharmaless’, it is called truly comprehending the Dharma. With Wisdom, no matter what experience a wise one encounters, they directly truly comprehend. So it is said that such a one’s Wisdom-eye is open. No matter what may appear, they do not view it in terms of seeing differences or sameness in characteristics (of self). This is called true comprehension.

Question: The Sutra (Vimalakirti Nirdeśa) says, “Outsiders take joy in their various views; the true bodhisattva is immutable in the midst of the various

views. The god-demons take joy in birth and death; the true bodhisattva does not reject birth and death”. What does this mean?

Answer: False views are as illegitimate as ‘correct views’; the bodhisattva is immutable. That outsiders take joy in the various views means that they view in terms of existence and non-existence. They view existence as existence and non-existence as non-existence. Understand that the (True Nature of) existence does not partake of existence and that the (True Nature of) non-existence does not partake of non-existence. This is called immutability. This immutability is not some realm apart from the correct or false views. At the time of true understanding, there is no false and no correct, so it is unnecessary to reject the false to seek the correct. Existence does not really partake of the (concept of) existence and it is in that light that the true bodhisattva sees existence in the Immutable State. Non-existence does not really partake of the (concept of) non-existence and it is in that light that the true bodhisattva sees non-existence in the Immutable State. Since such a one relies on Dharma (Truth) to clearly see the lack of difference between the false and the correct, the true bodhisattva is said to be in the Immutable State. Also, because it is unnecessary for them to correct the false to enter the correct, such a one is said to be immutable in the midst of the various views. The Sutra (Vimalakirti Nirveda) says, “By false characteristics clearly seen one enters the correct Dharma. There is no need to reject the eight falsities to enter the eight liberations”. *

[*Note: The eight falsities are the opposites of the noble eightfold path. The eight liberations are the stages of progress towards Nirvana by saints and followers of the small vehicle or Hinayana approach.]

The true bodhisattva understands that birth and death (samsara) is the same as Nirvana and so such a one does not need to reject birth and death. The True Nature of birth is actually birthless. The True Nature of death is actually deathless. The wise one does not depend upon rejecting birth in order to enter birthlessness and does not depend upon rejecting death in order to enter deathlessness. Everything is already quiescent, all is already in Nirvana. That is why the Sutra (Vimalakirti Nirveda) says, “All human beings from the outset are quiescent. They do not need to be extinguished again”. It also says, “All phenomena are Nirvana”. So it is unnecessary to reject birth and death (samsara) for mind to begin to be in Nirvana; just as it is unnecessary for a person to reject a chunk of ice for it to begin to be water. They have the same essence. Because samsara and Nirvana are also in Essence the same, it is unnecessary to reject birth and

death or samsara. Therefore, the true bodhisattva does not reject samsara. As to being fixated in immobility (or immutability), being fixated or grasping the ungraspable is still called fixation. Since outsiders take pleasure in their various views, the bodhisattva teaches them that views are in essence no-views (or empty). One does not need to toil over getting rid of some views and then only afterward to have viewlessness. So the Sutra indicates that the god-demon takes pleasure in samsara, that they reject but that the true bodhisattva does not reject samsara. Such a true bodhisattva wishes to help human beings awaken to the fact that the True Nature of birth is birthless and that one does not have to wait for the rejection of birth in order to enter birthlessness (or the Unborn). It is unnecessary to reject water to find wetness or to reject fire to get heat. Water is wetness, and fire is heat. Samsara is Nirvana. Therefore, the true bodhisattva does not reject samsara to enter Nirvana, because samsara is already identical to Nirvana. Literalist followers try to cut off samsara to enter Nirvana. However, the bodhisattva experientially comes to understand that in Essence they are the same. Relatively, a bodhisattva can by means of great compassion have empathy with beings and take on the function of transforming ignorant beings. Birth and death are different words with one meaning. Immutability and Nirvana likewise are different terms with one meaning.

Question: Is the great path to the Tao near or far?

Answer: It is like a mirage arising from the simmering of heated air – it is neither near nor far. An image of a face in a mirror is also neither near nor far. The stamens in flowers that a person who has ingested a hallucinogenic plant discerns in the sky are also neither near nor far. If you say they are near, how is it that when one seeks for them in the ten directions, they cannot comprehend them. If you say they are far, how is it that they pass clearly before his eyes? So the treatise of Chao-lun (Seng-chao) says, “Near and yet you cannot see it. This is the Nature of the ten thousand things”. If you see the Nature of all phenomena, it is called attaining the great path to the Tao. Seeing the mind of the experience of phenomena is seeing that the Nature of all phenomena is not characterized by thingness (objectivity) – so all things are thingless. This is called seeing the Nature of phenomena or things. Common worldly people believe that all things have the characteristic of shape and that is why they are called things. To clearly see the Nature of all things without error is called seeing the Reality and this is the highest meaning. It is also called seeing the Dharma. “Near and yet you cannot see it” refers to the characteristics of that phenomena or experience. The wise one trusts experience but does

not trust anything to self. So the wise one has no grasping and rejecting, no opposing or conforming. The stupid one trusts self and does not trust experience, and so has grasping and rejecting, opposing and conforming. If you can empty the mind, be unhurried and loose, and completely lose your old view of the world, then you are one who trusts experience and flows with the times.

Trusting experience and flowing with the times is easy, but opposing, resisting and transforming phenomena or experience is difficult. When phenomena 'desire' to come, trust them and do not go against them. If phenomena 'desire' to depart, let them go, do not pursue them. What has been done, let it pass by and do not regret it. Experiences that have not yet arrived, let them go and do not fixate about them. This is the one who is walking the great path to the Tao. If you can trust experience, then put it in charge of your world. Gain and loss do not arise but are produced by the sense of self. If you can trust experience and do not resist; relax and do not oppose it; where and when will you not roam in the vastness?

Question: Why is it said by Lao-tzu that the great path to the Tao is very easy to come to understand and easy to walk on, but no one in the world is capable of understanding it and walking it. Please explain this.

Answer: What you say is correct. When one is attuned to Wisdom, at rest, loose, trusting, not doing any thing (wu wei), they are said to be walking the great path to the Tao. Not seeing any thing is called seeing the great path to the Tao. Not knowing any thing is called cultivating the great path to the Tao. Not practicing any thing (objectively) is called truly practicing the great path to the Tao. Approaching thus, it is said to be easy to come to understand and easy to walk.

Question: The 'Classic of the Old One' (Lao-tzu – Tao Te Ching) says, "Be as careful at the end as at the beginning and there will be no failures". What does this mean?

Answer: This refers to the fact that when a wise person who has true faith or reliance on the Teaching, just one time makes up their mind to achieve Enlightenment, they will never retreat or lose sight of it from that past moment up to now. In fact, making up one's mind that way for the first time constitutes the real now moment. Ignorant people look at old times from the point of view of the present and that constitutes the 'past'. However, the wise look at that first step toward Enlightenment (intention for Awakening) from the point of view of that past moment and that constitutes the real now moment. One whose focus on the great path to Tao runs continuously from beginning to end is called one with true faith (reliance on) in the Dharma of the Buddhas. Seeing the past and the now in this unchanging manner

leads to the fruit of Reality. Those who depend on the unreal are deceived by the flower of illusion (i.e. seeing flowers in the sky due to eye disease is a reference to illusion).

Question: How does the true bodhisattva practice?

Answer: It is not the practice of literalists and saints. It is also not the practice of the common seeker. It is the practice of Truth. If one is training on the true bodhisattva path, one neither seizes (grasps) worldly phenomena nor rejects worldly phenomena. If you can enter this path (Ekayana), leaving thought and states of consciousness as they are, there will be no common seekers nor literalists capable of taking your spiritual measure. That is why it is said in the Vimalakirti Nirdeśa Sūtra that every space or experience of events, forms and even the space or experience of bad karma is used by the true bodhisattva – all are transformed into Buddha-experiences or spaces. In other words, they are all merged into Nirvana. They are all the great path into the Tao. Every space or experience is in its core without space or experience. This is the experience or space of the Dharma (Truth). This is the experience or space of the path (Ekayana). The wise bodhisattva (student of the Tao) examines the fact that every experience or space is the experience or space of the Dharma (Truth). So the true bodhisattva does not reject any experience or space, does not seize or grasp any experience or space, does not select or conceptually choose any experience or space and thus makes all of them into Buddha-experiences or spaces. Even birth and death is made into a Buddha-experience and so too, is delusion transformed into a Buddha-experience or space.

Question: It is said that all phenomena are without self-nature or substance so how is it that they are made into Buddha-experiences or spaces?

Answer: The experience of making every experience into a Buddha-experience is not accomplished via an experience or space of making or manufacturing anything. This is not a path of making or constructing and so in all experiences and spaces, good or otherwise, the true bodhisattvas see the Buddha (Buddha-nature).

Question: What is 'seeing the Buddha'?

Answer: To see no self-characteristic of greed (or craving) in greed is to see the Buddha-Dharma (Truth) in the midst of the experience of greed. To see no self-characteristic of suffering in suffering is to see the Buddha-Dharma (Truth) in the midst of the experience of suffering. To see no self-characteristic of dream in dreams is to see the Buddha-Dharma (Truth) in the midst of the experience of dreams. This is called 'in every experience or

space seeing the Buddha'. If you view in terms of self-characteristics, then in every experience or space you will only see the demons (of ignorance).

Question: Where is the Essence of the Dharma-realm (Dharmakaya) found?

Answer: Every experience or space is the experience or space of the Dharma-realm.

Question: Within the Essence of the Dharma-realm are there such things as upholding the precepts or breaking the precepts?

Answer: Within the Essence of the Dharma-realm there exists neither the worldly nor the holy, neither the upholding or breaking of precepts. Heavenly mansions and hells also do not exist. The True Nature of all inclusive of existence and non-existence ('is' and 'is-not'), suffering and happiness and so forth is constant like space.

Question: Where is the experience or space of Enlightenment found?

Answer: The space you are walking through is the space of Enlightenment. The space you use to lie down is the space of Enlightenment. The space you are sitting in is the space of Enlightenment. The space you are standing on is the space of Enlightenment. Wherever you lift your feet or put them down is the space of Enlightenment.

Question: Please explain the Realm of all the Buddhas (Buddhakaya).

Answer: Phenomena (inner and outer) neither exist nor are non-existent. Not grasping at the understanding that they neither exist nor are non-existent is called the Realm of the Buddhas (Buddhakaya). Since Mind is not unconscious like trees or stones, it cannot be understood by a knowledge of existence, nor can it be understood by a knowledge of non-existence. The Buddha Mind cannot be understood from the point of view of existence. The Dharma-realm (Dharmakaya) cannot be seen through spiritual imagery. That which ordinary knowledge comprehends is but the discriminations of false conceptual thoughts. Though you make many spiritual interpretations, they are all the calculations of your own mind – false conceptual thoughts produced in your own mind. The Wisdom of all the Buddhas cannot be shown to people through speech nor can it be hidden away nor can you increase it by means of meditation techniques or concentrations. So Manjusri says (in the Vimalakirti Nirdeśa Sutra), "According to my understanding, in the Dharma (Truth) there are neither words nor speech, neither showing nor knowing. The Dharma is free of all questions and answers. This is the Dharma-gate of the not-two (nonduality)". Cutting off interpretations and knowing is called entering the

Realm of the Buddhas (Buddhakaya). *This* which cannot be measured is called the Buddha Mind. If you can have faith or understand that the Buddha Mind is like this, then you will easily transcend all the defilements (tendencies) which are as numerable as the grains of sand of the Ganges River. If you understand Mind to be like this and you are mindful that the Buddha-Wisdom is also like this, your focus on the path will grow stronger day by day.

Question: Why is it said that the sun of the Tathagata's Wisdom appears to sink beneath the land of existence?

Answer: If you see Emptiness as objectively existing, then it is said that the sun of Wisdom appears to sink beneath the land of existence. This is also the case if you see characteristiclessness (of Nirvana) as one more characteristic.

Question: What is characterized by immutability?

Answer: When you do not conceptually apprehend existence, there is no existence for Mind to be moved by. When you do not conceptually apprehend non-existence, there is no non-existence for Mind to be moved by. When mind is no-mind, there is no (personal) mind for Mind to be moved by. When characteristics are seen to be characteristicless, there are no characteristics for Mind to be moved by. Therefore we say Mind is characterized by immutability. If there is still someone there who comes to this sort of realization, they are said to have deluded themselves. Such is not yet true understanding. When you truly understand, there is nothing to be understood.

Question: In what appears before us one sees that there is arising and extinguishing (appearing and disappearing). Why is it said that ultimately there is no arising and extinguishing?

Answer: That which arises from conditions is not said to have truly arisen (on its own), precisely because it arose from conditions. That which is extinguished due to conditions is incapable of disappearing on its own, precisely because it disappears due to conditions.

Question: Why is it said that that which arises from conditions has not truly arisen in mind?

Answer: This is so because it arises from conditions. It does not arise from another identical phenomenon nor does it arise from itself; nor does it arise from both another and itself; nor does it arise without a cause. There are no independent phenomena that arise in Mind. In fact, in Mind there is nothing that arises. There is no separate space or experience of arising. Therefore, we come to understand non-arising. That which you see as independent

phenomena arising and extinguishing is illusory arising, not real arising, and illusory extinguishing, not real extinguishing.

Question: Why does the common ignorant person fall into evil rebirths?

Answer: This happens because they have a sense of self and are stupid. Such a person says, "I drink wine". The wise one says, "When you have no wine, why don't you drink winelessness?" Even if the stupid person were to say, "But I drink winelessness"; the wise one would say, "Where is this I?" The stupid person also says, "I commit a sin". The wise one says, "What actually is your sin?" All of this nonsense appears as conditioned arising, lacking a self. When it arises, you should understand there is no self, so who commits the sin and who receives the religious punishment? So the Sutra says, "Common ignorant persons insist on discriminating, saying 'I crave, I am angry, and so on'. Such people will then fall into the three evil rebirths". Another Sutra (Vimalakirti Nirdeśa) says, "Sin is intrinsically neither internal nor external, nor is it between the two". This illustrates the point that sin is not localized. This which cannot be localized is the space or experience of quiescence. When human beings fall into a hell realm, this is because from mind they artificially calculate a sense of self. They then remember and discriminate among phenomena, saying, "I commit evils, and I receive punishments. I do good deeds, and I receive rewards". This is called evil karma. From the outset, no such things have ever existed, but they arbitrarily conceptually remember and discriminate, saying that they exist. This is the real 'evil karma'.

Question: Who can cross over the self to Nirvana?

Answer: Dharma (Truth and Teaching) can cross over the self. How can this be understood? By seizing upon or grasping characteristics, one appears to fall into a hell. By introspecting the Dharma, one is Liberated. That is why it is said that if you view in terms of characteristics, arbitrarily conceptually remember and discriminate, then you will apparently suffer from the three hells and so forth. Consequently, you will see manifested before you the characteristics of samsara (repetitive cycle of suffering). If you see that the Dharmakaya (Realm of the Absolute Truth) is the Nirvana-nature and you are without conceptual memory and discrimination, then all is the Substance of the Dharmakaya.

Question: What is the Substance of the Dharmakaya?

Answer: The Mind is the Substance of the Dharmakaya. This Dharma is non-objective. *It* is without boundaries, as vast and expansive as space, invisible. This is called the Substance of the Dharmakaya.

Question: What is the true understanding of the Dharma (Truth)?

Answer: Dharma is not a state of 'enlightenment' nor a state of knowledge. One whose mind is without a concept of enlightenment and without knowledge is one who truly understands the Dharma. Dharma does not involve either knowing or seeing. So if mind does not know or see, this is called truly seeing the Dharma. Not knowing anything is called truly knowing the Dharma. Not apprehending anything is called truly apprehending the Dharma. Not conceptually discriminating anything is called truly discriminating the Dharma.

Question: The Dharma is said to be no-seeing, but is *it* unimpeded knowing and seeing?

Answer: Not-knowing is unimpeded knowing. Not-seeing is unimpeded seeing.

Question: The Dharma is said to have no notion of enlightenment or awakening, yet Buddha means 'awakened one'. Why is this?

Answer: Yes, the Dharma is said to be no concept of awakening and Buddha does mean 'awakened one'. This no-awakening is true Awakening and this Awakening to the Mind in a state of identity with the Dharma is Buddha-Awakening. If you are diligent only in the practice of gazing at the characteristics of mind, you will only see the characteristics. However, if you are diligent in the practice of looking at the space or experience of mind, then you will realize that it is the space of quiescence, the space of non-arising, the space of Liberation, the space of Emptiness (the Void), the space of Enlightenment. The space of mind is unlocalized. It is the space of the Dharmakaya, the space of the seat of Enlightenment (Bodhimandala), the space of the One Dharma-gate, the space of Wisdom, the space of unimpeded meditation. However, a person who has but a conceptual understanding or knowledge is someone who has fallen into a pit or slipped into a ditch.

Question: The six perfections are said to produce Supreme Wisdom. Is this true?

Answer: The perfections have neither self nor other, so who would receive or obtain anything? It is said in the Vimalakirti Nirdesa Sutra, "If the giver with an equal mind gives to the lowest beggar, it is indistinguishable from the marks of a Tathagata's field of merit. It is equal to great compassion and seeks no reward. This is called complete Dharma-giving". This is the true perfection of giving. Regarding Supreme Wisdom, there are neither events nor causes. There is neither taking joy in Nirvana nor growing weary of samsara. The Substance is Suchness. Ultimately, there is no-one to

seek 'is' (existence) or 'is not' (non-existence). Who seeks what? If concepts of 'is' and 'is not' do not arise, then the realm of experience will be pure and so can be called the perfection of ethics. The Mind has no internal or external. Concepts of this (subject) and that (object) have no basis to rely upon. It is like the nature of sound that lacks anything concrete to be defiled. It is the same everywhere, like space. Seeing this is called the perfection of patience. Transcendent over the conceptual measurements of the various organs of perception is the Ultimate Wisdom. Approaching thus, the mind opens up revealing the Substance but not abiding in any characteristics. This is called the perfection of energetic application. The three times of past, present and future likewise have no characteristics. Not for a moment is there a space or experience for Mind to abide in. Mind dwells in neither worldly events nor spiritual spaces or experiences. Thus, quiet and disturbance are both intrinsically Suchness. This is called the perfection of meditation. Nirvana and Suchness are in essence indivisible and non-objective. When mind does not engage with futile spiritual theories, signs, concepts and discriminations and is transcendent of thought, intellect and consciousness and does not abide in spiritual techniques, it is called Suchness. In Suchness, there is nothing to be used. Mind uses (functions) yet *it* is not using anything (i.e. is non-functioning). That is why the same Sutra says, "Treading the path with wisdom brings release (Liberation)". Therefore this is called the perfection of wisdom.

Question: What is the Mind of Liberation?

Answer: Because Mind is formless, *it* is not connected to forms; and yet Mind is not formless and is not connected to formlessness. So, although Mind illuminates forms, *it* is not connected to forms; although Mind illuminates formlessness, *it* is not connected to formlessness. Mind is not something that can be seen through the characteristics of form. Although Mind is formless, *it* is not a mere nothingness or absence. Mind is formless and yet Mind is not the same as the emptiness of the sky or space. Thus the Mind of the true bodhisattva clearly illuminates both the Void and the non-void. Even though the Hinayana adept illuminates the Void, the non-void is not illuminated. Even though the literalist follower apprehends the Void, the non-void is not apprehended.

Question: Why is it said that the Buddha-mind is neither existent nor non-existent?

Answer: The Mind-Substance is without substance. Actually, *it* is the Dharma-Substance. Mind is formless, and so *it* is not existent. Mind

functions ceaselessly, and so *it* is not non-existent. Because Mind functions and yet is constantly void, *it* is not existent. Mind is void and yet constantly functioning, *it* is not non-existent. Relatively, because mind lacks substance, it is not existent; and because it apparently arises due to conditions, it is not non-existent. The common ignorant person abides in the belief or concept of existence. The Hinayana adept abides in the belief or concept of non-existence. The true bodhisattva abides in neither existence nor non-existence. However, this division is a false conceptual framework calculated by your own mind. In Reality, forms are formless and are never defiled by appearing as form. In Reality, formlessness is the same as form and is not defiled by appearing formless. Clear seeing is neither seeing nor not seeing and this is called seeing the Dharma (Truth). Clear understanding is neither knowing nor not knowing and this is called understanding the Dharma (Truth). Any objective spiritual knowing is also called false conceptual thought. Mind is no-mind. Because Mind is no-mind, *it* is called the Dharma-Mind. Unfortunately, today's practitioners conceive the Dharma-Mind as the destruction of all delusions. Mind is like space, indestructible and therefore *it* is called the Adamantine-Mind. Mind does not abide in abiding nor in non-abiding and therefore *it* is called the Mind of Wisdom. The Mind-Nature is broad and vast. The Mind's operation is directionless and therefore *it* is called the Mahayana-Mind. The Mind-Substance is all-penetrating, without obstacles, unimpeded, and therefore *it* is called the Enlightened Mind. Mind has no boundaries and is non-localized. Mind is without characteristics and so *it* does not have limits. Because Mind functions ceaselessly, *it* is not nothingness. Mind does not have limits nor is *it* limitless and therefore *it* is called the Mind of Reality and the Truth of the highest meaning. Mind has neither multiplicity nor uniformity (variations nor variationlessness) and so Mind is non-objective and empty. Mind appears as variationless yet *it* is not an objective substance. Mind, in Reality has neither variation nor variationlessness. Therefore, *it* is called the Mind of Suchness. Relatively, mind's lack of transformation is called variationlessness and mind's transformation according to phenomena is called variation but the Mind of True Suchness is neither. Mind is neither internal, nor external, nor in between. Mind is not to be found in any of the directions. Mind having no space (or experience) to abide in is the space wherein the Dharma abides – the space wherein the Dharmakaya abides and so *it* is also called the Dharmakaya-Mind. The True Nature of Mind is neither existent nor non-existent. Mind is not changed by the past, present or future; therefore we call *it* the Mind of the Dharma-Nature. Mind has neither arising (birth) nor extinguishing (death),

and therefore *it* is called the Nirvana-Mind. If you make those sorts of interpretations, you are under the sway of the perversion of false conceptual thought. You do not even understand the realm of phenomena experienced by and in your own mind. This is called the mind of undulating waves (or samsaric mind).

Question: How is the realm of phenomena experienced by and in one's own mind?

Answer: Even if you see that all phenomena appear to exist, that existence is not existent in and of itself. The conceptual calculations of your own mind have created that notion of existence. If you see that all phenomena do not exist, that non-existence is not non-existent in and of itself. The conceptual calculations of your own mind have created that notion of non-existence. This extends to all such conceptual dualities regarding all phenomena. In other words, in all cases the conceptual calculations of one's own mind create existence and non-existence. Even greed or craving is created by conceptual interpretations. In all these cases one's own mind has produced ignorant views and one's own mind has conceptually calculated the non-localized Mind. This is called false conceptual thought. Although you yourself say you are beyond the calculated conceptual views of those who follow non-Buddhist paths, proceeding as you are is also false conceptual thought. Even if you engage in spiritual talk about no-thought and non-discrimination, it is but false conceptual thought.

Remember, when walking, the Dharma is walking. It is not the self walking. It is not the self not walking. When sitting, the Dharma is sitting. It is not the self sitting. It is not the self not sitting. Entertaining those sorts of interpretations is just more false conceptual thought. Take care of your mind.



Miscellaneous Teachings of Bodhidharma

The great master Bodhidharma always pointed to things (phenomena) and asked their meaning. He simply pointed to something and asked: 'What do you call this?' or 'What is this really?' He asked about many things and changed the names of the things around and would ask again. This included 'does this body exist?' 'What experience is this body?' 'Does this realm or experience exist?' 'What realm is this experience?' and so on. He also said, 'Clouds and mists in the sky can never defile the sky. However, they can apparently screen off the sky so that they should not be considered as bright and pure. The Nirvana Sutra says, "There are no six internal sense consciousnesses and no six external sense objects. Internal and external are both fused and so it is called the Middle Path".'



Bodhidharma said, "When one abandons the false and embraces the true in the simplicity of empty mind, they find that there is neither selfhood nor otherness. They will not then be guided by any literary teachings, for they are in silent communion with the Principle itself, free from conceptual discriminations. Such is to find serenity and wu-wei." (no need to spiritually do anything)



[Manuscript from the Tung-huang caves]

Bodhidharma: The Ultimate Mind, which is Awareness, is without words but to give expression to it words are borrowed. The great Tao has no form but in order to explain it to those who are ignorant, it is revealed in analogies related to form.

Question: Is the Ultimate Mind or Awareness conscious or unconscious?

Bodhidharma: *It* is unconscious of itself as an object.

Question: If the Ultimate Mind is unconscious, who is it that does all the seeing, hearing, remembering and recognizing? Who is it that recognizes this unconscious Mind?

Bodhidharma: It is just because of Awareness or Mind that seeing, hearing, remembering and recognizing are possible. It is just because of Awareness that Awareness is recognized.

Question: How is it possible for this unconscious (non-objective) Mind to see, to hear, to remember or to recognize? Mind itself would be incapable of all this.

Bodhidharma: Although Mind is not conscious (of itself as an object) *it* can see, hear, remember and recognize.

Question: If Mind can see, hear, remember and recognize, it cannot be unconscious – it must be a separate conscious being.

Bodhidharma: To see, to hear, to remember and to recognize – these are the very acts (functions) of the Awareness. Awareness or Mind does not exist in a separate unconscious realm apart from the seeing, hearing, remembering and recognizing. I am afraid that you do not understand this. I will see to it that the matter is explained step by step and thus you are led into the Truth. For instance, when seeing occurs, it is said that there is “seeing” but it is in contrast to not-seeing. Even seeing is made up of Awareness or Mind. Even hearing is made up of Awareness or Mind. When hearing occurs, it is said that there is “hearing” but it is in contrast to not-hearing. When remembering occurs, it is said that there is “remembering” but it is in contrast to not-remembering. Even remembering is made up of Awareness or Mind. When recognizing occurs, it is said that there is “recognizing” but it is in contrast to not-recognizing. Even recognizing is made up of Awareness or Mind. When functioning occurs, it is said that there is “doing” but this doing is indeed not-doing. Even the doing is made up of Awareness or Mind. Therefore we say that seeing, hearing, remembering and recognizing – all these are of Awareness or Mind.

Question: How can we know that Mind is not objectively conscious of itself?

Bodhidharma: You should examine the matter more closely. Tell me if Mind has any perceivable form. If you say that it has, such would not be the real (or true) Mind. Is Mind to be considered existing within or outside or mid-way? Mind is not to be located at any of these three reference points. Nor can Mind be perceived as objectively existing in any other possible place or space. Hence we say that Mind is not conscious of itself as an object.

Question: O’ Teacher, if Mind already prevails everywhere in perfection, there should be neither guilt nor merit. Why then do beings transmigrate through the six realms of samsaric existence and thus constantly go through repeating births and deaths?

Bodhidharma: This is because those beings are confused regarding Mind. They conceive the illusive idea or concept of an individual existing in Mind and thus create all kinds of karma based on this erroneous clinging to the notion that there is really a separate individual conscious mind. It is for this

reason that they transmigrate through the six realms and constantly go through repeating births and deaths.

It is like a person seeing in the dusk a table or a piece of rope, which they then take for a departed spirit (ghost) or for a snake. They thus get terrified of their own imagination. In a like manner, ignorant beings cling to their own illusive creations. Where there is only Mind or Awareness, they erroneously imagine a “real individual conscious mind”. Then they act in such a way as to produce various sorts of karma and transmigrate through the six realms of samsaric existence. Such beings are well advised to find a really good spiritual friend (teacher) who has vast spiritual insight or Wisdom and to practice the meditation that they are taught which will lead them to the realization of Mind. When this is done, all their karmic hindrances vanish and the chain of bondage to birth and death is cut asunder. Just like sunlight penetrates at once into the darkness and dispels all of it, so all of their “sins” or ignorances are destroyed when they realize Mind or Awareness.

Question: I may be an ignoramus but my mind sees differences everywhere. Is this due to the different functioning of the six senses as they respond everywhere to stimulation?

Bodhidharma: The various conceptual contrivances are alone the difficulty. They alone produce the experience of differences everywhere although the differences are not real but only seem so in words.

Question: There are evil cravings and Enlightenment, samsara and Nirvana – are all these indeed Mind?

Bodhidharma: Most assuredly, they are none other than Mind or Awareness. Just because beings erroneously cling to the notion of a separate individual conscious mind (or entity), there seem to be evil cravings and Enlightenment, samsara and Nirvana. If they are Awakened to Mind, there are no evil passions, no enlightenment, no birth and death (samsara) and no nirvana. It was for the sake of those harboring the concept of a separate individual conscious mind, that the Tathagata spoke of “Enlightenment” as opposed to evil cravings and of “Nirvana” as opposed to samsara (or birth and death). All these names are mutually codependent. When Mind, which is no-mind, is attained, there are neither evil cravings nor enlightenment, neither samsara nor nirvana.

Question: If there is neither enlightenment nor nirvana, how do you account for the Enlightenment which is said to have been attained by the Buddhas of the past?

Bodhidharma: This is talked about that way only because of conventional phraseology. As far as Absolute Truth is considered, there is no such thing.

Therefore, it is said in the Vimalakirti Nirdeśa Sūtra that there is no one in which Enlightenment is to be realized and no separate individual conscious mind by which Enlightenment is to be realized. Again, it is said in the Diamond Sūtra that there is not a phenomena or objective reality which one can claim to have attained – that all of the Buddhas' attainment is really no-attainment. Therefore, let it be understood that all conceptual phenomena arise only when a separate individual conscious mind is asserted; and that all conceptual phenomena cease to exist when Mind or Awareness is realized.

Question: You say that Mind or Awareness is everywhere. Now, wood and rock would be Mind and all human beings would be the same as wood and rock?

Bodhidharma: When Mind or Awareness is realized, it is the Essence of even the apparently separate conscious mind and not like wood and rock. Why? It is like the celestial drum, which while lying still, spontaneously and without conscious efforts, produces endless varieties of exquisite sound in order to teach and guide all beings. It is again like the wish-fulfilling gem (mani-jewel) which, without conscious efforts on its own part, creates spontaneously all the varieties of form. In like manner Mind or Awareness apparently functions through the conscious mind, making it understand the True Nature of Reality. Thus the conscious mind is endowed with true Transcendental Wisdom, the Trikaya and at the same time functions with utmost freedom. So, it is said in the Ratnakuta Sūtra that the mind functions by means of Mind or Awareness without being conscious of it. So how can we then be like wood and rock? No-mind is the True Mind and the True Mind is Awareness.

Question: How shall we practice then with this relative conscious mind of ours?

Bodhidharma: Only let us be Awakened to Mind in all phenomena, all experience and all our doings – this is the way of true practice, there is no other way. Then you understand that when Mind or Awareness is realized, all sufferings cease to trouble you.

Hearing this, the student all at once had a profound illumination. He realized that there is no matter outside Mind and that no-mind is the one Substance. In all his behaviors and activities, he thus acquired perfect freedom, all his net of doubts was torn to pieces and he felt no obstructions.



The Recorded Sayings of Bodhidharma's Dharma-Successors: Masters Yuan and Hui-k'o

[Direct Students of Grandmaster Bodhidharma]

Master Yuan said: Even when you think you are on the verge of seizing a lofty sense of spiritual willpower, bondage and habit energy will surely not melt away.

Question: What is meant by bondage and what is meant by residual habit energy?

Master Yuan: Conceiving of arising and extinguishing is bondage. Conceiving of a spiritual non-arising and non-extinguishing is the residual habit energy of a stupid spiritual person. Do not indulge those concepts.

Question: Should one rely on the holy teaching or should one rely on people (teachers)?

Master Yuan: When in accord with Wisdom you rely neither on people nor holy teaching. Such is my direct understanding. If you rely on the holy teaching and do not rely on people, it is still just one way of viewing things. If you rely on people and do not rely on the holy teaching, it is the same. If you have correct energetic exertion, you will avoid the deceptive delusions of people and holy teachings and the spirit of your quest will be alright. When you esteem spiritual knowledge, you will be deceived by both people and holy teachings. If you value only one person as correct, then you will not avoid the deceptive confusions of that person; and this is true even to the point where if you say that a Buddha is the supreme person, you will still not avoid deceiving yourself. Why? This is because you are still deluded about the realm of phenomena. In fact, by relying on that person rather than faith in Mind (relying on Mind), your quest becomes slow and heavy. Stupid spiritual people say that a Buddha is supreme among human beings. They further say that Nirvana is supreme among holy teachings. Thus they are deluded and confused by both people and holy teachings. If you say that it matters not whether one experiences or does not experience the Dharma-Nature and Reality, but you believe in a self-nature that neither arises nor extinguishes, then you are deceiving and deluding yourself.

Once Master Yuan was on the street of the butchers.

Dharma Master Chih saw him, went up to him and asked: How could you be here? Do you not see the butcher slaughtering the sheep?*

[*Note: In traditional Buddhism the butchering of sheep is listed as the first of twelve wicked things. Monks are generally forbidden to go to the house of a thief, the house of an untouchable, the place of a butcher, the place of a prostitute, and any place that deals in wine.]

Master Yuan: My eyes are not blind. How could I not see them? You are (conceptually) seeing it on top of seeing it! If you hold a view that assigns characteristics, it is the view of the common ignorant person. If you hold a view of mere voidness, it is the view of the two vehicles (Hinayana and Mahayana). If you hold a view of intellectually negating existence or non-existence, it is the view of a pratyeka (individual synthesizer). If you hold a view of beings as existing and deserving of pity and sympathy, it is still the view of compassion with attachment. This type of compassion with its limited view should be rejected. If you use thought to create views, this is like the views of the followers of non-Buddhist paths. Even if you make use of consciousness to view, it is still the view of the god-demons. If you do not conceive of forms or formlessness, your mind will no longer have views. You may wonder how one should view in order to be free of all these errors. I have nothing whatsoever to do with these sorts of views at all, and that is what is called really seeing the view. Because you create false conceptual thoughts such as these, you are deluding and confusing yourself.

A certain person asked: Why do you not teach me the orthodox dharma (teaching)?

Master Yuan: If I were to set up an orthodox teaching to teach you, it would not be leading you in the right direction. If I were to teach such orthodoxy, it would be deceiving you; it would be failing you. If I had the true Dharma, how could it be verbally or intellectually explained? I do not know how I could speak of it to you. It comes down to this – if the Teaching is presented in terms and written words, all of it will deceive you. How could even a mustard seed of the real meaning of the great Tao be communicated? If I lecture on spiritual orthodoxy, what purpose would that serve?

The person repeated their question.

Master Yuan was silent.

Another questioner asked: How does one quiet the mind?

Master Yuan: You must not engender an artificial mental focus on the great Tao. Mind in and of *itself* cannot be known. Mind is mysterious and not something to be intellectually concerned about.

Questioner: What is the Tao?

Master Yuan: When you desire to produce thoughts of progressing along a path to the Tao, crafty cleverness will arise and you will fall into having conceptual thought. In your craving to give rise to the knowledge of the Tao, ingenious artifice will arise. If you have techniques on your mind, crafty artifice will always arise.

Question: What is crafty artifice?

Master Yuan: If you use intellectual knowledge to seek a name for yourself, a hundred ingenious artificial schemes arise. If you truly desire to cut off this crafty spiritual artifice, don't produce knowledge about Enlightenment and don't rely on knowledge of the Sutras and treatises. If you can accomplish this, then for the first time you will have correct energetic exertion. If you have the spirit of the quest - do not esteem knowledge, do not seek Dharma externally and do not love intellectual understanding, then you will discover real quiet. If you do not seek some sort of special spiritual knowledge and do not try to serve as a teacher for people, and also do not take orthodox teaching as your guide, you will walk free spontaneously. If you do not give rise to the demon of spiritual conceptual thought, I can lead you.

Question: What is the demon of spiritual conceptual thought?

Master Yuan: Closing the eyes, either completely or half-way, in the formal cross-legged seated posture and trying to enter some samadhi (trance or altered state) is an example of spiritual conceptual thought.

Question: What if I gather the mind into a meditative state so that it does not move?

Master Yuan: This is but bondage or 'bondage samadhi'. It is useless. This holds true even for the practice of the four dhyanas (stages of meditation according to the orthodox teaching), each of which is merely one stage of artificial quiescence from which you will return to disturbance again. Such approaches are not to be valued. These are thought-created teachings whose effects will be destroyed again and again – not the Ultimate Dharma. If you can understand that in mind intrinsically there is neither quiescence nor disturbance, then you will understand that Mind is so of *itself*. The one who is not drawn to abiding in quiescence or disturbance is the one who has the true spirit of the quest. If one does not seize on

interpretations nor create delusional concepts nor esteem vast knowledge, then their mind will be at peace. If there is any view that is esteemed or valued, this view will be capable of spiritually binding you and you will fall into conceptual thought. That is an unreliable state of affairs. Unfortunately, there are innumerable common spiritual people throughout the world who are bound by their grasping at terminology and the written word.



Sakya Seng-k'o, also known as Hui-k'o (487-593), was from Hu-lao (Honan) and his family name was Chi. He was originally educated in the Confucian classics and history as well as Taoist teachings. His family was said to have several Taoist scholars and was very educated. He was considered quite intelligent with an excellent memory, and his intellectual powers were so remarkable that he could read ten lines in the time it took an ordinary person to read one. The death of his parents caused Hui-k'o to turn to Buddhism. He read many Buddhist books and went around to every center of Buddhist learning in order to study a vast array of both Hinayana and Mahayana teachings. In about 519, when he was thirty-two years old, he became a Buddhist monk in a temple near Lo-yang. He later studied more Buddhist texts and scriptures. His intellectual knowledge increased greatly and he also commenced meditation in solitude. However, some of his spiritual companions were critical of his approach and informed him that 'perfecting the path is not something done anew by each practitioner and wise people value having a transmission from a living master'. One of them pointed out that 'his path was merely one of expedience and lacked a real strategy. He seemed to possess understanding but it was not lofty'.

When Hui-k'o reached forty years of age (about 528), he encountered the Indian monk Bodhidharma, who was traveling about sharing the Teaching in the area of Mount Sung and Lo-yang. Hui-k'o came to cherish deeply Bodhidharma and regarded him as a treasure who embodied the Tao. Bodhidharma was pleased with him and accepted him as a student. To the end of Master Bodhidharma's life, Hui-k'o stayed with him and studied the purport of the Teaching. He trained for six years (some sources say nine years), making a subtle investigation into the Teaching of the One Vehicle (Ekayana). Principle and phenomena fused, suffering and joy became unobstructed. His understanding was not of the provisional sort, for his Wisdom emerged from the One Mind (Buddha-mind). Hui-k'o regarded experience in the manner of a potter, grinding up the duality of purity and defilement, shaping it as if it were clay, and thus coming to a

living understanding or Awakening. Hui-k'o wrote in a letter to a student: "To truly comprehend the Dharma as it is, is to discover the deepest truth in the Principle which is the identity of mind and Buddha (Buddha-nature). When deluded, one calls the mani-jewel a potsherd. Suddenly one is Awakened and it is recognized as the mani-jewel that mind is always in possession of. Ignorance and Wisdom are identical, not different – of one Essence. All phenomena are Suchness as they are. Those who entertain a dualistic view are to be pitied and I write this letter to provide clarity for them and you. When we understand that between our experience and Buddha, there is nothing to separate one from the other, what is the use of seeking after Nirvana as something external to mind."

Bodhidharma died at Lo River Beach. Hui-k'o buried the body (possibly in a cave) without the usual formal proper ceremonies on the bank of the river. Later, monks and lay people came and politely asked to follow Bodhidharma's teaching. Hui-k'o then unleashed his astounding discourses on the Teaching which revealed the Mind Essence. Hui-k'o said, "Though you may be able to expound the verbal formulations of Bodhidharma's teaching, the intention behind it will not be understood. Abstruse books are but to look from afar. If you approach that way you have not even begun to experience it in your minds!"

Later, at the beginning of the T'ien-p'ing era (about 534) Hui-k'o went north to Yeh-tu, the new capital of the Eastern Wei empire and taught quietly there. In about 574, there was a period of political turmoil and Buddhist persecution and so Hui-ko sought refuge in the mountains near the Yang-tze River. There he met the layman Seng-tsan, who studied with him for six years and who was to become his Dharma successor and the Third Chinese Grandmaster of Ch'an. In 579 Hui-k'o returned to Yeh-tu and publicly expounded the Dharma while leading a life that resembled a layperson's. Even though Hui-k'o had lived much of his life amongst scholars and monks, he frequently worked as an itinerant laborer, and was known to frequent the wine market and the butcher shop, to demonstrate to the students that environment posed no obstacle to the Mind of tranquility and humility. The area was populated with stagnant spiritual seekers who endlessly wrangled about the written words and viewed spirituality in terms of 'is' and 'is not'. At that time there was a meditation master named Tao-heng who had undergone formal meditation training and was certified as a master. His supporters included the royal lineage in Yeh-tu and his followers numbered about one thousand. Upon coming in contact with Hui-k'o's Dharma and hearing a Dharma talk, he came to the conclusion that Hui-k'o's teaching in fact conveyed nothing of substance and he called it

the 'talk of the evil one'. Tao-heng then dispatched his most clever follower to publicly debate and defeat Hui-k'o and his school. The follower arrived and heard Hui-k'o's teaching on the Dharma and felt in his mind very much inclined to become a student. His sadness over his previous mission moved him emotionally to the point where he had no intention of returning to report to Tao-heng. Tao-heng summoned him once more but he still ignored the order. Other summons were sent by Tao-heng but still the follower did not return. Eventually Tao-heng encountered the clever follower and demanded an explanation saying, "Why is it necessary to recall you so many times?" The follower answered, "I now understand that my vision was intrinsically perfect. It became faulty because of you, Master, and your teaching."

Subsequently, Tao-heng developed a very deep hostility toward Hui-k'o and vilified him frequently. He eventually bribed an imperial guard to assassinate Hui-k'o for no reason whatsoever. That guard arrested Hui-k'o. It is said that Hui-k'o had not a bit of hatred as death approached. On the other hand, Tao-heng's group rejoiced and Tao-heng subsequently sent another man to finish the matter and 'cut off Hui-k'o's spiritual frivolities'. Upon meeting Hui-k'o, the new assassin hesitated with sword in hand. It is said that he listened to Hui-k'o expounding the One Vehicle Dharma with joy and fear crisscrossed in his experience. It is almost like the depth of the sea and the shallowness of a wet hoof print in the road coexisted within his mind. Hui-k'o appeared relaxed, accepting and in accord with both the situation and the Tao. It is said that at that time he blessed the assassin with pure counsel. With this the assassin was cleansed of the malice he harbored and his crudities were dispelled. It is said that the true Tao is far off and difficult to spot but, when one cuts off the ignorance, *it* is near at hand and is easy to unite with. This is the point of the story. Other accounts say that the spiritual teachers Bodhiruci and Vinaya Master K'uang-t'ung had six attempts made on the life of Bodhidharma and Hui-k'o as well. According to one account, Hui-k'o lost his left forearm due to one such attack but other accounts say it was severed by bandits.

Subsequently, Hui-k'o wandered away from Yeh-tu and Wei and chose locations regardless of coldness and warmth. His life story is obscure and dark. Later, the Tang Dynasty Emperor Te-t'sung gave Hui-k'o the honorific name 'Ta-tsu' (Great Ancestor). Some traditions have it that Hui-k'o was later executed after complaints about his teaching by other influential Buddhist priests. It is said that in 593, a famous priest named P'ien-ho accused Hui-k'o of heresy, and the local magistrates had the

elderly Hui-k'o executed. Some say that he did not produce any other successors except for Seng-tsan.



[Note: The following text was recovered from the Tun-huang caves in China.]

Records of the Teachers and Students of the Lanka

[Excerpts]

The one who took up the Transmission after the Ch'an Master Bodhidharma was Ch'an Master Hui-k'o. His lay surname was Chi and he was from Wu-lao. At a young age (possibly his early thirty's) he met Bodhidharma, who was traveling and teaching in the region. Hui-k'o served him for six years, investigating the One Vehicle (Ekayana) with pure energy and drawing near to the mysterious inner Truth. Hui-k'o gave the following outline account of cultivating the Tao and of the essential method for illuminating Mind, whereby one reaches the fruit of Enlightenment.

“The Lankavatara Sutra says, ‘Shakyamuni contemplated in stillness, and thus left birth and death far behind’. In the true Dharma (Teaching) this is called ‘not grasping’. Of all the Enlightened ones (Buddhas) of the ten directions, past and present, there is not one who became a Buddha (Awakened) without a basis in this type of Ch'an or meditation. The Ten Stages Sutra says, ‘Within the realm (experience) of ordinary human beings there is an indestructible Enlightened Nature. *It* is like the orb of the sun: *it* is bright, round (formless) and full – *it's* Light (Awareness) is vast and boundless’. Because this Nature appears covered by the layered clouds of concepts regarding the five skandas (which are the experience of 1. form, 2. sensation, 3. memory, 4. will or volition, 5. thoughts, feelings, states of consciousness) ignorant beings do not see *it*. If you encounter the wind of Wisdom, it blows away all the concepts regarding the five skandas. When the layers of clouds are totally gone, the Enlightened Nature is seen to be always shining perfectly bright, clear and pure.

The Huayan Sutra says, ‘*It* is as vast as the universe and as ultimate as the Void. But it is also like a light in an earthen jar that cannot illuminate the outside’. Another simile may help: when clouds close in on all sides and the world seems darkened, how can the sunlight be perceived as bright and clear? The sunlight has not been destroyed – it is just covered over and apparently blocked off by the clouds. The pure Reality or True Nature

of human beings is also like this. *It* cannot become fully manifest precisely because the layers upon layers of clouds – which are the afflictions or tendencies, the false concepts about perceptions, the clinging or attachment to objective experiences – these cover over and apparently block off the Path of the Buddhas. If false concepts are not born and you sit in this silent purity (Ekayana meditation or wordless meditation on the innate Purity of Mind), the sun of the Great Nirvana is seen to be spontaneously bright and clear.

It is said, 'Ice is born from water, but ice can block water. Ice is solid, whereas water flows'. Similarly, falsity arises from the Real. But falsity can apparently lose the Real in delusion. However, when falsity is ended, the Real appears or is discovered – the Mind-ocean is clear and pure. The Realm of Reality (Dharmakaya) is likewise empty, clear and pure. Therefore, when seekers rely on written and spoken words as the Path, these are like a lamp in the wind – they cannot dispel darkness, and their flame dies away. But if these seekers learn Ch'an meditation and see the Original Purity of Mind, they have no concerns for it is like a lamp in a closed room – it can dispel darkness and illuminate all things with clarity.

If you completely comprehend this clear purity of the Mind-source, then all vows are fulfilled, all practices are completed and spiritually all is accomplished. Mind is no longer subject to states of consciousness or the concept of a being (self). For those who find this Realm of Reality (Dharmakaya), the numberless beings are just one and this one has been there in accord with Suchness through a million billion eons. If pure energy (clear intention for Awakening) and true integrity are not generated within you, it accomplishes nothing even if you encounter countless Buddhas from the past, present and future. Thus we understand that human beings save themselves by understanding Mind – the Buddhas do not save sentient (human) beings. If the Buddhas could save human beings, since we have all met Buddhas in the past, why haven't we become Enlightened? It is just because this pure energy (of intention for Awakening) and integrity have not been generated within. Unless the mind attains what the mouth speaks of, you will never avoid taking on karma (tendencies) according to your deeds.

Thus, the Enlightened Nature is like the sun and moon to the world. Within wood, there is the potential for fire. Within humans, there is the Enlightened True Nature; *it* is also called the Lamp of Buddha-nature and the Mirror of Nirvana. The Great Nirvana-mirror is brighter than the sun and moon – inside and out *it* is perfectly pure, boundless and infinite. Another simile is smelting gold. When the dross is obliterated, the pure gold

remains unharmed. When the concepts of ‘ignorant beings’ and ‘birth and death or samsara’ are obliterated, the Realm of Reality (Dharmakaya) remains unmodified.

Accomplishment in Ch’an meditation is experienced in one’s mind, within one’s own experience. A picture of a cake is not fit for a meal – if you speak of feeding it to other people, how can it satisfy them? With that approach though you may wish to remove the blockages (obstructions or tendencies) of your past, instead you make them and their future offshoots even stronger. This is why the Huayan Sutra says, ‘It is like being a poor accountant, day and night counting the treasures of others without having a single penny of his own’. Being learned is also like this. That is why those who read spiritual material should only look at books for a while, then hasten to put them away to test them in practice and experience. If you do not give them up, it is the same as verbal learning or recitation – this is no different from looking for ice by boiling water. Thus, all the verbal explanations spoken by the Buddhas speak of the unspoken (wordless). Amidst the Reality that permeates all phenomena *it* is speechless and yet nothing is left unsaid. If you understand this, then you can penetrate the saying that when one is understood, a thousand will follow. The Lotus Sutra says, ‘Not real, not false, not ‘is’, not ‘is not’.”

After a pause Ch’an Master Hui-k’o said,

I explain this True Dharma (Teaching) as it really is – ultimately it is no different from the real profound inner Truth. Ignorant beings mistake this wish-fulfilling jewel for tiles and pebbles. When they empty out their mind and realize for themselves that it is the real jewel, then even ignorance and Wisdom are equal and no different. This is the way to realize that the myriad phenomena (inner and outer) are all Suchness. It was out of compassion for those with dualistic views, that I once took up a brush and wrote, “When you observe that your experience (or realm) is no different from the Buddha’s, there is no need to search further for the Final Nirvana”.

When I first generated the mind intent on Enlightenment, I cut off all concepts and persevered around the clock, not paying heed to outer events, because I was seeking the Supreme Tao. If you understand what I have just said then you will penetrate the Wisdom that if one is understood, a thousand will follow. The myriad phenomena are all Suchness.



A certain person asked: How can one become a sage?

Master Hui-k'o: All divisions of common people versus sages are created by the calculations of false conceptual thought.

Question: Since even they are false conceptual thoughts, how does one cultivate the Tao?

Answer: What sort of thing do you suppose the Tao to be that one can cultivate it? The Dharma (Truth) is not characterized by high or low. Indeed, all phenomena are not characterized as going or coming.

Another questioner: Teach me, your student, to quiet the mind.

Master Hui-k'o: Bring your mind here and I will quiet it for you.

Question: Can you please just quiet my mind for me!

Master Hui-k'o: This is like asking a craftsman to cut out a garment. It is only when the craftsman obtains your silk, that they can for the first time set their cutting tool to work. At the outset, without having seen the silk, how could they have cut out the pattern from space for you? Since you are unable to present your mind to me, I do not know which mind I shall quiet for you. I certainly am unable to quiet space!

Question: In that case, could you please administer religious confession to me?

Master Hui-k'o: Bring your sins here, and I will administer confession to you. The notion of 'sins' lacks any characteristic or even nature that can be apprehended. There is nothing to bring. My administration of confession to you is now over. You can go to your quarters. If there is sin, one must confess, but if one does not see any sins, it is unnecessary for them to confess.

Question: Teach me how to cut off defilements.

Master Hui-k'o: In what location are the defilements that you want to cut off? In fact, I have no knowledge of their location. If you don't know their location, they are like space. You don't know where they are or what they are and yet you desire to cut off space.

Question: But the Sutra says, "Cut off every evil, cultivate every good, and you will be able to become a Buddha".

Master Hui-k'o: These are but false conceptual thoughts manufactured by your own mind.

There was a monk named Hsiang who was over forty years old and came to visit Master Hui-k'o when he was teaching in the Northern Chi province in the year 567.

Hsiang asked: I have long been suffering. I pray to your Reverence to have my hindrance of sin removed.

Hui-k'o replied: Where is your sin? Show it me and I shall have it removed.

Hsiang said: The very reason of my trouble is that I am unable to find the sin.

Whereupon Hui-k'o exclaimed: There, I have removed your sin. You should now take refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

Hsiang asked: Now that I have seen you, I understand what is called Sangha. But I do not know what is called the Buddha and the Dharma.

Hui-k'o answered: The mind is the Buddha. The mind is the Dharma. Both of them are one and that (one who understands this) is the Sangha.

Hsiang heard this instruction and had a direct experience of Wisdom.

He said: Today I have come to understand that 'sin' neither abides inside nor outside nor in between – it is like mind itself. There is no difference between Buddha and Dharma.

Hui-k'o then accepted him as a student and some records indicate that Hsiang received (Awakened to) the 'Seal of the Buddha-mind'.

Another questioner: All the Buddhas of the ten directions have cut off the defilements and completed the path to Buddhahood.

Master Hui-k'o: You recklessly make such a conceptual calculation without any real frame of reference.

Question: How do Buddhas cross over (ferry over) ignorant beings to Nirvana?

Master Hui-k'o: When the image in the mirror crosses over ignorant beings, then Buddhas likewise will cross over ignorant beings.

Another questioner: What is the path and what is creation by false conceptual thought?

Master Hui-k'o: The notion of a path is completely created by false conceptual thought. The Dharma (Truth) has no big or small, no form or characteristics, no high or low. It is like this: Imagine that within your residence there is a great stone in the foreground of the garden. Should you fall asleep on it or sit on it, you would be neither alarmed nor fearful. But if suddenly you get an idea to create a Buddha-image on it, then you will need to hire someone to paint that Buddha-image on it. When your mind creates the conceptual interpretation of that Buddha as holy, then you fear committing a sin and no longer dare to sit on top of it. It is still the original stone, but this conceptual Buddha-interpretation was created by your mind. What is mind like? It is always your conceptual consciousness

that is brush painting and creating these ignorant interpretations. So, you yourself bring on the anxiety and you yourself bring on the fear. In reality, within the stone, there is neither sin nor merit. Your mind itself creates these conceptual interpretations. It is as if someone were to paint the forms of misshapen dwarfs, ghosts, dragons and tigers. They themselves paint them, but when they look at them in turn, they or their minds get fearful. In the paint, ultimately there is nothing to be feared nor do the apparent figures occupy real space. It is always your conceptual consciousness that is like a brush discriminating and creating these ignorant interpretations. There is actually nothing there. Again, it is always your false conceptual thought creating these interpretations.

Question: The Lankavatara Sutra says, "The Buddha said to Mahamati, 'The Tathagatas of the three times (past, present and future) transmit two types of comprehension of Dharma. The first is knowing what the Buddha preached, and the second is experiential understanding. Knowing what is preached means that the Tathagatas preach the Sutras and the various devices (techniques) so that the minds of ignorant beings will respond. This is also called knowing what the Buddha preached. Experiential understanding means that the practitioner is free of the various false conceptual thoughts manifested by one's own mind. It means that such a mind does not fall into the categories of oneness versus difference or both versus neither. Such a mind transcends all thought, intellect and all knowledge consciousness. In the Buddha-realm of Awakening, mind is free of causal and subject-object characteristics'." How many types of Buddha-discourse on the Dharma are there?

Master Hui-k'o: The real meaning of the Lankavatara Sutra is that the Buddha's true Dharma-discourse consists of understanding that self-substance is empty; that false thought is unreal; that Awakening to Wisdom is real non-attachment and the relative expedients of the six perfections.*

[*Note: The Six Paramitas are the practices of 1) charity or giving, 2) ethics and discipline, 3) patience especially under affliction or in the face of insult, 4) zealous application, 5) meditation or contemplation, 6) insight or wisdom.]

A certain person named Meditation Master Leng: When mind takes past and future events as objective supports, then it will be bound. How can this be stopped?

Master Hui-k'o: If objective supports arise (in one's experience), understand that all that arises is equally characterized by extinction. Ultimately, they will not be exactly produced again. Why? Because mind is

empty of any self-essence. Therefore the Sutra says, “All phenomena are empty of self-nature”. Therefore, you should understand that when one thought seems to be produced, it actually neither arises nor is extinguished. Why? When thought arises, it does not come from the east, nor does it come from the west, the south or the north (west=host; east=guest; south=lower realm; north=higher realm). From the outset it has no space to come from and so it is non-arising. If you understand that it is non-arising, then it is understood to be non-extinguishing.

Question: If one binds thought to bring karma into being, how can it be cut off?

Master Hui-k'o: Since there is no separate thought, it is unnecessary to cut it off. This mind has neither a space of arising nor a space of extinguishing – however, false conceptual thought gives rise to the notion of separate phenomena. The Sutra says, “The ‘sins’ of karmic obstacles do not come from the east, the west, the south or the north or from the four corners at once nor from above nor below. Karmic obstacles arise due to false ignorant views”. There is no need to doubt this. The wise bodhisattva (student of the Tao), looking into the Dharma of all the Buddhas, seeks these ‘sins’ of karmic obstacles in the ten directions but cannot apprehend any of them.

A certain person named Meditation Master Hsien: What is the correct spiritual medicine?

Master Hui-k'o: All of the Mahayana teaching is words for counteracting disease. If you see that mind engenders no disease, what need is there for medicine to counteract the disease? For example, the Mahayana teaching speaks of the medicine of voidness and non-existence. To counteract the supposed existence of a self or ego, it speaks the medicine of selflessness or egolessness. To counteract notions of arising and extinguishing, it speaks of non-arising and non-extinguishing. To counteract stinginess, it speaks of giving or charity. To counteract stupidity, it speaks of insight. Finally, to counteract incorrect views, it speaks of correct views, just as to counteract delusions, it speaks of understanding. All these are but words to counteract disease. If there is no fundamental disease, what need is there for all these medicines?

A certain person named Meditation Master Hsuan asked: What is the substance of the Tao?

Master Hui-k'o: Mind is the substance of the Tao. Mind is substantive substancelessness. *It* is the inconceivable Dharma, neither existent nor

non-existent. Why? Mind is empty of self-nature, and so *it* does not objectively exist. *Its* functions seem to arise from conditions, and so *it* does not exist. Mind does not have the characteristics of form, and so *it* is not existent yet *it* functions ceaselessly, and so *it* is not non-existent.

Hui-k'o said: If you understand that the deepest truth is the Principle of identity of mind and Buddha, you have truly comprehended the Dharma. It is due to one's ignorance that the mani-jewel is taken for a piece of brick. When one is suddenly Awakened to Mind-Enlightenment, it is realized that mind is always in possession of the real jewel. So the ignorant and the Enlightened are of one Essence – they are not really to be separated. We should understand all phenomena as Suchness because that is what they are. Those who entertain a dualistic view and look to the world are to be pitied. We understand that between our mind and the Buddha there is nothing to separate one from the other – so, what is the use of seeking after Nirvana as something external to mind?



The Recorded Sayings of Bodhidharma's Dharma-Successors in Subsequent Generations

Master Ching-yuan: If you understand that all phenomena (inner and outer) are ultimately void (empty), then the knower and known are also void (empty); the knowing of the knower is also void (empty) and the phenomena that are known are also void (empty). That is why it is said, "Phenomena and knowing are both void; this is called the voidness of voidness (empty of emptiness)". Therefore, the Buddha Store Sutra says, "The Buddhas of the past taught that all phenomena are ultimately void. The Buddhas of the future will teach that all phenomena are ultimately void".



Master Tsang: The one for whom in all phenomena there is nothing to be objectively apprehended is called the wise one who is cultivating the Tao. Why? Even though their eyes see every form, their mind does not objectively apprehend any form. Even though their ears hear every sound, their mind does not objectively apprehend any sound. All realms that the mind takes as objective supports or experiences are like this. Therefore, the Sutra says, "Mind has nothing to apprehend and so the Buddha gives a prediction of Buddhahood". The Sutra also says, "No phenomena can be apprehended, and even non-apprehension cannot be apprehended".



Master Hsien: The space or experience that the eyes see is actually the highest Reality. All phenomena are actually the highest Reality. What beyond this are you searching for?



Master An: Direct mind is the Tao. Why? The one who has truly walked the path has direct mindfulness and direct functioning. They are not intellectually examining voidness and are not looking for devices or techniques. So the Sutra says, "Direct seeing via Awareness does not look; direct hearing via Awareness does not listen; direct mindfulness via Awareness does not think; direct perception via Awareness does not act and direct speech via Awareness does not annoy one's own mind".



Master Lien (aka Master Bo-len): In the Dharma-nature you should not doubt. In this all-at-once cultivation do not doubt. Because all phenomena have no self-nature which is 'no-mind', they are Suchness and because they are Suchness they have no self-nature which is 'no-mind'. The Dharma-nature is non-objective. Do not doubt that *it* can function directly. The Sutra says, "All phenomena from the outset are non-existent (non-substantive)". The Sutra also says, "If all phenomena had always been existent and now for the first time were non-existent, everyone of the Buddhas would have committed a stupid error".



Master Hung: All behavior and activity are Suchness. Seeing forms and hearing sounds are also Suchness. In fact, all phenomena are Suchness. Why? This is so with no transformation or variation. When the eyes see forms, the mind has no experience of variation. This is the Suchness of mind. If you understand the Suchness of all phenomena, then you are a Tathagata (Buddha). The Vimalakirti Nirdeśa Sutra says, "Ignorant human beings are Suchness. Saints and sages are also Suchness. All phenomena are also Suchness".



Master Chueh: If you Awaken to the Wisdom that mind has nothing to be connected to, you have correctly apprehended the footprints on the Path to the Tao. Why? Eyes see every form, but eyes are not connected to any form. So, the eyes are intrinsically Liberated. Ears hear every sound, but ears are not connected to any sound. So, the ears are intrinsically Liberated. In fact, mind (consciousness) passes through every phenomena, but is not connected to any phenomena. So, mind (consciousness) is intrinsically Liberated. It is because all phenomena are unconnected to one another.



Master Fan: If you come to understand that all phenomena are the One Dharma (One Substance or Truth), then you will obtain Liberation. The eye as an organ is a phenomenon. Its objective forms are also phenomena.

Phenomena do not connect or associate with phenomena to create bondage. The ear as an organ is a phenomenon. Its objective sounds are also phenomena. Phenomena do not connect or associate with phenomena to create bondage or Liberation. Thoughts in the mind are phenomena. The objective content (of thought) is also a phenomenon. Phenomena do not connect or associate with phenomena to create sin, nor do phenomena connect or associate with phenomena to create (spiritual) merit. So, they are intrinsically Liberated. That is why the Sutra says, “One does not see phenomena associating or re-associating with phenomena to create bondage, nor does one see phenomena associating or re-associating with phenomena to create Liberation.



Master Tao-chih (a student of Master Yuan): All phenomena are unimpeded. Why? All phenomena are undefined and hence unimpeded.



The nun Yuan-chi: All phenomena do not cause reactions in mind. Furthermore, they are all intrinsically Liberated. Why? When the eye sees forms, there are none that mind does not see. Even when the mind-consciousness apparently knows something, there is nothing that mind does not know and nothing that mind does know. At the time of delusion, there is no understanding; at the time of understanding, there is no delusion. During a dream, there is no awakening; at the time of awakening, there is no dream. That is why the Prajnaparamita Sutra says, “The great assembly, having seen Aksobhya Buddha, no longer saw the Buddha*. Ananda! No phenomena associates with the eye and ear organs to create a reaction in mind. Why? Phenomena do not see phenomena. Phenomena do not know phenomena. The non-production of conceptual consciousness due to forms is called ‘not seeing forms’.”

[*Note: The Sutra tells a story that the Buddha through his magical power manifests Aksobhya (the blue Buddha of the eastern quadrant) and that Aksobhya preaches the Dharma. The Buddha then withdraws his magical transformation and the assembly no longer sees Aksobhya. The Buddha announces to Ananda that all phenomena are like this.]



Master Chien: In Enlightenment there is neither purity nor impurity. Darkness does not exist in the mind. Mind does not know phenomena. Though you say that phenomena bind the self or ego, the Substance of all phenomena has neither bondage nor liberation. If ignorant human beings were to come to understand this in their own mind, then it would be Nirvana even when their feelings are in motion. When they do not understand this, it is not Nirvana whether their feelings are in motion or not. When you do not yet understand, in your own mind you falsely conceptually calculate movement and quiescence. When you understand, the self is seen not to exist, and so who can calculate movement and quiescence? When you do not understand, you think that the true Nature of all phenomena cannot be understood at all. When you understand, there are no (objective) phenomena to be understood. When you do not understand, you are deluded. When you understand, there is nothing for delusion to be deluded about, and nothing for understanding to understand. Understanding that there is nothing for delusion to be deluded about is called 'the Great Understanding' (or Ultimate Wisdom).



Master Yin: Only scholars say that the six consciousnesses (of the six senses) are false thoughts and then refer to them as perpetrators of the deeds of the demon-king. That is why Bodhidharma had that famous dialogue which I will repeat:

Bodhidharma said, "When the unreal seems to arise, there is in Reality no arising. This is the Dharma of Buddhism. By forgetting grasping and rejecting, understanding all to be Suchness and understanding the true bodhisattva entrances (Dharma-gates) into the Buddha-mind, all is identical to the Dharma-nature. However, the deluded person thinks that the six consciousnesses create the defilements. So I ask, what do your six consciousnesses rely upon to arise?"

The deluded one answers, "They arise from empty illusion".

Bodhidharma said, "In empty illusion there are not separate phenomena. So how are the defilements created?"

The deluded one answers, "Although all phenomena are empty, when conditions assemble, phenomena apparently come into existence. The one who knows this attains sagehood, but the one who is deluded about it is an idiot. Because their approach is idiotic, they undergo suffering. How can you teach a nihilistic emptiness or voidness that eliminates all phenomena?"

Bodhidharma answers, “You exert effort to get to Buddhahood or the Buddha-stage and yet you say the six consciousnesses are characterized by defilements. If through effort you were to arrive at the Buddha-stage, the six consciousnesses would be the space or experience wherein you would attain the Tao. So the Vimalakirti Nirdeśa Sutra says, ‘Without entering the great sea of defilements you will not get the precious pearl. The class (realm) of ignorant human beings is actually the Buddha-lands of the bodhisattvas’. These Sutra passages verify that these six consciousnesses are the ‘space’ of the Ultimate Fruit, but the deluded all day long create deluded interpretations and thus fail to recognize that delusion is delusionless. Speaking from the point of view of the Truth of the Tao, there is neither understanding nor delusion. What is there to be distressed about?”



Master Yen: Listen to my understanding. If you understand the Principle of Mind for yourself, there will be neither depth nor shallowness. Movement and quiescence will merge into the Tao. Mind will see no place for gain or loss. Yet deluded ones remain deluded about both voidness and existence. They mistakenly produce conceptual tainted views. They then mistakenly employ mind to get rid of mind, saying that there are defilements to be cut off. Such people are forever sinking in the sea of suffering and constantly undergoing birth and death (samsara). This is why Master K’o (Hui-k’o) says, ‘Because common ignorant people lack understanding, they say that the past differs from the present and the present differs from the past. Furthermore, they say that, apart from the four elements, there is in addition a separate Dharma-body or Dharmakaya. However, when Mind is truly understood, the five aggregates* right now are the perfect pure Nirvana and this realm or Mind is endowed with ten thousand functions. Truly, this is rightfully proclaimed as the great Teaching’. If you have such an understanding, you see the ‘bright pure pearl’ in the sea of defilements, and that Mind is capable of illuminating the darkness of all ignorant beings in the radiance of Awareness.

[*Note: the five aggregates or five skandas which are the experience of 1. form, 2. sensation, 3. memory, 4. will or volition, 5. thoughts, feelings, states of consciousness]



Master Liang: When you clearly see the Truth of all phenomena, in Reality there is neither identity nor difference.



Master T'an: All phenomena (outer and inner) refer to the five aggregates. However, the five aggregates are intrinsically pure from the outset. Therefore the Buddha says that the mundane is the supramundane. Because ignorant beings are deluded about the True Nature of the mundane, they think they are dwelling in the mundane. When you understand, the mundane and the supramundane are empty names; but in Reality there is no mundane or supramundane to be apprehended. One who has such an understanding is the one who clearly sees the True Nature of the five aggregates.



Master Hui-yao: If you clearly understand that thought and the consciousnesses are intrinsically, in their very Substance, Reality, then even in the space or experience of the objective aspects of the mind, there will be none that are not Buddha-dharmas, Buddha-vehicles or Nirvana. Mind reflects the ten thousand objects but there are no cases in which what is reflected are not Buddha-objects or Buddha-dharmas. In the Indic language, it is called 'Buddha'. In Chinese, it is called 'Awakened One'. In Reality, the 'Awakened One' is Mind. The Buddha could hardly be an unawakened mind. When ignorant beings do not understand this, they think mind is not Buddha, and they employ mind to pursue mind. However, if they understand, mind is Buddha and Buddha is mind. Therefore I say that the intrinsically pure mind of all beings has from the outset been empty of defilements. If mind were not Buddha, then you would not be able to see anything outside of mind to call Buddha.



Master Chih: All phenomena are Buddha-dharmas. If you understand that all phenomena are Buddha-dharmas, this is called 'the Dharma-eye'. All behavior and activities are of the Nature of Enlightenment. Following mind, you will go straight on the path of the Buddhas. You could say that in conforming with the Mind of Reality, you will arrive at the Tao of the

Buddha-dharma. Regarding the spaces of experiences – do not be alarmed. Do not be frightened. All the spaces or experiences are equal.



Master Dzi: All the Sutras and treatises delude people into thinking sinless karma to be a sin. They see sin in the space of sinlessness. For the one of understanding, the space or experience of sin is sinless. Furthermore, Master Yuan says, “All the Sutras and treatises are practices that produce conceptual thought. If you produce conceptual thought or artificial mental focus on the Tao, then that artifice will give rise to knowledge and a complement of spiritual practices. If conceptual thought is not produced, what need is there for prolonged formal cross-legged sitting meditation? If artificial conceptual thought does not arise, why toil endlessly over ‘right mindfulness’? However, if you do not raise the intention for Awakening and do not seek Wisdom and understanding, then you will not understand either phenomena nor the Principle.”



Master Lang: If conceptual thought arises, then gaze at it with non-attachment. Delusion arises from attachment not from the forms. You see forms and then make conceptual interpretations and thus delusion arises. Conceptual thought is a created phenomenon. The Dharma is not some thing to gaze at (is non-objective). All notions are the calculations of false conceptual thought. Their creation lacks reality. Whatever is experienced is all a manifestation of one’s own mind. What sort of thing is the Tao that you want to cultivate it? What sort of things are the defilements that you want to cut them off? Mind itself is the True Nature of the Tao. The body is but a vessel of the path. A truly good friend (spiritual teacher) appears when one is ready. If the mind is seen to be pure, the phenomena are also seen to be pure. When there is neither grasping nor rejecting of the two extreme views (of existence and non-existence), then there is clear seeing into the Nature of the eighteen elements (six sense organs, six sense objects, and six corresponding consciousnesses).



Bodhidharma's Memorial Stele (Attributed to Emperor Wu)

The following entry is contained in the 13th Century text "Compendium of the Five Lamps":

"It has long been reported that Bodhidharma travelled with his students to the Thousand Saints Temple at Yu Gate. They stayed there for three days. At that time, the prefect chief Yang Hsuan-chih, who had long respected Buddhism, came to visit. He asked Bodhidharma, 'Your Excellency is called the Grandmaster from India who has the seal of the Teaching. What is this Teaching?'

Bodhidharma said, 'Those illuminated to Buddha-mind and who practiced in accordance with this understanding, are the ones called Grandmasters.'

The Governor then asked, 'What do you teach besides this?'

Bodhidharma then said, 'You must have clarity regarding this Mind, comprehending its past and present, unhindered by concepts of existence and non-existence, not seeking the Dharma outside, forever apart from cleverness and ignorance, without delusion or 'enlightenment'. If you can understand in this fashion, you will be called a Grandmaster.'

The Governor then asked, 'I have long taken refuge in the Three Treasures (Buddha, Dharma, Sangha) and understood the teachings of wisdom and ignorance, but I am uncertain about the Truth. Hearing you speak, I now begin to have an inkling about it. I ask for the Master's forbearance to reveal the true Teaching (Dharma).'

Bodhidharma, seeing the earnestness of the request, then spoke this instruction: 'Without seeing evil or feeling revulsion (at samsara), and without perceiving goodness and making artificial exertions (for Nirvana), without forsaking knowledge or practicing ignorance, without shunning delusion or conceiving of attaining 'enlightenment', in this Way you will achieve the great Unexcelled Tao. You should penetrate the Immeasurable Buddha-mind. Do not follow ideas of ordinary or sacred and naturally you will become a Grandmaster.'

When Governor Yang heard this verse, he experienced both joy and sorrow and said, 'May the Master long abide in the world and liberate people from delusion.'

Bodhidharma said, 'I will soon leave the world. I cannot remain here much longer. There are countless sorrows in life and I have encountered many difficulties.'

Governor Yang then said, 'Who among your followers comprehends the Teaching?'

Bodhidharma replied, 'I have transmitted the secret of the Buddhas that can benefit those on the road of delusion so that they may find peace through this Teaching. Those who would find peace cannot do so without this Teaching.'

Governor then said, 'If the Master does not teach, how can this penetrating light come forth?'

Bodhidharma poetically replied,

'The river swirls with its jade waves;
The lamp light opens the golden lock.
Among ninety seekers, five practice together,
One with myself and the Tao.'

Governor Yang heard this and said, 'This I do not fathom, but I will silently hold it.'

The Governor then bid farewell and left. Although at that time he did not grasp the Master's verse, he later understood its meaning.

At that time, the Wei-dynasty house honored Buddhism and Buddhist adepts were as numerous as trees in the forest. Vinaya Master Kuang-t'ung and Tripitaka Master Ju-tz'u were famous and prominent among the monks. Hearing Master Bodhidharma expound the Dharma, they totally condemned his teaching of 'Pointing at Mind'. They tried to debate Bodhidharma but he critiqued their ideas of existence and non-existence. Meanwhile Bodhidharma continued to spread his teaching widely, bringing the universal Dharma-rain. Because of his growing popularity, these two masters could not bear the situation and gave rise to harmful thoughts. They then added poison to Bodhidharma's food but there was no effect. They continued increasing the amount until they had done so six times. Bodhidharma passed his teaching to others until the karmic conditions were exhausted. His students were unable to save him, and sitting upright in meditation, he passed away. The date was the fifth day of the tenth lunar month in 536. He was buried on the twenty-eighth day of the twelfth lunar month at the Samadhi Forest Temple on Bear Ear Mountain.

Emperor Liang Wu-ti had previously met Bodhidharma but they had no affinity. When the Emperor heard of Bodhidharma's death, he made haste to author a memorial tablet to honor him. The Tang Dynasty Emperor T'ai-sung posthumously conferred the title 'Great Teacher of Perfect Enlightenment'. The memorial stupa was called 'Empty Seeing'.

[Note: This is the text of the memorial found at Bodhidharma's purported memorial place supposedly composed by Emperor Wu around 728-730, about two hundred years after Bodhidharma died. The remains of the text of the stele are presently preserved at the Shao-lin Temple.]

"I have heard, that within the blue sea, there is a black dragon with a lustrous white pearl, and that neither gods nor men have ever seen it. However, my teacher has done so – the great teacher Bodhidharma. He is said to have come from India, though his home is unknown. We do not know his family name. This great teacher took mind to be the Essence and yin and yang as only a device. His temperament was provided by heaven and his wisdom given by the gods. His bearing was like the sea and the mountains, his spirit like billowing clouds. He possessed extraordinary clarity with profound understanding. The entire Buddhist Canon was contained within his mind-stream. The five skandas are transported on his sea of words. Riches turn to dust, and the golden speech of the scriptures falls short. Vowing to spread the Dharma, he came east from India, planting his staff in China. He expounded the wordless Truth, like a bright candle in a dark room, like the bright moon when the clouds open. His words reverberated through China and his path passed through ancient and contemporary. When the Emperor and his court heard his name, they honored him like the vast heavens. He was like a leaping fish in the sea of Wisdom. He startled the birds in the Ch'an River, his Dharma upholding the heavens and the Buddha-sun in their high brilliance.

Such was the nourishment Bodhidharma gave the world; his teaching was the moistureless Dharma-rain that invigorates the field of experience. He expounded the dharma-less Dharma, illuminating the bright Truth. With a single phrase he directly pointed to 'Mind is Buddha' and thus cut off the ten thousand causes, emptying form and revealing the Realm apart from the myriad realms. Form and emptiness, mundane and sacred, all sublimely illuminated in a single instant due to realizing the Nature of mind. With the understanding of 'no-mind', the sublime Truth is instantly attained. However, with only an understanding of a self-mind that is regarded as existent, people remain in a state of ignorance. Mind exists without existence. No-mind is not to be understood as non-existence. With this understanding the wise have penetrated the obstruction of 'non-existence'. The Mystery extends inconceivably, unsurpassably vast, unsurpassably small, united in both non-existence and manifest existence.

Wonderful is our true Teaching! Now it spreads like clouds and those who study it are as numerous as raindrops. Though the seeds are scant, the flowers are many. The only one who understood Bodhidharma's essential teaching was Ch'an Master Hui-k'o! The great teacher Bodhidharma, upon passing the Dharma to Hui-k'o at last relaxed and exclaimed, 'My mind is complete! The Transmission of the great Teaching has been carried out. The entire true Teaching is now possessed by Hui-k'o!' Bodhidharma instructed Hui-k'o and then transmitted the Light, the Principle that is apart from all the affairs and things of the world. It is said that when consciousness comes, it abides in a body. When consciousness travels on, the body is lost. However, upon receiving this Teaching, Hui-k'o cried out exclaiming that the True Nature of consciousness surpasses heaven and earth and it transmigrates like the light of the sun and moon. It gives rise to the eternal flows of the Dharma-seas and endlessly bathes the dark Mystery. It eternally pours forth the Ch'an river which ceaselessly cleanses away all impediments.

Bodhidharma declared accumulating spiritual merit is not truly beneficial! What was the Emperor's error? The moon shines on the mysterious Ch'an garden but the mental-winds obscure the Way of Awakening and then the Dharma-rafters break, wisdom-waters are submerged in the currents, the dark streams hide the boat, the tides and waves surge, and no strategy can help. Then, suddenly it happens. Mind and form are revealed to have no difference. Even color and appearance appear as eternal, and at that time the earth and all things are purified. Heaven is vast and blue. Wild beasts cry out. Sweet springs gush forth! Then there is another cry! Non-action (wu-wei) arrives, and all action is gone, the Tao is manifest and birth and death are emptied.

Bodhidharma died on the 5th day of the 12th month in the early morning hours at Yu Gate. His age was unknown. He was buried ceremoniously at Bear Ear Mountain. His students were grief-stricken. Their lamentations moved heaven and earth, and their tears drenched their bodies. They were overcome, mourning as though their fathers and mothers had died. All the students, their eyes closed, mourned in this manner. In fact, the entire Dharma-realm came as one to his funeral, there being none who did not attend. It is as if he came but did not come, left but did not leave. None of those popularly known as holy or wise have attained Bodhidharma's Wisdom.

My imperial actions lack merit and only comprise unworthy karma. I am concerned that my karma has harmed heaven's yin and yang and that below it has damaged the happiness of human beings. So at night I am greatly troubled and unable to eat. The redeeming aspect is that within all my so-called great functions, there is essentially the treasure of Buddhism which is Mind. Though I have not gained the merit of nine years of sitting meditation to benefit all beings, I still seek the meaning of the Dharma, this eternal and miraculous gate. Practiced in peace it is the essence, the sublime. Those who transmit this Teaching by word and deed are the Great Teacher's progeny. Alas! I saw him but did not see him! Met him but did not meet him! Thus I have only regret and distress about the past and present. Though I am but an ordinary person, I have dared to teach with this stele and hope that although I have not attained in this life, sharing this will create the conditions for my future rebirth. One cannot engrave Mind onto a stone, so how can the Dharma be demonstrated? I fear heaven will change and the earth will be transformed, and then the Teaching of the Great Teacher will not be heard. So, I venture to establish this monument for those who care to come here to see it and dedicate this following verse:

*From Mount Lanka's Peak a jeweled moon appears,
Inside a golden being unfurls the silks.
His appearance like the earth,
His true Realm empty.
Unblemished, unadorned, eternal purity,
He penetrates the cloud and fog of mind.
A lotus with majestic form,
Brings eternal joy to each wherever they are.
Neither existence nor non-existence,
Neither coming nor going,
The learned and talented can't explain it.
Ideas of real and void do not matter,
All great and small affairs are cut off,
In an instant attaining sublime Awakened Mind.
The leaping fish in the Wisdom Sea surpasses all the former sages.
The Principle is in the eternally coursing Dharma,
When has it ever ceased to flow?
Within the black dragon's pearl is the Mind-light,
Whose bright rays instantly dull every opposing blade.
New followers scurry about, their compassion-eye closed.
But though residing in the current of the Ch'an River,*

*Their roof beams break.
No going, no coming, no 'is', no 'is not',
It is here that body and mind part ways.
Abiding and moving, all return to perfect stillness,
So why have cries ever issued forth?
Telling Hui-k'o to clasp his hands, he passed the Lamp.
Birth and death, coming and going are all like lightning,
Yet unwavering Mind remains,
Not destroyed even by the fire at the end of the eon.
Thus only Hui-k'o inherited the true Dharma,
His ignorance totally dispelled.*



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