

SHAstra

ON THE IMPORTANCE OF ENTERING THE PATH OF SUDDEN ENLIGHTENMENT

Translated from the Chinese original (Sino-Korean) 'Don O Ip To Yo Mun Non' by (Eng.) the 'Great Pearl, Ocean of Wisdom' (Ch.) the Ven. Ch'an Master Hui Hai, (Kr.) Dae Ju Hye Hae Sunim, with the support of the Korean translation and commentary of the Venerable Master Song Chol, former Head of the Korean Chogye Order/Ch. Tsao Chi School

Introduction

Master Hui Hai, Ocean of Wisdom, lived during the eighth century. Ordained early, he stayed a few years with his ordination master and mentor and then went on to study under one of the most infamous Ch'an Masters of his time, Ma Tsu (deceased 788). After six years, he returned to his original temple to care of his, by then ailing, master and mentor under whose guidance he had first ordained. There he wrote his treatise *On the Importance of Entering the Path of Sudden Enlightenment*.

The work was carried by another monk to Ma Tsu who, on reading it said, "In Yueh Chou there is now a great pearl; its luster penetrating everywhere freely and without obstruction." Thereafter, Master Hui Hai was known as the 'Great Pearl.'

*The unsurpassed, profound and sublime Dharma
Is difficult to meet even in a billion eons.
Now we hear, see receive and retain it
Vowing to realize the Tathagata's true meaning.*

The Author's Introduction:

One *Written as an Offering to all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.*

To the ten directions I bow my head low before all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, all Awakened Beings and those who live by the mind of Bodhi.

I first repent to the Buddha. For, as a disciple of the Buddha's, in writing this Shastra, my first concern is my own lack of surety in knowledge of the Buddha's perfect teaching. If it may be that I do have perfect knowledge of the Buddha's teaching, in the times to come, may it return to the simultaneous enlightenment of all sentient and insentient beings.

the ten directions *the eight points of the compass as well as nadir and zenith*

Commentary: (gak ju)

The Venerable Bhiksu Hui Hai composed this shastra upon his perfect awakening, but he was still very humble, so he began by repenting for any mistakes made in the Buddhadharma. He hoped that if there were any benefit in the ideology of the poor shastra he composed, if all of the multitude of living beings could realize that higher ideology, that this would be truly fortunate.

Two *Sudden Enlightenment*

Q: How can I attain liberation? Through which method? Through which practice?

A: Liberation can only be attained through one gate, that of sudden enlightenment.

liberation (Sanskrit: moksa, Sino-korean: he 'release, awakening, realization, wisdom', tal 'to become free of, to escape, to sloth off, release, let go, throw away, slip out of' sudden enlightenment (Chinese: tan 'sudden', wu 'satori, awakening')

Commentary:

The higher ideology and purpose of Buddhism is to solve birth and death- this means fluent knowledge of why and how we are born and die. But there are many methods of practice to reach Nirvana, and many people are confused by there being so many methods of practice. The Buddha taught 84,000 Sutras as well as the Abhidharma and Vinaya, so following their karma, people practice according to their like. Still, it is ironic that there are so many methods. But we want to practice a method to get enlightened easily, and so he asked and answered himself on the question of sudden enlightenment.

Why 'sudden enlightenment?' When the Buddha was enlightened he said, "Our original self-nature is such - as Buddha Nature - all of us." So, 'sudden enlightenment'.

If we are to get truly and properly enlightened; suddenly enlightened; then we have to take refuge in the entrance to sudden enlightenment and realize our true self nature.

Then what is Nirvana? Nirvana means freedom from all kinds of defilement and distorted projections, anuttara samyak sambodhi, unexcelled perfect and complete enlightenment. So, for those who are practicing sincerely before realizing annutara samyak sambodhi, that is not the anuttara samyak sambodhi which is Nirvana. If you wish to truly realize Nirvana, then you must experience sudden awakening and prove enlightenment for yourself.

Sometimes, there are those who have a lot of academic knowledge or intellectual ideas of enlightenment-that is not actual complete enlightenment. Even the Dharma talk of the tenth level bodhisattvas, wonderful as a gentle rain and passing clouds-even those tenth level bodhisattvas have not yet cut off basic delusion and the three poisons; this is not rightly Nirvana. So we should know that we have to aspire to the right anuttara samyak sambodhi that is true Nirvana.

When someone awakens suddenly, that is immediately Nirvana. Thus [the definition of] sudden enlightenment and Nirvana, and the personal and experiential proof of enlightenment, is annutara samyak sambodhi.

Q: What is this 'sudden enlightenment'?

A: 'Sudden' means to be rid of all delusion instantaneously.
'Enlightenment' means the realization there is no more 'enlightened' to 'get'; that there is nothing to attain.

Commentary:

The text explains the basis of sudden enlightenment; it also explains getting away from the three poisons which are our delusion. This means getting away from all the delusional aspects of the eight consciousnesses.

Q: Where do we begin in this practice?

A: You must begin with the beginning, the fundamental root, the origin.

Q: So how do we practice beginning with the original root?

A: It all boils down to Mind.

Q: And how do we know that Mind is the root?

A: In the Lankavatara Sutra it says:

*“When mind arises, all dharmas
(phenomenal qualities, characteristics and distinctions) arise;
When mind ceases, all dharmas also cease”*

and in the Vimilakirti Nirdeśa Sutra:

*“To attain the Pure Land, mind must be pure;
If mind is pure, all Buddha Lands follow in their purity”*

and in the Confucian Classics:

“With a well trained mind there is nothing impossible.”

Other sutras say:

*“Sages search their mind, they do not search for Buddhas;
Fools, in their search for Buddhas, never search their own mind.*

and

*Those who are wise, regulate their mind not their body;
Fools regulate their body, but not their mind.”*

In the Sutra on the Names of the Buddha we find:

“Sin arises from the mind, and by the mind is it overcome.”

So we find that good and evil, as well as everything else, all stem from mind and that, therefore, we may suppose mind to be the origin, the fundamental root. For those who seek liberation, definitely, first you must know your mind. For those who cannot penetrate the truth of this, your efforts will be in vain; for even the most dedicated search for substance among the shadows and reflections called external phenomena has never proven effective.

As the Dhyana Paramita Sutra says:

*“Although you may search the world of outer form for eon after eon,
Though ages pass, in the end, your goal cannot be attained;
While, in a single moment of looking into the place of inner awareness,
Instantaneously, the proof, Bodhi is realized.*

Three Dhyana Samadhi

Q: What method should we use in this root practice?

A: It is only through sitting meditation that dhyana samadhi is attained. In the Dhyana Paramita Sutra it says:

*“If you seek the noble wisdom of the Buddhas’,
dhyana samadhi is essential,
for without dhyana samadhi,
deluded and distorted dreamlike thoughts and projections,
arise confused and tumultuous
and our roots of goodness suffer damage.”*

Q: Then, what is dhyana (jhana/ch’an/zen/seon) and what is samadhi?

A: When deluded, distorted, dreamlike thoughts and images do not arise, that is dhyana; sitting and seeing our original nature is samadhi. ‘Original nature’ is our unborn mind nonarising; ‘samadhi’, the natural situational

response of no-mind, the eight winds unmoving. The ‘eight winds’ are gain and loss, calumny and eulogy, praise and blame, joy and sorrow. Those who practice samadhi in this way, even those called common and ordinary fools, enter the rank of the Buddhas. How can this be so? In the sutra on the Bodhisattva precepts it says:

*“Living beings, receiving the Precept of Awakening,
Immediately enter the Buddhas’ fold.”*

There are those who in this way have attained liberation, and in this Paramita, crossed over to the other shore. Transcending the six rafts (the six Paramitas), freeing themselves from the three realms (greed, anger and delusion), the great power of the beings that live by the mind of Bodhi, is the infinite power of the honored, the brave, the courageous.

Four The Place of Nonabiding and the Nonabiding Mind

Q: Where should the mind abide and dwell?

A: Dwell and abide where there is no dwelling nor abiding.

Q: What is this place of nonabiding?

A: Not dwelling on anything anywhere is the place of nonabiding.

Q: What is this -- this not dwelling on anything anywhere?

A: Not dwelling on anything anywhere is dwelling nowhere among good and evil, existence and nonexistence, being and nonbeing, inner and outer, nor dwelling in the middle. Do not even dwell upon emptiness or an absence of emptiness, nor should you dwell in dhyana samadhi. Not dwelling even in an absence of dhyana samadhi, not dwelling anywhere and everywhere; anywhere and everywhere undwelling -- this is exactly where you should abide and dwell. For in this way one attains the ‘mind of nonabiding’, the undwelling mind that is the Mind of Buddhahood.

Q: What is that mind like?

A: That mind is not blue or yellow or red or white. It is neither long nor short, neither going nor coming, neither defiled nor pure. Unborn and unceasing, it is the depth of suchness, eternally quiescent. This is the reflection and image of our original mind and body, our original body exactly the Buddha's body, the Body of Awakening.

Five Seeing Our Nature

Q: What do body and mind see through? Through the eyes? Through the ears? Through the nose? Through mental and physical sensations or consciousness?

A: Although we see innumerable things, there is nothing seen.

Q: What do you mean? If it is not like anything mentioned, then what is seeing (the view)?

A: We see through our nature (svabhava). How? Our nature is fundamentally clear and lucid, the depth of suchness, emptiness and quiescence, and within this utterly empty and still original body of immateriality, 'vision' or 'the view' arises.

Q: That's fine and good but, since this clear and lucid original and immaterial body's place and position are unlocatable and unattainable, where does vision come from?

A: If it must be described, then, it may be likened to a bright mirror in which there are no images, yet forms are apparent, for a bright mirror is something without a mind of its own. You students of the Way, if in your mind you do not look at things, the deluded mind will not arise nor the mind attached to subjective and objective views, and in the absence of these mental states there is a natural clarity, a lucidity in which 'the view' or 'vision' is able to arise.

In the Dharmapada it is said:

*Finally within ultimate emptiness,
In a flash of immediacy, the nature of suchness, established;
This is excellent wisdom, awareness, indeed!*

Six *Two Verses from the Mahaparinirvana Sutra*

Q: What does it mean in the Vajrakaya (Diamond Body) Chapter of the Mahaparinirvana Sutra where it says:

*Unseen,
the ultimate complete awakened knowing wisdom of enlightened vision,
knows no knower, nor anyone or anything unknown.*

A: ‘Unseen’ is our nature’s original immaterial body. Since it is impossible to attain a tangible vision of an image of that which is without image, appearance or form, it says ‘unseen’.

Such, ‘vision of the intangible’ is the original immaterial body of our nature, the body of profound suchness. It is not something that comes or goes, for it is neither separate from the flow of the world nor dependant upon the worldly flow. It is smoothly and naturally free, exactly ‘the ultimate completely awakened knowing wisdom of enlightened vision.’

Since our nature has no form or appearance and is originally without any kind of discrimination or distinction it is said there is ‘no knower’ and thus ‘nothing known’.

That there is ‘nothing unknown’ refers to the fact that within our undifferentiated original body there are functions countless as the Ganges sands, without a single thing among it all unknowable or indiscernible.

In the Prajna verse is written:

*Prajna, unknowing, knows all;
Prajna, unseeing, sees all.*

Seven *True Liberation is Neither Seeing 'To Be' nor 'Not to Be',
Seeing Neither Existence nor Nonexistence*

Q: There is a sutra which says:

*"Seeing neither being nor nonbeing,
Neither existence nor nonexistence,
Is true liberation."*

What is this -- 'seeing neither being nor nonbeing, neither existence nor nonexistence?'

A: When some attainment or achievement of clarity of mind is evident, this is exactly what is called 'existence' or 'being'. When within this clarity of mind no conceptual ideas of 'being' or 'existence' arise, this is exactly what is called 'seeing neither existence nor being.'

When conceptualizations neither arise nor abide and there is no attachment to conceptual ideas of nonarising or nonabiding, this is exactly 'seeing neither nonbeing nor nonexistence.'

These are what is spoken of as the view of 'neither being nor nonbeing,' 'neither existence nor nonexistence.'

In the Surangama Sutra it is said:

*“In the view of the wise,
To stand
For apprehension of wisdom,
Is fundamental ignorance;
In the view of the wise,
No view-
This exactly
Is Nirvana, ‘Liberation.’”*

Eight Seeing Nothing Nowhere

Q: What is this -- the view of ‘not seeing anything anywhere?’

A: Whenever you see men or women, or any sights or forms, if neither like nor dislike arises for them, exactly as though they had not been seen at all; this is ‘not seeing anything anywhere.’

Q: The response or reaction that occurs when sights and forms are apprehended is called ‘seeing.’ When there is no response or reaction, is this also ‘seeing?’

A: Look.

Q: When things are apprehended, they are seen to ‘exist’ to ‘be happening.’ When nothing is apprehended, how can there be awareness or vision?

A: Now, in awareness, in seeing, whether anything is seen or not, whether anything is apprehended or not is irrelevant. How can that be so? The very nature of awareness, of ‘the view’, is continuous and timeless. Whether it is awareness objectified or not, it is still ‘seeing’, still awareness. On realizing this, we realize that everything is freely and naturally coming and going, while natural awareness neither goes nor comes. As it is like this with vision, so it is with all the other senses as well.

Q: In this ‘right view’ of things, in awareness, do things have any objective existence or being?

A: In the view, in awareness, there is no objective stance.

Q: In this ‘right view’ of nothing, in awareness, then, do things have any nonobjective existence or being?

A: In the view, there is no nonobjective stance.

Q: Although when there is sound, there is listening; when there is no sound is there still listening?

A: Just listen. There is still listening.

Q: Although when there is sound there is hearing, how can there be hearing when there is nothing to listen to?

A: Now, in listening, whether anything is heard or not is irrelevant. How so? The very nature of hearing is continuous and timeless, we hear when there are sounds to listen to, we hear when there are not.

Q: This being so, who is the listener? Who hears?

A: It is the nature of hearing, hearing our nature, to which we have added the name ‘the knower’ and ‘listener.’

Nine *Entering Sudden Enlightenment:
The Meaning and Purpose of the Doctrine
and it's Basic Function*

Q: This ‘entering sudden enlightenment’ -- is it a religious or sectarian doctrine? Or is it something passed down through a lineage from our ancestral Masters? What is it's aim or purpose, what should we do it for? What is it's basis? And, how does it actually work, how does it function?

A: Unminding is it's doctrine; giving no more rise to delusion-mindedness, it's aim and purpose. Clarity is it's basis and wisdom it's function.

Q: It has been said that 'unminding' is the doctrine, but this word hasn't been explained. For those unminding, what is it that is not minded?

A: 'Unminding' means without the evil and wicked mental preoccupations that lead to suffering. It does not mean without right mindfulness.

**Note: the two closest words in the dictionary to 'unminding' are unbinding and unwinding, both very close to the meaning implied in the text, but in a purely mental aspect.*

Q: Then what are the mental preoccupations that lead to suffering, or 'wrong mindfulness,' and what is this 'right mindfulness?'

A: Mental preoccupation with existence or nonexistence, with being or nonbeing, is called wrong mindfulness. Unminding 'there is!' or 'there isn't!' is called right mindfulness, while mental preoccupation with good and evil is called wrong mindfulness. Unminding 'fantastic' and 'terrible' is called right mindfulness, while minding high and low, suffering and happiness, birth and death, increase and decrease, likes and dislikes, love and hate, clinging and rejection, right and wrong -- as well as all other categorical opposites, relative dualities and stands upon which delusions are based is called wrong mindfulness. Unminding both suffering and happiness as well as all the rest is exactly called right mindfulness.

Q: [So then, speaking in positive terms] what is this right mindfulness?

A: Right mindfulness means mind full solely of Bodhi.

Q: Is Bodhi something we can get, attain or achieve?

A: Bodhi is unattainable.

Q: If Bodhi is unattainable, how can we be mindful solely of Bodhi?

A: Only suchness, Bodhi is falsified if stood for in terms of names, identities or something that is, in reality, attainable. Never attained in the past nor in the future, precisely without such ideas, its only vessel, is the unminding

known as ‘true mindfulness,’ Bodhi mindfulness, without location in time or space.

It is as though Bodhi were a mere name applied to something which, in fact is intangible. Something which never has been nor ever will be attained. Being intangible, it cannot be thought about, and it is just this not thinking about it which is called rightly thinking of Bodhi as something not to be thought about-for this implies that your mind dwells upon nothing whatsoever. The term ‘not to be thought about’ is like the various kinks of not-thinking mentioned earlier, all of which are but names convenient for use in certain circumstances-all are of the one substance in which no differences or diversities exist. Simply to be conscious of mind as resting upon nothing whatsoever is to be without thought; and whoever reaches this state is naturally delivered.

[End of translation work (translation incomplete)]

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