

## Realization through Hearing in Chan Literature\*

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### Abstract

This article is primarily concerned with investigating the similarities between Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva's (*Guanyin Pusa* 觀音菩薩) method (*famen* 法門) of "perfect or all-pervading realization (*yuan tong* 圓通) based on the auditory faculty" (*er gen* 耳根; Skt. *śrotra-indriya*), as expounded in scroll six of the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* (*Lengyan Jing* 楞嚴經), and cases of awakening experiences recorded in the *gong'an* 公案 literature from the Chinese Chan School 禪宗 that involve sound and hearing. Specifically, it examines how, in the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, the auditory sense-object (*sheng chen* 聲塵; Skt. *śabda-viśaya*) is actualized as a perceptual support (*suoyuan jing* 所緣境; Skt. *ālambana*) for attaining realization, and how that realization correlates to the Chan notion of "illuminating the mind and seeing one's nature" (*ming xin jian xing* 明心見性). Examples are provided in which Chan masters of the various lineages explicitly implement this method from the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* to cause Chan adepts to realize awakening (*kai wu* 開悟) and see their nature. Chan literature seldom provides concrete instructions for practice, or outlines a graduated course of cultivation (*jianxiu* 漸修)—most often, it only records claims of sudden awakening (*dunwu* 頓悟). It is, nonetheless, my contention that awakening is concretely grounded in years of cultivation. What is unique in the Chan school is the particular generation of the doubt sensation. When a practitioner is absorbed in this state, in which the conceptual and thinking mind is brought to a halt, sound is used to shatter this unified state so that the practitioner suddenly realizes the nature of emptiness or selflessness. Comparing the method of "perfect realization based on the auditory faculty" with those Chan cases of awakening that involve hearing, we can appreciate the practical dimensions of Chan practice and the continuous impact that the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* has had on the development of Chan in the post-Song period.

### Keywords:

Chan school, Chan, *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, perfect realization based on the auditory faculty, Five Houses and Seven Schools, Venerable Sheng Yen

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## 禪宗語錄公案中耳根圓通及其應用

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### 摘要

本文以《楞嚴經》卷六中之觀音菩薩的耳根圓通法門為主要研究對象，嘗試探討中國禪宗公案中，如何用耳根以聲塵為所緣境，達到明心見性。並試圖深入了解五家七宗之祖師，如何應用運籌耳根圓通法門，促使學禪者開悟見性。禪宗語錄很少提供修行的詳細指導或是漸修的步驟，大多是頓悟的記錄。本文的假設是開悟是基於多年的修行，特別是禪宗的疑情法門及滋潤；當一位行者處於言語道斷、思維息止的疑團狀態，音聲即可成爲一種機緣來打破這統一的狀態，使行者頓然領悟無我的空性。比較《楞嚴經》的耳根圓通法門與禪宗公案中由聽覺而開悟的記載，可使我們更加瞭解禪修實踐的步驟和耳根圓通法門對宋朝之後禪宗的持續影響。

### 關鍵詞：

禪宗、禪、《楞嚴經》、耳根圓通、五家七宗、聖嚴法師

## I. Forward

Chinese Chan Buddhism traces its origin back to the first patriarch Bodhidharma, who during the Liu-Song period (420-479) of the Southern dynasties is said to have transmitted this “wordless teaching” from India to the East. According to tradition the Chan lineage has been successively transmitted, generation to generation, for some fifteen or sixteen centuries, down to the present day. Scholars agree that, despite its claim to “not rely on words and language,” the primary scriptural focus in early Chan circles was the *Lañkāvatāra Sūtra* (*Lengqie Jing* 楞伽經). By the time of the fifth and sixth patriarchs, the *Diamond Sūtra* (*Jingang Jing* 金剛經; Skt. *Vajracchedikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*) gradually became the key textual focus.<sup>1</sup> It bears mentioning that, during the last years of the Tang and early Song dynasties, the Chan school was still very much occupied with doctrinal concerns, and hence in addition to placing emphasis on the *Diamond Sūtra*, the *Śūraṃgama Sūtra* (*Lengyan Jing* 楞嚴經)<sup>2</sup>, also assumed an important role.<sup>3</sup>

Tradition holds that the *Śūraṃgama Sūtra* was translated by Pāramiti during the Tang dynasty (618-906). Evidence suggests, however, that the scripture is most likely an apocryphal work that was composed in China.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, the impact this scripture has had on Chinese Buddhism is undeniable. Beginning in the Song dynasty (960-1276), commentaries on this scripture began to appear, such that by the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties, it was one of the most widely studied and commented upon scriptures of the Chinese Buddhist canon. Judging from the large corpus of commentaries and exegetical tracts that survive from this period,<sup>5</sup> we can

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<sup>1</sup> On the role of these two sūtras in early Chan, see Faure (1997, 136-59) and McRae (1986, 15-29; 1987, 227-78).

<sup>2</sup> The full title in Chinese is *Da foding rulai miyin xiuzheng liaoyi zhu pusa shou lengyan jing* 大佛頂如來密因修證了義諸菩薩首楞嚴經, otherwise called *Da foding shoulengyan jing* 大佛頂首楞嚴經. Abbreviated as *Lengyan Jing* 楞嚴經.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Welter (2011).

<sup>4</sup> On scholarly views regarding the origins of the *Śūraṃgama Sūtra*, see Benn (2008).

<sup>5</sup> Among the people who composed commentators on this sūtra, there is no shortage of famous Chan masters: Changqing 長慶, Yanshou 延壽, Juefan 覺範, Mingben 明本, Zhenke 真可, Deqing 德清, Guanheng 觀衡, Yuancheng 圓澄, Yuanxian 元賢 and Tianran 天然. The important extant commentaries include the *Lengyan jing zun ding* 楞嚴經尊頂 by Juefan 覺範, *Lengyan jing yaojie* 楞

surmise that it was only after the Tang and Song dynasties that the Chan school came to hold the *Śūraṃgama Sūtra* in high regard. This is corroborated by the prodigious number of commentaries on the *Śūraṃgama* that were written by Chan masters in Song and later eras. For example, Chan master Zhongfeng Mingben 中峰明本 (1263-1323) states: "This single scripture of the *Śūraṃgama Sūtra* is for the most part held as the standard by Chan practitioners."<sup>6</sup> Master Ouyi Zhixu 藕益智旭 (1599-1655) also states, "Although you may be unable to master the many scriptures in the *tripitaka*, it is inexcusable not to be well versed in this single text of the *Śūraṃgama*."<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, the modern Chan master Xuyun 虛雲 (1840-1959) states that, when it comes to reading canonical texts, it is best if one can simply concentrate on reading the single text of the *Śūraṃgama Sūtra*.<sup>8</sup>

What is curious is that in the *Śūraṃgama Sūtra*, we find a unique method of practice through which Avalokiteśvara (Guanyin) Bodhisattva attains full buddhahood, and this method finds resonance with many cases of Chan awakening experiences. In the *Śūraṃgama* it is recorded that in a *kalpa* of the distant past, there was an "Ancient Buddha Avalokiteśvara" (*Guanyin Gufo* 觀音古佛) who through the practice of "perfect realization based on the auditory faculty" achieved the ultimate fruit of Buddhahood. Also in the scripture, the Buddha praises Avalokiteśvara for revealing this method, which is the most efficacious method for practitioners of the later age—thus, sanctifying it as the very heart of the practice and realization of the scripture itself. For this reason it is understandable that subsequent masters within the Chan school directed their attention to this method.

## II. What is perfect realization based on the auditory faculty?

The phrase "perfect realization based on the auditory faculty" is not explicitly found in the *Śūraṃgama Sūtra*, though the terms "auditory faculty" (*ergen* 耳

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嚴經要解 by Jiehuan 戒環, *Lengyan jing huijie* 楞嚴經會解 by Weize 惟則, *Lengyan jing mo* 楞嚴經摸 by Zhuhong 祿宏, *Lengyan jing xuanjing* 楞嚴經懸鏡 and *Lengyan jing tongyi* 楞嚴經通議 by Deqing 德清, *Lengyan jing zhizhi* 楞嚴經直指 by Tianran 天然 and *Lengyan jing zongtong* 楞嚴經宗通 by Zeng Feng Yi 曾鳳儀. See Li (1998, 207-29)

<sup>6</sup> *Lengyan jing mengchao* 楞嚴經蒙鈔, X. no. 287, 13: 858b17-18.

<sup>7</sup> *Lingfeng Ouyi dashi zonglun* 靈峰藕益大師宗論, J. no. B348, 36: 330a26-27.

<sup>8</sup> See Lü Xuecen 呂學岑 (2001, 234).

根) and “perfect realization” (*yuantong* 圓通) are. The earliest evidence of coupling these two terms together can be found in fascicle eighty-six of the *Essentials of the Avataṃsaka Sūtra* (*Da fanguang fo huayan jing gangyao* 大方廣佛華嚴經綱要) by the Tang dynasty Huayan master, Chengguan 澄觀 (738-839). He states: “As to Avalokiteśvara [*Guanyin* 觀音] Tathāgata, it was through hearing, contemplation, and cultivation that he attained perfect realization based on the auditory faculty.”<sup>9</sup>

The text in the *Śūramgama Sūtra* that details “perfect realization based on the auditory faculty” is this:

At first, while in the midst the hearing, upon entering the stream [of sound], the stream becomes extinct (*ruliu wangsuo* 入流亡所). That which enters also became quiescent. The attributes of motion and stillness (*dongjing erxiang* 動靜二相) were utterly unborn (*liaoran bushen* 了然不生). Thus, advancing gradually, hearing and its object ceased completely. Not abiding in this cessation, both the awakened awareness (*jue* 覺) and the object of awareness (*suojue* 所覺) were emptied. The awakening in emptiness (*kongjue* 空覺) thus became thoroughly perfect (*jiyuan* 極圓). Both emptiness (*kong* 空) and that which is emptied (*suokong* 所空) were extinguished. At this time, arising and cessation ceased (*shenmie jimie* 生滅既滅), and *nirvāṇa* manifested (*jimie xianqian* 寂滅現前).<sup>10</sup>

In Chinese Buddhism, these stages of practice would usually be construed as a gradual progression of “cultivating meditative concentration in order to generate wisdom” (*xiuding fahui* 修定發慧). I will discuss the progressive nature of this practice in detail below. Here it is important to note that in Sanskrit the “auditory faculty” (*ergen* 耳根) is called *śrotrendriya*, which is one of the five sensory faculties. Yet, what we normally understand to be the eyes, ears, nose, tongue and tactile nervous system, in fact, comprise only the five sensory organs and their sensory function. They do *not* equate directly to the “five sensory faculties” referred to in the Buddhist scriptures.

“Faculty” (*gen* 根) is a translation of the Sanskrit *indriya*, which in turn is distinguished in Sanskrit sources into the two aspects of external supporting sensory faculties, otherwise known as the “superficial and dust-like sensory organs” (*fuchen gen* 浮塵根; Skt. *indriya*), and the “pure material sensory faculties” (*jingse gen* 淨色根; Skt. *rūpa-prasāda*). The “five faculties” in the

<sup>9</sup> X. no. 240, 09: 195c15-16.

<sup>10</sup> T. no. 945, 19: 128b18-21.

*Śūraṃgama Sūtra* refer to the latter: the pure material faculties, not the superficial supporting organs. While the superficial supporting organs can be analyzed using objective scientific methods, the pure material faculties cannot be observed through dissection or a microscope.

In his work *Guanyin Miaozhi* 觀音妙智 (*The Excellent Wisdom of Avalokitēśvara*), Sheng Yen 聖嚴 (1930-2009) states, "It is rather difficult to understand the pure material sensory faculties. Ordinary people only know of the supporting organs and are unaware of the pure material faculties. It is only a bodhisattva who has attained wisdom who can then become aware of the pure material faculties. What actually enables sensory function are the pure material sensory faculties, not the supporting organs."<sup>11</sup> This passage suggests that the pure material faculties can only be realized and experienced when awakening is present.

"Perfect realization" (*yuantong* 圓通) means complete and all-pervading penetration. It is unimpeded wisdom. "Perfect" means that its essence reaches everywhere. "Realization," or literally "penetration," refers to the unhindered and marvelous function (*miao yong* 妙用) of that wisdom. Thus, the twenty-five Mahāsattvas (*dashi* 大士) in the *Śūraṃgama Sūtra* actually gain perfect realization of all methods introduced in the scripture through their own respective single method. Avalokitēśvara Bodhisattva, for example, cultivates the method of "perfect realization based on the auditory faculty," employing contemplative techniques for inducing meditative concentration in order to attain thorough-going awakening and realize entry to the wisdom of the buddhas and the essence of marvelous enlightenment.

Sheng Yen's commentary states, "Once Avalokitēśvara Bodhisattva perfected the meritorious virtues of perfect realization based on the auditory faculty, every given point of time or space became equivalent to the whole of time and space. The pursuit of any particular method of practice was equivalent to taking on all the measureless methods of practice. Even though the specific methods pursued might differ, once engaged they become identical and interpenetrate. This is the meaning of 'perfect realization.'"<sup>12</sup> He further explains "perfect realization based on the auditory faculty" as being a method of practice that entails "contemplating all sounds."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Sheng Yen (2010a, 181).

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

<sup>13</sup> See Sheng Yen's oral teaching on the subject, prepared by Liang Hanyi (2003, 46).

The Ming dynasty Chan master Hanshan Deqing 憨山德清 (1546-1623), who is perhaps the most representative example of a master who resorted to this method of “perfect realization based on the auditory faculty,” once had an experience through listening to the sound of water. In the *Hanshan Laoren Mengyou Ji* 憨山老人夢遊集 (*Collection of the Dream Roaming of the Old Man, Hanshan*), he provides a detailed account of the process:

The ancient has said, “If for thirty years one listens to the sound of water without engaging the faculty of consciousness, one would realize Guanyin’s perfect realization.” Over the stream there was a single wooden bridge. Day after day, I would sit or stand there. At first the sound of the water was vivid. After a while only if thoughts moved could I hear the sound. If [my mind] did not move, nothing was heard. One day I sat atop the bridge and suddenly forgot myself, whereupon the sound became silent. Thereafter the myriad sounds were all quiescent, never to disturb me again.<sup>14</sup>

The close resemblance between this passage and the *Śūramgama Sūtra* passage on Avalokiteśvara’s experience of contemplating sound is undeniable. Both experienced sound at first as an external sensory object; both then experienced the cessation of sound. The difference is that with Hanshan, his experience stopped at the cessation of sounds, whereas in the *Śūramgama*, Avalokiteśvara continued the contemplation until both subject and object ceased and the realization of the emptiness was emptied as well.

Hanshan’s case is rare in Chan literature, because he recorded and clearly articulated the various stages and realizations of his practice. In earlier Chan records, accounts that provide such vivid detail are unfortunately scarce. Nevertheless, there are plenty of examples of masters who purport to have experienced Buddhist awakening after hearing the sound of bells, drums, boards, the cry of fowl, and bray of donkeys, details of which will be discussed below. To bridge the gap between stages of practice and realization of awakening, I will primarily rely on the writings of Sheng Yen, insofar as his writings provide the clearest articulation of the use of sound and hearing in the practice and experience of Chan. Premodern Chan sources, where relevant, will also be used.

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<sup>14</sup> X. no. 1456, 73: 835b14-17.

### III. The Process of Cultivating the Practice of Perfect Realization based on the Auditory Faculty

What Hanshan experienced is perhaps only the entry way to the method of perfect realization based on the auditory faculty, for there is obviously a progression of stages to the practice. According to Sheng Yen, perfect realization based on the auditory faculty is one of the most profound methods of cultivation, and prior to taking it on and gradually advancing through its various stages, one must undertake a preliminary training of the faculty of hearing. He states:

The process and stages of this practice are by now clear, but when starting the practice not everyone will necessarily be able to grasp the essentials. So the first step of practice that I teach beginners is the "practice of hearing sound," which is altogether divided into four steps:

First, concentrate on broadly hearing all sounds without selecting or differentiating any particular sound. From large to small, close to distant, do not use the auditory faculty to actively strive to listen, but let the sound be heard on its own.

Second, understand that it is oneself who is hearing the sound, and that there are sounds to be heard. At this time one synchronizes with the sound, without giving rise to any distracting thoughts.

Third, there is only sound. One has forgotten the self; it has merged into an undifferentiated and boundless field of sound.

Fourth, sound and self are simultaneously extinguished and illumined (*shuangwan shuangzhao* 雙亡雙照). "Simultaneously extinguished," there is neither internal and external nor self and other. "Simultaneously illumined," everything is still present, in utter clarity.

This is different from the mundane four *dhyānas* and eight *samādhis* (*si chan ba ding* 四禪八定), where only the independently arising cognitive consciousness (*dutou yishi* 獨頭意識) remains present. It also differs from the Śrāvakayāna concentration of

extinguishing perception and thought (*mie shou xiang ding* 滅受想定;  
Skt. *nirodha-samāpatti, samjñā-vedita-nirodha*).<sup>15</sup>

The preliminary practice of attention to sound described above is able to bring the mind to quietude and stability. Sheng Yen emphasized it as a foundation: through these four steps one could develop the power of meditative concentration necessary to enter shallow states of meditative absorption and avoid giving rise to afflictions. He states, however, that one would not be able to manifest wisdom or attain perfect realization just by using this method alone. For that, one must cultivate the method of “perfect realization based on the auditory faculty,” which entails “entering samādhi through listening (*wen* 聞), contemplation (*si* 思), and cultivation (*xiu* 修)” as espoused in the *Śūramgama Sūtra*. One must maintain awareness of sound with unceasing and steadfast diligence, after which one employs contemplation, and then engages in cultivation. This process of maintaining awareness of sound—which is comprised of hearing, contemplation, and cultivation—is from the start done in gradual stages. Only after one gains some degree of mastery can all three be engaged simultaneously. At this point, there is no functioning of the ear itself, it is only the mental faculty of mind that listens. Finally, one proceeds into samādhi, upon which awakening is achieved.

According to Sheng Yen, the method of “perfect realization based on the auditory faculty” is eminently practical. It is a path of self-cultivation, and its profundity is experienced differently, in progressive stages, until one reaches the single flavor of liberation, the all-pervading nature of awakening. Be that as it may, commentators on this scripture throughout the dynasties have interpreted the above paragraph by way of three stages: emptiness of person (*ren kong* 人空); emptiness of phenomena (*fa kong* 法空); and emptiness of both person and phenomena (*ren fa kong* 人法空).<sup>16</sup> Unfortunately, none of the commentaries provide a thorough analysis of the process of cultivation itself. Drawing on the narrative of Avalokiteśvara’s cultivation of “perfect realization on the basis of the auditory faculty,” Sheng Yen’s interpretation once again is helpful in laying out a conceptual map of the practice:

1. “At first, being in amidst the hearing” (*chuyu wenzhong* 初於聞中). After proceeding through the foundational “practice of hearing sound” (*ting shengyin fa* 聽聲音法) as described above, there is the sequential progression from hearing, to contemplation, to cultivation, whereupon

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<sup>15</sup> See Sheng Yen (1999, 239).

<sup>16</sup> See Shi Guojing (2011).

one eventually arrives at the state of simultaneously entertaining all three.

- II. "In entering the stream [of sound], the stream becomes extinct" (入流亡所). The stage where the object of sound vanishes occurs only when one's sense of "self" is forgotten therein. The current of sound and self are already in an indivisible state, fused into one. Yet the faculty of consciousness, what people ordinarily consider to be the mind, is still hearing. What it hears is the "sound of no sound." It is not really that one is hearing a sound of no sound, but that there still remains the presence of a continuum or directed energy. For a lack of better term, it is *that* which is hearing.
- III. "That which enters also became quiescent. The attributes of motion and stillness were utterly unborn" (*suoru jie ji dongjing erxiang liaoran bushen* 所入既寂，動靜二相了然不生). The self that entered into the current of "soundless sound," and the "soundless sound" current itself, are both transformed into a state of quiescence. This is the state where both subject and object cease to be; the two attributes of motion and stillness that can be experienced by mind are both non-existent. This is what is considered to be a Mahāyāna form of samādhi (*dasheng de chanding* 大乘的禪定).
- IV. "Hearing and its object ceased completely" (*wen suowen jin* 聞所聞盡). This is the state one reaches where there exists neither the perception of an external landscape of sound to which one listens nor an agent who listens. It is known as the "closing of the six faculties." In practice it is necessary to first close off the six faculties, after which they are no longer subject to the influences of the six sensory objects (*liuchen* 六塵; Skt. *ṣaḍ-viśaya*). To accomplish this is to realize the emptiness of self (*wokong* 我空), which is the "stage where the six faculties are pure" (*liugen qingjing wei* 六根清淨位).
- V. "Both awakened awareness and the objects of awakened awareness were emptied" (*jue suo jue kong* 覺所覺空). Not abiding in the state where "hearing and its object ceased completely," Avalokiteśvara went a step further to the condition in which "awakened awareness and the objects of awareness were emptied." This is tantamount to realizing the emptiness of phenomena (*fakong* 法空) in the Mahāyāna teaching. Here, "awareness" means the six consciousnesses, which were purified

of all vexation in the previous stage.<sup>17</sup> This “awareness” is the wisdom of the practitioner, which realizes emptiness of self. The “object of awareness” refers to the six sense faculties, the six sense objects (sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, and thought), and the six corresponding consciousnesses or cognitive awarenesses. Together they are known as the eighteen sensory fields. At this level, all eighteen fields (or eighteen dharmas)—which, in fact, comprise all phenomena—are realized as empty. The “emptiness of phenomena” is the object of “awakened awareness.” “Awakened awareness” refers to the wisdom which realizes the emptiness of self in the six consciousnesses, having been purified of all vexations in the previous stage. Both the “emptiness of phenomena” and the “awakened awareness” that realizes it are found to be utterly empty.

- VI. “Both emptiness and that which is emptied were extinguished” (*kong suokong mie* 空所空滅). This is the condition where both emptiness and that which is empty have completely ceased. At this point the process of “emptying” reaches its greatest level of perfection, insofar as one has already emptied and done away with “the awakened awareness and the objects of awareness were emptied” of the previous stage. This would be equivalent to a bodhisattva at the eighth *bhūmi* or higher.
- VII. “Nirvāṇa as such manifested” (*jimie xianqian* 寂滅現前). Any notions of emptiness and an object that could be emptied are entirely put down. Giving rise to the thought of emptiness is “arising” (*shen* 生); the thought that contemplates emptiness also constitutes “arising.” At this point, the thought of eradicating emptiness, conceiving the thought to eradicate emptiness, the relinquishing of words and language of any kind, the relinquishing of afflictions, the relinquishing of wisdom, and even perfecting the wisdom of a buddha and the relinquishing of this perfection of wisdom itself—all of them are put down. This is the manifestation of *nirvāṇa* (*jimie* 寂滅), which is true perfection. Some might doubt this and say, “If so, then there would not be a need to liberate sentient beings? There is nothing that needs to be done?”<sup>18</sup> No. Hence the text explains that such perfection “manifests” (*xianqian* 現前). This term means that everything as such, whether good or bad, appears as it is *in the present* (*xian* 現), and that whatever needs to be

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<sup>17</sup> See Sheng Yen (1996).

<sup>18</sup> See Sheng Yen (2010a, 34).

done should still be done. There are no hang ups in the mind. If there is the slightest trace of attachment or vexations, then all of these are just *past* and *future* hindrances—they are not what is *in the present*. In the present, there can be no problems to be hung up about.<sup>19</sup> This is why “*nirvāṇa* as such manifests” constitutes the attainment of buddhahood, whereupon the liberation of sentient beings also, as such, *presently* manifests.

Drawing upon his own personal experience, Sheng Yen explains the aforementioned seven steps in the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* for the benefit of posterity. His aim is to provide practitioners who wish to cultivate this method of “perfect realization based on the auditory faculty” with guidelines to avoid blind and reckless practice that might lead to erroneous states.

In a word, the method of “perfect realization based on the auditory faculty” in the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* urges and provides an opportunity for people to turn around their hearing. This, in essence, refers to the passage, “To turn around one’s inverted capacity of hearing, and turn back to hear your self-nature, whereby in [self-]nature unexcelled awakening can be achieved.”<sup>20</sup> This is the essence of Avalokiteśvara’s practice and realization. “To turn back the hearing to hear your self-nature” (*fanwen zixing* 反聞自性) is the method of practice. To mobilize the realization of self-nature is the function of the practice. It is with this that one achieves the goal of awakening and buddhahood.

#### IV. Application by the Sixth Patriarch Huineng

Awakening may occur all at once, but practice is always gradual. The Sixth Patriarch of the Chan School, Huineng 六祖慧能 (638-713), experienced a great sudden awakening upon hearing a line from the *Diamond Sūtra* recited: “One should arouse this thought without having any place in which to abide” (*yin wusuo zhu ershen qixin* 應無所住而生其心). Such an awakening achieved through hearing can be said to be a typical model of attaining great samādhi through “hearing, contemplation, and cultivation” as espoused in the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*. Prior to hearing the *Diamond Sūtra*, Huineng was actually a woodcutter who chopped firewood. Although he never engaged in the formal practices of meditation, prostration, or buddha-name recitation, he spent his

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>20</sup> T. no. 945, 19: 131b5-6.

days patiently cutting firewood, one log at a time, one bundle at a time, and carrying it over his shoulder to the marketplace one step at a time. If his mind and body were not one, he would have been unable to still his mind like still water, thereby enabling him to realize awakening upon hearing the sūtra passage.<sup>21</sup>

A similar instance of awakening by hearing appears in chapter seven of the *Platform Sūtra of the Sixth Patriarch* (*Liuzu tan jing* 六祖壇經), entitled “Encounters” (*ji yuan* 機緣), wherein Huineng “scolded” (*he* 訶) the monk Fada for his recitation of the *Lotus Sūtra*: “To recite with the mouth and to put it to practice with the mind is to turn the sūtra. To recite with the mouth without practicing in the mind is to be turned by the sūtra.”<sup>22</sup> Hearing these words, Fada realized great awakening.

## V. Application by the Five Houses and Seven Schools of the Chan School

There appear to be many instances where Chan patriarchs explicitly employ the method of “perfect realization based on the auditory faculty” as found in the *Śūramgama Sūtra* in and make use of opportune circumstances for awakening. They skillfully used the sounds of bells, order to break the attachments of beings drums, boards, the crowing of roosters, the braying of donkeys, as well as shouts, slaps and even strikes as a catalyst to cause practitioners to achieve awakening, or to attain what appears to be Avalokiteśvara’s meditative state of “in entering the stream [of sound], the stream becomes extinguished.” So doing, these encounters provide catalytic occasions for removing attachments to self and object and sparking insight (*jifeng* 機鋒) into Chan and the living marvelous dharma.

In the pages below I have provided an investigation of *gong’an* cases that seem to resonate with the method of “perfect realization based on the auditory faculty,” as found in the recorded sayings (*yulu* 語錄) of the Chan patriarchs. We see that in several of the cases, Chan masters explicitly associate some practitioners’ experiences with the concept of “perfect realization based on the auditory faculty.” While the narratives present these experiences as occurring all at once, without stages, we must bear in mind that *gong’an* cases, as a literary genre, typically focus on episodic moments of awakening, encounter

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<sup>21</sup> See Sheng Yen (2001, 46-47).

<sup>22</sup> See John McRae (2008 [2000], 58).

and transformation. They do not show the years of practice leading up to those moments. Nonetheless, taken in light of the foregoing seven-stage analysis of practice and realization, it is conceivable that once the preliminary foundation of practice is established, the practitioner can progress through these stages instantaneously. It is also interesting that several of the Chan masters and practitioners appear to have gained awakening through the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra's* practice of "perfect realization based on the auditory faculty." In many cases, they even refer specifically to this practice.

## i. Utilizing Sounds

### 1. Drums

(1) *Hongzhou Baizhang shan Dazhi chanshi yulu* 洪州百丈山大智禪師語錄:

因普請鋤地次。有僧，聞鼓聲，舉起鋤頭，大笑歸去。師云：「俊哉！此是觀音入理之門。」後喚其僧，問：「你今日見甚道理？」云：「某甲早晨未喫粥，聞鼓聲，歸喫飯。」師乃呵呵大笑。

During the period for communal hoeing, a monk heard the sound of the drum. He raised the end of the hoe, let out a great laugh and returned [to the monastery]. Master [Baizhang] said, "Excellent! This is Avalokiteśvara's method for realizing entry to the cardinal principle!" Later the master called the monk and asked, "What did you realize today?" He said, "I didn't eat porridge in the morning, so when I heard the sound of the drum I went to eat some rice." The master then let out a great laugh.<sup>23</sup>

This story is retold by another master in *Zongbao Daodu chanshi yulu* 宗寶道獨禪師語錄:

從觀音門入者，一切聲響音韻，助汝發機。為山有一僧，鋤地次，聞鼓聲呵呵大笑。為山曰：「俊哉！此是觀音入理之門。」

Upon realizing entry by Avalokiteśvara's method, all sounds can occasion a catalyst (*faji* 發機) [for generating insight]. At Guishan there was a monk who, when hoeing the ground, heard the sound of the

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<sup>23</sup> X. no. 1322, 69: 7a2-6.

drum and let out a great laugh. Guishan said, "This is Avalokiteśvara's method for realizing entry to the cardinal principle!"<sup>24</sup>

These two *gong'ans* refer to the same incident. The first identifies the Chan master as Baizhang 百丈 (720-814), the second identifies the master as Guishan 滙山 (771-853). Since all other sources<sup>25</sup> concur that Baizhang is the master, the attribution of Guishan as the master was probably either a written or oral mistake by the compiler of Daodu's 道獨 (1600-1661) discourse record.

Baizhang praises the monk for entering the cardinal principle (*ruli* 入理) upon hearing the sound just like Avalokiteśvara. To Baizhang, this experience is the same as "perfect realization based on the auditory faculty." If Baizhang's statement is accepted, then this // or cardinal principle would be identical to "nirvāṇa as such manifests" as described in the *Śūramgama Sūtra*. As explained above, the word "manifest" means everything as such, whatever it may be, still continues in the present. Whatever needs to be done is still done, without being caught up in past and future. For this reason, the monk in question simply stated what happened: Hearing the sound of the drum, he put down self and phenomena. Yet, what needs to be done still needs to be done. He missed breakfast, so he went to eat some rice.

Here is another case of utilizing hearing the sound of drums as a way to set up an occasion for insight. The case involves two dharma brothers.

(2) *Xuansha Shibeishi chanshi guanglu* 玄沙師備禪師廣錄:

師云：「你聞鼓聲也無？」稜云：「某不可不識鼓聲。」師云：「若聞鼓聲，只是你。」稜云：「不會。」師云：「你且喫粥去。」稜道者喫粥了，便上云：「乞和尚說破。」師云：「不是喫粥了也。」稜云：「乞和尚說破，莫弄！某且辭歸去。」師云：「你來時從那路來。」稜云：「大目路來。」師云：「你去也從大目路去，作麼生說相弄？好去！」

Master [Shibeishi] said, "Did you hear the sound of the drum?" Leng replied, "I cannot not be aware of the sound of the drum!" The master said, "If you heard the sound of the drum, then that's just *you*

<sup>24</sup> X. no. 1443, 72: 767a22-24.

<sup>25</sup> These include *Wuqie Dagan chanshi yulu* 物初大觀禪師語錄, *Hengchuan Xinggong chanshi yulu* 橫川行珙禪師語錄, *Huangnie Wunian chanshi yulu* 黃蘗吳念禪師語錄 and *Sanyi Yu chanshi yulu* 三宜孟禪師語錄.

[hearing]." Leng said, "I do not understand." Shibeï said, "Go have some porridge then!" After Practitioner Leng ate porridge, he went on to say, "I beg you, venerable one, explain it explicitly." Shibeï said, "I thought you said porridge has been eaten?!" Leng responded, "I beg you to fully explain this. Don't fool around! Otherwise I am going." The master said, "What path did you take to come here?" Leng said, "I came from Damu path." The master said, "Then return along Damu path. How could this be 'fooling around'? Now go!"<sup>26</sup>

Shibeï 師備 (835-908) utilized the opportunity of hearing the sound of the drum as a catalyst for transformation (*ji feng* 機鋒). Here Leng 稜 is Changqing Huileng 長慶慧稜 (854-932), who studied with Xuefeng Yicun 雪峰義存 (822-908), along with his elder dharma brother Shibeï.

In this *gong'an* Huileng is unaware of the profound meaning of Shibeï's sound of the drum. When he said that he heard the sound of the drum, it was just plain ordinary hearing; there was still a subject who hears and an object that is perceived. That's why Shibeï replied that there was obviously a *you* who hears. However, Huileng didn't understand. Shibeï then told him to go have some porridge, knowing that he, like everyone else, must have already eaten. Shibeï gave him another pointer, that all things that needed to be done were already done. There was nothing to do. But Huileng didn't understand and so simply replied, "I've already had some porridge," in a straightforward ordinary manner. Missing the point, he proceeded to express his confusion. This is why Shibeï said that "I thought you already had porridge?!" meaning that everything as such is already present (*xiancheng* 現成). What is there to be done then? There's no need to eat porridge. Next Shibeï hinted to Huileng that coming and going was the same, as long as the self is dropped away. Record has it that it was only after struggling to penetrate the meaning of Shibeï's last words that one day, as Huileng was rolling up a curtain, he finally realized the meaning of "*coming* from the path" (來路) and "*going* on the path" (去路). What prompted this struggle was the sense of questioning or doubt sensation (*yiqing* 疑情) that Shibeï instilled in Huileng.

The "doubt sensation" or sense of existential questioning in Chan Buddhism is perhaps one of the most important and unique expedient means in practice. It serves as a catalyst that can turn a practitioner around from delusion to awakening. One may say it short-circuits the logical, dualistic mind characterized by self-grasping and causes the mind to turn on itself

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<sup>26</sup> X. no. 1445, 73: 2c3-8.

with an impenetrable question until the mind reaches a unified state. When this unification is shattered, self-grasping vanishes. If this happens, the practitioner experiences awakening. For the first time, the practitioner experiences a world without dualities, without self, without separateness. It is tantamount to the emptying out of the “awakened awareness and the object of awareness” as stated in the *Śūramgama Sūtra*. We will see the workings of the “doubt sensation” in other cases discussed below.

Here, one way to understand the exchange between Shibe and Huileng is that things in themselves as such are already replete (*xiancheng* 現成). Yet, unless one is able to drop away the hearer and phenomena (e.g., sound of the drum), there will always be a doer and things done, and distinctions between coming and going.

(3) *Chushi Fanqi chanshi yulu* 楚石梵琦禪師語錄:

寂照之弟子楚石禪師，蚤以穎悟之姿，銳意於道。一時名德，若晦機、若虛谷、若雲外，爭欲令出座下，師皆謝之。惟詣寂照之室，反覆參叩，一聞鼓鳴，羣疑冰消，世間萬物，總總林林，皆能助發真常之機。

Jizhao's disciple, Chan Master Chushi [Fanqi], in his early years was intelligent and savvy in his bearing and was keen on the path. At one time, venerable monks such as Huiji, Xugu, and Yunwai were all competing to get him to leave and become their student, but he refused them all. He would only go to Jizhao's quarters, visiting him repeatedly for teachings. Once he heard the sound of the drum and suddenly all his doubt vanished like melting ice. The myriad things in the world can serve as occasions that reveal the eternal truth.<sup>27</sup>

Fanqi 梵琦 (1296-1370) heard the sound of the drum and immediately his doubt vanished, as he realized that myriad phenomena and appearances were all opportunities for being in accordance with the truth. Here, we also see the workings of doubt sensation. In that unified state, Fanqi heard the drum, which served as a catalyst for him to drop away self and phenomena, thereby experiencing awakening.

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<sup>27</sup> X. no. 1420, 71: 548a11-15.

## 2. Bells

There are other cases that suggest both the realization and the process of cultivating the “perfect realization based on the auditory faculty.” Consider these:

### (1) *Yuanzhou Yangshan Huiji chanshi yulu* 袁州仰山慧寂禪師語錄:

赤干行者聞鐘聲，問仰山：「有耳打鐘？無耳打鐘？」師曰：「汝但問，莫愁我答不得。」行者云：「早箇問了也。」師喝云：「去。」

The postulant Chigan heard the sound of the bell and asked Yangshan, “Are there ears [that perceive] the striking of the bell? Or, are there no ears [that perceive] the striking of the bell?” The master said, “Such a question. Don't be dismayed if I can't answer.” “I asked just now.” The master shouted, “Go!”<sup>28</sup>

A postulant asked Yangshan Huiji 仰山慧寂 (807-883) whether or not the sound of the bell entered the ear. In so doing, he made a brisk inquiry to Yangshan as to whether or not the master himself perceives external sound—in other words, whether or not he had realized the state where “the awakened awareness and the object of awareness were emptied” (*jue suo jue kong* 覺所覺空). A witty dialogue between master and disciple ensues. Huiji's reply of “I can't answer,” suggests that as long as there's an “I” whatever answer one gives would be wrong.

Sometimes Chan masters provide pointers on cultivation that would appear to reference the practice of “perfect realization based on the auditory faculty.”

### (2) *Liandeng huiyao* 聯燈會要:

曹山車一日聞鐘聲，乃云：「阿[口\*耶]！阿[口\*耶]！」僧云：「和尚作麼？」師云：「打著我心。」

Caoshan one day heard the sound of a bell and said, “Ayah! Ayah!” A monk said, “What are you doing?” The master said, “It [i.e., the bell toll] is striking my mind.”<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> T. no. 1990, 47: 584b28-c1.

<sup>29</sup> X. no. 1557, 79: 190c10.

In this *gong'an* we can see the unity of mind and sound. Caoshan Benji 曹山本寂 (840-901) shows how sounds can have a pulsating effect on the mind by utilizing the bell toll to alert a practitioner on how to apply the mind.

(3) *Yunmen Kuangzhen chanshi guanglu* 雲門匡真禪師廣錄:

師有時云：「真空不壞有，真空不異色。」僧便問：「作麼生是真空？」師云：「還聞鐘聲麼？」僧云：「此是鐘聲。」師云：「驢年夢見麼。」

The master at one time said, "True emptiness does not eradicate existence. True emptiness is not different from form." A monk then asked, "What is true emptiness?" The master said, "Do you hear the sound of the bell?" The monk said, "That's just the sound of a bell." The master said, "Are you still dreaming of the year of the donkey?"<sup>30</sup>

Yunmen Wenyan 雲門文偃 (864-949) employs the sound of a bell to reveal the principle of true emptiness. The twelve earthly branches in China are each associated with an animal, but among them there is no donkey or year of the donkey. Consequently Yunmen's reply points to the fact that true emptiness simply does not exist as something outside oneself. In listening to the sound of the bell, one cannot expect to ever achieve awakening if one doesn't realize the principle of unity of emptiness and form. Emptiness is not something separate from everyday sound and form. When the monk replied, "That's just the sound of a bell," he perceived the sound of the bell as something outside himself. The text further states,

上堂因聞鐘鳴，乃云：「世界與麼廣闊，為什麼鐘聲披七條？」

[The master] ascended the hall [to preach the Dharma]. As he heard the chime of the bell, he said, "The world is so vast. Why at the sound of the bell do you all put on the seven-strip [cassock or *kāṣāya*]?"<sup>31</sup>

Also see the *Xutang heshang yulu* 虛堂和尚語錄:

上堂。僧問：「世界與麼廣闊，因甚聞鐘聲披七條？」師云：「水淺無魚，徒勞下釣。」僧云：「長期已過了，中間事作麼生？」師云：「一向收拾不來。」僧云：「鐘樓上念讚，床脚下

<sup>30</sup> T. no. 1980, 47: 554a21-24.

<sup>31</sup> T. no. 1980, 47: 553a1-2.

種菜，明甚麼邊事？」師云：「刮皮見骨。」僧云：「勝首座道猛虎當路坐擲。」師云：「乞兒席袋。」

A monk asked, "The world is vast. Why upon hearing the sound of the bell do you put on the seven-strip [cassock]?" Master [Xutang] said, "There are no fish in shallow water. It would be futile to go fishing." The monk said, "A long period has already passed. What to do in between?" The master said, "Never grasp or abandon." The monk said, "On the bell tower reciting praises, planting vegetables under the bed legs—what side matter do you illumine?" The master said, "Shaving the skin you see the bone." The monk said, "This victorious head monk says the ferocious tiger should sit on the road." The master said, "A beggar's begging sack."<sup>32</sup>

When Wenyan ascended the hall and heard the bell he skilfully responded to the question, "The world is so vast. Why at the sound of the bell do you put on the seven-strip [cassock]?" He was alerting his assembly of practitioners that one must not be conditioned by the external environment. When Xutang 虛堂 (1185-1269) ascended the hall, the case was used to reveal the delusion of the practitioners' attachment to the mundane world.

(4) *Chushi Fanqi chanshi yulu* 楚石梵琦禪師語錄：

師一日，忽聞鐘聲，起立合掌云：「觀世音菩薩！大慈悲菩薩！」僧云：「即今在什麼處？」師云：「却歸南海去也。」

The master one day suddenly heard the sound of the bell. He stood up, placed his palms together and said, "Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva! Bodhisattva of Great Compassion!" A monk said, "Where is s/he right now?" The master said, "Gone back to the South Sea."<sup>33</sup>

This story suggests that Fanqi once heard the sound of the bell and immediately had an awakening experience. He then joined his palms in reverence and paid respect to Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva (*Guanshiyin pusa* 觀世音菩薩). Perhaps he had achieved perfect realization based on the auditory faculty and was himself Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva. The monk did not comprehend what had happened, and so asked where Avalokiteśvara was.

<sup>32</sup> T. no. 2000, 47: 997a26-b3.

<sup>33</sup> X. no. 1420, 71: 585b1-2.

Fanqi could not help but reply that Avalokitēśvara had already returned to the South Sea.<sup>34</sup>

(5) *Rujiu Ruibai chanshi* 入就瑞白禪師語錄:

夏間又約六七眾打七，至第六日聞鐘聲，忽然身心脫落，不見有一物當情，此正是虛空粉碎，大地平沉時節。正如高峰枕头子撲落地一般的工夫，纔得個太平時節。

In the summer I formed a compact with six or seven monks to do a seven day retreat. On the sixth day I heard the sound of a bell and suddenly both body and mind dropped away. I felt that not a single thing existed. This was really the shattering of empty space, a time when the great earth was at peace and calm. It was just like when Gaofeng's pillow fell to the ground whereupon the era of Great Peace was attained.<sup>35</sup>

Ruibai 瑞白 (1584-1641) did a seven day retreat and heard the sound of a bell. He attained the dropping away of body and mind, the shattering of empty space and the manifestation of the awakened state. What is of interest to us here is that he described the state of awakening as "not a single thing exists," where "emptiness is shattered." These two descriptions correspond to Master Sheng Yen's fifth and sixth stages of the realization of the "perfect realization based on the auditory faculty." The "not perceiving a single thing" may be understood as referring to "Both the awakened awareness and the objects of awareness were emptied" (*jue suo jue kong* 覺所覺空)." The "shattering of emptiness" may be understood as "Both emptiness and that which is emptied were extinguished" (*kong suokong mie* 空所空滅)."

The mention of the "pillow of Gaofeng" (Gaofeng zhengzi 高峰枕头子) comes from a *gong'an* in the *Gaofeng Yuanmiao chanshi yulu* 高峰原妙禪師語錄:

一日寓庵宿睡覺，正疑此事。忽同宿道友推枕头子墮地作聲，驀然打破疑團，如在羅網中跳出。

One day I was sleeping in a hut, and was in the state of wonderment regarding the *huatou*. Suddenly my co-resident fellow practitioner

<sup>34</sup> This refers to Avalokitēśvara Bodhisattva's holy spot of Mount Putuo 普陀山 (Mt. Potala) in Zhejiang.

<sup>35</sup> J. no. B188, 26: 769a27-30.

pushed my pillow, which fell to the ground and made a thump sound. Suddenly, upon hearing this, the mass of doubt (*yituan* 疑團) was smashed, as though I had leapt out of a net.<sup>36</sup>

While engaged intently in the investigation of Chan, Gaofeng Yuanmiao 高峰原妙 (1238-1295) at the sound of the pillow hitting the ground smashed his mass of doubt, illumined the mind and perceived his original nature, whereupon he attained liberating freedom.

(6) *Tianjiejue Langsheng chanshi yulu* 天界覺浪盛禪師語錄:

上堂。五更欲覺忽聞鐘，夢裏風光一擊空。醒起六根齊感應，普門何處不圓通。諸大士還見過去正法明如來，於現前出生為大悲觀世音菩薩者麼？看看天際，日上月下，檻前柳綠桃紅，水流濕而火就燥，風從虎而雲隨龍，正以聖作而物睹，寂感而道通。聖人具足凡夫法，聖人不知春風吹起百花枝；凡夫具足聖人法，凡夫不會荆山璞玉自藏粹。感之時義大矣哉！且作麼生慶讚？千聖不傳真慧命，薪薪麗火作燈宗。

It was the fifth period of the night and I was about to wake, when I suddenly heard the bell. All the scenery of the dream vanished into emptiness. I awoke and my six faculties responded with even precision. Every point of the universal teaching (*pumen* 普門) was perfectly penetrated. Does the Great Being (*mahāsattva*) perceive the Tathāgata of the distant past, Thus Come One Light of the True Dharma (*Zhengfaming rulai* 正法明如來), and manifest as the great compassionate Avalokitēśvara Bodhisattva?<sup>37</sup> Watching the horizon, the sun rises and the moon sets. In front of the bannister, the willow is green and the peach blossoms red. The stream moistens, and fire parches. The wind follows the tiger, and the clouds accompany the dragon. The sages act, things are seen; quiescence experienced, the path is penetrated. When the sage is replete with the dharma of ordinary people, he knows not how the spring wind brings to life the hundred flowers and branches. When the ordinary person is replete

<sup>36</sup> X. no. 1400, 70: 690c7-9.

<sup>37</sup> Thus Come One (*Tathāgata*) Light of the True Dharma (*Zhengfaming rulai*), according to medieval Chinese sources, is the ancient Buddha of the distant past of whom Avalokitēśvara was said to be a manifestation, Avalokitēśvara having allegedly achieved Buddhahood ages ago, long before Śākyamuni himself. See Chün-fang Yü (2001, 68-69).

with the dharma of the sages, he does not know of the uncut jade in the thorny mountain, hidden and pure. How profound is this when experienced? What is there to celebrate? The thousand sages do not transmit the life of true wisdom. The kindling fire itself is the lamp of the lineage.<sup>38</sup>

Daosheng 道盛 (1592-1659) was residing at Baoguo Cloister 報國院 on the day of Avalokiteśvara's birthday. He delivered a teaching on the practice of Avalokiteśvara's "perfect realization based on the auditory faculty" to the lay practitioners Zhang Fangbo 張方伯, Fang Bingxian 范兵憲, Li Queguan 李權關 and Liu Jijian 劉給諫.<sup>39</sup> He then taught that sages do not understand "how the spring wind brings to life the hundred flowers and branches," while the ordinary person does not know "the uncut jade in the thorny mountain hidden and pure." Thus he indicated that the profundity of a sage is endowed with the qualities of the ordinary person, while the ordinary person possesses the qualities of the sage.

These passages point to the fact that after awakening, all things, as such, are in themselves replete. Yet, all things still have their function, such as the blossoming of flowers during spring and the naturalness of a mountain that contains jade. Despite all this, there's no self-grasping anywhere. Likewise, for a person who is awakened, what needs to be done still needs to be done, yet with no attachment whatsoever. This corresponds nicely with the seventh and final stage of the realization of Avalokiteśvara's method.

(7) *Miyin chanshi yulu* 密印禪師語錄:

師從此後少以執卷，默而靜坐，身心渾忘。如此半載，偶一宵，月地經行，聞鐘豁悟，覺得已往所看教中，從聞思修之旨，炳然不疑，胸中礙膺，當下冰釋。

From then on, the master would seldom pick up scrolls [to read], but sit there silently in quiet meditation [*jingzuo* 靜坐], forgetting both body and mind. Half a year passed like this. By chance one night he was engaged in walking meditation under the moonlight, when he heard a bell and immediately experienced awakening. He realized that among all the teachings he had read before, he had no confusion

<sup>38</sup> J. no. B174, 25: 705a5-15.

<sup>39</sup> These four were all Ming dynasty officials. Fang Bo was a commissioner, Bing Xian was a military officer, Que Guan was involved with tariffs and "Ji Jian" is a common term for the *jianyi dafu* 諫議大夫 office.

whatsoever about the meaning of “[realization] through hearing, contemplation, and cultivation.” The obstacles he had harbored in his chest immediately vanished.<sup>40</sup>

Miyin 密印 (1625-1678) heard the sound of the bell and realized the purport of Avalokiteśvara’s realization “through hearing, contemplation, and cultivation” and thereafter had no confusion about the doctrines found in the sūtras.

### 3. Boards

(1) *Xisou Shaotan chanshi yulu* 希叟紹曇禪師語錄:

上堂。雲居聞板聲，見神見鬼。瑞巖聞板聲，普請瞌睡。夢中喚醒主人翁，鼻孔元來在眼底。雖然如是，也須親手摸著一回始得，且道：「摸著後如何？」飯熟聞香，天寒出涕。

Yunju’s sound of the board and the nonsense of seeing gods and ghosts. Ruiyan’s sound of the board is like summoning everyone to sleep. Immersed in a dream, if a man awakens, he will realize that his nostrils from the beginning have always been below the eyes. Even though it is like this, one still needs to actually feel with one’s own hand that the nose is where it is! Now I ask, “After you have felt it, what’s next?” When the rice is cooked one smells its aroma. When the weather gets cold, your nose naturally snuffles.<sup>41</sup>

This passage discusses the cases of two Chan masters who experienced awakening upon hearing the sound of the monastery’s mealtime board-signal. Their experiences also suggest a realization akin to the seventh stage of “perfect realization based on the auditory faculty,” where all things, as such, are already perfect.

Yunju 雲居 (929-997) heard the sound of the board and became enlightened, but his insight wasn’t deep enough. Thus in his subsequent solitary retreat he never bothered to show up for meals because he received offerings from deities—until one day he was scolded by his teacher, Dongshan Liangjie 洞山良价 (807-869), who pointed out that he still had attachments, which is why deities were able to perceive him.

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<sup>40</sup> T. no. B343, J3: 865b25-29.

<sup>41</sup> X. no. 1389, 70: 404c12-16.

Ruiyan 瑞巖 (d.u., Tang yuasty, related to Qingyuan Xingsi's 青原行思 lineage) also heard the sound of the board and realized awakening. He likened this event to waking up from a dream. After that, he said that he now knows that his nostrils are under his eyes—thus pointing to the obvious: that things, as such, are already replete.

(2) *Duanqiao Miaolun chanshi yulu* 斷橋妙倫禪師語錄:

一日佛鑑，因舉狗子無佛性話，至末後為伊有業識在。一句徵詰，下語幾三十轉，皆不契。師再進曰：「豈無方便耶？」佛鑑乃舉真淨頌曰：「海枯終見底，人死不知心。」良久聞板聲，赴堂，下階三級，驀然瞥地，乃徹見佛鑑鉗鎚妙密，倒心事之。

One day Fojian gave a teaching on [the saying that] a dog has no buddha-nature, at the end of which he asserted that it was due to having a karmic consciousness [業識]. [Miaolun] questioned [Fojian] about this story some thirty times, but could never get it. The master [Miaolun] then again asked, "Is there not a way [to understand this]?" Fojian cited Zhenjing's verse and said: "When the sea dries up, one will see the bottom. When one dies, there is no mind to be known." Sometime later [Miaolun] heard the sound of the monastery board and proceeded to the [dining] hall. Descending down three steps, he suddenly glanced at the floor, whereupon he thoroughly perceived the marvelous secret and the hammering effect of Fojian's training. [Thereafter] Miaolun served [Fojian] to the utmost.<sup>42</sup>

Miaolun 妙倫 (1201-1261) heard from Fojian 佛鑑 (1178-1249) a verse by Zhenjing 真淨 (1025-1102): "When the sea dries up, one will see the bottom. When one dies, there is no mind to be known." After contemplating this for a long while, he suddenly heard the sound of the board, which "turned around his capacity of hearing" and prompted him to "turn back to hear his self-nature." Thus he came to see thoroughly the buddha-nature of the marvelous mind. His inability to penetrate the words of Fojian at first causes him to generate the doubt sensation, the unique method within Chan Buddhism. His hearing the sound of the board in the monastery shattered his doubt and, along with it, his self. Fojian's ability to prompt the doubt sensation—the impenetrable question—in his heart was the "hammering effect" by which Fojian trained his students. This is why he only realized its efficacy after he was awakened.

<sup>42</sup> X. no. 1934, 70: 571b8-13.

There are numerous examples of practice and enlightenment experiences within the Chan tradition to cite. Below I will only list a few more regarding hearing sounds.

#### 4. Bells, Drums and Boards

##### (1) *Tianyin heshang yulu* 天隱和尚語錄:

室中垂示。師云：「五更熟睡時，撞鐘不聞鐘聲？頃寤時，鳴鼓便聞鼓聲？若先不聞鐘聲，後聞鼓聲，寤寐不得恒一。或聞性有不遍耶？鐘聲有不到耶？鐘聲若不到同處，寤者亦應不得聞，聞性若遍，寐者亦當得聞，何以寤時聞？寐時不聞？若融會得，寤寐一如，若融會不得，生死關頭如何打脫？不可放過諸人，簡點看！」

While giving instruction in his quarters, the master said, "During the fifth period of the night, when you are fast asleep, if the bell is struck do you not hear the sound of the bell? When awake, if the drum is struck do you then hear the sound of the drum? If you first do not hear the sound of the bell and later hear the sound of the drum, being awake and being asleep cannot be considered one and the same. If someone hears their nature, is there [an element of] *not* being all-pervading? Does the sound of the bell not reach them? If the sound of the bell does not everywhere reach the same place, those who are awake should also be unable to hear it. Upon hearing their nature, if it is all-pervading, those asleep should also be able to hear it. Why hear it when awake, and not hear it when asleep? If fully understood, being awake and asleep are the same. If not fully understood, how does one break free from the cangue of birth and death? [Birth and death] do not allow anyone to go free. Examine this!"<sup>43</sup>

In order to rid the mind of grasping, Tianyin Yuanxiu 天隱圓修 (1575-1635) used the sound of bell and drum to expound upon the all-pervading and non-pervading characteristics of hearing one's nature.

##### (2) *Neishao Zhong chanshi yulu* 內紹種禪師語錄:

上堂。聞鐘鳴便上殿，聽板聲即過堂。喫粥了也，洗鉢盂去。便是廣額屠兒，放下屠刀立地成佛底時節；便是悉達初生，指天指

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43 J. no. B171, 25: 528c18-24.

地作大獅子吼底時節。喝一喝。云：「丈夫自有衝天志，莫向如來行處行。」

[The master] ascended the hall [and said]: “Hearing the sound of the bell you enter the Buddha hall. Hearing the sound of the board you go to the refectory. You go to eat porridge, and then go wash your bowl and cup. This is the moment in time when the butcher with looming brow lays down his cleaver and, on that very spot, attains Buddhahood. This is the moment in time when Siddhārtha is born, he points to the sky, points to the earth, and utters the lion's roar.” [The master] shouted a single shout. “There is a saying: ‘A great and heroic person may have the will of heaven on high, but he cannot walk the path of the Tathāgatas!’”<sup>44</sup>

Neishao Zhizhong 內紹智種 (ca. 17<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries) taught that hearing the sound of a bell or board could serve as a catalyst for transformative insight. His concluding words, in seven character verse, urge the assembly to approach practice in the way that the Fifth Patriarch Hongren taught Huineng in the *Platform Sūtra of the Sixth Patriarch* (*Liuzu dashi fabao tan jing* 六祖大師法寶壇經):<sup>45</sup> they should practice like a great heroic person with a sky high determination to know one's original mind and see one's fundamental nature. It must not be like the Tathāgata practices as found in the “Saintly Practices” (*Shengxing pin* 聖行品) section of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* (*Da ban niepan jing* 大般涅槃經), where one rests content in the cumulative ease of non-doing.<sup>46</sup>

## 5. Crow of a rooster

### (1) *Jie An Jin chanshi yulu* 介菴進禪師語錄:

無趣參，每呈見解，師盡與掃闢昔日所負，直使索然。一日，師謂趣云：「我有一言，要與爾說。」趣便問師，但笑而不語。趣又問，師又笑。趣不諳旨，遂禮拜懇求。師不得已，乃云：「達磨西來，直指人心，見性成佛，唯在直下體取。子若信得及，可放下萬緣，參個萬法歸一。」趣領旨後，聞雞鳴有省，即薙染。師乃付法。偈云：「非法非非法，非性非非性，非心非非心，付汝心法竟。」

<sup>44</sup> J. no. B306, 34: 413b21-24.

<sup>45</sup> See. T. no. 2008, 48: 349a22-23.

<sup>46</sup> See T. no. 374, 12: 527c11 and 631b26-27.

When Wuqu was practicing, whenever he brought up his views Chan master [Xiao] would attack and refute him until he felt he had no more will to carry on. One day Master [Xiao] said to Wuqu, "I have something to tell you." When Wuqu asked what it was, the master just smiled and did not say anything. Wuqu again asked, and Master [Xiao] again smiled. Wuqu did not understand the import, so he respectfully bowed in earnest, seeking an answer. Master [Xiao] had no alternative to reply, so said, "When Bodhidharma came from the west, he directly pointed to a person's mind, and by seeing their nature they attained buddhahood. One has but to immediately grasp it. If your conviction is sufficient, you can put down the myriad entanglements and investigate that single source to which the myriad phenomena revert." After Wuqu got the point, he heard a rooster crow and experienced an insight. He shaved his head and dyed [his robes to become a Buddhist monk], and Master [Xiao] then transmitted the Dharma to him. He composed the verse: "Non-Dharma is not non-Dharma, non-nature is not non-nature, non-mind is not non-mind. I have given you the Mind Dharma!"<sup>47</sup>

Wuqu 無趣 (1491-1580) was diligently immersed in the practice of Chan when he suddenly heard the crow of a rooster and for the first time penetrated "the single source to which myriad phenomena revert" (*wanfa guiyi* 萬法歸一). He became awakened and left the household life as a monk.

(2) *Huiqi Yunmen Zhanran Yuancheng chanshi yulu* 會稽雲門湛然圓澄禪師語錄:

上堂。師纔就坐，忽聞雞鳴。乃云：「呀！金雞上座！先為汝等轉第一義諦根本法輪了也。更要討什麼消息！若也不會，重新再舉。」揮一尺云：「這個是聲？有耳皆聞，定非聾漢。」舉拂子云：「這個是色，有眼皆見，定非瞎漢，更無絲毫瞞昧。」不見道：「頻呼小玉元無事，只要檀郎認得聲。」便下座。

Master [Yuancheng] ascended the hall and was about to take his seat, when suddenly he heard a cock crow. He then said, "Ah! Elder Golden Fowl! He has already turned the fundamental Dharma Wheel of ultimate truth for you all. What more is there to say? If you still don't get it, I will again explain." He then slapped down the woodblock and said, "This is sound. Those with ears all hear it. None of you are deaf." He raised his horsetail whisk and said, "This is form. Those with eyes

<sup>47</sup> J. no. B233, 29: 376b14-21.

all see it. None of you are blind. There is absolutely nothing concealed." Have you not seen it said [in the verses], "Her constant calling on [the maid] Xiaoyu, though having no reason to do so, is just to have her master remember her voice."<sup>48</sup> He then descended the seat.<sup>49</sup>

Yuancheng 圓澄 (1561-1626), on the spot, made use of sounds of the cock's crow, the wooden block, and the motioning of the horsetail whisk, to lay bare the meaning of the fundamental Dharma Wheel, the ultimate truth. To encourage practitioners, he further made use of the enlightenment verse that Yuanwu Keqin 圓悟克勤 (1063-1135) heard from the Wuzu Fayan 五祖法演 (d. 1104): "Her constant calling on [the maid] Xiaoyu, though having no reason to do so, is just to have her master remember her voice."<sup>50</sup>

## 6. Donkeys

### (1) *Tianyin heshang yulu* 天隱和尚語錄:

終日蒲團，正在忘絕境界之際。忽聞驢鳴，恍然頓釋前疑，如放下百千斤擔子。有偈曰：「忽聞驢子叫，驚起當人笑，萬別與千差，非聲非色鬧。」自後看公案，如劈竹相似，了無滯礙。偶聞風拂松，梢雨打窗紙，隨口云：「風聲與水聲，不必論疏親，一耳聞為決，何曾有二音。」

All day long on the cushion, he remained immersed right in a state of complete oblivion to perception. Suddenly he heard the bray of a donkey and at once it dispelled his previous doubt. It was as if he had put down a load of 100,000 pounds. In verse he said, "Suddenly hearing the donkey's bray shocked this man into smiling. The 10,000 distinctions and 1,000 differences: the ruckus is not caused by sound or form." Thereafter whenever he read *gong'an* it was like chopping bamboo, for he understood them without impediment. By chance hearing the wind rush through the pines, branch tips and rain hitting the window paper, he said, "The sound of wind and the sound of water,

48 The idea here is that while she calls the servant girl, her real intent is to have her lover hear her voice. Figuratively, it alludes to saying one thing, but having a hidden purpose. In the Chan context this means employing language to have people realize a meaning beyond words.

49 X. no. 1444, 72: 781b7-13.

50 T. no. 1997, 47: 768a18-26. Here the "master" refers to Panyue 潘岳 in the Jin 晉. His wife "Xie Nü" 謝女 was Xie Daoyun 謝道韞. They were a couple with great affection for each other. Xiaoyu 小玉 was the name of the girl servant.

we need not discuss whether they are distant or familiar. Once the ear hears, it is just that. When have there ever been two sounds?"<sup>51</sup>

Tianyin Yuanxiu 天隱圓修 (1575-1635) was diligently practicing when he heard the cry of a donkey, which prompted a great awakening. Thereafter there were no longer any obstacles in his mind.

## 7. Sound of jewelry

(1) *Wenyi chanshi yulu* 文益禪師語錄:

法眼因四眾士女入院，問永明潛：「律中道：『隔壁聞釵釧聲，即名破戒。』見觀金銀合雜，朱紫駢闐，是破戒？不是破戒？」潛曰：「好个入路。」

When four groups of noble men and women came to the monastery, Fayan asked Yongming Qian, "The Vinaya says, 'If on the other side of the wall you hear a hairpin or bracelet, it is considered breaking the precepts.' Seeing gold and silver mixed, and vermilion and purple all together, is it breaking the precepts? Is it not breaking the precepts?" Qian said, "It is a good place to start one's practice."<sup>52</sup>

Fayan Wenyi 法眼文益 (885-958) asked Yongming Daoqian 永明道潛 (862-961) whether or not hearing the sound of a lady's jewelry was breaking the precepts. In the vinaya, monks are not supposed to stay overnight under the same roof as a woman. Daoqian replied that it was a good place to start practice. This is the Mahāyāna form of meditative concentration, achieved through "perfect realization based on the auditory faculty," in which "the two aspects of movement and stillness are clearly unproduced."<sup>53</sup> Immersed in everyday life, movement is fine; stillness is fine, as one is already completely unaffected by their influence. This type of experience is different from the meditative absorptions of the Hīnayāna or Śrāvaka Vehicle.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> J. no. B171, 25: 602b29-c2.

<sup>52</sup> T. no. 1991, 47: 591b22-25.

<sup>53</sup> "Meditative concentrations in Mahāyāna Buddhism are diverse. They focus on daily living, whereby one can practice meditative concentration at anytime. They also focus on the object of one's concentration, whereby one is not constrained with the body being seated. This was the basis for later Chinese Chan theory." See Sheng Yen (2001, 28).

<sup>54</sup> See the *Da zhidu lun* 大智度論 (*Great Perfection of Wisdom Treatise*): "How to refute sound? The characteristic of sound is unsettled. Momentarily hearing, it

## 8. Other sounds

(1) *Jingde chuandeng lu* 景德傳燈錄 (Record of the Transmission of the Lamp Published in the Jingde Era):

僧問歷村和尚：「如何是觀其音聲而得解脫？」師將火柴敲柴曰：「還聞不？」曰：「聞。」師曰：「誰不解脫？」

A monk asked the monk Licun 歷村, "How does one attain liberation by contemplatively observing sound? The master took a burning ember and struck a piece of firewood, saying, "Did you hear that?" [The monk] said, "Yes, I heard it." The master said, "Who is not liberated then?"<sup>55</sup>

Licun 歷村 (d.u.) was Linji Yixuan's 臨濟義玄 (767-866) dharma-heir (*faci* 法嗣). A monk asked him how one attains liberation by observing sound. Licun was in the middle of brewing tea, and with the sound of burning kindling striking a piece of firewood, he made the point that hearing is by nature empty. Likewise, our hearing is just hearing; no self is needed. In this manner he expounded the path to liberation through practice of perfect realization based on the auditory faculty.

(2) *Dahui Pujue chanshi pushuo* 大慧普覺禪師普說:

一日芟除草木，因颺瓦礫，驀然擊著一竿竹作聲，不覺打著父母未生時鼻孔。當時如病得醫，如暗得燈，如貧得寶，如子得母，歡喜無量。

One day, while he was clearing grass and trees, a tile shard went flying and struck a stalk of bamboo, making a sound. Without thinking, he awoke to find the nostrils [of his true face] before his parents were

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then immediately ceases. The foolish person does not comprehend the characteristic of sound. It is impermanent, changing and lost, thus there is delight delusionally born in sound. The moment of sound is already past, yet there is grasping born towards it. It is like the 500 ascetics living on the mountain. A *kimnara* woman was bathing in a pond on the snowy mountain. Hearing the sound of her song they immediately lost their meditative concentrations. Their minds intoxicated and perturbed, they could not maintain themselves." (T. no. 1509, 25: 181b24-29) We can hence know that the Śrāvakayāna form of meditative concentration is unable to be practiced in daily living. This is a great point of difference with the Mahāyāna forms of meditative concentration.

<sup>55</sup> T. no. 2076, 51: 296a21-25.

born. At that moment his joy was boundless, like obtaining medicine when ill, acquiring a lamp in the darkness, finding treasure when destitute, or a child finding his or her mother.<sup>56</sup>

Here, Chan master Dahui 大慧 (1089-1163) cites the case of Xiangyan 香巖 (799-898), who with the sound of a tile shaver striking some bamboo, realized his original face from the time before his parents were born, thereby experiencing a vast awakening.

(3) *Yunmen Kuangzhen chanshi guanglu* 雲門匡真禪師廣錄:

生法師云：「敲空作響，擊木無聲，如何？」師以拄杖敲空云：「阿[口\*耶]!阿[口\*耶]!」又敲板頭云：「作聲麼？」僧云：「作聲。」師云：「者俗漢！」又敲云：「喚甚麼作聲？」

Dharma master Sheng said, "How is it that striking air makes a noise and hitting wood makes no sound?" The master [Yunmen Wenyan] struck the air with his staff and said, "Ah! Ah!" Then he struck the board and said, "Did it make a sound?" The monk said, "It made a sound." The master said, "Oh, ordinary fellow!" Again he struck it and said, "What makes the noise?"<sup>57</sup>

Yunmen Wenyan (864-949) employed the sounds of striking the air and board with his staff to create a catalyst for insight, jolting Dharma Master Sheng 生法師 (d.u.) into "perfect realization based on the auditory faculty."

(4) *Jianzhong jingguo xudeng lu* 建中靖國續燈錄:

僧問大陽漢禪師：「如何是敲磕底句？」師曰：「檻外竹風搖，驚起幽人睡。」曰：「觀音門大啟也。」師曰：「師子咬人。」

A monk asked Chan master Dayang Han, "How would you go about composing a line of verse about knocking?" The master said, "Outside the door sill the bamboo shakes in the wind, waking the hermit from his sleep." [The monk] said, "Avalokiteśvara's (Guanyin's) gate is wide open." The master said, "The lion bites the man."<sup>58</sup>

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56 T. no. 1998A, 47: 865a21-24.

57 T. no. 1980, 47: 557c26-29.

58 X. no. 1556, 78: 691a19-20.

Changqing Ruhan 長慶如漢 (d.u.) was the dharma-heir to Shishuang Fayong 石霜法永. Fayong was the dharma-heir to Fenyang Shanzhao 汾陽善昭 (947-1024). Ruhan employed the sound of wind shaking the bamboo to open the way to Avalokiteśvara's practice of perfect realization based on the auditory faculty.

(5) *Qianshan Shengren chanshi yulu* 千山剩人禪師語錄:

以拂子擊案云：「聞麼？汝若向個裏得聞，不特老人福州說法得聞，即今釋迦老子現在靈山說法汝也得聞。又不特靈山說法得聞，即今壽筵上茶碗、果碟、香爐、燭臺與兩邊土床、木柱同時說法，汝盡得聞。學人，莫見怎麼說便思量道：『此是無言、無說也，無聽、無聞也。』」又道：「無言無說是真言說，無聽無聞是真聽聞也。」便又引：「《金剛經》道：『無法可說，是名說法。』」又引：「《楞嚴經》道：『反聞聞自性。』且道自性作麼生聞？爾又不妨廣去搜尋。證見道：『釋迦掩室於摩竭，淨名杜口於毘耶，須菩提唱無說以顯道，釋梵絕聽而獻花。』者般說話不道不是，任爾將三藏十二部一齊翻將出來，說到來年三月十七，不特聞不得老人福州說法，現今山僧恁地鼓兩片皮，爾也直得有眼如盲、有耳如聾。

He struck the table with the whisk, "Did you hear it? If you could hear this, not only will you hear the Dharma from this old man in Fuzhou, you would be able to hear even the Dharma preached by the Old Man Śākya on Vulture's Peak. Again, you can hear not only the Dharma being expounded on Vulture's Peak, but here and now at today's birthday feast, the tea cups, fruit platters, incense burners, candlesticks and the two sides of earthen seats and wooden pillars simultaneously preach the Dharma. Practitioners! Do not listen to what I have to say and think, 'This is without language and without hearing.'" [Chan master Yuancheng 圓澄禪師] also said, "No words and no speaking are true words and speaking. No listening and no hearing are true listening and hearing." He also quotes the *Diamond Sūtra*: "No Dharma can be taught. This is called teaching the Dharma." He also quotes the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, "turn back one's hearing to hear the self-nature." "Tell me, how is self-nature heard? You could look extensively for it. The proof: 'Śākyamuni shut himself up in Magadha. Vimalakīrti closed his mouth in Vaiśālī. Subhūti chanted no teaching to reveal the path. Indra and Brahma ceased listening [to music] and offered flowers.' You can't say it can't be like this. Even if you read

through all the three canons and their twelve divisions, reciting until the seventeenth of the third month next year, don't say you cannot hear the Old Man in Fuzhou teaching the Dharma. Now I beat my lips together like this and yet you have eyes like you were blind or ears like you were deaf."<sup>59</sup>

Shengren 剩人 (1612-1660) struck the table with the whisk, teaching the practitioners that non-sentient objects can also teach the profound purport of the Dharma. Quoting the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, he also explained that if this meaning could be comprehended, then one could achieve realization of "turning back one's hearing to hear the self-nature." If one could not comprehend it, then even if one read through all the twelve divisions of the three canons it would be in vain.

(6) *Panshan Liaozong chanshi yulu* 盤山了宗禪師語錄:

以拂子擊案：「這是聲，還有悟道的麼？見色非干色，聞聲不是聲。文殊常觸目，觀音塞耳根。寒山逢拾得，拍手笑欣欣。泥牛吼水面，木馬漫嘶風。還會麼？任從三尺雪，難壓寸靈松。」復舉《楞嚴經》云：「吾不見時，何不見吾不見之處？若見不見，自然非彼不見之相。若不見吾不見之地，自然非物，云何非汝？」師云：「衲僧鼻孔長，佛祖舌頭短。無耳人能聞，無眼人能見。且道見箇什麼？咄！咄！咄！」

[Liaozong] struck the table with the whisk. "This is sound. Have you awakened to the path? Seeing forms, one is not disturbed by form. Hearing sound, it is not sound. Mañjuśrī constantly covers the eyes. Avalokiteśvara plugs the ears. When Hanshan came across Shide he clapped his hands, laughing in delight. The mud ox lows on the river's surface. The wooden horse trots in the wind, neighing. Do you understand? Even in three feet of snow, it is difficult to keep down the one inch nimble pine." He then cited the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*: "When I'm no longer seeing [the object], why can't you see my not seeing? Even if you could see my not seeing [the object], naturally that would not be a characteristic of not seeing. Since you cannot see my not seeing, then clearly it is not an object. How could your seeing not be you?" The master said, "My nose is long. The Buddha's and Patriarchs' tongues

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<sup>59</sup> J. no. B407, 38: 227a20-24.

are short. The man with no ears can hear. The man with no eyes can see. Now what do you see? Quick! Quick! Quick!”<sup>60</sup>

Liaozong 了宗 (1614-1688) used the sound of striking the table with his whisk to teach that one can see one's nature through hearing sound. He cites a passage from the *Śūraṃgama Sūtra*, in which the Buddha instructs Ānanda<sup>61</sup> on how to lead students to see their natures and attain buddhahood.

In the preceding examples of *gong'an*, the Chan patriarchs rely on various sounds to initiate the inconceivable process of “perfect realization based on the auditory faculty” as found in the *Śūraṃgama Sūtra*. A state of liberation is thereby reached in which one either experiences the body and mind dropping away or a shattering into emptiness. The causes and conditions that enable this are not accidentally produced. If it were not for the fact that one's efforts at practice were already nearing maturity, then it would be difficult to achieve illumination of the mind and insight into one's nature by hearing some sound.

## ii. Application of “Turning Back the Hearing to Hear Self-Nature”

(1) *Hanshan laoren mengyou ji* 憨山老人夢遊記:

侍御左公宗郢問：「念佛得悟否？」師曰：「返聞聞自性，性成無上道。又何疑返念念自性耶？」

Imperial Censor of the Left Zongying 宗郢 asked, “Can one attain awakening by doing recollection of the Buddha's name [*nianfo* 念佛]?” The master said, “Turning back the hearing to hear your self-nature, the nature already completes the unexcelled awakening. Why not turn back your recollection and recollect self-nature?”<sup>62</sup>

Deqing 德清 (1546-1623) employed the *Śūraṃgama Sūtra* idea of “reverting the hearing to hear your self-nature” to teach that *nianfo*, when done with “turning back recollection to recollect self-nature” could also prompt awakening.

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<sup>60</sup> J. no. B474, 40: 28b19-26.

<sup>61</sup> T. no. 945, 19: 111c1-3.

<sup>62</sup> X. no. 1456, 73: 656c7-8.

(2) *Zizhulin Zhuanyu Heng heshang yulu* 紫竹林顛愚衡和尚語錄:

僧問：「如何是返聞聞自性？」師云：「用返作麼？」進云：「畢竟如何是返聞聞自性？」師擊桌云：「聞麼？」進云：「聞。」師云：「是返？是順？」僧茫然。師云：「病僧罪過。」

A monk asked, "What is turning back the hearing to hear your self-nature?" The master said, "What is there to turn back?" [The monk] continued, "[Yes, but] just what does turning back the hearing to hear your self-nature mean?!" The master struck the table and said, "You hear it?" [The monk] said, "I heard it." The master said, "Is that turning back or is it advancing forward?" The monk was at a loss. The master said, "This ill monk commits a transgression."<sup>63</sup>

僧問：「如何是返聞聞自性？」師云：「手執金剛杵，擊碎珊瑚枝。」進云：「意旨如何？」師云：「誰將秦時鏡，照破野狐精。」

A monk asked, "What is turning back the hearing to hear your self-nature?" The master said, "With *vajra* scepter in hand, one smashes the coral branches." [The monk] said, "What does that mean?" The master said, "Whoever holds the Qin Emperor's mirror exposes the wild fox's true essence!"<sup>64</sup>

僧問：「返聞聞自性，意旨如何？」師云：「螳螂推糞，螻蛄尋腥。」進云：「不會。」師云：「說個不會的道理來。」僧擬答，師搖手，僧有省。

A monk asked, "What is the meaning of turning back the hearing to hear your self-nature?" The master said, "The mantis rolls dung, and ants seek rank smells." [The monk] said, "I don't understand." The master said, "Say something about this not understanding." The monk was about to answer, the master waved his hand. The monk had an insight.<sup>65</sup>

When Zhuanyu 顛愚 (1579-1646) was providing instruction to the assembly, though the same question was posed several times, in responding to people's individual capacities and circumstances his replies were often different. In the

<sup>63</sup> J. no. B219, 28: 712a20-22.

<sup>64</sup> J. no. B219, 28: 712a23-24.

<sup>65</sup> J. no. B219, 28: 712a25-27.

case of the first question, the opportune circumstances for awakening were not ripe. Hence he directed the monk to introspect and collect the mind. However, he was still unable to eradicate the man's delusion. In the second case, the monk was half raw and half ripe. Hence the master eradicated the false to reveal the true. In the third case, the monk's predisposition for awakening was already ripe. He urged the monk to say something about not knowing, but then shook his hand to shut him up, whereupon the monk experienced awakening. From these *gong'an* we can see the extent to which people of that time were familiar with the *Śūraṃgama Sūtra* and also frequently employed this sūtra's idea of "turning back the hearing to hear the self-nature" as a subject of inquiry and investigation.

(3) *Xuetang xingy lu* 雪堂行遺錄:

一日，白悟曰：「和尚勿舉話，待某說出看。」悟曰：「好。」民曰：「尋常拈槌豎拂，豈不是經中道：『一切世界諸所有物，皆即菩提妙明真心。』」悟笑曰：「你元來在這裏作活計。」悟復徵之，民又曰：「下喝敲牀時，豈不是返聞聞自性，性成無上道？」悟又曰：「你豈不見經中道：『妙性圓明，離諸名相。』」民於言下釋然。

One day [Anmin] said to [Yuan] wu, "Master, don't bring up any old dialogues for discussion. Please wait for me to try to say something." Wu said, "Very well." Min said, "Isn't the everyday wielding of the mallet and raising of the whisk what the sūtra refers to as 'All things in the world are the marvelously luminous and true mind of bodhi'?" Wu laughed, "I see that you're just here for intellectual play!" Wu further pointed to its subtlety. Min then said, "When shouting and knocking the couch, is it not turning back the hearing to hear self-nature, and the self-nature completing unexcelled awakening?" Wu again said, "Have you not read in the sūtra where it says, 'The marvelous nature is perfect and luminous, apart from labels and characteristics'?" With these words, Min understood.<sup>66</sup>

When Miyin Anmin 密印安民 (1086-1136) was practicing under Yuanwu Keqin 圓悟克勤 (1063-1135), Anmin employed a line from the *Śūraṃgama Sūtra* to convey his own experience of how everyday tasks are themselves the same as awakening. Yuanwu saw that he was still depending on the scriptures,

<sup>66</sup> X. no. 1576, 83: 371c24-372a5.

so he used the same scripture to point out that words and labels cannot reveal the hearing of self-nature so Anmin would understand.

(4) *Tianjie Juelang Sheng chanshi quanlu* 天界覺浪盛禪師全錄:

宋戶部問：「返聞聞自性，自性如何聞？」師召居士，士應諾。師云：「山僧戒口。」

Song Hubu asked, "One might turn back the hearing to hear your self-nature, [but] how does one hear self-nature?" The master called the layman over, and he responded. The master then said, "This mountain monk should have refrained from speaking!"<sup>67</sup>

In this case, the layman thinks the self-nature is something separate from hearing, so Juelang 覺浪 (1593-1659) called the man, and upon hearing the master's call the man responded. In doing so, he demonstrated the hearing and self-nature are not two.

(5) *Yushan heshang yulu* 兩山和尚語錄:

汝號以聞，聞箇甚麼？若謂「返聞聞自性」，性是甚麼破草鞋？更云「性成無上道」，道是甚麼閒家具？如是則二途不立，中道何依？皮膚脫落盡，惟有一真實。其或未然，遂擲下火炬云：「且向烈燄光中薦取。」

You are called Yiwen [literally, 'by means of hearing']. What have you heard? If you say "I have turned back the hearing to hear self-nature," what sort of broken straw sandal is this self-nature? If you also say "the self-nature completes unexcelled awakening," what sort of excess furniture is this awakening? That being the case, when these two options are not set up, what does the middle path rely on? When the skin completely peels away, there is only one truth. Perhaps it is not so for you. He then threw down the torch and said, "Make the case for yourself in the light of the raging flames!"<sup>68</sup>

Yushan 兩山 (1630-1688) with poignant skill taught Yiwen 以聞 (d.u) that the nature of reality or truth in "turning back the hearing to hear the self-nature" and "the self-nature completing unexcelled awakening" falls to neither of the two extremes, nor is there any middle to rely on.

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<sup>67</sup> J. no. B311, 34: 653a20-21.

<sup>68</sup> J. no. B494, 40: 613a22-26.

## iii. "Entering the stream, effacing the object"

(1) *Dahui Pujue chanshi pushuo* 大慧普覺禪師普說:

In the recorded sayings of Dahui Zonggao 大慧宗杲 (1089-1163) we find four *gong'an* or public cases related to the concept in the *Śūramgama Sūtra* of "entering the stream [of sound], whereupon the stream is extinguished."

## ①. The first case of "entering the stream and effacing the object."

如水潦和尚，因採藤次。問馬祖曰：「如何是祖師西來意？」祖曰：「近前來向爾道。」水潦纔近前，馬祖當胸一蹋倒，水潦忽然大悟，不覺起來呵呵大笑。祖曰：「爾見箇甚麼道理？」潦曰：「百千法門無量妙義，只向一毛頭上，便識得根源去。這箇教中，謂之入流亡所，所入既寂，動靜二相，了然不生。纔得箇入處，便亡了定相，定相既亡，不墮有為，不墮無為，動靜二相了然不生，便是觀音入理之門。」他既悟了，便打開自己庫藏，運出自己家珍。乃曰：「百千法門無量妙義，只向一毛頭上，便識得根源去。」又呵呵大笑，馬祖知他已到這箇田地，更不采他，亦無後語。後來住水潦菴，禪和家來參，他有百十眾，纔舉揚便賣弄這一蹋云：「自從一喫馬師蹋，直至而今笑不休。」渠又何曾有峯巒疊翠、澗水潺湲、岸柳含煙、庭華笑日、鸞啼喬木、蝶舞芳叢底說話來。只道：「自從一喫馬師蹋，直至而今笑不休。」這箇便是第一箇入流亡所，動靜二相，了然不生底樣子。

The monk Shuilao was collecting rattan when he asked Mazu, "What was the meaning of the patriarch's coming from the west?" Mazu said, "Come closer and I'll tell you." Shuilao then went up to Mazu, who kicked him in the chest and knocked him over. Shuilao suddenly had a great awakening. Without being aware of it, he got up and laughed loudly. Mazu said, "What have you realized?" Shuilao said, "The measureless profound meanings of 100,000 Dharma teachings reside on the mere tip of a hair, and there one realizes the source. In this teaching, we refer to this as 'entering the stream [of sound], upon which [the stream] as object is extinguished and that which enters also becomes quiescent. The attributes of motion and stillness are utterly unborn.' Upon attaining this point of entry, one effaces all marks of meditative concentration, and once they eradicated, one neither falls into action nor non-action. The attributes of motion and stillness are utterly unborn. This, then, is Avalokitēśvara's entrance to the cardinal principle." Having had an awakening, he opened up his

treasure-store and brought out his household treasures. He said, "The measureless profound meanings of 100,000 Dharma teachings reside on the mere tip of a hair, and it is there that one realizes the source." Moreover, when he laughed loudly, Mazu knew he had reached this stage and did not test him further; nor did he say anything further. Later Shuilao went to take up residence at Shuilao Hermitage. Some fellow Chan monks came to study under him, forming an assembly of a hundred or so. When he first began to teach, he mentioned this incident: "From the moment I was kicked by Master Ma, I have not been able to stop laughing!" Whenever there would be questions about the ranges of mountain peaks and folding meadows, or the flowing water of mountain streams, or the mist that lingers around the river bank willows, or the garden flower smiling at the sun, or the oriole cries in the tree, or the dancing butterflies in the fragrant thickets, he would just reply, "From the moment I was kicked by Master Ma, I have not been able to stop laughing!" This is the first case of "in entering the stream [of sound], the stream becomes extinguished. That which enters also becomes quiescent. The attributes of motion and stillness are utterly unborn."<sup>69</sup>

Hongzhou Shuilao 洪州水潦 (d.u.) questioned Mazu Daoyi 馬祖道一 (709-788). Mazu kicked him in the chest and he fell down, whereupon he had a great awakening and started laughing loudly. He realized that, although there are 84,000 measureless Dharma teachings, if one but penetrates their source they will all be realized. This is precisely Avalokitēśvara's gate or method for entering the cardinal principle of "in entering the stream [of sound], the stream becomes extinguished," as taught in the *Śūramgama Sūtra*.

②. The second case of "entering the stream and losing the object."

又不見雲門問洞山：「近離甚處？」山曰：「查渡。」門曰：「夏在甚處？」山曰：「湖南報慈。」門曰：「幾時離彼山？」曰：「八月二十五。」門曰：「放爾三頓棒，古人淳樸據實祇對。」自言：「我此回實從查渡來，有甚麼過，便道放我三頓棒？大丈夫漢！須共這老漢理會始得。」至明日，便去問曰：「昨日蒙和尚放三頓棒，未審過在甚麼處？」問曰：「飯袋子，江西湖南，便怎麼去？」洞山忽然大悟，更無消息可通，亦無道理可拈出，只禮拜而已。既悟了，便打開自己庫藏，運出自己家珍。乃

<sup>69</sup> T. no. 1998A, 47: 882b27-c17.

曰：「他後向無人煙處住箇草菴，不蓄一粒米，不種一莖菜，接待十方往來，盡與伊出却釘拔却楔，拈却炙脂帽子，脫却鶻臭布衫，教伊灑灑地作箇衲僧，豈不俊哉！」雲門曰：「爾身如椰子大，開得許大口。」這箇是第二箇入流亡所，動靜二相，了然不生底樣子。

Moreover, have you not seen Yunmen's question posed to Dongshan: "Where did you come from?" Dongshan said, "Chadu." Yunmen said, "Where did you spend the summer [rains retreat]?" Dongshan replied, "At Baoci [Monastery] in Hunan." Yunmen said, "When did you leave that mountain?" Dongshan said, "On the twenty-fifth day of the eighth month." Yunmen said, "I strike you three blows. Everyone before you has answered honestly!" Dongshan said to himself, "Since on this occasion I actually did come from Chadu, where was my mistake that prompted him to say he strikes me three blows? I have to be a man about this and try to grasp this old man's reasoning." The next day Dongshan went to question Yunmen, "Yesterday you said you would strike me three times. Where does my fault lay?" Yunmen replied to Dongshan, "Rice bag! How did you get from Jiangxi and Hunan?" Dongshan suddenly had a great awakening, there being nothing more to understand nor principle to bring out. He just prostrated. Having achieved awakening, he then opened up his treasure house and brought out his household treasures. He said, "I will go to a grass hut in a misty place without people. I will neither cultivate grain nor plant vegetables. I shall receive the travelers of the ten directions and pull out the nails and wedges for them, while seizing their broiled greasy hats [their arrogance]. I will remove their stinking robes and teach them to be free and at ease, to be patched robe monks. Would that not be good!" Yunmen said, "Your body is no bigger than a coconut, yet the mouth you open is as big as this!" This is the second case of "entering the stream [of sound], upon which the stream becomes extinguished, that which enters also became quiescent, and the attributes of motion and stillness are utterly unborn."<sup>70</sup>

Yunmen Wenyan 雲門文偃 (864-949) struck Dongshan Shouchu 洞山守初 (910-990) three blows, which caused him to give rise to a sense of great doubt about why he was hit. When his doubt was shattered by Yunmen the next day,

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<sup>70</sup> T. no. 1998A, 47: 882c17-883a3.

he experienced great awakening, whereupon he aroused his great vow to guide practitioners.

③. The third case of “entering the stream and extinguishing the object.”

又鼓山晏國師在雪峯多年，一日雪峯知其緣熟，忽起搗住曰：「是甚麼？」晏釋然了悟，唯舉手搖曳而已。峯曰：「子作道理耶？」晏曰：「何道理之有？」後來楊大年收在《傳燈錄》中，謂之「亡其了心」。此是第三箇入流亡所，動靜二相，了然不生底樣子。

Moreover, National Master Gushan [Shen]yan was with Xuefeng for many years. One day Xuefeng knew his circumstances were ripe and suddenly got up and grabbed him by the chest. “What is it?” Yan was awakened. He simply raised and waved his hand, nothing more. Feng said, “Are you demonstrating your understanding?” Yan replied, “What is there to understand?” Later, when Yang Danian included this in the *Record of the Transmission of the Lamp*, he called this “extinguishing the mind that understands.” This is the third case of “in entering the stream [of sound], the stream becomes extinct, that which enters also becomes quiescent, and the attributes of motion and stillness are utterly unborn.”<sup>71</sup>

Gushan Shenyan 鼓山神晏 (860-936) was practicing under Xuefeng Yicun 雪峰義存 (822-908). Xuefeng grabbed Shenyan by the chest and tried to make him speak. Shenyan was immediately awakened.

④. The fourth case of “entering the stream and effacing the object.”

又灌谿和尚，一日見臨濟，濟下繩床纔擒住，谿便云：「領！領！」這箇是第四箇入流亡所，動靜二相，了然不生底樣子。

Then again, monk Guanxi one day saw Linji. As Linji got off the rope bed and grabbed him, Guanxi said, “OK, OK, I got it!” This is the fourth case of “in entering the stream [of sound], the stream becomes extinct. That which enters also became quiescent. The attributes of motion and stillness were utterly unborn.”<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> T. no. 1998A, 47: 883a3-9.

<sup>72</sup> T. no. 1998A, 47: 883a9-11.

Guanxi Zhixian 灌谿志閑 (d. 895) visited Linji Yixuan 臨濟義玄 (767-866). Linji grabbed Guanxi by the scruff of the neck and immediately Guanxi realized the essence of mind.

(2) *Dinghu shan Muren Ju Zaisan chanshi shenggao* 鼎湖山木人居在禪師剩稿:

師陞座，講經題至照見五蘊皆空度一切苦厄訖。時人眾哄鬧，聽者難聞，乃略示云：「當知菩薩所修不同，名號亦別。從眼根修證故，照見五蘊皆空，得觀自在名。從耳根悟入故，初於聞中，入流亡所，得觀世音名。學人欲識觀自在菩薩照見五蘊皆空麼？」即豎起如意，復云：「學人欲得觀世音菩薩入流忘所麼？」喝一喝，便下座。

The master ascended to the seat and began to expound on the *[Heart] Sūtra*. When he got to the line, “perceived that the five aggregates are empty and transcended all suffering,” some people [outside the hall] were making a ruckus, making it difficult for those listening [in the hall] to hear. He cut his explanation short, saying, “You should know that the practices of bodhisattvas differ from one another. Their names are also distinct. Because it was through the cultivation and realization based on the visual faculty, perceiving the emptiness of the aggregates, that [Avalokiteśvara] is called ‘One Who is Free and Sovereign in Observation’ (*guanlizai* 觀自在). Because it was through the cultivation and realization based on the auditory faculty that Avalokiteśvara ‘entered the stream [of sound], whereby the stream became extinct,’ that he is called ‘Sound Observer’ (*guanshiyin* 觀世音). Do you practitioners want to understand Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva’s ‘perceiving the five aggregates to be empty’?” He raised his wish-fulfilling scepter and further said, “Do you practitioners want to attain Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva’s ‘entering the stream [of sound], whereupon the stream becomes extinct’?” He shouted once and then descended from his seat.<sup>73</sup>

Zaisan 在禪 (1611-1685) explained that “One Who Is Free and Sovereign in Observation,” (i.e., the Chinese name for Avalokiteśvara used in the *Heart Sūtra*) is a name obtained as a result of cultivating the visual faculty. In the *Śūramgama Sūtra*, “Observing the Sounds of the World” (*guanshiyin* 觀世音), a rendering that may have originated from the alternate Sanskrit reading of

<sup>73</sup> J. no. B326, 35: 476a5-12.

Avalokitaśvara, is a name obtained as a result of cultivating the auditory faculty. Moreover, by raising the wish-fulfilling scepter (*ruyi* 如意), he referenced the sūtra passage, “perceived that the five aggregates are empty and transcended all suffering.” His shout was a demonstration of “entering the stream [of sound], whereupon the stream becomes extinguished.” He did not use words, but only raised the scepter. It was by the sound of the shout that the cardinal meaning (*zongzhi* 宗旨) and essentials of the mind were directly penetrated.

The processes of training and awakening evinced in these examples of various past Chan masters may be likened to adjusting the focus of a telescope. If a student was not yet mature in terms of practice, or lacked experience in the “encounter” approach used by Chan masters, then even to engage the student in dialogue would have gone nowhere. However, after engaging in this practice for some time, the student may come closer to getting the point. Or upon receiving help from an illustrious master, when conditions ripen, the student would experience a direct perception of self-nature. This is why Chan fully utilizes opportune circumstances as a catalyst for insight (*ji feng* 機鋒) and engages practitioners with turning words (*zhuan yu* 轉語) in the effort to transform delusion into awakening. The Chan master will use all manner of expressions and actions, familiar and unfamiliar, to probe or test whether or not the practitioner can rise in response. If the practitioner’s efforts in practice have reached a certain degree of maturity, then the encounter might possibly work.<sup>74</sup> On the occasions described here, this involved chance encounters with sounds from such things as bells, drums, boards, fowl, and donkeys, as well as shouts and strikes on tables, or even just a fly whisk hitting the table or the air. If the time was right, and the capacity for awakening mature, then the student right there and then would experience awakening and see his or her true nature.

#### iv. Examples of Modern Application

We have introduced in previous pages various *gong’an* or public cases, taken from recorded sayings of the Chinese Chan school, in which Chan masters of succeeding generations employed “perfect realization based on the auditory faculty” to guide their assemblies. Here we will turn to the modern day masters Xuyun 虛雲 (1840-1959) and Sheng Yen 聖嚴 (1930-2009). We will examine how they employed the method of “perfect realization based on

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<sup>74</sup> See Sheng Yen (2007a, 132-33).

the auditory faculty" in their teaching of meditation, *nianfo* or mindful recollection of the Buddha's name, and circumstantial or on-the-spot instruction in order to bring out the unique features of this practice.

### 1. Master Xuyun

Master Xuyun was a Chan monk of the Republican era (1912-1949) who received Dharma transmission in both the Caodong 曹洞 and Linji 臨濟 lineages. He also sought to revive and draw upon the Yunmen 雲門, Fayan 法眼 and Guiyang 滄仰 lines. Thus he was a great worthy of the Chan shool who combined in his person the five principal lineages of Chan. According to the *Biographical Chronicle of Xuyun Heshang* (*Xuyun heshang nianpu* 虛雲和尚年譜), in the year 1895, when he was 56 *sui* 歲 (55 years old by Western reckoning), the following occurred:

臘月八九，第三晚，六枝香開靜時，護七例沖開水，濺師手上，茶杯墮地，一聲破碎，頓斷疑根，慶快平生，如從夢醒。……因述偈曰：「杯子撲落地，響聲明瀝瀝；虛空粉碎也，狂心當下息。」又偈曰：「盪著手打碎杯，家破人亡語難開；春到花香處處秀，山河大地是如來。」

On the 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> of the twelfth lunar month—the third night [of the retreat], when the sixth stick of incense had burned and it was time to come out of meditation—the retreat attendant as usual was proceeding to pour boiled water [for each of the practitioners]. It splashed on the master's hand, and his tea cup fell to the ground, making a sound as it shattered to pieces. Instantly it severed the roots of his doubt; his joy was beyond anything he had ever known, as though having awakened from a dream... He thereupon uttered the verse: "The cup plummets to the floor, the sound clear and flowing; emptiness is smashed to pieces, the mad mind on the spot pacified." In another verse he said, "Water burns the hand, a cup smashes to pieces. It is difficult to describe how this household is destroyed and everyone dies. When spring arrives, the fragrance of flowers reaches everywhere. The mountains, streams, and the great earth are all the Tathāgata."<sup>75</sup>

When he was 55 years old, at Gaomin Monastery 高旻寺 in Jiangsu province, boiling water splashed onto his hand, causing the tea cup to fall to the floor, and suddenly the root of his doubt was severed. Much as with previous

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<sup>75</sup> See Lü Xuecen 呂學岑 (1978, 24-26).

masters, it was inadvertently due to fixing on the sound of the cup falling to the floor that caused Xuyun to enter into the state where emptiness shattered to pieces (*xukong fensui* 虛空粉碎) and he completely awakened to his original face. The state of emptiness shattering that Xuyun experienced bears resemblance to the awakening experienced by Rujiu Ruibai as described in the previous section. One heard the sound of the tea cup falling to the floor; the other heard the sound of a bell being struck. Both experienced realization of emptiness through their auditory faculties.

## 2. Sheng Yen of Dharma Drum Mountain

Sheng Yen founded Dharma Drum Mountain (*Fagu shan* 法鼓山) in Taiwan with the aim of propagating Chinese Chan Buddhism. Here we will discuss his method of Chan and the particular features of the architecture of Dharma Drum Mountain, as designed by Sheng Yen.

### (1) Application in Chan practice

Whenever Sheng Yen presided over teaching *huatou* 話頭 (contemplation of a critical phrase), silent illumination (*mozha* 默照), calming and contemplation (*zhi guan* 止觀), and beginning Chan methods, both at home and abroad, the practitioners would spend several days in the Chan hall diligently at practice. During such occasions, Sheng Yen would always take them outdoors into the natural environment for walking meditation. He would also say to them, "Whatever you see, whatever you hear, do not assign labels, descriptions, or comparisons to them. Just see what you see, and just hear what you hear, and do not go on to distinguish them." This method of instruction can be said to be an entry to "perfect realization based on visual and auditory faculties." Sheng Yen called this "direct or straightforward contemplation" (*zhi guan* 直觀).<sup>76</sup>

### (2) Application in *Nianfo* practice

Additionally, Sheng Yen taught "perfect realization based on the auditory faculty," where the sound of *nianfo* (Buddha name recitation) served as the perceptual object. Whenever Sheng Yen would preside over the practice of a seven-day *nianfo* retreat, he would always remind the reciters that "when doing *nianfo* listen to the practitioners' voices, not one's own voice. Focus the mind on the sound of the practitioners' rhythmic recitation and do not generate any sort of scattered or spurious thoughts."<sup>77</sup> Later, he took it a step further

<sup>76</sup> See Sheng Yen (2005, 83).

<sup>77</sup> See Sheng Yen (1999, 248).

by teaching an approach of “not reciting with mind, and not reciting with no-mind, not reciting with both mind and no-mind, nor reciting with neither mind nor no-mind.” His aim was to have practitioners reach a state of “recitation without recitation,” where every successive thought was on the Buddha’s name. He also taught “not reciting externally, but reciting within,” whereby no matter whether one was asleep or awake, one would always be doing *nianfo*. This, then, would then be successful cultivation of the “*samādhi* of mindful recollection of the Buddha” (*nianfo sanmei* 念佛三昧).<sup>78</sup>

### (3) Application in Environment

Dharma Drum Mountain is known as a “place of practice dedicated to Avalokiteśara” (*Guanyin daochang* 觀音道場). Outside the mountain gate there stands a bronze image of “Welcoming Avalokiteśara (Guanyin)” (*laiying Guanyin* 來迎觀音) who greets and welcomes visitors. Avalokiteśara Bodhisattva overlooks everyone, in long flowing garments with feet that suggest movement, seemingly riding a cloud down from the sky to greet all the sentient beings who come to visit.

Dharma Drum Mountain is flanked on either side by streams. On the banks of either stream there are walkways. On the walkways stand steles that state, “Meditation on Hearing the Sound of the Stream” (*tingxi chan* 聽溪禪).

This setting was designed by Sheng Yen in the hope that all visitors, when proceeding upstream, or up the mountain, would have the sound of the stream running through their ears, which could serve as an object of meditation. By utilizing the sound of the flowing stream, the visitors would have their minds cleared of worldly defilements. With a purified mind they would then enter the hall of “Wishfulfilling Avalokiteśara (Guanyin)” (*qiyuan Guanyin* 祈願觀音). There they would offer prayers to Avalokiteśara, who is seated on an island in a pond, holding an overturned vase that pours ambrosial nectar that transforms living beings. Inside the hall there is a tablet that reads: “entering the stream, the stream becomes extinguished”—a line from the *Śūrangama Sūtra*, which describes the realization of Avalokiteśvara. It represents a state of liberation which entails entering into the stream of the method of practice that one is cultivating, but then losing both the practice and the sense of self, which itself is tantamount to the unification of subject and object. One thereby enters into the liberated state of the simultaneous extinguishing of both subject and object.<sup>79</sup> Entering into hall of the Wishfulfilling Avalokiteśara (Guanyin),

<sup>78</sup> See Sheng Yen (2010b, 206).

<sup>79</sup> See Sheng Yen (2007b, 18).

one prays that all beings will come into the hall of the “Wishfulfilling Avalokiteśara” and all aspire themselves to become Avalokiteśara (Guanyin) Bodhisattva and enter into the state of “perfect realization based on the auditory faculty.” Progressing further into the interior of the complex, they “turn back the hearing to hear their self-nature,” and realize their “original face” (*benlai mianmu* 本來面目) by arriving in the main Hall of the Great Hero, which symbolizes “achieving unexcelled enlightenment by realizing the self nature.” Finally, upon ascending the highest peak of Dharma Drum Mountain, one arrives at the realm of compassion and wisdom, which is symbolized by the statue called “Avalokiteśara (Guanyin) as the Mountain’s Founder” (*kaishan Guanyin* 開山觀音). The entire concept behind the architectural layout of Dharma Drum Mountain, reflected throughout the complex, is informed by the concept of Guanyin Bodhisattva’s “perfect realization based on the auditory faculty” as found in the *Śūramgama Sūtra*.

## VII. Conclusion

The *Śūramgama Sūtra* is a scripture that is rich in philosophical import, yet also places weight on the experience of realization attained through cultivation. It emphasizes the practice of “perfect realization based on the auditory faculty,” which, as shown in this paper, was employed and developed by Chan masters of various lineages. Furthermore, in the *gong’an* records of Chan masters, all manner of sounds such as water, drums, bells, boards, fowl, donkeys, jewelry and shouting as well as striking the table and striking the air or table with a fly whisk are utilized as opportunities for beings to realize Buddhist awakening. In case after case, we see clearly displayed the expedient use of these phenomena by Chan masters.

However, even after achieving what the Chan school claims to be “seeing the nature,” it is still possible that one might regress to suffer retribution in the womb of an ox or horse. After having seen one’s nature, if there is not continual practice it would be like “a boat moving against the stream—when there is no progress, there’s only regression.” Hence in Chan, seeing one’s nature is not a singular episode of awakening in which everything is perfected and settled once and for all. Despite Chan claims of “becoming a buddha through sudden awakening,” what is attained is just a moment of buddhahood. Once that moment passes, one is still an ordinary being with vexations. According to Sheng Yen, this is why one must continue to practice, continue to engage in cultivation, and continue to experience awakening again and

again. Stage by stage, one ascends.<sup>80</sup> Hence in the Chan records we often find the metaphor of “the tip of a 100 foot pole”<sup>81</sup> used to spur practitioners to persevere relentlessly in their efforts.

In brief, the focal point of the practice of “perfect realization based on the auditory faculty” is to “destroy attachment” and realize the nature of emptiness. It is to destroy all the manifold attachments to the myriad phenomena of everyday existence, by which one experiences utter freedom and liberation in the midst of any and all circumstances.<sup>82</sup> Chan masters from the Tang dynasty through the Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing periods, and even down to today, have utilized and commented on this method. There has also always been *gong'an* literature related to awakening through the auditory faculty. Regardless of whether it took the form of an exegetical commentary, explanatory lecture, or a *gong'an* related to awakening, everywhere they reflect the popularity and intimate connection that Buddhism in China has had with the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*.

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<sup>80</sup> See Sheng Yen (2007a, 147).

<sup>81</sup> See the following: *Yuanwu Foguo chanshi yulu* 圓悟佛果禪師語錄, *Dahui Pujue chanshi yulu* 大慧普覺禪師語錄 (Song). *Gaofeng Longquan yuan Yin shi ji xian yulu* 高峰龍泉院因師集賢語錄, *Wuming Huijing chanshi yulu* 無明慧經禪師語錄 (Yuan). *Boshan canchan jingyu* 博山參禪警語, *Youngjue Yuanxian Chanshi Guanglu* 永覺元賢禪師廣錄 (Ming). *Boshan chanshi yulu* 破山禪師語錄, *Tian'an Sheng Chanshi Yulu* 天岸昇禪師語錄 (Qing).

<sup>82</sup> See Sheng Yen (2003, 42).

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