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# Master Hsu Yun's Discourses and Dharma Words

Edited, Translated and Explained by  
Lu Kuan Yu [Charles Luk]

(Including: An Introduction to Empty Cloud by Richard Hunn and Master  
Hsu Yun's sermons and discourses of December 1952)

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"Universally regarded as the most outstanding Buddhist of the Chinese order in the modern era."

—Richard Hunn

"Dharma successor of all five Chan schools; main reformer in the Chinese Buddhist Revival (1900-50). Born Chuan Chou (Quan Zhou), Fukien (Fujian) province. Left home at 19. At 20 took precepts with master Miao Lien and received Dharma name Ku Yen. In 56th year achieved final awakening at Kao Min Ssu in Yang Chou (Yang Zhou). Thereafter began revival and teaching work. Eventually invited to take charge of the Sixth Patriarch's temple (Tsao-Chi/Chao Xi), then very rundown; restored it along with temples and monasteries; also founded many schools and hospitals. Died in his 120th year. Had also traveled in Malaysia and Thailand, and taught the King of Thailand."

—Autobiography: Empty Cloud, translated by Charles Luk

The supreme and endless blessings of Samantabhadra's deeds,  
I now universally transfer.  
May every living beings, drowning and adrift,  
Soon return to the land of Limitless Light!

—The Vows of Samantabhadra, Avatamsaka Sutra

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# Master Hsu Yun (虚云) A Brief Biography

By Upasaka Lu K'uan Yu (Charles Luk)

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Ch'an Master Hsu (Xu) Yun was born on 26th April 1840 at Chuanchowfu in Fukien province. His father was an official of the prefecture and his mother died immediately after giving birth to him. His uncle was childless and adopted him as his heir; so his grandmother decided that he should take two wives to continue both families.

When he was 11, his grandmother died and monks were invited to perform Buddhist rites. This was the first time he saw monks or sacred objects and it made him very happy. After this he read the sutras which deeply impressed him. When his uncle took him on pilgrimage to Nanyo, he became so attached to the holy place that he was reluctant to return home. When he was 14, his father discovered that he wanted to renounce the world and, in order to keep him, engaged a Taoist to teach him meditation. After practicing Taoism for three years, he decided that its teaching failed to reach the ultimate goal. One day he fled to Nanyo but was soon found and brought home. Sometime later his father sent for the two girls and celebrated Hsu Yun's marriage. Although the latter lived with his two wives, he had no intercourse with them but taught them the Dharma, which they understood.

At 19, together with his cousin Fu Kuo, he fled to Kushan monastery at Fuchow where his head was shaved, and here he followed the Master Miao Lien and received full ordination. After being ordained, his cousin left in search of enlightened masters but was never heard of again. Hearing that his father had sent servants to look for him, Hsu Yun hid in

a grotto behind the monastery where he practiced austerities for the next three years. At 25 he learned that his father had died in Hunan province and that his stepmother with his two wives had entered a nunnery.

During these years in the grotto, he made very good progress and had most interesting experiences. He says in his autobiography: "I was able to make my heart content and became free to go anywhere I wanted. As there were mountains to stay on and herbs to eat, I started wandering from place to place." At 31, he went to Wenchow where he met a monk who urged him to call on the old master Yung Ching who was well-versed in both teaching and Ch'an transmission. This master urged him to resume eating rice and to use the Koan "Who is dragging this corpse of mine?" and ordered him to study the Ch'an rules, the Lotus teaching and other important sutras. From 36 to 43 he went on a pilgrimage to P'u T'o Island off Ningpo, which was the bodhimandala of Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva, thence to the monastery of King Asoka at Ningpo and too many other holy places where he called on well-known masters and made good progress in his Ch'an practice.

At 43, he took stock of his achievements which were not complete and remembering how he had sacrificed his love for his parents in order to join the Sangha, he was ashamed that he had attained so little. In order to repay his debt of gratitude to them, he decided on a long pilgrimage from P'u T'o to the Five-Peaked Mountain (the bodhimandala of Manjusri) in the North-west to pray for their rebirth in the Pure Land. From the thatched temple of Fa Hua on P'u T'o Island, he set out with incense sticks in his hands, prostrating himself every three paces until he reached his destination.

In his long walk with prostration at every third step and concentration on repeating Manjusri's name, he succeeded in realizing singleness of thought which was the key to his subsequent success in Ch'an training. Twice he was in danger of death and twice he was saved by Manjusri who appeared as a beggar called Wen Chi to hide his identity, instead of Wen Shu as he was called in China. The first time he had been caught in a heavy snowstorm and was very hungry, tired and exhausted for several days after which he was given some yellow rice gruel which brought him back to life.

Later he caught malaria and dysentery and was dying in a deserted temple on the top of a mountain when the beggar appeared again to give him the hot water and medicine that saved him. The beggar, who had given his name as Wen Chi, asked several questions which Hsu Yun did not understand and could not answer because he was still unenlightened and did not understand the living meaning of Ch'an dialogue. Although he was told by the beggar that the latter was known in every monastery on the Five-Peaked Mountain, when Hsu Yun arrived there and asked the monks about Wen Chi no one knew him. Later he mentioned the incident to an elderly abbot who brought his palms together and said: "That beggar was the transformation body of Manjusri Bodhisattva." Only then did the master realize that he had actually met the Bodhisattva who had saved him twice on the long journey.

After sitting in meditation, he paid reverence to the Bodhisattva on the Five-Peaked Mountain, thus fulfilling his vow taken three years before to pray for the liberation of his parents. During this long journey, which took three years, he succeeded in realizing singleness of mind (i.e., the pure and undisturbed mind) even in the midst of hardship, adversity, illness and danger. On the mountain he saw, as many other pilgrims including devotees from foreign countries have done, balls of light dancing from one peak to another.

The master then went west and south, passing through many holy places where he paid reverence and sat in meditation until he reached the holy site of Samantabhadra Bodhisattva on Mount OMei in West Szechwan. There he saw at night countless Buddha-lights, like a constellation of bright stars in the sky. He continued his westward journey and entered Tibet where he visited the Potala, the seat of the Dalai Lama, and that of the Panchen Lama at Tashi Lunpo monastery. He then left Tibet to visit the holy sites of India, after which he crossed the sea to Ceylon, and thence to Burma. He then returned to China where he first visited the Cock's Foot Mountain in Yunnan which was the bodhimandala of Mahakasyapa, and then passed through the provinces of Kweichow, Hunan, Hupeh, Kiangsi and Anhwei. In his autobiography the master wrote of these two years of travel: "The scenery changed every day but my pure mind was like a bright moon hanging solitarily in the sky. My health grew more robust and my steps were rapid."

In his 54th and 55th years, the master stayed on a mountain to read the Tripitaka. At 56, he was invited to the famous monastery of Gao Ming at Yangehow to assist its abbot in supervising the twelve weeks of Ch'an meditation. On his way to Yangehow, he slipped and fell into a rising river and was caught in a fisherman's net. He was carried to a nearby temple where he was revived. He was very ill but went on to Kao Ming monastery where he was asked to help at the forthcoming meditation weeks. Without disclosing his illness, he politely declined the abbot's request, asking only to be allowed to attend the meditation meetings. His refusal was regarded as an affront to the whole community and, according to Kao Ming's rules of discipline; he was punished by being beaten with a wooden ruler. As the master was practicing the relinquishment of attachment to ego, ksanti-paramita and virya-paramita, he willingly accepted this punishment which aggravated his illness. In order to cure it, he sat firmly in the meditation hall day and night with increasing zeal. He said in his autobiography: "In the purity of my singleness of mind, I forgot all about my body. Twenty days later my illness vanished completely. From that moment, with all my thoughts entirely wiped out, my practice took effect throughout the day and night. My steps were as swift as if I was flying in the air. One evening, after meditation, I opened my eyes and suddenly saw I was in brightness similar to broad daylight in which I could see everything within and without the monastery. ..." Knowing that he had only achieved an advanced but not the final stage, he refused to cling to it, resolving to wipe out the final hindrance caused by his last subtle attachment to ego and Dharma. One night when the meditation ended after six successive incense sticks had been burned; a monk came to fill his cup of tea. As the boiling water splashed over his hand, he dropped the cup, which fell to the ground and broke with a sound which was heard by his pure mind<sup>[1]</sup> that was now able to perform its non-discriminating function of perceiving externals. Instantly he cut off his last link with samsara and rejoiced at his realization of the Absolute. He wrote in his autobiography: "I was like someone awaking from a dream" which meant that he had leaped over the worldly stream to the other shore of Bodhi. He then chanted the following two gathas:

1 - A cup fell to the ground  
With a sound clearly heard.  
As space was pulverized,

The mad mind came to a stop.

2 - When the hand released its hold, the cup fell and was shattered,  
'Tis hard to talk when the family breaks up or someone dies.  
Spring comes with fragrant flowers exuberating everywhere;  
Mountains, rivers and the great earth are only the Tathagata.

After his own Enlightenment, the master immediately began his Bodhisattva work of guiding others out of the sea of suffering. His first act was to pray to Shakyamuni Buddha for the liberation of his mother whom he had never seen. Previously he had taken the vow to go to the monastery of Emperor Asoka at Ningpo to pay reverence to the Buddha Relics and to burn off there one of his fingers as his offering to the Buddha for her liberation.

After the death of the Buddha he was cremated. Followers searching ashes found 4 teeth and finger bones. They were redistributed by Emperor Asoka, who built stupas for worshipping them. Only one finger bone is known to exist.

Each day he prostrated three thousand times and increased the number until he ached all over and was seriously ill. He became so weak that the chief monk did not approve of his burning a finger on account of the risk involved. The master burst into a flood of tears and finally the superintendent of the monastery and another monk agreed to assist him in fulfilling his vow. He was helped to the main hall where together with the assembly; he paid reverence to the Buddha, performed the ritual and recited the text of the rules of repentance and reform. He wrote later: "With singleness of mind, I repeated the Buddha's name and prayed Him to liberate my affectionate mother. At the beginning I felt pain, but as gradually my mind became pure, my awakening wisdom manifested clearly ... When my finger had burned off, I arose to bow down before the Buddha. I did not need others to support me and entirely forgot my illness. After walking unaided to present my thanks to the assembly, I returned to the sick bay. Everyone present was surprised at my transformation, and I moved out of the hut for sick monks."

From then until his death, the master performed his Bodhisattva work by expounding sutras, transmitting the precepts, reconstructing many temples that had fallen in ruins, building new ones and starting seminaries for novices, Buddhist associations for laymen and free



Buddhist schools for children. His field of activities was not confined to China but also included Burma, Thailand, Malaya, Singapore and Hong Kong where the number of his disciples could not be counted.

In the course of this Bodhisattva work, the master survived dangers, illnesses, poisoning, beating, torture and persecution. A translation of his autobiography is being published by installments in *World Buddhism*, a monthly journal published in Dehiwela, Ceylon. Before passing away on 13th October 1959, the master said to his attendant: "After my death and cremation, please mix my ashes with sugar, flour and oil, knead all this into nine balls and throw them into the river as an offering to living beings in the water. If you help me to fulfill my vow, I shall thank you forever."

Hsu Yun in his extreme old age had chosen hardship and suffering to protect the Buddha Dharma in his country instead of seeking safety across the water in Hong Kong.

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### About Lu K'uan Yu ( Charles Luk )



**Lu K'uan Yü**  
(Charles Luk)  
1898-1978

Born in Canton in 1898 and died in 1978. His first Master was Hutuktu of Sikang—an enlightened Great Lama. His second Master was the Venerable Ch'an Master Hsu Yun, the best-known modern Ch'an Master. Throughout his life Lu K'uan Yu contributed to Buddhist publications in India, London, Paris, and New York, for he passionately devoted his life to presenting Chinese Buddhist texts to Westerners because he wanted to preserve Buddhism.

—From "Ch'an and Zen Teaching"

# Introduction to Empty Cloud

*(By Richard Hunn, from Empty Cloud: The Autobiography of the Chinese Zen Master)*



Long before the time of his death in 1959 at the venerable age of 120 on Mount Yun-ju, Jiangxi Province, Master Hsu Yun's name was known and revered in every Chinese Buddhist temple and household, having become something of a living legend in his own time. His life and example has aroused the same mixture of awe and inspiration in the minds of Chinese Buddhists as does a Milarepa for the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, remarkable in view of the fact that Hsu Yun lived well into our own era, tangibly displaying those spiritual powers that we

must otherwise divine by looking back through the mists of time to the great Chan adepts of the Tang, Song and Ming Dynasties. They were great men whose example still inspires many today, but in many cases, we have scant details as to their lives as individuals, outside their recorded dialogues or talks of instruction.

The compelling thing about Hsu Yun's story which follows is that it paints a vivid portrait of one of China's greatest Buddhist figures complete with all the chiaroscuro of human and spiritual experience. It is not a modern biography in the Western sense, it is true but it does lay bare the innermost thoughts and feelings of Master Hsu Yun, making him seem that much more real to us. No doubt, the main thing for a Buddhist is the instructional talks, and Hsu Yun's are rich in insight, but it is only natural that we should wonder about the individual, human factors, asking what life was like for these fascinating figures. After all, holy men are like mountains, while their 'peaks of attainment' may thrust into unbounded space, they must rest on the broad earth like the rest of us. That part of their experience—how they relate to temporal conditions—is an intrinsic part of their development, even if the ultimate goal be to 'pass beyond' the pale of this world. In Hsu Yun's

account we are given a fascinating glimpse into the inner life of a great Chinese Buddhist Master.

By the time of his passing, Hsu Yun was justifiably recognized as the most eminent Han Chinese Buddhist in the 'Middle Kingdom'. When he gave his talks of instruction at meditation meetings and transmitted the precepts in his final decades, literally hundreds of disciples converged upon the various temples where he met and received his followers and, on some occasions, this number swelled to thousands. Such a wave of renewed enthusiasm had not been witnessed in the Chinese monasteries since the Ming Dynasty when Master Han-shan (1546-1623) appeared. This eminent Master had also found the Dharma in decline and set about reconstructing the temples and reviving the teachings, as would Master Hsu Yun some three hundred years or so later. Only years before these great gatherings around Master Hsu Yun, many of the temples which he was subsequently to use had been little more than ruined shells, decrepit shadows of their former grandeur and vitality, but the Master revived these along with the teachings that were their very *raison d'être*.

Not surprisingly, Hsu Yun soon acquired the nickname 'Hanshan come again' or 'Han-shan returned', for their careers were in many respects similar. Both had shared the ordination name of 'De-qing' and both had restored the Monastery of Hui-neng at Cao-xi among others in their times. However, unlike his eminent predecessors in the Tang, Song and Ming Dynasties who had frequently enjoyed official patronage and support from Emperor and State, Hsu Yun's long life of 120 years spanned a most troublesome time both for China and Chinese Buddhism. It was a period continually punctuated by both civil and international conflict, with almost perpetual doubt and confusion as to China's future and security, one in which general want and straitened circumstances were the order of the day.

Hsu Yun was born in 1840 around the time of the Opium Wars and by 1843 the Treaty of Nanjing had been signed with the ceding of Hong Kong to Great Britain, the thin end of a wedge of foreign intervention in China's affairs that was to have fateful and long lasting repercussions. Hsu Yun lived to see the last five reigns of the Manchu Dynasty and its eventual collapse in 1911, the formation of the new Republican era taking place in the following year. With the passing of the old order,

much was to change in China. China's new leaders were not that concerned about the fate of Buddhism and indeed, many of them were inclined to regard it as a medieval superstition standing in the way of all social and economic progress. The waves of modernism sweeping China at this time were not at all sympathetic towards Buddhism nor any other traditional teachings. Needless to say, many of the monasteries found themselves falling on hard times and many others had already been in ruins before the fall of the dynasty. Government support for the Buddhist temples was scanty when not altogether absent. Of course, China's new leaders had other things on their minds, for besides the frequent famines, droughts and epidemics which ravaged China during these years, there was also the growing threat of Japanese invasion. The Communist Chinese were rising in the countryside, soon to find sufficient strength to take on the Nationalist armies. By the late 1930s, Japanese troops occupied large areas of northern China. It goes without saying that this unfortunate social and political climate hardly offered the best of circumstances in which to embark upon large-scale renewal of the Chinese Buddhist tradition.

However, despite the odds stacked against him by dint of all this chaos, Hsu Yun succeeded in retrieving Chinese Buddhism from abysmal decline and actually injected fresh vigor into it. In many ways, the story of Hsu Yun is the story of the modern Chinese Buddhist revival, for by the end of his career, he had succeeded in rebuilding or restoring at least a score of the major Buddhist sites, including such famous places as the Yun-xi, Nan-hua, Yun-men and Zhen-ru monasteries, besides countless smaller temples, also founding numerous Buddhist schools and hospitals. His followers were scattered throughout the length and breadth of China, as well as in Malaysia and other outposts where Chinese Buddhism had taken root. During the Master's visit to Thailand, the King became a personal disciple of Hsu Yun, so impressed was he by the Master's example. Hsu Yun's life-work would have been an achievement of note even during more auspicious days when official patronage had been freely given, but that this tenacious and devoted spirit succeeded in his aims amid the general want and turmoil of his times was even more remarkable and nothing short of miraculous. This was possible only because of the Master's deep spiritual life, which alone could provide the energy for renewal amid confusion and decay.

His external works were a reflection of the inner life he cultivated and one of a piece.

To many Chinese Buddhists, Hsu Yun appeared like an incarnation and personal embodiment of all that was great about the Chinese Sangha in the halcyon days of the Tang and Song, and as a modern scholar in the West put it, Hsu Yun 'lived hagiography', his life strangely infused with the spirit of greater times. The Master's restoration work was often bidden in strange ways, as if a hidden reservoir of the whole Chinese Buddhist tradition wished to speak anew through his very being. When serving as Abbot of Gu-shan Monastery, Fujian, in 1934, the Master beheld the Sixth Chan Patriarch (d. 713) in his evening meditation. The Patriarch said, 'It is time for you to go back.' thinking that this betokened the end of his earthly career, the Master said a few words about it to his attendant in the morning and then put it out of mind. In the fourth month of that same year, he again beheld the Patriarch in a dream, who this time thrice urged him to 'go back'. Shortly afterwards; the Master received a telegram from the provincial authorities in Guangdong, inviting him to take over and restore the Sixth Patriarch's monastery at Cao-xi, then in just the same dilapidated condition as Hanshan had found it back in the Ming Dynasty before his own restoration work. Thus, Hsu Yun handed over Gushan Monastery to another Abbot and proceeded to Cao-xi to set about restoring the famous Nan-hua Monastery, formerly known as 'Bao-lin' or 'Precious Wood', and from which the Chan Schools of yore had received their impetus and inspiration.

Throughout the Master's long career, whether in good fortune or bad, he remained a simple and humble monk. Those who met him, including the usually more critical Western observers, found him to be thoroughly detached from his considerable achievements, unlike one or two other Chinese Buddhists who had welcomed publicity and self-glorification as instruments behind the Chinese Buddhist renaissance. While many talked, Hsu Yun quietly went his way, as unaffected as the 'uncarved block' so dear to a wise Chinese heart. Again, despite the munificence of the temples he helped to restore, his noble simplicity remained entire. When the Master approached a holy site for restoration, he took a staff with him as his only possession; when he had seen his task completed, he left with that same staff as his sole possession. When he arrived at the Yun-ju Mountain to restore the Zhen-ru Monastery, then a

shambles, he took up residence in a cowshed. Despite the large sums of money which came in from devotees during restoration, the Master remained content with his simple cowshed and still preferred it, even after the Zhen-ru Monastery had risen, phoenix-like, from its ashes. But this was to be expected from a monk who had once lived on nothing but pine needles and water while on retreat in the mountain fastness of Gu-shan.

Famous, too, were the Master's long pilgrimages on foot to holy sites at home and abroad, totally at the mercy of the elements and often with little more than his faith to support him. His greatest pilgrimage began in his 43rd year when he set out for the isle of Putuo in Zhejiang, sacred to Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva. Carrying incense in hand, he prostrated every third step of the way to pay reverence to the 'three gems'. Thence in a similar fashion, he headed for Mount Wu-tai in Shansi, sacred to Manjusri Bodhisattva, one point of his pilgrimage being to pay back the debt of gratitude he felt towards his parents; the strength of his determination can well be measured by the fact that he nearly perished twice in the bitter cold of Wu-tai's snowy peaks but never gave up. He was saved by a beggar named Wen-ji, regarded by Chinese Buddhists as a 'transformation-body' of Manjusri. From Mount Wu-tai, the Master headed towards Tibet, which he visited, going on to Bhutan, India, Ceylon and Burma before returning to China via Yunnan, calling at holy sites en route.

During his travels the Master succeeded in realizing 'singleness of mind' throughout day and night, so that by the time of his return to China, conditions were ripe for his final or complete enlightenment, which took place in his 56th year while at the Gao-min Monastery in Yangzhou. He was, as the Chinese say, one who had 'ancient bones', for as regards his later career of restoration which included reviving the teaching of the Five Chan Schools (Wu-jia), the Master was very much a 'self-made man' who had re-established these teachings on the strength of his own insight without teachers. A flash of the old insight was to be found here and there in the temples as Hsu Yun had known them in his youth, but the Chan tradition had been in decline by and large. His first teachers had been either Dharma-Masters or Tian-tai Masters, though indeed his Tian-tai teacher had given him his first gong-an [Jap. koan] ('Who is dragging this corpse about?') and it would not be true to say that the Chinese temples had been totally lacking in enlightened

individuals. The marked revival of the Chan tradition in the period extending from the mid-1930s through to the 1950s was largely attributable to Hsu Yun's endeavors.

The Master cared greatly for lay-Buddhists, too, and he was progressive for the way in which he opened up the temple doors to layfolk, teaching them alongside Sangha members. He made much of the pu-shuo or 'free sermon' end addressed all who came to him. Though a monk for 101 years, he never pretended that the Dharma was beyond the reach of layfolk. While his gathas and verses of instruction reveal the insight of one who saw beyond the pale of this world, he never failed to remind his disciples that the great bodhi is ever-present, always-there in our daily acts and seemingly mundane circumstances. Like all the great Masters of Chan before him, he laid stress on the non-abiding mind which is beyond reach of all conditioned relativities; even as they arise within it, a paradox that only the enlightened truly understand.

Though the Master became famous as a Chan adept, he also taught Pure Land Buddhism, which he considered to be equally effective as a method of self-cultivation, for like the hua tou technique, the single-minded recitation of the Pure Land mantra stills the dualistic surface activity of the mind, enabling practitioners to perceive their inherent wisdom. This will surprise some Western people who tuned in to the 'Zen craze' a few years back, in which it was often said that Chan or Zen Masters eschewed use of the Pure Land practice. Also, contrary to what has been said on occasions, Hsu Yun gave regular talks of instruction on the sutras and shastras, which he knew thoroughly after many decades of careful study and which he understood experientially, in a way which went beyond the grasp of mere words, names and terms in their literal sense.

By the time Hsu Yun had rebuilt the physical and moral fabric of Chinese Buddhism, few of the disciples who gathered round the Master or attended the other temples he rebuilt had to suffer the same indignities and privations that he had experienced himself when calling at monasteries in his youth. He had often been turned away from temples that had fallen into the degenerate system of hereditary ownership, not even allowed a night's lodging. When he had called at some temples, only a handful of monks were to be found because of the general decline. In one instance, famine had reduced the whole population of

locals and monks at one site to just a single person who used to put on a 'brave face' if callers happened by. Given that kind of background, it is hardly surprising that Hsu Yun recognized the need to recreate that self-sufficiency extolled by the ancient Master Bai-zhang Hui-hai (d. 814) in his famous dictum, 'A day without work, a day without food'. Thus, wherever possible, Hsu Yun revived the monastic agricultural system to live up to this tradition of self-sufficiency.

Thus far, all the necessary ingredients were present to sustain a revival which had borne fruit through decades of devoted effort. But we now come to a most tragic interlude in the life of Hsu Yun which might well be called a 'twilight of the gods' were it the finale, though thankfully it was not. As is well known, the Communist Government took effective control of China in 1949 about the time that Hsu Yun had set his aim on restoring the Yun-men Monastery in Guangdong. By 1951-52 the first tremors of what was to follow in the Cultural Revolution were beginning to make themselves felt. The restoration of the Yun-men Monastery was more or less complete, but misfortune struck from without with a purge of so-called 'rightist elements' in Guangdong Province. Being very much a 'traditionalist' in outlook, Master Hsu Yun was an obvious target. Fears that Hsu Yun might not be safe in the volatile atmosphere of these times had been voiced, the Master's overseas disciples urging him to leave the mainland until things settled down. He refused to leave, however, expressly because he felt that it was his duty to look after the welfare of the monasteries. What happened next was almost inevitable; a horde of Communist cadres descended on the Yun-men Monastery which they surrounded. They locked the Master up in a room for several days, where he was interrogated and ruthlessly beaten, left for dead. Perhaps the less said about this episode, the better. Suffice it to say that the Master had broken ribs and bled profusely, being for a while most seriously ill. Remarkably enough though, while then in his 112th year, Hsu Yun recovered from a beating severe enough to have killed someone less than half his age. This was not the first time that he had been beaten, for the police in Singapore had roughed him up back in 1916, ironically enough on the suspicion of being a 'leftist' from the mainland. But the beating he suffered in his 112th year was infinitely worse. Even so, without trying to make too little out of the violence he suffered, the old Master bounced back with all the properties of a proverbial 'Daruma doll' and lived to carry on



teaching not only at the Yunmen Monastery but many others besides, also finding time and energy for one more round of restoration work at the Zhen-ru Monastery on Mount Yunju, Jiangxi Province, where he eventually departed from this world on 13 October 1959. He had been in the Sangha for 101 years.

With the Master's passing in 1959, the Cultural Revolution was just around the corner. As we know, the monasteries had to suffer bitterly during that period. For many monks, nuns and lay devotees, it must have seemed that everything the Master had striven for was about to sink into oblivion. That draconian measures were already evident in Hsu Yun's last years must have caused him some concern; as it was, the episode at Yun-men cost him his most able disciple, Miao-yuan, who was executed. Other disciples had been harmed too. Things did look bleak, and even the news of events at Yun-men had to be smuggled out of mainland China by inserting records in the blank innerfolds of traditionally bound Chinese books. But as many on the mainland today are prepared to admit, the excesses of the Cultural Revolution were wrong; few would disagree.

Whether the long-term effects of ideological reform have been as catastrophic for Chinese Buddhism as once predicted is a good question. We should not deceive ourselves into thinking that Buddhism had been immune from persecution under the ancient regime. In the Hui-chang period (842-5) of the Tang Dynasty, a massive purge of Chinese Buddhism took place with the near destruction of some 4,600 monasteries, with 260,000 monks and nuns being forced back into lay life, the confiscation of monastic property and land being widespread. The monasteries managed to recover from that and by way of contrast; the modern picture is not entirely pessimistic. It is some consolation to learn that the temples which Hsu Yun restored are not only being patched up after the ravages of the revolution, but that many are being restored to their proper use and once more assuming an air of normality, though the complement of monks and nuns is much smaller these days. At any rate, these are not the 'actor monks' shuffled around China by the authorities twenty years ago, who fooled nobody, but bona fide occupants. Of this I have been given reliable assurance from two sources, my friends Dharma-Master Hin-lik and Stephen Batchelor (Gelong Jhampa Thabkay), both of whom made recent visits to the monasteries in southern China.

Thus, rather than ending on a pessimistic note, we should rejoice in the fact that Hsu Yun's endeavors did not fall entirely on stony ground. Without the energies he released into Chinese Buddhism, it is quite likely that the Chinese Sangha would have suffered far greater setbacks than it did during the revolution. In this sense, Master Hsu Yun lived out the mythical role of the 'poison-eating peacock' in Buddhist lore; from the bitterness of that poison something spiritual sprang forth. In the long run it seems that, as with the suppression of Buddhism in Tibet, the suppression of Chinese Buddhism has had the precise opposite effect to that intended by the suppressors. Not only has the Asian Buddhist had to reappraise the worth of the Dharma in his own context, but its merits have also struck the attention of the whole world.

Was it merely coincidence that at the height of the Cultural Revolution in China, copies of Lao-tzu and Chan (Zen) texts went into record numbers of reprints in the West? Anyone at all familiar with the Jungian theory of synchronicity would find it hard not to see this phenomenon as a profound act of compensation in the collective psyche. Some things are meant to be and cannot be destroyed. Though all outward signs and symbols may be denied for a while, their inner archetypes always remain and, like seeds, they reassert themselves. It is salutary to note in this respect that no lesser person than the late C. G. Jung was reading Hsu Yun's Dharma-discourses while on his death-bed.

Over the years, the editor has received a number of letters from home and abroad inquiring about Hsu Yun, his life and teachings. Such interest has sprung from a variety of sources and lands ranging from Europe, Australia and the USA, to Scandinavia and even a small South American state. In view of such wide interest, the story of Hsu Yun's life will appeal to many, for while his teachings have been available for years, the autobiography has so far appeared only in limited editions.

In America, Roshi Philip Kapleau has read from Hsu Yun's account to inspire his students at the Rochester Zen Center. This could only be because Hsu Yun's story is a testimony to the deep human need for spiritual nourishment. When reading the story of the Master's quest, we see a reflection of our own therein. He symbolizes the 'great man' hidden in ourselves and his name 'Empty Cloud' reminds us of that greater, 'undiscovered Self' that we are all fated to explore.

So much then for the great man with whom our text deals; a brief word must now be said about the text itself. It is a cause for rejoicing that a new edition of *Empty Cloud* is to become available under the banner of Element Books. Though Hsu Yun's teachings are quite widely known via the *Discourses and Dharma Words* translated by Upasaka Lu K'uan Yu (Charles Luk) in his *Chan and Zen Teaching* series (see Bibliography), Lu's translation of the Master's biography never saw regular publication, though limited editions have indeed appeared, once in the USA, through the inspired initiative of Roshi Philip Kapleau and friends at the Rochester Zen Center (1974), and an English edition (1980), thanks to the editor's friends who helped finance that version.

In anticipation of further reprints, it seemed advisable to incorporate a number of corrections, revisions and additions to bring the text up to date. Some of these errors had been drawn to my notice by Upasaka Lu back in 1975 and vice versa, but as Lu sadly passed away in 1978 he was unable to make further revisions. To compensate, I have checked the translation several times against the Hsu Yun He-shang Nian-pu from which Lu worked, incorporating whatever changes seemed to be required, including extra notes, minor additions, a glossary, etc. although the translation is still basically Luk's original which first appeared in serialized form in *World Buddhism* back in the 1960s, several passages have either been rewritten or added, and to that extent constitute new translations.

Another modification has been to substitute the pinyin form of Romanization; this is rapidly becoming the standard form in the West and it is also the form that visitors will find used in China in guidebooks and publications. I have departed from this in two or three instances, as in the retention of Canton for Guangzhou, the old form still being used in guidebooks; I have kept Amoy for Xiamen, and in order to avoid an apparent ambiguity likely to ensnare the general reader, I have kept the old spellings of Shensi and Shansi (pinyin: Shaanxi and Shanxi). Again, while not quite orthodox, I have hyphenated some pinyin names more than usual so as to recall the older spellings. Readers with pinyin should have no trouble with 'Bao-lin' and those familiar with Wade-Giles will readily spot the transition from 'Pao-lin'. Written as 'Baolin', however, the name is not identifiable in the same way. I have retained the Chinese li as a measurement of distance, for it is much shorter than the English mile (about 1/3 mile) and should pose no more problems than

the kilometer in Continental writings. As a final note, it is worth reminding readers that Luk's translation was made from the early edition of Hsu Yun's biography; in recent years this has been expanded to include collections of the recorded teachings and lectures given at many monasteries, in fact extra books. To translate all of this material would be interesting, but something of a magnum opus for the would-be translator. However, a couple of supplementary records have been added in this edition. Extra sources of Hsu Yun's teaching, both English translations and Chinese originals, are listed in the bibliographical section.

May all beings attain release!

UPASAKA WEN SHU (RICHARD HUNN)

Tholpe Hamlet, Norwich.

13 October 1987.

The Anniversary of Hsu Yun's Nirvana.

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I would like to add the following about Richard Hunn  
written by Adrian Chan-Wyles (Upasaka Heng Yu).



### **Richard Hunn**

Richard Hunn passed away on the 1st October 2006, in hospital, in Kyoto, Japan. He was suffering from cancer.

He spent much of his adult life propagating and preserving the spiritual essence of life in its many guises and myriad forms. Part of this immense task was the practice of Ch'an Buddhism—the method of which was very close to his heart.

He had met Charles Luk (Upasaka Lu Kuan Yu) in Hong Kong in the 1970s and tirelessly worked to keep the 'Ch'an and Zen Teaching Series' 1, 2, and 3 in print, together with Charles Luk's other texts, translated from the Chinese into a good and reliable English format, texts such as the Surangama Sutra, The Nirveda Vimalakirti Sutra, Taoist Yoga, Secrets of Chinese Meditation, Practical Buddhism and the very important autobiography of Master Xu Yun (1840-1959).

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# Prerequisites of the Ch'an Training

(From the Hsu Yun Ho Shang Fa Hui)

The object of Ch'an training is to realize the mind for the perception of (self-) nature—that is, to wipe out the impurities which soil the mind so that the fundamental face of self-nature can really be perceived. Impurities are our false thinking and clinging (to things as real). Self-nature is the meritorious characteristic of the Tathagata wisdom which is the same in both Buddhas and living beings. If one's false thinking and grasping are cast aside, one will bear witness to the meritorious characteristic of one's Tathagata wisdom and will become a Buddha, otherwise one will remain a living being. For since countless eons, our own delusion has immersed us in the (sea of) birth and death. Since our defilement has (already) lasted so long, we are unable instantly to free ourselves from false thinking in order to perceive our self-nature. This is why we must undergo Ch'an training. The prerequisite of this training is the eradication of false thinking. As to how to wipe it out, we have already many sayings of Sakyamuni Buddha and nothing is simpler than the word 'Halt' in His saying: 'If it halts, it is Enlightenment (Bodhi)'.<sup>1</sup>

The Ch'an sect from its introduction by Bodhidharma after his arrival in the East until after the passing of the Sixth Patriarch, spread widely all over the country and enjoyed great prosperity, unknown before and after that period. However, the most important thing taught by Bodhidharma and the Sixth Patriarch was only this: 'Expel all concurrent causes; do not give rise to a single thought.' To expel all concurrent causes is to lay them down.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, these two sentences: 'Expel all concurrent causes. Do not give rise to a single thought', are the prerequisites of Ch'an training. If these two sentences are not put into actual practice, not only will the training be ineffective, but also it will be impossible to start it, for in the midst of causes which rise and fall, thought after thought, how can you talk about Ch'an training?

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<sup>1</sup> The full sentence is: The mad mind does not halt; if it halts, it is Bodhi, i.e. enlightenment.

<sup>2</sup> In Ch'an terminology, "to lay down causes or thoughts" is to lay down the heavy load of causes or thoughts to free the mind from defilement.

Now we know that (the sentences): '*Expel all concurrent causes. Do not give rise to a single thought*' are the prerequisites of Ch'an training; how can we fulfill these prerequisites? Those of high spirituality are able to halt forever the arising of a single thought until they reach (the state of) birthlessness and will thereby instantaneously realize enlightenment (bodhi) without any more ado. Those of lower spirituality will deduce the underlying principle<sup>3</sup> from facts<sup>4</sup> and will thoroughly understand that the self-nature is fundamentally pure and clean and that distress (klesa)<sup>5</sup> and enlightenment as well as birth, death and Nirvana are all empty names having no connection whatever with self-nature; that phenomena are like a dream, an illusion, a bubble and a shadow; and that the four basic elements constituting the physical body, as well as mountains, rivers and the great earth which are within self-nature, are just like bubbles in the sea. These phenomena rise and fall following one another in succession without interfering with the essence (of self-nature). Therefore, one should not follow illusion in its creation, stay, change and annihilation and give rise to feelings of joy, sadness, attachment and rejection. One should lay down everything with which one's body is burdened, thus becoming exactly like a dead man. The outcome will be that sense-organs, sense-data and consciousness will vanish and that concupiscence, anger, stupidity and love will be eliminated. When all our feelings of joy and sadness, of the cold of hunger and the warmth of one's fill, of honor and dishonor, of birth and death, of happiness and misery, of blessing and calamity, of praise and censure, of gain and loss, of safety and danger, and of handicap and help, are all cast aside, this is the true laying down (of everything). To lay down a thing is to lay down everything for ever, and this is called the laying down of all concurrent causes. When all concurrent causes have been laid down, false thinking will vanish with the non-arising of differentiation and the elimination of all attachments. When one reaches this state of the non-arising of a single thought, the brightness of self-nature will appear in full.<sup>6</sup> Then only can the prerequisites of Ch'an training be entirely fulfilled. Further efforts in the true training

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<sup>3</sup> Underlying principle: theory, noumenon.

<sup>4</sup> Facts: activity, practice, phenomenon.

<sup>5</sup> Klesa: distress, worry, trouble and whatever causes them.

<sup>6</sup> This is the state described in Han Shan's "Song of the Board-bearer".

and real introspection will be required if one wishes to be qualified for realizing the mind for the perception of self-nature.

Recently, Ch'an Buddhists often came to inquire (about all this). As to the Dharma, fundamentally there is no such thing, because as soon as it is expressed in words, the meaning will not be true. Just see clearly that mind is Buddha and there will be no more ado. This is self-evident and all talks of practice and realization are the demon's words. Bodhidharma, who came to the East to "directly point at man's mind for the perception of self-nature leading to the attainment of Buddhahood", clearly indicated that all living beings on earth were Buddhas. The outright cognizance of this pure and clean self-nature together with complete harmony with it, without contamination from attachment (to anything)<sup>7</sup> and without the least mental differentiation, while walking, standing, sitting and lying by day or night<sup>8</sup> is nothing but the self-evident Buddha(hood). It does not require any application of mind or use of effort. Moreover, there is no place for either action or deed, and no use for words, speech and thought. For this reason, it is said that the attainment of Buddhahood is the most free and easy thing which relies only on oneself and does not depend on others. If all living beings on this earth are not willing to pass long eons through the successive four kinds of birth<sup>9</sup> in the six realms of existence<sup>10</sup> to stay permanently immersed in the sea of suffering, and if they wish to attain Buddhahood with the accompanying enjoyment of true eternity, true bliss, true personality and true purity<sup>11</sup>, they should sincerely believe the true words of the Buddha and Patriarchs, and lay down all (attachments) without thinking of either good or evil; all of them will certainly be able to become Buddhas on the spot. All Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and Patriarchs of past generations did not take the vow of liberating all living beings without warrant for so doing; they did not take vain vows and did not tell a deliberate lie.

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<sup>7</sup> Even attachment to the self-nature is also an impurity which should be cast aside.

<sup>8</sup> Literally 'during the two six-hour periods of the day'. Each day is divided into two six-hour periods. One for day-time and one for night-time.

<sup>9</sup> Birth from eggs, wombs and humidity, and by transformation.

<sup>10</sup> Worlds of gods (devas), men, spirits (asuras), animals, hungry ghosts and hells.

<sup>11</sup> The four transcendental realities in Nirvana expounded in the Mahaparinirvana Sutra.

The (qualification) above referred to, is in the state provided by nature<sup>12</sup>. Moreover, the Buddha and Patriarchs had expounded it again and again, and their injunction in this respect had also been repeated; theirs were true words, words corresponding to reality, which did not contain an atom of falsehood and deception. However, all living beings on this earth have been, for countless eons, deluded and sunk in the bitter ocean of birth and death, rising and falling in their endless transmigrations. Being deluded, confused and upset, they turn their back on enlightenment and unite with impurities. They are just like real gold thrown into a manure pit where it not only falls into disuse but is also deplorably soiled. Because of His great mercy, the Buddha was compelled to set up 84,000<sup>13</sup> Dharma doors (to enlightenment) so that living beings of different natural capacities could use them to cure the 84,000 ailments caused by their habitual concupiscence, anger, stupidity and love. In the same way you are taught to use a shovel, brush, water and cloth to wash, brush, polish and scrub the dirty piece of gold. Therefore, the Dharma doors expounded by the Buddha are all excellent Dharmas which enable one to see through birth and death and to attain Buddhahood, the only question being the adaptability or otherwise of individual potentialities. These Dharma doors should not be divided arbitrarily into superior or inferior ones. Those introduced into China are: the Ch'an Sect (Tsung), the Discipline School (Lu Tsung), the Teaching School (Chiao Tsung), the Pure Land School (Chin Tsung), and the Yoga School (Mi Tsung). Of these five Dharma doors, it is up to each man to choose the one which is suitable to his natural character and inclination, and he will surely reach his goal if he only sticks to it long enough without change of mind and deeply penetrates it.

Our sect advocates the Ch'an training. This training centers on 'realization of mind (and) perception of self-nature' that is an exhaustive investigation into one's fundamental face. The Dharma door which consists in the '*clear awakening to the self-mind and through perception*

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<sup>12</sup> i.e. 'self-so', so of itself, natural, of course, self-existing, the self-existent.

<sup>13</sup> The digits 8 and 4 symbolize respectively the eighth Vijnana or Consciousness and the four basic elements of the physical body, and mean the deluded self-nature (8) held in bondage in the illusory body (4), i.e. Space. The three following zeros symbolize Time, and so long as one remains under delusion, it will be immaterial to add 10, 100, or 1,000 zeros at the end of the number. However, when one attains enlightenment in one finger-snap. The digits 8 and 4 or Space will disappear and the line of zeros, or Time, will have no meaning.



*of the fundamental nature*' has been handed down ever since the Buddha held up a flower until after Bodhidharma's coming to the East, with frequent changes in the method of practice. Up to the T'ang (935) and Sung (1278) dynasties, most adherents of the Ch'an sect became enlightened after hearing a word or sentence. The transmission from master to disciple did not exceed the sealing of mind by mind, and there was no fixed Dharma (taught). In their questions and answers (the role played by a master) was only to untie the bonds (fettering his disciple)<sup>14</sup> according to available circumstances, just like the giving of an appropriate medicine for each particular ailment. In and after the Sung dynasty, human potentialities became duller, and the instructions given by the masters were not carried out by their disciples. For instance, when they were taught to 'lay down everything' and 'not to think of either good or evil', practitioners could not lay down anything and could not stop thinking of either good or evil. Under these circumstances, the ancestors and masters were compelled to devise a 'poison-against-poison' method by teaching their followers to inquire into a kung-an<sup>15</sup> or look into a hua t'ou.<sup>16</sup> Their disciples were even taught to hold a meaningless hua t'ou as firmly as possible (in their minds), without loosening their grip even for the shortest possible moment, in the same way as a rat will (stubbornly) bite the board of a coffin at a fixed spot until it has made a hole. The aim of this method was to use a single thought to oppose and arrest myriad thoughts because the masters had no alternative. It was like an operation which became imperative when poison had been introduced into the body. There were many kung-ans (devised by the ancients but) later only hua t'ous were taught such as: 'Who is dragging this corpse here?'<sup>17</sup> and 'What was my fundamental

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<sup>14</sup> i.e., freeing his disciples from restraint caused by delusion.

<sup>15</sup> Kung-an, or koan in Japanese: A dossier, or case-record; a cause, public laws, regulations; case-law. Problems set by Ch'an masters upon which thought is concentrated as a means to attain inner unity and illumination. The meaning of a kung-an is irrevocable and kung-an is as valid as the Law.

<sup>16</sup> Hua t'ou: ante-word, or ante-thought, i.e. the mind before it is stirred by a thought. It is the mind in its undisturbed condition. The holding of a hua t'ou in the mind is the looking into the self-mind until its realization. It is also the turning inward of the faculty of hearing to hear the self-nature, for the disentanglement of mind (subject) from external objects.

<sup>17</sup> i.e., who is dragging here this physical body of yours?

face before I was born?' In the present day, the masters use the hua t'ou: 'Who is the repeater of Buddha's name?'

All these hua t'ou have only one meaning which is very ordinary and has nothing peculiar about it if you look into him: 'Who is reciting a sutra?', 'Who is holding a mantra?', 'Who is worshipping Buddha?', 'Who is taking a meal?', 'Who is wearing a robe?', 'Who is walking on the road?', or 'Who is sleeping?', the reply to 'Who?' will invariably be the same: 'It is Mind.' Word arises from Mind and Mind is head of (i.e. ante-)Word. Thought arises from Mind and Mind is head of Thought. Myriad things come from Mind and Mind is head of myriad things. In reality, a hua t'ou is the head of a thought (i.e., ante-thought). The head of thought is nothing but Mind. To make it plain, before a thought arises, it is a hua t'ou. From the above, we know that to look into a hua t'ou is to look into the Mind. The fundamental face before one's birth is Mind. To look into one's fundamental face before one's birth is to look into one's mind. Self-nature is Mind (and) to 'turn inwards the hearing to hear the self-nature' is to 'turn inward one's contemplation to contemplate the self-mind'.

The sentence: 'The perfect shining on the pure Awareness' means this: 'the pure awareness' is mind and 'to shine on' is to look into. Mind is Buddha and to repeat the Buddha's (name) is to contemplate the Buddha. To contemplate Buddha is to contemplate mind. Therefore, to 'look into a hua t'ou' or 'to look into him who repeats the Buddha's name is to contemplate the mind or to contemplate the pure essence of awareness of the self-mind, or to contemplate the self-natured Buddha. Mind is self-nature, is awareness and is Buddha, having neither form nor location, and being undiscoverable. It is clean and pure by nature, penetrates everywhere in the Dharmadhatu, does not enter or leave, neither comes nor goes, and is fundamentally the self-evident pure Dharmakaya Buddha.

A practitioner should keep under control all his six sense-organs and take good care of this hua t'ou by looking into where a thought usually arises, until he perceives his pure self-nature, free from all thoughts. This continuous, close, quiet and indifferent investigation will lead to a still and shining<sup>18</sup> contemplation (the outcome of which will be) the

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<sup>18</sup> The essence of the mind is still and its function is shining.

outright non-existence of the five constituent elements of being (skandhas)<sup>19</sup> and the wiping out of both body and mind, without the least thing being left behind. Thereafter, this absolute immutability (should be maintained) in every state, while walking, standing, sitting and lying by day or night. As time goes on, this achievement will be brought to perfection, resulting in the perception of self-nature and the attainment of Buddhahood, with the elimination of all distress and suffering.

Ancestor Kao Feng<sup>20</sup> said: 'When a student looks into a hua t'ou with the same steadiness with which a broken tile when thrown into a deep pond plunges straight down 10,000 changs<sup>21</sup> to the bottom, if he fails to become awakened in seven days, anyone can chop off my head and take it away.' Dear friends, these are the words of an experienced master, they are true and correspond to reality, they are not deceitful words to cheat people.

Then why in the present generation are there not even a few men who attain enlightenment in spite of the great number who hold a hua t'ou (in their minds)? This is because their potentialities are not so sharp as those of the ancients. It is also because students are confused about the correct method of training and of holding a hua t'ou. They go to various places in the four quarters, seeking instruction, and the result is that when they get old, they are still not clear about the meaning of a hua t'ou and how to look into it. They pass their whole lives clinging to words and names, and applying their minds to the tail of the hua t'ou.<sup>22</sup> They inquire into (the sentences): 'Look into him who repeats the Buddha's name' and 'Take care of the hua t'ou', and the more they look and inquire into these sentences, the more they get away from what

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<sup>19</sup> The 5 skandhas: form, feeling, ideation, reaction and consciousness.

<sup>20</sup> Kao Feng was the teacher of Chung Feng whose 'Sayings of Chung Feng' (Chung Feng Kuang Lu) were read by Han Shan before the latter began his Ch'an training. (See Han Shan's Autobiography.)

<sup>21</sup> Chang: a measure of ten Chinese feet.

<sup>22</sup> When the sentence 'who repeats the Buddha's name?' is merely repeated by a practitioner who only grasps its meaning, he thinks of the 'tail' of the hua t'ou, instead of its head or ante-word, that is the mind. Thus he wrongly applies his mind to 'tail' instead of 'head'.

these sentences stand for.<sup>23</sup> Thus how can they be awakened to the self-evident Wu Wei (transcendental) Supreme Reality, and how can they ascend the undisturbable Royal Throne? When gold powder is thrown into their eyes, they are blinded: how then can they send out the great illuminating ray? What a pity! What a pity! They are all good sons and good daughters who leave their homes in quest of the truth, and their determination is above the average. What a pity if they labor to no purpose! (For this reason) an ancient master said: 'It is better to remain unenlightened for a thousand years than to tread the wrong path for a day.'

Self-cultivation for awakening to the truth is easy and is (also) difficult. For example, when we turn on the electric light, if we know how, in a finger-snap there will be light and the darkness which has lasted for a myriad years will disappear. If one does not know how to turn on the light, the electric wires will be interfered with and the lamp will be damaged, resulting in an increase of passions and ignorance. There are also some people who, while undergoing Ch'an training and looking into the hua t'ou, get entangled with demons and become insane, while others vomit blood and fall sick.<sup>24</sup> Are the fires of ignorance bursting into flame and the deep-rooted view of self and other<sup>25</sup> not the obvious causes of all this? Therefore, practitioners should harmonize body with mind and become calm, free from all impediments and from (the view of) self and other so as to bring about a perfect unison with their latent potentialities. Fundamentally, this method used in Ch'an training is invariably the same, but the training is both difficult and easy to beginners as well as to old hands.

Where does its difficulty lie for a beginner? Although his body and mind are mature for it, he is still confused about the method of undergoing it,

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<sup>23</sup> The master means that these people fail because they set their discriminating minds on grasping the meaning of these sentences, whereas in the training, their minds should first be disentangled from all discriminations.

<sup>24</sup> If an evil thought is allowed to slip into the concentration of mind while holding a hua t'ou, this thought will replace the hua t'ou and may grow out of proportion and become difficult to subdue. If it be a strong desire which cannot be satisfied, the resultant frustration may cause insanity. One's breath should never be interfered with, and concentration of mind should never be on the chest as it may affect the lungs and cause the vomiting of blood.

<sup>25</sup> View of dualism which should be wiped out.

and since his practice is ineffective, he will either become impatient or spend his time in dozing with this result: 'A beginner's training in the first year, an old hand's training in the second, and no training in the third year.'

Where does its easiness lie for a beginner? It only requires a believing, a long enduring and a mindless mind. A believing mind is, firstly, belief that this mind of ours is fundamentally Buddha, not differing from all Buddhas and all living beings of the three times in the ten directions of space, and secondly, belief that all Dharmas expounded by Sakyamuni Buddha can enable us to put an end to birth and death and to attain Buddhahood. A long enduring mind consists in the choice of a method to be put into continuous practice in the present lifetime, in the next life, and in the life after next. The Ch'an training should be continued in this manner; the repetition of the Buddha's name should be continued in this manner; the holding of a mantra (mystic incantation) should be continued in this manner and the study of sutras, which consists in putting into practice the teaching heard (i.e., learned from the Scriptures), should be continued in this manner. The practice of any Dharma door (to enlightenment) must be based on sila<sup>26</sup> and if the training is undergone in this manner, there is no reason why it will not be successful. The old master Kuei Shan<sup>27</sup> said: 'Anybody practicing this Dharma without backsliding in three successive lives can surely expect to attain the Buddha-stage.' The old master Yung Chia said: 'If I utter deceitful words to cheat living beings, I shall be prepared to fall into the tongue-snatching hell for eons as numberless as atoms.'

By mindlessness is meant the laying down of everything<sup>28</sup> so that the practicer will become like a dead man who, while following others in their normal activities, does not give rise to the least differentiation and attachment, and lives as a mindless religious man.

After a beginner has acquired these three kinds of mind, if he undergoes the Ch'an training and looks into, for instance, the hua t'ou: 'Who is the repeater of Buddha's name?' he should silently repeat a few

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<sup>26</sup> Sila: precept, command, prohibition, discipline, rule, morality.

<sup>27</sup> Master Kuei Shan(Wei Shan) and his disciple Yang Shan were founders of the Kuei Yang (Wei Yang) Sect (Ikkyo in Japanese), one of the five Ch'an Sects in China.

<sup>28</sup> i.e., free from all attachments, which are likened to a burden which one should lay down.

times: 'Amitibha Buddha' and then look into him who thinks of the Buddha and where this thought arises. He should know that this thought does not arise either from his mouth or body. If it arises from either his mouth or body, why when he dies, cannot his body and mouth, which still exist, give rise to this thought? Therefore, he knows that this thought arises from his mind. Now he should watch (and locate) where his mind gives rise to this thought and keep on looking into it, like a cat ready to pounce on a mouse, with his exclusive attention concentrated upon it, free from a second thought. However, its sharpness and dullness should be in equal proportions. It should never be too sharp for that sharpness may cause illness. If the training is undergone in this manner, in every state, while walking, standing, sitting and lying, it will be effective as time goes on, and when cause comes to fruition, like a ripe melon which automatically falls, anything it may happen to touch or come into contact with, will suddenly cause his supreme awakening. This is the moment when the practitioner will be like one who drinks water and who alone knows whether it is cold or warm, until he becomes free from all doubts about himself and experiences a great happiness similar to that when meeting one's own father at the cross-roads.

Where do both easiness and difficulty lie for an old hand? By old hand is meant one who has called on learned masters for instruction and has undergone the training for many years during which his body and mind were mature for it and he was clear about the method which he could practice comfortably without experiencing any handicap. The difficulty met by a monk who is an old hand lies in this feeling of comfort and clearness in which he stops and stays. Thus, because of his stay in this illusion-city, he does not reach the place of precious things (i.e. the perfect Nirvana). He is fit only for stillness but is unfit for disturbance and his training is, therefore, not completely effective for really full use. In the worst case, the practitioner will, when coming into contact with his surroundings, give rise to feelings of like and dislike and of acceptance and rejection with the result that his false thinking, both coarse and fine, will remain as firm as before. His training will be likened to the soaking of a stone in water and will become ineffective. As time goes on, weariness and laziness will slip into his training which will become fruitless in the end. When such a monk is aware of this, he should immediately give rise to the hua t'ou again and rouse his spirits to take a

step forward from the top of a hundred-foot pole (he has reached)<sup>29</sup> until he reaches the top of the highest peak on which he will firmly stand or the bottom of the deepest ocean where he will walk (in every direction). He will cast away (his last link with the unreal) and will walk freely everywhere, meeting face to face (lit. substance to substance, or essence to essence) with Buddhas and Patriarchs. Where is the difficulty? Is this not easy?

Hua t'ou is One-Mind. This One-Mind of yours and mine is neither within nor without nor between the two. It is also within, without and between the two and is like space which is immutable and is all-embracing. Therefore, the hua t'ou should not be pulled up or pushed down. If it is pulled up, it will cause disturbance, and if it is pushed down, it will cause dullness, and so will be in contradiction with the mind-nature<sup>30</sup> and not in line with the 'mean'.<sup>31</sup> Everybody is afraid of false thinking which he finds difficult to control, but I tell you, dear friends, do not be afraid of false thinking and do not make any effort to control it. You have only to be aware of it but should not cling to it, follow it or push it away. It will suffice to discontinue your thinking and it will leave you alone. Hence, the saying: 'The rise of falsehood should be immediately cognized, and once cognized, it will quit.'

However, in his training, if the practitioner can turn this false thinking to his own advantage, he will look into where it arises and will notice that it has no independent nature of its own. At once, he will realize the non-existence of this very thinking and will recover his fundamental mindless nature, followed immediately by the manifestation of his pure self-natured Dharmakaya Buddha which will appear on the spot.

In reality, the real and the false are the same (in nature); the living and the Buddhas are not a dualism; and birth-death and Nirvana as well as enlightenment (bodhi) and distress (klesa) all belong to our self-mind and self-nature and should not be differentiated, should not be either

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<sup>29</sup> This state of stillness is fully described in Han Shan's 'Song of the Board-bearer' (see Han Shan's Autobiography) and in Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva's 'Complete Enlightenment' when he said: 'Both the hearing and its object came to an end but I did not stay where they ended.'

<sup>30</sup> Mind-nature: immutable mind-body, the existing fundamental pure mind, the all, the Tathagata-garba.

<sup>31</sup> 'Mean': between the two extremes.

liked or disliked and should not be either grasped or rejected. This mind is pure and clean and fundamentally is Buddha. Not a single Dharma is required (in the quest of enlightenment). Why so much complication? Ts'an!<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Ts'an (Can): to inquire, investigate, look into. Usually at the end of a meeting, a master mutters this word to urge his disciples to inquire into or ponder over the real meaning.



# The Ch'an Training

(From the Hsu Yun Ho Shang Fa Hui)

## *Master Hsu Yun's Discourse in the Ch'an Hall*

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(Dear friends,) you have been coming frequently to ask for my instruction and I really feel ashamed (of my incompetence). (Every day) from morning to evening, you have been all hard at work splitting fire-wood, tilling the fields, moving earth and carrying bricks. In spite of this, you still remember your religious duties; this earnestness of yours does indeed warm the heart of other people. I, Hsu Yun, feel really ashamed of my incompetence in religion and lack of virtue. I am not qualified to give instruction and can only pick up a few sentences left behind by the ancients in reply to your questions.

### **PRELIMINARIES TO THE METHOD OF TRAINING**

There are many kinds of method but I will deal briefly with them.

### **PREREQUISITES OF THE PERFORMANCE OF RELIGIOUS DUTY**

#### *(1) Firm Belief in The (Law of) Causality*

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Whoever One may be, especially if striving to perform one's religious duty, one should believe firmly in the law of causality. If one lacks this belief and does whatever one likes, not only will one fail in the performance of religious duty, but also there will be no escape from this law (of causality) even in the three unhappy ways.<sup>33</sup> An ancient master said: 'If one wishes to know the causes formed in a previous life, one can find them in how one fares in the present life; if one wishes to know the effects in the next life, one can find them in one's deeds in the present life.' He also said: 'The karma of our deeds will never be wiped out even after hundreds and thousands of eons (but) as soon as conditions become ripe, we will have to bear the effects ourselves.' The Surangama Sutra says: 'If the causal ground is not a true one, the ripening (fruit) will be distorted' Therefore, when one sows a good

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<sup>33</sup> By going to (a) the hell of fire, (b) the hell of blood, where the inhabitants devour each other like animals and (c) the Asipattra hell of swords, where the leaves and grass are sharp-edged swords.

cause, one will reap a good fruit (and) when one sows an evil cause, one will reap an evil fruit; when one sows melon (seeds) one will gather melons (and) when one sows beans, one will gather beans. This is the plain truth. As I am talking about the law of causality, I will tell you two stories to illustrate it.

The first story is about the massacre of the Sakya clansmen by the Crystal King (Virudhaka).<sup>34</sup> Before the advent of Sakyamuni Buddha, there was near Kapila town a village inhabited by fishermen, and in it was a big pond. It happened that because of a great drought, the pond ran dry and all the fish were caught and eaten by the villagers. The last fish taken was a big one and before it was killed, a boy who never ate fish, played with it and thrice knocked its head. Later, after Sakyamuni Buddha's appearance in this world, King Prasenajit<sup>35</sup> who believed in the Buddha-dharma, married a Sakya girl who then gave birth to a prince called Crystal. When he was young, Crystal had his schooling in Kapila which was then inhabited by the Sakya clansmen. One day while playing, the boy ascended to the Buddha's seat and was reprimanded by others who dragged him down. The boy cherished a grudge against the men and when he became king, he led his soldiers to attack Kapila, killing all its inhabitants. At the same time, the Buddha suffered from a headache which lasted three days. When His disciples asked Him to rescue the poor inhabitants, the Buddha replied that a fixed Karma could not be changed. By means of his miraculous powers, Maudgalyayana<sup>36</sup> rescued five hundred Sakya clansmen and thought he could give them refuge in his own bowl which was raised up in the air. When the bowl was brought down, all the men had been turned into blood. When asked by His chief disciples, the Buddha related the story (kung-an) of the villagers who in days gone by had killed all the fish (in their pond); King Crystal had been the big fish and his soldiers the other fish in the pond; the inhabitants of Kapila who were now killed had been

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<sup>34</sup> This story was related by the Buddha himself.

<sup>35</sup> King of Sravasti and a contemporary of the Buddha. He was killed by his son, Virudhaka, known as the Crystal King and the Evil Born King, who supplanted him.

<sup>36</sup> Maha-Maudgalyayana, or Maudgalaputra, was one of the ten chief disciples of the Buddha, and was specially noted for his miraculous power; formerly an ascetic, he agreed with Sariputra that whichever first found the truth would reveal it to the other. Sariputra found the Buddha and brought Maudgalyayana to Him; the former is placed on His right, the latter on His left.

those who ate the fish; and the Buddha Himself had been the boy who thrice knocked the head of the big fish. (Karma was) now causing Him to suffer from a headache for three days in retribution for his previous act. Since there could be no escape from the effects of a fixed Karma, the five hundred Sakya clansmen, although rescued by Maudgalyayana, shared the same fate. Later, King Crystal was reborn in a hell. (As cause produces effect which in turn becomes a new cause) the retribution (theory) is inexhaustible. The law of causality is really very dreadful.

The second story is that of (Ch'an master) Pai Chang who liberated a wild fox.<sup>37</sup> One day, after a Ch'an meeting, although all his disciples had retired, the old master Pai Chang noticed an elderly man who remained behind. Pai Chang asked the man what he was doing and he replied: 'I am not a human being but the spirit of a wild fox. In my previous life, I was the head-monk of this place. One day, a monk asked me, "Does a man practicing self-cultivation, still become involved in the (theory of) retribution?" I replied, "No, he is free from the (theory of) retribution." For this (reply) alone, I got involved in retribution and have now been the spirit of a wild fox for five hundred years, and am still unable to get away from it. Will the master be compassionate enough to enlighten me on all this?' Pai Chang said to the old man: 'Ask me the same question (and I will explain it to you).' The man then said to the master: 'I wish to ask the master this: Does one who practices self-cultivation still get involved in the (theory of) retribution?' Pai Chang replied: 'He is not blind to cause and effect.' Thereupon, the old man was greatly awakened; he prostrated himself before the master to thank him and said: 'I am indebted to you for your (appropriate) reply to the question and am now liberated from the fox's body.'<sup>38</sup> I live in a (small) grotto on

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<sup>37</sup> This story is recorded in 'The Transmission of the Lamp' (Ching Te Ch'uan Teng Lu) and other Ch'an collections.

<sup>38</sup> In his previous life, the old monk had already succeeded in disentangling his mind (from its attachment to the phenomenal). However, he could not get away from Samsara because of the karma of misguiding his former disciple about retribution. In his present transmigration, he had realized a singleness of mind about leaving the world of animals and had thereby acquired the occult power of transforming his fox's body into that of an old man. However, he still clung to the dual view of the existence of ego (subject) and fox (object) and could not free himself from this last bondage. Pai Chang's words had a tremendous effect on the old man, releasing his mind from his doubt about his self-nature which fundamentally was pure and contained neither cause nor effect. Being free from this last bond, his self-nature now returned to normal and could function without further handicap; it could hear the master's voice by means of its Master Hsu Yun's Discourses and Dharma Words

the mountain behind and hope you will grant me the usual rites for a dead monk.' The following day, Pai Chang went to a mountain behind (his monastery), where in a (small) grotto he probed the ground with his staff and discovered a dead fox for whom the usual funeral rites for a dead monk were held.

(Dear) friends, after listening to these two stories, you will realize that the law of causality is indeed a dreadful (thing). Even after His attainment of Buddhahood, the Buddha still suffered a headache in retribution (for His former act). Retribution is infallible and fixed karma is inescapable. So we should always be heedful of all this and should be very careful about creating (new) causes.

## *(2) Strict Observance of the Rules of Discipline (commandment)*

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In striving to perform one's religious duty, the first thing is to observe the rules of discipline. For discipline is the fundamental of the Supreme Bodhi; discipline begets immutability and immutability begets wisdom. There is no such thing as self-cultivation without observance of the rules of discipline. The Surangama Sutra which lists four kinds of purity, clearly teaches us that cultivation of Samadhi (-mind) without observance of the rules of discipline, will not wipe out the dust (impurities). Even if there be manifestation of much knowledge with dhyana, this also will cause a fall into (the realm of) maras (evil demons) and heretics. Therefore, we know that observance of the rules of discipline is very important. A man observing them is supported and protected by dragon-kings and devas, and respected and feared by maras and heretics. A man breaking the rules of discipline is called a big robber by the ghosts who make a clean sweep of even his footprints. Formerly, in Kubhana state (Kashmir), there was nearby a monastery a poisonous dragon which frequently played havoc in the region. (In the monastery) five hundred arhats gathered together but failed to drive away the dragon with their collective power of Dhyana-samadhi. Later, a monk came (to the monastery) where he did not enter into Dhyana-samadhi; he merely said to the poisonous dragon: 'Will the wise and virtuous one leave this place and go to some distant one.' Thereupon, the poisonous dragon fled to a distant place. When asked by the arhats

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function. When function operated normally, its essence manifested itself; hence enlightenment.

what miraculous power he had used to drive away the dragon, the monk replied: 'I did not use the power of dhyana-samadhi; I am only very careful about keeping the rules of discipline and I observe a minor one with the same care as a major one.' So, we can see that the collective power of five hundred arhats' dhyana-samadhi cannot compare with a monk's strict observance of the rules of discipline.

If you (retort and) ask me (why) the Sixth Patriarch said:

'Why should discipline be observed if the mind is (already) impartial? Why should straightforward men practice Ch'an?'<sup>39</sup>

I will ask you back this question: 'Is your mind already impartial and straightforward; if the (lady) Ch'ang O came down from the moon<sup>40</sup> with her naked body and embraced you in her arms, would your heart remain undisturbed; and if someone without any reason insults and beats you, will you not give rise to feelings of anger and resentment? Can you refrain from differentiating between enmity and affection, between hate and love, between self and other, and between right and wrong? If you can do all this, then you can open your mouth widely to talk, otherwise it is useless to tell a deliberate lie.'

### *(3) A Firm Faith*

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A firm believing mind is the fundamental of one's training for performing one's religious duty, because faith is the mother (or begetter) of the beginning (or source) of right doctrine, and because without faith, no good will derive therefrom. If we want to be liberated from (the round of) births and deaths, we must first have a firm believing mind. The Buddha said that all living beings on earth had (inherent in them) the meritorious Tathagata wisdom which they could not realize solely because of their false thinking and grasping. He also expounded all kinds of Dharma doors (to enlightenment) to cure (all kinds of) ailments from which living beings suffered. We should, therefore, believe that his words are not false and that all living beings can attain Buddhahood. But why have we failed to attain Buddhahood?

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<sup>39</sup> See 'The Altar Sutra of the Six Patriarch,' Chapter 3.

<sup>40</sup> The name of a very beautiful lady who, according to a popular tale, stole the elixir of life and fled with it to the moon where she was changed into a frog.

It is because we have not gone into training according to the (correct) method. For example, we believe and know that bean curd can be made with soybean but if we do not start making it, soybean cannot turn into bean curd (for us). Now assuming that soybean is used for making bean curd, we shall still fail to make it if we do not know how to mix it with gypsum. If we know the method, we will grind the soybean (put the powder in water), boil it, take out the bean grounds and add a suitable quantity of gypsum powder; thus we will certainly get bean curd. Likewise, in the performance of our religious duty, Buddhahood will be unattainable not only because of lack of training, but also because of training not in conformity with the (correct) method. If our self-cultivation is practiced according to the (correct) method, without either backsliding or regret, we are bound to attain Buddhahood.

Therefore, we should firmly believe that fundamentally we are Buddhas, we should also firmly believe that self-cultivation performed according to the (correct) method is bound to result in the attainment of Buddhahood. Master Yung Chia said (in his Song of Enlightenment):

'When the real is attained, neither ego nor dharma exist,  
And in a moment the avici karma<sup>41</sup> is eradicated.  
If knowingly I lie to deceive living beings, my tongue  
Will be pulled out for eons uncountable as dust and sand.'<sup>42</sup>

The old master was very compassionate and took this boundless vow to urge those coming after him to develop a firm believing mind.

#### *(4) Adoption of the Method of Training*

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After one has developed a firm faith, one should choose a Dharma door (to enlightenment) for one's training. One should never change it, and when one's choice has been made, either for repetition of the Buddha's name, or for holding a mantra, or for Ch'an training, one should stick to it for ever without backsliding and regret. If today the method does not prove successful, tomorrow it shall be continued; if this year it does not prove successful, next year it shall be continued; and if in the present

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<sup>41</sup> Avici is the last and deepest of the eight hells, where the culprits suffer, die, and are instantly reborn to suffering without interruption.

<sup>42</sup> As punishment for verbal sins.

lifetime it does not prove successful, it shall be continued in the next life. The old master Kuei Shan said: 'If one practices it in each succeeding reincarnation, the Buddha-stage can be expected.' There are some people who are irresolute in their decisions; today after hearing a learned man praise the repetition of Buddha's name, they decide to repeat it for a couple of days and tomorrow, after hearing another learned man praise Ch'an training, they will try it for another two days. If they like to play in this manner, they will go on doing so until their death without succeeding in getting any result. Is it not a pity?

### *Method of Ch'an Training*

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Although there are many Dharma doors (to enlightenment), the Buddha, Patriarchs and Ancestors<sup>43</sup> were agreed that the Ch'an training was the unsurpassed wonderful door. In the Surangama assembly, the Buddha ordered Manjusri to choose between the (various modes of) complete enlightenment, and (he chose) Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva's (method) of using the faculty of hearing, as the best. When we turn back the hearing to hear our self-nature, this is (one of the methods of) Ch'an training. This place is a Ch'an hall in which we should discuss this Ch'an training.

### *Essentials of Ch'an Training*

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Our daily activities are performed within the truth itself. Is there a place that is not a Bodhimandala?<sup>44</sup> Fundamentally a Ch'an hall is out of place; moreover Ch'an does not mean sitting (in meditation). The so-called Ch'an hall and the so-called Ch'an sitting are only provided for people (who encounter) insurmountable obstructions (of their own) and who are of shallow wisdom in this period of decadence (of the Dharma).

When one sits in this training, one's body and mind should be well controlled. If they are not well controlled a small harm will be illness and a great harm will be entanglement with the demon, which is most regrettable. In the Ch'an hall, when incense sticks are burned for your walking or sitting, the aim is to ensure the control of body and mind.

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<sup>43</sup> The Patriarchs are the six Patriarchs of China. The Ancestors are the great Ch'an Masters who came after the Patriarchs. Hsu Yun is now called an Ancestor.

<sup>44</sup> Bodhimandala: truth-plot, holy site, place of enlightenment.

Besides this, there are many ways to control body and mind, but I will deal briefly with the essential ones.

When sitting in Ch'an meditation, the correct position is the natural one. The waist should not be pushed forward, for to do so is to pull upward the inner heat with the result that after the sitting, there will be tears, bad breath, uneasy respiration, loss of appetite and even vomiting of blood. Neither should the waist be drawn backward with dropped head, for this can easily cause dullness. As soon as dullness is felt, the meditator should open his eyes wide, pull up his waist and gently shake his buttocks, and dullness will disappear automatically.

If the training is undergone in hot haste, one will feel a certain annoying dryness in the chest. In this case, it will be advisable to stop the training for the time a half-inch of the incense stick takes to burn, and resume when one feels at ease again. If one does not proceed in this manner, one will, as time goes on, develop a hot and excitable character, and in the worst case, one may thereby become insane or get entangled with demons.

When the Ch'an sitting (in meditation) becomes effective, there will be (mental) states which are too many to enumerate, but if you do not cling to them, they will not hinder you. This is just what the proverb says: 'Don't wonder at the wonderful and the wonderful will be in full retreat.' Even if you see evil spirits of all kinds coming to disturb you, you should take no notice of them and you should not be afraid of them. Even if Sakyamuni Buddha comes to lay His hand<sup>45</sup> on your head and prophesies (your future Buddhahood) you should not take any notice of all this and should not be delighted by it. The Surangama Sutra says: 'A perfect state is that in which the mind is undisturbed by the saintly; an interpretation of the saintly is entanglement with all demons.'

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<sup>45</sup> A custom of Buddha in teaching His disciples, from which the burning of spots on the head of a monk is said to have originated. The eventual vision of the Buddha is merely an impure creation of the deluded mind and does not really represent Him in His Dharmakaya which is inconceivable. Many meditators mistake such visions for the real and become involved with demons. (See Surangama Sutra.)



How should one start the (Ch'an) training? In the Surangama assembly, Arya Ajnatakaundinya talked about the two words 'Foreign Dust'<sup>46</sup> and this is just where we should begin our training. He said: 'For instance, a traveler stops at an inn where he passes the night or takes his meal, and as soon as he has done so, he packs and continues his journey, because he has no time to stay longer. As for the host (of the inn), he has nowhere to go. My deduction is that the one who does not stay is the guest and the one who does stay is the host. Therefore, a thing is foreign when it does not stay. Again in a clear sky, when the sun rises and sunlight enters (the house) through an opening, the dust is seen moving in the ray of light whereas the empty space is unmoving. Therefore, that which is still is voidness and that which moves is dust.'

Foreign dust illustrates false thinking, and voidness illustrates self-nature, that is the permanent host who does not follow the guest in the latter's coming and going. This serves to illustrate the eternal (unmoving) self-nature which does not follow false thinking in its sudden rise and fall. Therefore, it is said: 'if one is unmindful of all things, one will meet with no inconvenience when surrounded by all things.' By dust which moves of itself and does not inconvenience voidness which is clearly still, one means that false thinking rises and falls by itself and does not hinder the self-nature which is immutable in its Bhutatathata (suchness, thatness) condition. This is the meaning of the saying: 'If the mind does not arise, all things are blameless.'

(The meaning of) the above word 'foreign' is coarse and (that of) 'dust' is fine. Beginners should clearly understand (the difference between) 'host' and 'guest' and will thus not be 'drifted about' by false thinking. By advancing further, they will be clear about 'voidness' and 'dust' and thus will experience no inconvenience from false thinking. It is said: 'when (false thinking) is known, there will be no harm.' If you inquire carefully into and understand all this, over half of what the training means will become quite clear to you.

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<sup>46</sup> See Master Hsu Yun's 'Daily Discourses'.

In ancient times, the Patriarchs and Ancestors directly pointed at the mind for realization of self-nature and attainment of Buddhahood. like Bodhidharma who 'quietened the mind' and the Sixth Patriarch who only talked about 'perception of self-nature', all of them just advocated the outright cognizance (of it) without any more ado. They did not advocate looking into a hua t'ou, but later they discovered that men were becoming unreliable, were not of dogged determination, indulged in playing tricks and boasted of their possession of precious gems which really belonged to others. For this reason, these ancestors were compelled to set up their own sects, each with its own devices; hence, the hua t'ou technique.

There are many hua t'ous, such as: 'All things are returnable to One, to what is (that) One returnable?'<sup>47</sup> 'Before you were born, what was your real face?'<sup>48</sup> but the hua t'ou: 'Who is repeating Buddha's name?' is widely in use (today).

What is hua t'ou? (lit. word-head). Word is the spoken word and head is that which precedes word. For instance, when one says 'Amitabha Buddha', this is a word. Before it is said it is a hua t'ou (or ante-word). That which is called a hua t'ou is the moment before a thought arises. As soon as a thought arises, it becomes a hua wei (lit. word-tail). The moment before a thought arises is called 'the un-born'. That void which is neither disturbed nor dull, and neither still nor (one-sided) is called 'the unending'. The unremitting turning of the light inwards on oneself, instant after instant, and exclusive of all other things, is called 'looking into the hua t'ou' or 'taking care of the hua t'ou'.

When one looks into a hua t'ou, the most important thing is to give rise to a doubt. Doubt is the crutch of hua t'ou.<sup>49</sup> For instance, when one is asked: 'Who is repeating Buddha's name?' everybody knows that he

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<sup>47</sup> All things are returnable to One-mind, to what is One-mind returnable?

<sup>48</sup> This hua t'ou is sometimes wrongly translated in the West as: 'Before your parents were born, what was your original face?' There are two errors here. The first is probably due to the wrong interpretation of the Chinese character 'sheng'. which means 'born' or 'to give birth'. Then 'original' is wrong because it suggests creation or a beginning. The self-nature has no beginning, being outside time. The correct rendering is: 'Before your parents gave birth to you, what was your fundamental face?'

<sup>49</sup> Doubt is as indispensable to hua t'ou as crutches are to the cripples.

himself repeats it, but is it repeated by the mouth or by the mind? If the mouth repeats it, why does not it do so when one sleeps? If the mind repeats it, what does the mind look like? As mind is intangible, one is not clear about it. Consequently some slight feeling of doubt arises about 'WHO'. This doubt should not be coarse; the finer it is, the better. At all times and in all places, this doubt alone should be looked into unremittingly, like an ever-flowing stream, without giving rise to a second thought. If this doubt persists, do not try to shake it; if it ceases to exist, one should gently give rise to it again. Beginners will find the hua t'ou more effective in some still place than amidst disturbance. However, one should not give rise to a discriminating mind; one should remain indifferent to either the effectiveness or ineffectiveness (of the hua t'ou) and one should take no notice of either stillness or disturbance. Thus, one should work at the training with singleness of mind.

(In the hua t'ou): 'Who is repeating the Buddha's name?' emphasis should be laid upon the word 'Who', the other words serving only to give a general idea of the whole sentence. For instance (in the questions): 'Who is wearing this robe and eating rice?', 'Who is going to stool and is urinating?', 'Who is putting an end to ignorance?', and 'Who is able to know and feel?', as soon as one lays emphasis upon (the word) 'Who', while one is walking or standing, sitting or reclining, one will be able to give rise to a doubt without difficulty and without having to use one's faculty of thought to think and discriminate. Consequently the word 'Who' of the hua t'ou is a wonderful technique in Ch'an training. However, one should not repeat the word 'Who' or the sentence 'Who is repeating the Buddha's name?' like (adherents of the Pure Land School) who repeat the Buddha's name. Neither should one set one's thinking and discriminating mind on searching for him who repeats the Buddha's name. There are some people who unremittingly repeat the sentence: 'Who is repeating the Buddha's name?'; it would be far better merely to repeat Amitabha Buddha's name (as do followers of the Pure Land School) for this will give greater merits. There are others who indulge in thinking of a lot of things and seek after everything here and there, and call this the rising of a doubt; they do not know that the more they think, the more their false thinking will increase, just like someone who wants to ascend but is really descending. You should know all this.

Usually beginners give rise to a doubt which is very coarse; it is apt to stop abruptly and to continue again, and seems suddenly familiar and suddenly unfamiliar. This is (certainly) not doubt and can only be their thinking (process). When the mad (wandering) mind has gradually been brought under control, one will be able to apply the brake on the thinking process, and only then can this be called 'looking into' (a hua t'ou). Furthermore, little by little, one will gain experience in the training and then, there will be no need to give rise to the doubt which will rise of itself automatically. In reality, at the beginning, there is no effective training at all as there is only (an effort) to put an end to false thinking. When real doubt rises of itself, this can be called true training. This is the moment when one reaches a 'strategic gateway' where it is easy to go out of one's way (as follows).

Firstly, there is the moment when one will experience utter purity and boundless ease<sup>50</sup> and if one fails to be aware of and look into the same, one will slip into a state of dullness. If a learned teacher is present, he will immediately see clearly that the student is in such a state and will strike the meditator with the (usual) flat stick, thus clearing away the confusing dullness; a great many are thereby awakened to the truth.<sup>51</sup>

Secondly, when the state of purity and emptiness appears, if the doubt ceases to exist, this is the unrecordable state<sup>52</sup> in which the meditator is likened to one sitting on a withered tree in a grotto, or to soaking stones with water.<sup>53</sup> When one reaches this state, one should arouse (the

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<sup>50</sup> Lit. utter purity and extreme lightness. When the meditator succeeds in putting an end to all his thoughts, he will step into 'the stream' or correct concentration in which his body and its weight seem to disappear completely and to give way to a bright purity which is as light as air; he will feel as if he is about to be levitated.

<sup>51</sup> Lit. 'thus clearing away the fog that darkens the sky'. As soon as the confusing dullness is cleared away, the self-nature, now free from hindrance, is able to function normally and will actually receive the beating, hence enlightenment.

<sup>52</sup> Avyakṛta or Avyakhyata, in Sanskrit; unrecordable, either as good or bad; neutral, neither good nor bad, things that are innocent and cannot be classified under moral categories.

<sup>53</sup> When the mind is disentangled from the sense-organs, sense data and consciousness, one reaches a state described as: 'holding fast to the top of a pole', or 'silent immersion in stagnant water' or 'sitting on the clean white ground'. (See Han Shan's 'Song of the Boardbearer'.) One should take a step forward in order to get out of this state called 'a life', the fourth of the four laksanas (of an ego, a personality, a being and a life) mentioned in the Diamond Sutra; otherwise the result one will achieve is no better than 'soaking stones with water' which never penetrates stones. If from the top of a hundred-Master Hsu Yun's Discourses and Dharma Words

doubt) to be immediately followed by one's awareness and contemplation (of this state). Awareness (of this state) is freedom from illusion; this is wisdom. Contemplation (of this state) wipes out confusion; this is imperturbability. This singleness of mind will be thoroughly still and shining, in its imperturbable absoluteness, spiritual clearness and thorough understanding, like the continuous smoke of a solitary fire. When one reaches this stage, one should be provided with a diamond eye<sup>54</sup> and should refrain from giving rise to anything else, as if one does, one will (simply) add another head upon one's head.<sup>55</sup>

Formerly, when a monk asked (Master) Chao Chou: 'what should one do when there is not a thing to bring with self?' Chao Chou replied: 'Lay it down.' The monk said: 'What shall I lay down when I do not bring a thing with me?' Chao Chou replied: 'If you cannot lay it down, carry it away.'<sup>56</sup> This is exactly the stage (above mentioned) which is like that of a drinker of water who alone knows whether it is cold or warm. This cannot be expressed in words and speeches, and one who reaches this stage will clearly know it. As to one who has not reached it, it will be useless to tell him about it. This is what the (following) lines mean:

'When you meet a fencing master, show to him your sword.  
Do not give your poem to a man who's not a poet.'<sup>57</sup>

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foot pole one takes a step forward, one will reach the top of a high peak from which one will release one's last hold and leap over the phenomenal.

<sup>54</sup> Diamond eye: indestructible eye of Wisdom.

<sup>55</sup> A superfluous and unnecessary thing that will obstruct the training.

<sup>56</sup> The monk became thoroughly awakened after hearing Chao Chou's reply. His first question means: 'What should one do when one becomes disentangled from sense-organs, sense-data and consciousnesses?' He did not know that he was still entangled with this awareness of ego and preservation of ego. (See Han Shan's commentary on 'The Diamond Cutter of Doubts'). Chao Chou's reply 'Lay it down' means: 'Lay down even the thought you are still burdened with, for this very thought of not carrying a thing with you holds you in bondage.' The monk argued: 'As I do not carry a single thing with me, what shall I lay down?' Chao Chou replied: 'If you really have got rid of all your false thinking, there will only remain your self-nature which is pure and clean and which you should carry away with you, because you cannot get rid of it.' The monk, now released from his awareness of ego or last bondage, realized that only his self-nature remained which was free from all impediments and which he could not get rid of, for Chao Chou told him to carry it away. It was this very self-nature of his, now pure and clean, which actually heard the master's voice, hence his enlightenment.

<sup>57</sup> These two lines come from Lin Chi (Rinzai in Japanese) whose idea was that one could talk about enlightenment with an enlightened person and that it was useless to do so

Master Hsu Yun's Discourses and Dharma Words

## *Taking Care of a Hua T'ou and Turning Inward the Hearing to Hear the Self-Nature*

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Someone may ask: 'How can Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva's "method of turning inward the hearing to hear the self-nature" be regarded as Ch'an training?' I have just talked about looking into the hua t'ou; it means that you should unremittingly and one-pointedly turn the light inwards on 'that which is not born and does not die' which is the hua t'ou. To turn inwards one's hearing to hear the self-nature means also that you should unremittingly and one-pointedly turn inwards your (faculty of) hearing to hear the self-nature. 'To turn inwards' is 'to turn back'. 'That which is not born and does not die' is nothing but the self-nature. When hearing and looking follow sound and form in the worldly stream, hearing does not go beyond sound and looking does not go beyond form (appearance), with the obvious differentiation. However, when going against the mundane stream, the meditation is turned inwards to contemplate the self-nature. When 'hearing' and 'looking' are no longer in pursuit of sound and appearance, they become fundamentally pure and enlightening and do not differ from each other. We should know that what we call 'looking into the hua t'ou' and 'turning inwards the hearing to hear the self-nature' cannot be effected by means of the eye to look or the ear to hear. If eye and ear are so used, there will be pursuit after sound and form with the result that one will be turned by things (i.e. externals); this is called 'surrender to the (mundane) stream'.<sup>58</sup> If there is singleness of thought abiding in that 'which is not born and does not die', without pursuing sound and form, this is 'going against the stream'; this is called 'looking into the hua t'ou' or 'turning inwards the hearing to hear the self-nature'.

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when meeting a deluded man, for the truth was inexpressible and could only be realized after rigorous training. The first line 'When you meet a fencing master, show to him your sword' was illustrated when Han Shan met Ta Kuan and sat cross-legged face to face with him for forty days and nights without sleeping. (See Han Shan's Autobiography). The second line 'Do not give your poem to a man who's not a poet' was proved by the Sixth Patriarch, who urged his disciples not to discuss the Supreme Vehicle with those who were not of the same sect, but to bring their palms together to salute them and make them happy. (See The Altar Sifra of the Sixth Patriarch.)

<sup>58</sup> i.e., to accord with the world, its ways and customs; to die.

## *Earnestness About Leaving Samsara<sup>59</sup> and Developing a Long Enduring Mind*

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In the Ch'an training, one should be in earnest in one's desire to leave the realm of birth and death, and develop a long enduring mind (in one's striving). If the mind is not earnest it will be impossible to give rise to the doubt, and the striving will be ineffective. Lack of a long enduring mind will result in laziness and the training will not be continuous. Just develop a long enduring mind and the doubt will rise of itself. When doubt rises, trouble (klesa) will come to an end of itself. As the ripe moment comes (it will be like) running water which will form a channel.<sup>60</sup>

I will now tell you a story I personally witnessed. In the year K'eng Tsu (1900), when eight world powers sent their expeditionary forces to Peking (after the Boxer rebellion), I followed Emperor Kuang Hsu and Empress Dowager Tz'u Hsi when they fled from the capital. We had to hurry towards Shen Hsi (Shensi) province; each day we walked several tens of miles, and for several days we had no rice to eat. On the road, a peasant offered some creepers of sweet potato<sup>61</sup> to the (hungry) emperor, who found them savory and asked the man what they were. You can imagine that when the emperor who used to put on airs and had an awe-inspiring reputation, had to run some distance he became very hungry. When he ate creepers of sweet potato, he gave up all his airs and awe-inspiring attitude. Why did he walk on foot, become hungry and lay down everything? Because the allied forces wanted his life and he had only one thought, that of running for his life. Later, when peace had been concluded, he returned to the capital, putting on once more his airs with his awe-inspiring reputation. Again he would no longer walk in the street and did not feel hungry. If he did not find some food savory, once more he could not swallow it. Why was he (again) unable to lay down every-thing now? Because the allied forces no longer wanted his life and because his mind was not set on escaping. If he now applied the same mind (previously) set on running for his life to perform his religious duty, was there anything he could not do? This

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<sup>59</sup> Realm of birth and death.

<sup>60</sup> i.e., success is bound to follow.

<sup>61</sup> In China, only starving people eat creepers of sweet potato which is used as food for pigs.

was due to the fact that he did not have a long enduring mind, and as soon as favorable conditions prevailed, his former habits appeared again.

Dear friends, the murderous demon of impermanence is constantly looking for our lives and will never agree to conclude peace with us! Let us hastily develop a long enduring mind to get out of birth and death. Master Yuan Miao of Kao Feng said: 'If one sets a time limit for success in the Ch'an training, one should act like a man who has fallen to the bottom of a pit one thousand chang deep.<sup>62</sup> His thousand and ten-thousand thoughts are reduced to a single idea on how to escape from the pit. He keeps it up from morning to evening and from evening (to the following) morning, and has no other thought. If he trains in this way and does not realize the truth in three, five or seven days, I shall be guilty of a verbal sin for which I shall fall into the hell where tongues are pulled out.' The old master was earnest in his great mercy and being apprehensive that we would not develop a long enduring mind, he took this great vow to guarantee (our successes).

## Difficulty and Easiness in Ch'an Training

There is difficulty and easiness in the Ch'an training, both for beginners and for old practicers.

### *Difficulty for Beginners: The Remiss Mind*

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The most common defects of a beginner lie in his inability to lay down his habits of false thinking; of (self-indulgence in) ignorance caused by pride and jealousy; of (self-inflicted) obstructions caused by concupiscence, anger, stupidity and love; of laziness and gluttony; and of (attachment to) right and wrong, to selfness and otherness. With a belly (breast) filled with all the above (defects), how can he be responsive to the truth? Others are young gentlemen<sup>63</sup> who are unable to get rid of their habits and are incapable of the least condescension and of enduring the smallest trouble; how can they undergo the training in performance of their religious duties? They never think of our original

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<sup>62</sup> Chang: a measure of ten Chinese feet.

<sup>63</sup> Literally 'sons of officials'; equivalent of the French term 'fils à papa'.



teacher, Sakyamuni Buddha, and of His standing when He left home. Some people who know a little literature, use their knowledge of it to interpret the ancients' sayings, boast of their unequalled abilities and regard themselves as superiors.<sup>64</sup> When seriously ill, they cannot bear their sufferings with patience. When they are about to die, they lose their heads and realize that their usual knowledge is useless. Thus their repentance will be tardy.

Some are serious in their religious duties but do not know where to begin their training. Others are afraid of false thinking and are unable to put an end to it. So they worry about it all day long and blame their karmic obstructions for it, thus falling away in their religious enthusiasm. Some want to resist false thinking to the death by angrily clenching their fists to keep up their spirits and by thrusting out their chests and widely opening their eyes as if there is really something very important to do. They want to fight to a finish against their false thinking; not only will they fail to drive it away but they will thereby vomit blood or become insane. There are people who are afraid of falling into voidness but they do not know they are thus giving rise to the 'demon'. Consequently, they can neither wipe out voidness nor attain awakening. There are those who set their minds on the quest of awakening and who do not know that to seek awakening and to desire Buddhahood are nothing but a great falsehood; they do not know that gravel cannot be turned into rice and they will thus wait until the year of the donkey for their awakening.<sup>65</sup>

There are (also) those who can manage to sit (in meditation) during the time one or two incense sticks take to burn and thereby experience some joy, but this is only likened to the blind black tortoise which stretched its head through the hole of a floating log.<sup>66</sup> It is just a rare

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<sup>64</sup> One of the ten wrong views.

<sup>65</sup> Animals and birds were chosen by the ancients as symbols for lunar years, such as a rat, buffalo, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, sheep, monkey, chicken, dog and pig. As a donkey was not one of them, the year of the donkey can never come round, i.e., these people can never attain enlightenment.

<sup>66</sup> The Samyuktagama Sutra says: 'There was a blind tortoise countless aeons old which stretched out its head once every century. There was a log with a hole through it, floating in the sea and tossed about by high waves raised by winds of gale force. The tortoise stretched its head through the hole. . . .' This shows the rareness of the chance as compared with the difficulty of the blind black tortoise succeeding in putting its head through the hole in the floating log.

chance and not (the result of) true training. Moreover, the demon of joy has already slipped into their minds. There are cases of the enjoyable state of purity and cleanness realizable in stillness but not realizable in disturbance and for this reason meditators avoid disturbing conditions and look for quiet places. They do not realize that they have already agreed to become servants of the demon of both stillness and disturbance.<sup>67</sup>

There are many cases like the above. It is really difficult for beginners to know the correct method of training; awareness without contemplation will lead to confusion and instability, and contemplation without awareness will result in immersion in stagnant water.

### *Easiness for Beginners: Laying Down of (The Burden of) Thinking and Giving Rise to a Single Thought*

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Although the training seems difficult, it becomes very easy once its method is known. Where does easiness lie for beginners? There is nothing ingenious in it because it lies in 'laying down'. Laying down what? (The burden of) distress (klesa) caused by ignorance. How does one lay it down? You have all been at the bedside of a dead man. If you try to scold him a few times, he will not be excited. If you give him a few strokes of the staff he will not strike back. Formerly he indulged in ignorance but now he cannot do so any more. Formerly he longed for reputation and wealth but now he no longer wants it. Formerly he was contaminated by habits but now he is free from them. Now he does not make distinctions and lays down everything. Dear friends, please look at all this. When we have breathed our last, this physical body of ours will become a corpse. Because we cherish this body, we are unable to lay down everything, with the resultant creation of self and other, right and wrong, like and dislike, and acceptance and rejection. If we only regard this body as a corpse, we will not cherish it and will certainly not consider it as ours. (If so) is there anything we cannot lay down?

We only have to lay down everything, day and night, no matter whether we walk, stand, sit or recline, in the midst of either stillness or disturbance, and whether busy or not; throughout our bodies, within and without, there should be only a doubt, a uniform, harmonizing and

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<sup>67</sup> i.e., differentiation between stillness and disturbance.

continuous doubt, unmixed with any other thought, in other words, a hua t'ou which is likened to a long sword leaning against the sky, which we will use to cut down a demon or Buddha should either appear. Thus we will not fear false thinking; who then will disturb us; who will distinguish between disturbance and stillness and who will cling to existence and non-existence? If there be fear of false thinking, this fear will increase false thinking. If there be awareness of purity, this purity will immediately be impure. If there be fear of falling into non-existence, there will immediately be a fall into existence. If there be desire to attain Buddhahood, there will immediately be a fall into the way of demons. (For this reason) it is said: 'The carrying of water and fetching of firewood are nothing but the wonderful Truth. The hoeing of fields and the cultivation of soil are entirely ch'an potentialities.' This does not mean that only the crossing of legs for sitting in meditation can be regarded as Ch'an training in the performance of one's religious duty.

*Difficulty for Old Practicers: Inability to Take a Step Forward After Reaching the Top of a Hundred-Foot Pole*

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Where does difficulty lie for an old practitioner? In his training, when his doubt has become genuinely real, his awareness and contemplation are still linked with the (realm) of birth and death, and lack of awareness and contemplation is (the cause of) his fall into (the realm of) non-existence. It is already difficult to reach these stages, but there are many who are unable to get beyond them, and are content to stand on the top of a hundred-foot pole without knowing how to take a step forward. Others who, after reaching these stages, are able to achieve in the stillness some wisdom which enables them to understand a few kung-ans left behind by the ancients; they also lay down the doubt, thinking they have attained a thorough awakening, and compose poems and gathas, twinkle their eyes and raise their eyebrows, calling themselves enlightened; they do not know that they are servants of the demon.<sup>68</sup>

There are also those who misunderstand the meaning of Bodhidharma's (words:)

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<sup>68</sup> Ancient masters used to twinkle their eyes and raise their eyebrows to reveal the self-mind to their disciples. In the above text, those who have only made some progress but are still unenlightened, ape the ancients to prove their attainment of the truth.

'Put an end to the formation of all causes without, and have no panting heart within; then with a mind like a wall,<sup>69</sup> you will be able to enter the Truth' and the Sixth Patriarch's (words:)

'Do not think of either good or evil; at this very instant, what is the Venerable Hui Ming's real face?'<sup>70</sup>

They think that sitting with crossed legs like withered logs in a grotto is the best Pattern. These people mistake an illusion-city for a place of precious things,<sup>71</sup> and take a foreign land for their native village. The story of the old lady burning the hut serves to scold these (logs of) dead wood.<sup>72</sup>

### *Easiness for Old Practicers: Continuation of Close and Uninterrupted Ch'an Training*

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Where does easiness lie for old practicers? It lies only in the absence of self-satisfaction and the continuation of the close and uninterrupted (Ch'an) training, the closeness should be much closer, the continuance much more continuous and the subtleness much more subtle. When the ripe moment comes, the bottom of the barrel will drop off of itself;<sup>73</sup> otherwise one will have to call on enlightened masters who will help one to pull out (the remaining) nail or stake (of obstruction).

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<sup>69</sup> When the mind is like a wall, it will remain indifferent to all externals.

<sup>70</sup> See 'The Altar Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch'.

<sup>71</sup> Quotation from the Lotus Sutra in which the Buddha urged His disciples not to stay in the illusion-city or incomplete Nirvana but to strive to reach the Perfect Nirvana.

<sup>72</sup> An old lady supported a Ch'an monk for twenty years and used to send every day a sixteen-year-old girl to bring him food and offerings. One day, the old lady ordered the girl to ask him this question: 'How is "it" at this very moment?' The monk replied:

'A withered log in a cold cave  
After three winters has no warmth'.

The girl gave the monk's reply to the old lady who said: 'I have been making offerings to one who can prove only that he is a worldly fellow.' Thereupon, she sent him away and set fire to the hut. (See 'The Imperial Selection of Ch'an Sayings'). The monk reached only the top of a hundred-foot pole but refused to take a step forward. As he was only dead wood, the old lady was angry, sent him away and destroyed the hut.

<sup>73</sup> i.e., the bottom of the barrel full of black lacquer, or ignorance; when it drops off; the barrel will be emptied of lacquer and enlightenment will be attained.

Master Han Shan's Song is:<sup>74</sup>

High on a mountain peak<sup>75</sup>  
Only boundless space is seen.<sup>76</sup>  
How to sit in meditation, no one knows.<sup>77</sup>  
The solitary moon shines o'er the icy pool,<sup>78</sup>  
But in the pool there is no moon;<sup>79</sup>  
The moon is in the night-blue sky.<sup>80</sup>  
This song is chanted now,  
(But) there's no Ch'an in the song.<sup>81</sup>

The first two lines show that that which is truly eternal is solitary and does not belong to anything else, and that it shines brightly over the world without encountering any obstruction. The following (third) line shows the wonderful body of Bhutatathata<sup>82</sup> which worldly men do not know and which cannot be located<sup>83</sup> (even) by all Buddhas of the three times; hence the three words: 'no one knows'. The next three (fourth, fifth and sixth) lines show the old master's expedient expounding of this state. The last two lines (seventh and eighth) give a special waffling to

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<sup>74</sup> Han Shan (Cold Mountain) should not be confounded with Han Shan (Silly Mountain) whose autobiography has been translated by me into English.

<sup>75</sup> The high purpose of one desirous of escaping from mortality.

<sup>76</sup> The magnitude of his high aim.

<sup>77</sup> Worldly men turn their backs on the transcendental which they do not know.

<sup>78</sup> The solitary moon symbolizes enlightenment which is independent of the phenomenal and is the absolute which does not brook interference from any quarter. The pool is a symbol of the self-nature which avoids all worldly things and is disentangled from them. The line means the attainment of enlightenment by self-nature.

<sup>79</sup> The self-nature is fundamentally pure and clean and does not gain anything, even the moon, symbol of enlightenment, when it is awakened, or lose anything, when it is under delusion. If there be a moon, or enlightenment in it, it will not be absolute and will not be pure and clean.

<sup>80</sup> The enlightened self-nature neither comes nor goes for it is immutable and pervades everywhere in the Dharmadhatu, symbolized by the blue sky which is pure and clean.

<sup>81</sup> The song is chanted in praise of that which is pure and clean and does not contain an atom of Ch'an, because Ch'an is only an empty name with no real nature.

<sup>82</sup> Bhutatathata: the real, thus always, or eternally so; i.e., reality as contrasted with unreality, or appearance, and the unchanging or immutable as contrasted with form and phenomena. Bhuta is substance, that which exists; tathata is suchness, thusness, i.e., such is its nature.

<sup>83</sup> If it can be located anywhere, it will not be the absolute and will not be all-embracing.

all of us, lest we mistake the finger for the moon,<sup>84</sup> that is none of these words are Ch'an.<sup>85</sup>

My talk is like a heap of things and is also (like what we call) the drag of creepers<sup>86</sup> and an interfering interruption (because) wherever there are words and speeches, there is no real meaning.<sup>87</sup> When the ancient masters received their students, either they used their staffs (to beat them) or they shouted (to wake them up)<sup>88</sup> and there were not so many complications. However, the present cannot be compared with the past, and it is, therefore, imperative to point a finger at the moon.<sup>89</sup> Dear friends, please look into all this; after all, who is pointing his finger and who is looking at the moon?<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> When a finger points towards the moon, wise men look at the moon, whereas the ignorant look at the finger and do not see the moon, or the truth. This parable was used by the Buddha when teaching His disciples.

<sup>85</sup> Readers will notice that earlier footnotes 75-81 (Han Shan's Song) seem somewhat different from Master Hsu Yun's commentary on the song, and will realize that Han Shan's poem was excellent in that it can be interpreted either 'perpendicularly' or 'horizontally' as the learned ancients put it, provided there be no deviation from its main purport. My footnotes describe a student striving to achieve enlightenment whereas my Master Hsu Yun describes the state of an enlightened master. Gathas and poems chanted by the ancients are 'like a prism or spectrum of multi-levelled meanings', as Mr. L Group, an American Buddhist of New York, ably puts it.

<sup>86</sup> Creepers: unnecessary things which do not concern the real.

<sup>87</sup> Words and speeches cannot express the inexpressible. Real meaning is the reality which cannot be described and expressed.

<sup>88</sup> Beating and shouting are to reveal the master's self-nature which beats and shouts and the student's self-nature which is beaten and hears the shout. The beating and shouting are in accord with Bodhidharma's direct pointing at the self-mind for realization of the self-nature for attainment of Buddhahood.

<sup>89</sup> The finger is an expediency used to reveal the moon, or enlightened self-nature, but one should not cling to the finger and overlook the moon which is pointed at.

<sup>90</sup> One who points at the moon and one who looks at the moon are the self-mind of the master and the self-mind of the student respectively, again a direct pointing at the self-mind for realization of self-nature and attainment of Buddhahood, as taught by Bodhidharma.

# Daily Lectures at Two Ch'an Weeks

Given at the Jade Buddha Monastery, Shanghai, in 1953

(from the Hsu Yun Ho Shang Nien P'u)

## The First Week

### *The First Day*

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THE Venerable Wei Fang, abbot (of this monastery), is very compassionate indeed, and the chief monks are also earnest in their efforts to spread the Dharma. In addition, all the laymen (upasakas) here are keen in their studies of the truth and have come to sit in meditation during this Ch'an week. All have asked me to preside over the meeting and this is really an unsurpassable (co-operating) cause. However, for the last few years, I have been ill and am, therefore, unable to give long lectures.

The World Honored One spent over forty years in expounding the Dharma, exoterically and esoterically, and his teaching is found in the twelve divisions<sup>91</sup> of the Mahayana canon in the Tripitaka. If I am asked to give lectures, the most I can do is to pick up words already spoken by the Buddha and Masters.

As to the Dharma of our sect, when the Buddha ascended to his seat for the last time, he held up and showed to the assembly a golden flower of sandalwood, offered to him by the king of the eighteen Brahmaloкас (Mahabrahma Devaraja). All men and gods (devas) who were present, did not understand the Buddha's (meaning). Only Mahakasyapa (acknowledged it with a) broad smile. Thereupon the World Honored One declared to him: "I have the treasure of the correct Dharma eye,

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<sup>91</sup> The 12 divisions of the Mahayana canon are: (1) sutra, the Buddha's sermons; (2) geya, metrical pieces; (3) gatha, poems or chants; (4) nidana, sutras written by request or in answer to a query, because certain precepts were violated and because of certain events; (5) itivrttaka, narratives; (6) jataka, stories of former lives of Buddha; (7) adbhuta-dharma, miracles; (8) avadana, parables, metaphors, stories, illustrations; (9) upadesa, discourses and discussions by question and answer; (10) udana, impromptu, or unsolicited addresses.

Nirvana's wonderful mind and the formless Reality which I now transmit to you. This was the transmission outside of teaching, which did not make use of scriptures and was the unsurpassed Dharma door of direct realization."

Those who came afterwards got confused about it and (wrongly) called it Ch'an (Dhyana in Sanskrit and Zen in Japanese). We should know that over twenty kinds of Ch'an are enumerated in the Mahaprajna-paramita Sutra, but none of them is the final one.

The Ch'an of our sect does not set up (progressive) stages and is, therefore, the unsurpassed one. (Its aim) is the direct realization leading to the perception of the (self-) nature and attainment of Buddhahood. Therefore, it has nothing to do with the sitting or not sitting in meditation during a Ch'an week. However, on account of living beings' dull roots and due to their numerous false thoughts, ancient masters devised expedencies to guide them. Since the time of Mahakasyapa up to now, there have been sixty to seventy generations. In the Tang and Sung dynasties (619-1278), the Ch'an sect spread to every part of the country and how it prospered at the time! At present, it has reached the bottom of its decadence (and) only those monasteries like Chin Shan, Kao Min and Pao Kuan, can still manage to present some appearance. This is why men of outstanding ability are now so rarely found and even the holding of Ch'an weeks has only a name but lacks its spirit.

When the Seventh Ancestor<sup>92</sup> Hsing Szu of Ch'ing Yuan Mountain asked the Sixth Patriarch: "What should one do in order not to fall into the progressive stages?"<sup>93</sup> the Patriarch asked: "What did you practice of late?" Hsing Szu replied: "I did not even practice the Noble Truths."<sup>94</sup> The Patriarch asked: "Then falling into what progressive stages?" Hsing Szu replied: "Even the Noble Truths are not practiced, where are the progressive stages?" The Sixth Patriarch had a high opinion of Hsing Szu.

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<sup>92</sup> Hsing Szu inherited the Dharma from the Sixth Patriarch and was called the Seventh Ancestor because his two Dharma-descendants, Tung Shan and Ts'ao Shan, founded the Ts'ao Tung sect, which was one of the five Ch'an sects in China.

<sup>93</sup> Of the method of gradual enlightenment which took many aeons to enable an adherent to attain the Buddha-stage.

<sup>94</sup> The four Noble Truths are: Misery; the accumulation of misery, caused by passions; the extinction of passions, being possible; and the doctrine of the Path leading to extinction of passions.



Because of our inferior roots, the great masters were obliged to use expedencies and to instruct their followers to hold (and examine into) a sentence called hua t'ou. As Buddhists (of the Pure Land School) who used to repeat the Buddha's name (in their practice) were *numerous*, the great masters instructed them to hold (and examine into the hua t'ou): "Who is the repeater of the Buddha's name?" Nowadays, this expedient is adopted in Ch'an training all over the country. However, many are not clear about it and merely repeat without interruption the sentence: "Who is the repeater of the Buddha's name?" Thus they are repeaters of the hua t'ou, and are not investigators of the hua t'ou's (meaning). To investigate is to inquire into. For this reason, the four Chinese characters "chao ku hua t'ou" are prominently exhibited in all Ch'an halls. "Chao" is to turn inward the light, and "ku" is to care for. These (two characters together) mean "to turn inward the light on the self-nature". This is to turn inward our minds which are prone to wander outside, and this is called investigation of the hua t'ou. "Who is the repeater of the Buddha's name?" is a sentence. Before this sentence is uttered, it is called a hua t'ou (lit. sentence's head). As soon as it is uttered, it becomes the sentence's tail (hua wei). In our inquiry into the hua t'ou, this (word) "Who" should be examined: What is it before it arises? For instance, I am repeating the Buddha's name in this hall. Suddenly someone asks me: "Who is repeating the Buddha's name?" I reply: "It is I." The questioner asks again: "If you are the repeater of the Buddha's name, do you repeat it with your mouth or with your mind? If you repeat it with your mouth, why don't you repeat it when you sleep? If you repeat it with your mind, why don't you repeat it after your death?" This question will cause a doubt to arise (in our minds) and it is here that we should inquire into this doubt. We should endeavor to know where this "Who" comes from and what it looks like. Our minute examination should be turned inward and this is also called "the turning inward of the hearing to hear the self-nature."

When offering incense and circumambulating in the hall, one's neck should touch the (back of the wide) collar of the robe, one's feet should follow closely the preceding walker, one's mind should be set at rest and one should not look to the right or to the left. With a single mind, the hua t'ou should be well cared for.

When sitting in meditation, the chest should not be pushed forward. The prana (vital energy) should neither be brought upward nor pressed

down, and should be left in its natural condition. However, the six sense organs should be brought under control, and all thoughts should be brought to an end. Only the hua t'ou should be gripped and the grip should never loosen. The hua t'ou should not be coarse for it will float up and cannot be brought down. Neither should it be fine, for it will become blurred with the resultant fall into the void. In both cases, no result can be achieved.

If the hua tou is properly looked after, the training will become easier and all former habits will be brought automatically to an end. A beginner will not find it easy to hold the hua t'ou well (in his mind), but he should not worry about it. He should neither hope for awakening nor seek wisdom, for the purpose of this sitting in meditation in the Ch'an week is already the attainment of awakening and wisdom. If he develops a mind in pursuit of these ends, he 'puts another head upon his own head'.<sup>95</sup>

Now we know that we should give rise only to a sentence called hua t'ou which we should care for. If thoughts arise, let them rise and if we disregard them, they will vanish. This is why it is said: "One should not be afraid of rising thoughts but only of the delay in being aware of them." If thoughts arise, let our awareness of them nail the hua t'ou to them. If the hua t'ou escapes from our grip, we should immediately bring it back again.

The first sitting in meditation can be likened to a battle against rising thoughts. Gradually the hua t'ou will be well gripped and it will be easy to hold it uninterruptedly during the whole time an incense stick takes to burn.<sup>96</sup> We can expect good results when it does not escape from our grip any more.

The foregoing are only empty words; now let us exert our efforts in the training.

### *The Second Day*

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To sit *in* meditation during a Ch'an week is the best method which sets a time limit for realizing the truth by personal experience. This method

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<sup>95</sup> A Ch'an term which means an unwanted thing which hinders self-realization.

<sup>96</sup> Usually one hour. The longer sticks take an hour and a half to burn.

was not used in ancient times for the ancients had sharp roots (and did not require it). It has gradually been put into use since the Sung dynasty (fell in 1278). In the Ch'ing dynasty (1662-1910), it was brought into vogue and the Emperor Yung Cheng used to hold frequent Ch'an weeks in the imperial palace. He entertained the highest regard for the Sect and his own attainment of Ch'an samadhi was excellent. Over ten persons realized the truth under the imperial auspices and Master T'ien Hui Ch'e of the Kao Min monastery at Yang Chou attained enlightenment during these meetings (in the palace). The emperor also revised and improved for observance the rules and regulations of the Sect, which flourished and produced so many men of ability. The (strict observance of) rules and regulations is, therefore, of paramount importance.

This method of setting a time limit for personal experience of the truth is likened to a scholars' examination. The candidates sit for it and write their compositions according to the subjects, for each of which a time limit is set. The subject of our Ch'an week is Ch'an meditation. For this reason, this hall is called the Ch'an hall. Ch'an is dhyana in Sanskrit and means "unperturbed abstraction". There are various kinds of Ch'an, such as the Mahayana and Hinayana Ch'ans, the material and immaterial Ch'ans, the Sravakas' and the Heretics' Ch'an. Ours is the unsurpassed Ch'an. If one succeeds in seeing through the doubt (mentioned yesterday) and in sitting on and cracking the life-root,<sup>97</sup> one will be similar to the Tathagata.

For this reason, a Ch'an hall is also called a Buddha's selecting place. It is called a Prajna hall. The Dharma taught in this hall is the Wu Wei Dharma.<sup>98</sup> Wu Wei means "not doing". In other words, not a (single) thing can be gained and not a (single) thing can be done. If there be doing (samskrta),<sup>99</sup> it will produce birth and death. If there is gain, there will be loss. For this reason, the sutra says: "There are only words and expressions which have no real meaning." The recitation of sutras and

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<sup>97</sup> Life-root. A root, or basis for life, or reincarnation, the nexus of Hinayana between two life-periods, accepted by Mahayana as nominal but not real. The Chinese idiom 'to sit on and to crack' is equivalent to the Western term 'to break up'.

<sup>98</sup> Wu Wei. Asamskrta in Sanskrit, anything not subject to cause, condition or dependence; out of time, eternal, inactive, supramundane.

<sup>99</sup> Samskrta. Yu Wei in Chinese, active, creative, productive, functioning. causative, phenomenal, the process resulting from the laws of karma.

the holding of confessional services pertain to doing (samskṛta) and are only expediciencies used in the teaching school.

As to our Sect, its teaching consists in the direct (self-) cognizance for which words and expressions have no room. Formerly, a student called on the old master Nan Chuan and asked him: "What is Tao?" Nan Chuan replied: "The ordinary mind<sup>100</sup> is the truth." Every day, we wear robes and eat rice; we go out to work and return to rest; all our actions are performed according to the truth.<sup>101</sup> It is because we bind ourselves in every situation that we fail to realize that the self-mind is Buddha.

When Ch'an Master Fa Ch'ang of Ta Mei Mountain called for the first time on Ma Tsu, he asked the latter: "What is Buddha?" Ma Tsu replied: "Mind is Buddha." Thereupon, Ta Mei<sup>102</sup> was completely enlightened. He left Ma Tsu and proceeded to the Szu Ming district where he lived in a hermitage formerly belonging to Mei Tsu Chen.

In the Chen Yuan reign (A.D. 785-804) of the T'ang dynasty, a monk who was a disciple of Yen Kuan and went to the mountain to collect branches of trees for making staffs, lost his way and arrived at the hut. He asked Ta Mei: "How long have you stayed here?" Ta Mei replied: "I see only four mountains which are blue and yellow."<sup>103</sup> The monk said: "Please show me the mountain track so that I can get out of here." Ta Mei replied: "Follow the stream."<sup>104</sup>

Upon his return the monk reported what he saw in the mountain to Yen Kuan who said: "I once saw a monk in Chiang Hsi province) but I have had no news of him since. Is it not that monk?"

Then Yen Kuan sent the monk (to the mountain) to invite Ta Mei to come (to his place). In reply, Ta Mei sent the following poem.

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<sup>100</sup> Ordinary mind: indiscriminating mind.

<sup>101</sup> Without discrimination, the acts of wearing clothes and eating and all our activities are nothing but the functions of the self-nature; and One reality is all reality. On the other hand if the mind discriminates when one wears one's robe or takes one's meal, everything around one will be the phenomenal.

<sup>102</sup> Ta Mei. In deference to him, the Master was called after the name of the mountain where he stayed.

<sup>103</sup> The mountains are immutable and symbolize the unchanging self-nature, whereas their colors (blue and yellow) change and symbolize appearance, i.e., the phenomenal. Ta Mei's reply meant that his self-nature was the same and beyond time.

<sup>104</sup> If your mind wanders outside, it will follow the stream of birth and death.

A withered log in the cold forest  
Does not change heart for several springs,  
The woodcutter will not look at it.  
How can a stranger hunt it?  
A lotus pond yields boundless store of clothing:  
More fir cones drop from pines than you can eat.  
When worldly men discover where you live  
You move your thatched hut far into the hills.<sup>105</sup>

Ma Tsu heard of Ta Mei's stay on the mountain and sent a monk to ask him this question: "What did you obtain when you called on the great master Ma Tsu and what prompted you to stay here?" Ta Mei replied: "The great master told me that mind was Buddha and that is why I came to stay here." The monk said: "The great master's Buddha Dharma is different now." Ta Mei asked: "What is it now?" The monk replied: "He says it is neither mind nor Buddha."<sup>106</sup> Ta Mei said: "That old man is causing confusion in the minds of others and all this will have no end. Let him say that it is neither mind nor Buddha. As far as I am concerned, Mind is Buddha."

When the monk returned and reported the above dialogue to Ma Tsu, the latter said: "The plum is now ripe."<sup>107</sup>

This shows how the ancients were competent and concise. Because of our inferior roots and perverted thinking, the masters taught us to hold a hua t'ou (in our minds) and they were obliged to use this expedient. Master Yung Chia said: "After the elimination of the ego and dharma, the attainment of reality will destroy the Avici hell in a moment (ksana). If I tell a lie to deceive living beings, I will consent to fall into the hell

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<sup>105</sup> When the mind is free from passions, it is like a withered log which is indifferent to its surroundings and does not "grow" any more in spite of the spring, the season of the year in which trees begin to grow after lying dormant all winter. A mind free from delusion remains unchanged and indifferent to all changes in its surrounding and to those who hunt after it.

<sup>106</sup> Because his disciples clung to his saying: "Mind is Buddha," Ma Tsu said to them: "It is neither mind nor Buddha" so that they ceased to cling, which was the cause of their delusion.

<sup>107</sup> Ta Mei means "Big Plum". Ma Tsu confirmed that Master Ta Mei was ripe, i.e., enlightened.

where the tongue is pulled out (as punishment for my verbal sin)."<sup>108</sup> Master Yuan Miao of Kao Feng said: "Ch'an training is like throwing into a deep pond a tile which sinks to the bottom." When we hold a hua t'ou, we must look into it until we reach its "bottom" and "crack" it. Master Yuan Miao also swore: "If someone holding a hua t'ou without giving rise to a second thought, fails to realize the truth, I will be (ready) to fall into the hell where the tongue is pulled out." The sole reason why (we do not succeed in our practice) is because our faith (in the hua t'ou) is not deep enough and because we do not put an end to our (wrong) thinking. If we are firmly determined to escape from the round of births and deaths, a sentence of the hua t'ou will never escape from our grip. Master Kuei Shan said: "If in every reincarnation we (can hold it firmly) without backsliding, the Buddha stage can be expected."

All beginners are inclined to give rise to all kinds of (false) thoughts; they have a pain in the legs and do not know how to undergo the training. The truth is that they should be firm in their determination to escape from the round of births and deaths. They should stick to the hua t'ou and no matter whether they walk, stand, sit or lie, they should grasp it. From morning to evening, they should look into this (word) "Who" until it becomes as clear as "the autumn moon reflected in a limpid pool". It should be clearly (and closely) inquired into and should be neither blurred nor unsteady. (If this can be achieved) why worry about the Buddha stage which seems unattainable?

If the hua t'ou becomes blurred, you can open your eyes wide and raise your chest gently; this will raise your spirits. At the same time, it should not be held too loosely, nor should it be too fine, because if it is too fine, it will cause a fall into emptiness and dullness. If you fall into emptiness, you will perceive only stillness and will experience liveliness. At this moment, the hua t'ou should not be allowed to escape from your grip so that you can take a step forward after you have reached "the top of the pole."<sup>109</sup> Otherwise, you will fall into dull emptiness and will never attain the ultimate.

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<sup>108</sup> Quotation from Yung Chia's "Song of Enlightenment". Avici is the last and deepest of the eight hot hells, where sinners suffer, die, and are instantly reborn to suffering, without interruption. Ksana is the shortest measure of time, as kalpa is the longest.

<sup>109</sup> The instant one perceives only stillness and experiences liveliness; it is called in Ch'an parlance "reaching the top of a hundred-foot pole." All masters advised their disciples Master Hsu Yun's Discourses and Dharma Words

If it is loosely gripped, you will be easily assailed by false thoughts. If false thoughts arise, they will be difficult to suppress.

Therefore, coarseness should be tempered with fineness and fineness with coarseness to succeed in the training and to realize the sameness of the mutable and immutable.

Formerly I was at Chin Shin and other monasteries and when the Karmadana<sup>110</sup> received the incense sticks which he had ordered (previously), his two feet ran<sup>111</sup> with great speed as if he flew (in the air) and the monks who followed him were also good runners. As soon as the signal was given, all of them looked like automata. (Thus) how could wrong thoughts arise (in their minds)? At present (although) we also walk (after sitting in meditation), what a great difference there is between then and now!

When you sit in meditation, you should not push up the hua t'ou for this will cause its dimness. You should not hold it in your chest for it causes pain in the chest. Neither should you press it down, for it will expand the belly and will cause your fall into the realm of the five aggregates (skandhas)<sup>112</sup> resulting in all kinds of defect. With serenity and self-possession, only the word "Who" should be looked into with the same care with which a hen sits on her egg and a cat pounces on a mouse. When the hua t'ou is efficiently held, the life-root will automatically be cut off.

This method is obviously not an easy one for beginners, but you must exert yourselves unceasingly. Now I give you an example. Self-

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not to abide in this state which was not real. Master Han Shan composed "The Song of the Board-bearer" to warn his followers against "silent immersion in stagnant water." This state is called "life" and is the fourth of the four signs (laksana) mentioned in the Diamond Sutra. (See Part 3.)

<sup>110</sup> Karmadana: the duty-distributor, second in command of a monastery.

<sup>111</sup> After a meditation, the monks used to march quickly in single file to relax their legs, preceded by the Karmadana and followed by the abbot.

<sup>112</sup> Realm of the five skandhas: the present world as the state of the five aggregates. The best place in which to hold the hua t'ou is between the pit of the stomach and the navel. A meditator may have all kinds of visions before his attainment of enlightenment, and these visions belong to the realm of the five skandhas, i.e. are creations of his mind. His master would instruct him to remain indifferent, to neither "accept" nor "reject" these visions which will disappear before the meditator makes further progress in the right direction.

cultivation is likened to making fire with a piece of flint. We must know the method of producing a fire and if we do not know it, we will never light a fire even if we break the flint in pieces. The method consists in using a bit of tinder and a steel. The tinder is held under the flint and the steel strikes the upper part of the flint so as to direct the spark to the tinder which will catch it. This is the only method of starting a fire (with a flint).

Although we know quite well that Mind is Buddha, we are still unable to accept this as a fact. For this reason, a sentence of the hua t'ou has been used as the fire-starting-steel. It was just the same when formerly the World Honored One became thoroughly enlightened after gazing at the stars at night. We are not clear about the self-nature because we do not know how to start a fire. Our fundamental self-nature and the Buddha do not differ from each other. It is only because of our perverted thinking that we are (still) not liberated. So the Buddha is still Buddha and we are still ourselves. Now as we know the method, if we could inquire into it, it would indeed be an unsurpassing, co-operating cause! I hope that everyone here will, by exerting himself, take a step forward from the top of a hundred-foot pole and will be elected (Buddha) in this hall so that he can pay the debt of gratitude he owes to the Buddha high above and deliver living beings here below. If the Buddha Dharma does not produce men of ability, it is because no one is willing to exert himself. Our heart is full of sadness when we talk about this (situation). If we really have deep faith in the words uttered under oath by Masters Yung Chia and Yuan Miao, we are sure we will also realize the truth. Now is the time to exert yourselves!

### *The Third Day*

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Time passes quickly (indeed); we have only just opened this Ch'an week and it is already the third day. Those who have efficiently held the hua t'ou (in their minds) have (been able to) clear up their passions and wrong thoughts; they can now go straight home.<sup>113</sup> For this reason, an ancient (master) said:

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<sup>113</sup> 'To go straight home': a Ch'an idiom meaning the return to the self-nature, i.e. realization of the real. "Home" is our self-natured Buddha.



Self-cultivation has no other method;  
It requires but knowledge of the way.  
If the way only can be known,  
Birth and death at once will end.

Our way consists in laying down our baggage<sup>114</sup> and our home is very near. The Sixth Patriarch said: "If the preceding thought does not arise, it is mind. If the following thought does not end, it is Buddha."<sup>115</sup>

Fundamentally, our four elements are void and the five aggregates (skandhas) are non-existent. It is only because of (our) wrong thoughts which grasp (everything) that we like the illusion of the (impermanent) world and are thereby held in bondage. Consequently, we are unable to (perceive) the voidness of the four elements and (to realize) the nonexistence of birth and death. However, if in a single thought, we can have an experience of that which is not born, there will be no need for those Dharma doors expounded by Sakyamuni Buddha. (If so) can it still be said that birth and death cannot be brought to an end? On that account, the brightness of our Sect's Dharma really illumines the boundless space in the ten directions.

Master Teh Shan was a native of Chien Chou town in Szu Ch'uan. His lay surname was Chou. He left home at the age of twenty. After being fully ordained, he studied the Vinaya-pitaka<sup>116</sup> which he mastered. He was well-versed in the teaching of the noumenal and phenomenal as expounded in the sutras. He used to teach the Diamond Prajna and was called "Diamond Chou".

Said he to his schoolmates:

When a hair swallows the ocean<sup>117</sup>  
The nature-ocean<sup>118</sup> loses naught.

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<sup>114</sup> Baggage: our body, mind and all the seeming which we hold dear.

<sup>115</sup> That which has no birth and death, i.e., the eternal self-nature.

<sup>116</sup> Vinaya-pitaka. One of the three divisions of the canon or Tripitaka. It emphasizes the discipline. The other two divisions are: sutras (sermons) and sastras (treatises).

<sup>117</sup> The two forms of Karma resulting from one's past are: (1) the resultant person, symbolized by a hair, and (2) the dependent condition or environment, e.g. country, family, possessions, etc., symbolized by the ocean. These two forms being illusory only, they penetrate each other without changing the self-nature, or the nature-ocean (see note 28) which is beyond time and space.

To hit a needle's point with mustard seed  
Shakes not the needle's point.<sup>119</sup>  
(Of) saiksa and asaiksa<sup>120</sup>  
I know and I alone.

When he heard that the Ch'an Sect was flourishing in the South, he could not keep his temper and said: "All who leave home take a thousand eons to learn the Buddha's respect-inspiring deportment<sup>121</sup> and ten thousand eons to study the Buddha's fine deeds; (in spite of this) they are still unable to attain Buddhahood. How can those demons in the south dare to say that the direct indication of the mind leads to the perception of the (self-) nature and attainment of Buddhahood? I must (go to the South,) sweep away their den and destroy their race to repay the debt of gratitude I owe the Buddha."

He left Szu Ch'uan province with Ch'ing Lung's Commentary<sup>122</sup> on his shoulders. When he reached Li Yang, he saw an old woman selling tien hsin (lit. mind-refreshment)<sup>123</sup> on the roadside. He halted, laid down his load and intended to buy some pastries to refresh his mind. The old woman pointed at the load and asked him: "What is this literature?" Teh Shan replied: "Ch'ing Lung's Commentary." The old woman asked: "Commentary on what sutra?" Teh Shin replied: "On the Diamond Sutra." The old woman said: "I have a question to ask you; if you can answer it, I will offer you mind-refreshment. If you cannot reply, (please) go away. The Diamond Sutra says: 'The past, present and future mind cannot be found.' What do you want to refresh?"

Teh Shan remained speechless. He (left the place and) went to the Dragon Pond (Lung T'an) monastery. He entered the Dharma hall and

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<sup>118</sup> Nature-ocean. The ocean of the Bhutatathata, the all-containing, immaterial nature of the Dharmakaya.

<sup>119</sup> The appearance of a Buddha is as rare as the hitting of a needle's point with a fine mustard-seed thrown from a devaloka. Even an accurate hit does not move the immutable needle's point.

<sup>120</sup> Saiksa, need of study; asaiksa, no longer learning, beyond study, the state of arhatship, the fourth of the sravaka stages; the preceding three stages requiring study. When the arhat is free from all illusion, he has nothing more to study.

<sup>121</sup> Dignity in walking, standing, sitting and lying.

<sup>122</sup> *A Commentary on the Diamond Sutra* by Tao Yin of the Ch'ing Lung monastery.

<sup>123</sup> Tien hsin, pastry, snack; refreshment to keep up one's spirits.

said: "I have long desired to see the Dragon Pond, but as I arrive here, neither is the pond seen nor does the dragon appear." Hearing this, (Master) Lung T'an came out and said: "You have really arrived at the Dragon Pond."<sup>124</sup> Teh Shan remained speechless; he then (made up his mind to) stay at the monastery.

One night, while he was standing (as an attendant) by Lung T'an, the latter said to him: "It is late now, why don't you go back to your quarters?" After wishing his master good night, he withdrew but returned and said: "It is very dark outside." Lung T'an lit a paper-torch and handed it to him. When Teh Shan was about to take the torch, Lung T'an blew out the light.<sup>125</sup>

Thereupon Teh Shan was completely enlightened and made his obeisance to the master (to thank him). Lung T'an asked him: "What have you seen?" Teh Shan replied: "In future, I will entertain no more doubt about the tips of the tongues of the old monks all over the country."<sup>126</sup>

The following day, Lung T'an ascended to his seat and said to the assembly: "There is a fellow whose teeth are like sword-leaf trees and whose mouth is like a blood bath."<sup>127</sup> He receives a stroke of the staff but

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<sup>124</sup> Lung T'an was an enlightened master. The sentence: "You have really arrived at the Dragon Pond" means: "You have really attained the state of Lung T'an or enlightenment for the real is invisible and does not appear before the eyes of the unenlightened." Teh Shan did not understand its meaning and remained speechless. This was the second time he remained speechless, the first being when the old woman asked him about the past, present and future mind. He was still unenlightened but became later an eminent Ch'an master after his awakening.

<sup>125</sup> Lung T'an was an eminent master and knew the moment was ripe to enlighten Teh Shan. The latter perceived the master's self-nature through its function which blew out the torch. At the same time, Teh Shan perceived also that which "saw" the torch blown out, i.e., his own nature.

<sup>126</sup> Old monks all over the country: a Chinese idiom referring to eminent Ch'an masters who were intransigent and exacting when teaching and guiding their disciples. Readers may learn about these masters by studying their sayings which seem ambiguous but are full of deep meaning.

<sup>127</sup> A fellow who was awe-inspiring like the two hells where there are hills of swords or sword-leaf trees and blood baths as punishments for sinners. Lung T'an foretold the severity with which Teh Shan would receive, teach and train his disciples. Those wishing to familiarize themselves with these awe-inspiring things should read Dr. W. Y. Evans-Wentz's *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* (Oxford University Press).

does not turn his head.<sup>128</sup> Later, he will set up my doctrine on the top of a solitary peak."<sup>129</sup>

In front of the Dharma hall, Teh Shan laid on the ground all the sheets of the Ch'ing Lung Commentary in a heap and raising a torch said: "An exhaustive discussion of the abstruse is like a hair placed in the great void (and) the exertion to the full of all human capabilities is like a drop of water poured into the great ocean." Then he burned the manuscript. He bade farewell to his master and left the monastery.

He went straight to Kuei Shin (monastery) and carrying his baggage under his arm, he entered the Dharma hall which he crossed from its east to its west side and then from its west to its east side. He looked at the abbot (Master Kuei Shan) and said: "Anything? Anything?" Kuei Shan was sitting in the hall but paid no attention to the visitor. Teh Shan said: "Nothing, nothing."<sup>130</sup> and left the hall.

When he reached the front door of the monastery, he said to himself: "Be that as it may, I should not be so careless." Then, he turned back and again entered the hall in full ceremony. As he crossed its threshold, he took out and raised his cloth rug (nisidana),<sup>131</sup> calling: "Venerable Upadhyaya!"<sup>132</sup> As Kuei Shan was about to pick up a dust-whisk,<sup>133</sup> Teh Shan shouted<sup>134</sup> and left the hall.

That evening, Kuei Shan asked the leader of the assembly: "Is the newcomer still here?" The leader replied: "When he left the hall, he

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<sup>128</sup> Ch'an masters frequently used their staffs to strike their disciples to provoke their awakening. The stroke of the staff here referred to Teh Shan's enlightenment after "seeing" the torch blown out by his master. Teh Shan did not turn his head, because he was really enlightened and did not have any more doubt about his self-nature.

<sup>129</sup> Will be an outstanding Ch'an master.

<sup>130</sup> This walk from east to west and then from west to east meant the "coming" and "going" which were non-existent in the Dharmadhatu wherein the Dharmakaya remained immutable and unchanging. Teh Shan's question: "Anything? Anything?" and the reply: "Nothing, Nothing," served to emphasize the nothingness in space.

<sup>131</sup> Nisidana, a cloth for sitting on.

<sup>132</sup> Upadhyaya, a general term for a monk.

<sup>133</sup> The duster used by the ancients consisted of long horse hairs attached to the end of its handle. It was used to reveal the function of the self-nature.

<sup>134</sup> The shout was to reveal that which uttered it, i.e., the self-nature.

turned his back to it, put on his straw sandals and went away."<sup>135</sup> Kuei Shan said: "That man will later go to some lonely peak where he will erect a thatched hut; he will scold Buddhas and curse Patriarchs."<sup>136</sup>

Teh Shan stayed thirty years at Li Yang. During the persecution of Buddhists by the Emperor Wu Tsung (A.D. 841-846) of the T'ang dynasty, the master took refuge in a stone hut on the Tu Fou mountain (in A.D. 847). At the beginning of Ta Chung's reign, prefect Hsieh T'ing Wang of Wu Ling restored the veneration of Teh Shan monastery and named it Ko Teh Hall. He was looking for a man of outstanding ability to take charge of the monastery when he heard of the master's reputation. In spite of several invitations, Teh Shan refused to descend the (Tu Fou) mountain. Finally, the prefect devised a stratagem and sent his men falsely to accuse him of smuggling tea and salt in defiance of the law. When the master was brought to the prefecture, the prefect paid obeisance to him and insistently invited him to take charge of the Ch'an hall where Teh Shan spread widely the Sect's teaching.

Later, people talked about Teh Shan's shouting and Lin Chi's<sup>137</sup> caning. If we can discipline ourselves like these two masters, why should we be unable to put an end to birth and death? After Teh Shin, came Yen T'ou and Hsueh Feng. After Hsueh Feng, came Yun Men and Fa Yen,<sup>138</sup> and also state master Teh Shao and ancestor Yen Shou of the Yung Ming (monastery). They were all "produced" by (Teh Shan's) staff.

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<sup>135</sup> Teh Shan took out and raised his nisidana, calling: "Venerable Upadhyaya" to show the function of that which took out and raised the nisidana and called Kuei Shan. When the latter was about to take the duster to test the visitor's enlightenment, Teh Shan shouted just to indicate the presence of the substance of that which called on the host. Teh Shan left the hall and went away to show the return of function to the substance. Thus Teh Shan's enlightenment was complete, because both function and substance, or prajna and samadhi, were on a level. Therefore, he did not require any further instruction and any test of his attainment would be superfluous. For this reason, Kuei Shan praised the visitor, saying: "That man will later go to some solitary peak... will scold Buddhas and Patriarchs."

<sup>136</sup> Teh Shan would "scold" unreal Buddhas and "curse" unreal Patriarchs who existed only in the impure minds of deluded disciples, for the latter's conditioned and discriminating minds could create only impure Buddhas and impure Patriarchs. Teh Shan's teaching was based only on the absolute Prajna which had no room for worldly feelings and discernings, the causes of birth and death.

<sup>137</sup> Lin Chi was the founder of the Lin Chi Sect, one of the five Ch'an Sects of China.

<sup>138</sup> Yun Men and Fa Yen were respective founders of the Yun Men and Fa Yen Sects, two of the five Ch'an Sects in China.

During the past successive dynasties, the Sect was kept going by great ancestors and masters. You are here to hold a Ch'an week and you understand very well this unsurpassed doctrine which will enable (us) without difficulty to attain direct (self) cognizance and liberation from birth and death. However, if you trifle with it and do not train seriously, or if from morning to evening, you like to behold the "demon in the bright shadow" or to make your plans inside "the den of words and expressions", you will never escape from birth and death.<sup>139</sup> Now, all of you, please exert yourselves diligently.

### *The Fourth Day*

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This is the fourth day of our Ch'an week. You have exerted yourselves in your training; some of you have composed poems and gathas and have presented them to me for verification. This is not an easy thing but those of you who have made efforts in this manner, must have forgotten my two previous lectures. Yesterday evening, I said:

Self-cultivation has no other method;  
It requires but knowledge of the way.

We are here to inquire into the hua t'ou which is the way we should follow. Our purpose is to be clear about birth and death and to attain Buddhahood. In order to be clear about birth and death, we must have recourse to this hua t'ou which should be used as the Vajra King's<sup>140</sup> precious sword to cut down demons if demons come and Buddhas if Buddhas come<sup>141</sup> so that no feelings will remain and not a single thing (dharma) can be set up. In such a manner, where could there have been wrong thinking about writing poems and gathas and seeing such states as voidness and brightness?<sup>142</sup> If you made your efforts (so wrongly), I really do not know where your hua t'ou went. Experienced C'han monks

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<sup>139</sup> If while sitting in meditation one only takes delight in false visions or in the wrong interpretation of sutras and sayings, one will never attain the real.

<sup>140</sup> The strongest or sharpest precious sword.

<sup>141</sup> i.e., false visions of demons and Buddhas in one's meditation.

<sup>142</sup> Beginners usually see the voidness and brightness as soon as all thoughts are discarded. Although these visions indicate some progress in the training, they should not be taken as achievements. The meditator should remain indifferent to them as they are only the creation of the deluded mind and should hold firm the hua t'ou.

do not require further talks about this, but beginners should be very careful.

As I was apprehensive that you might not know how to undergo your training, I talked during the last two days about sitting in meditation in a Ch'an week, the worthiness of this method devised by our Sect and the way of making efforts. Our method consists in concentrating pointedly on a hua t'ou which should not be interrupted by day or night in the same way as running water. It should be spirited and clear and should never be blurred. It should be clearly and constantly cognizable. All worldly feelings and holy interpretations should be cut down (by it). An ancient (master) said:

Study the truth as you would defend a citadel  
Which, when besieged, (at all costs) must be held.  
If intense cold strikes not to the bone,  
How can plum blossom fragrant be?

These four lines came from (Master) Huang Po and have two meanings. The first two illustrate those who undergo the (Ch'an) training and who should hold firm the hua t'ou in the same manner as the defense of a citadel which no foe must be allowed to enter. This is the unyielding defense (of the citadel). Each of us has a mind which is the eighth consciousness (vijñana), as well as the seventh, sixth and the first five consciousnesses. The first five are the five thieves of the eye, ear, nose, tongue and body. The sixth consciousness is the thief of mind (manas). The seventh is the deceptive consciousness (klista-mano-vijñana) which from morning to evening grasps the eighth consciousness' "subject" and mistakes it for an "ego". It incites the sixth to lead the first five consciousnesses to seek external objects (such as) form, sound, smell, taste and touch. Being constantly deceived and tied the eighth consciousness-mind is held in bondage without being able to free itself. For this reason we are obliged to have recourse to this hua t'ou and use its "Vajra King's Precious Sword" to kill all these thieves so that the eighth consciousness can be transmuted into the Great Mirror Wisdom, the seventh into the Wisdom of Equality, the sixth into the Profound Observing Wisdom and the first five consciousnesses into the Perfecting

Wisdom.<sup>143</sup> It is of paramount importance first to transmute the sixth and seventh consciousnesses, for they play the leading role and because of their power in discriminating and discerning. While you were seeing the voidness and the brightness and composing poems and gathas, these two consciousnesses performed their (evil) functions. Today, we should use this hua t'ou to transmute the discriminating consciousness into the Profound Observing Wisdom and the mind which differentiates between ego and personality into the Wisdom of Equality. This is called the transmutation of consciousness into wisdom and the transformation of the worldly into the saintly. It is important not to allow these thieves who are fond of form, sound, smell, taste, touch and dharma, to attack us. Therefore, this is likened to the defense of a citadel.

The last two lines:

If intense cold strikes not to the bone  
How can plum blossom fragrant be?

illustrate living beings in the three worlds of existence<sup>144</sup> who are engulfed in the ocean of birth and death, tied to the five desires,<sup>145</sup> deceived by their passions, and unable to obtain liberation. Hence the plum blossom is used as an illustration, for these plum trees spring into blossom in snowy weather. In general, insects and plants are born in the spring, grow in summer, remain stationary in autumn and lie dormant in winter. In winter, insects and plants either die or lie dormant. The snow also lays the dust which is cold and cannot rise in the air. These insects, plants and dust are likened to our mind's wrong thinking, discerning, ignorance, envy and jealousy resulting from contamination with the three poisons.<sup>146</sup> If we rid ourselves of these (impurities), our minds will be naturally comfortable and plum blossoms will be fragrant in the snow. But you should know that these plum trees blossom in the bitter cold and not in the lovely bright spring or in the mild breeze of charming weather. If we want our mind-flowers to bloom, we cannot expect this

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<sup>143</sup> Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch.

<sup>144</sup> World of desire, world of form and formless world.

<sup>145</sup> The five desires arising from the objects of the five senses, things seen, heard, smelt, tasted and touched.

<sup>146</sup> The three poisons are: concupiscence or wrong desire, hatred or resentment, and stupidity.



flowering in the midst of pleasure, anger, sorrow and joy or (when we hold the conception of) ego, personality, right and wrong. If we are confused about these eight kinds of mind, the result will be unrecordable.<sup>147</sup> If evil actions are committed, the result will be evil. If good actions are performed, the result will be good.

There are two kinds of unrecordable nature; that of dreams and of dead emptiness. The unrecordable nature of dreams is that of illusory things appearing in a dream and unconnected with usually well-known daily activities. This is the state of an independent mind-consciousness (mano-vijnana).<sup>148</sup> This is also called an independent unrecordable state.

What is the unrecordable dead emptiness? In our meditation, if we lose sight of the hua t'ou while dwelling in stillness, there results an indistinctive voidness wherein there is nothing. The clinging to this state of stillness is a Ch'an illness which we should never contract while undergoing our training. This is the unrecordable dead emptiness.

What we have to do is throughout the day to hold without loosening our grip the hua t'ou which should be lively, bright, undimmed and clearly and constantly cognizable. Such a condition should obtain no matter whether we walk or sit. For this reason, an ancient master said:

"When walking, naught but Ch'an; when sitting, naught but Ch'an. Then body is at peace whether or not one talks or moves."

Ancestor Han Shan said:

High on a mountain peak  
Only boundless space is seen.  
How to sit in meditation, no one knows.  
The solitary moon shines o'er the icy pool,  
But in the pool there is no moon;  
The moon is in the night-blue sky.

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<sup>147</sup> i.e., neutral, neither good nor bad, things that are innocent or cannot be classified under moral categories.

<sup>148</sup> i.e., when the sixth consciousness is independent of the first five.

This song is chanted now,  
(But) there's no Ch'an in the song.<sup>149</sup>

You and I must have a co-operating cause, which is why I have this opportunity of addressing you on the (Ch'an) training. I hope you will exert yourselves and make steady progress, and will not wrongly apply your minds.

I will tell you another story, a kung-an (or koan in Japanese). After the founder of the Hsi T'an (Siddham in Sanskrit) monastery on the Cock's Foot (Chi Tsu) mountain had left home, he called on enlightened masters (for instruction) and made very good progress in his training. One day, he stopped at an inn, and heard a girl in a bean-curd shop singing this song:

Bean-curd Chang and Bean-curd Li!<sup>150</sup>  
While your heads rest on the pillow,  
You think a thousand thoughts,  
Yet tomorrow you will sell bean-curd again.

The master was sitting in meditation and upon hearing this song, he was instantaneously awakened.<sup>151</sup> This shows that when the ancients underwent the training, there was no necessity of doing it in a Ch'an hall for experiencing the truth. The (self-) cultivation and training lie in the One-Mind. So, all of you, please don't allow your minds to be disturbed in order not to waste your time. Otherwise, you will be selling bean-curd again tomorrow morning.<sup>152</sup>

### *The Fifth Day*

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<sup>149</sup> See footnotes 75-81 on pages 34-35.

<sup>150</sup> Chang and Li are the Chinese equivalents of Smith and Brown. [Editor of the web edition: Two popular family names.]

<sup>151</sup> In his meditation, the master had already discarded all thoughts and upon hearing the song, he instantly perceived that which heard the song, i.e., the self-nature. This is called Avalokitesvara's complete enlightenment by means of hearing, or the successful turning inward of the faculty of hearing to hear the self-nature.--Cf. Surangama Sutra.

<sup>152</sup> Bean-curd is made of soy-bean and is very cheap, so that only poor people make it for sale. For this reason, they are never satisfied with their lot and always want to do something more profitable.

About this method of (self-) cultivation, it can be said that it is both easy and difficult. It is easy because it is really easy and it is difficult because it is really difficult.

It is easy because you are only required to lay down (every thought), to have a firm faith in it (the method) and to develop a lasting mind. All this will ensure your success.

It is difficult because you are afraid of enduring hardships and because of your desire to be at ease. You should know all worldly occupations also require study and training before success can be achieved. How much more so when we want to learn (wisdom) from the sages in order to become Buddhas and Patriarchs. Can we reach our goal if we (act) carelessly?

Therefore, the first thing is to have a firm mind in our self-cultivation and performance of the truth. In this, we cannot avoid being obstructed by demons. These demoniacal obstructions are the (external) karmic surroundings caused by our passions for all form, sound, smell, taste, touch and dharma as enumerated in my talk yesterday. This karmic environment is our foe through life and death. For this reason, there are many sutra expounding Dharma masters who cannot stand firm on their own feet while in the midst of these surroundings because of their wavering religious mind.<sup>153</sup>

The next important thing is to develop an enduring mind. Since our birth in this world, we have created boundless karmas and if we now wish to cultivate ourselves for the purpose of escaping from birth and death, can we wipe out our former habits all at once? In olden times, ancestors such as Ch'an master Ch'ang Ch'ing, who sat in meditation until he had worn out seven mats, and (Ch'an master) Chao Chou who wandered from place to place (soliciting instruction) at the age of eighty after having spent forty years in meditating on the word 'Wu' (*lit.* No) without giving rise to a thought in his mind. They finally obtained complete enlightenment, and the princes of the Yen and Chao states revered them and made offerings to them. In the Ch'ing dynasty, Emperor Yung Cheng (1723-35) who had read their sayings and had found these excellent, bestowed upon them the posthumous title of 'Ancient Buddha'. This is the resultant attainment after a whole life of austerity.

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<sup>153</sup> The mind which is bent on the right way, which seeks enlightenment.

If we can now wipe out all our former habits to purify our One-thought, we will be on an equality with Buddhas and Patriarchs. The S'urangama Sutra says:

"It is like the purification of muddy water stored in a clean container; left unshaken in complete calmness, the sand and mud will sink to the bottom. When the clear water appears, this is called the first suppression of the intruding evil element of passion.<sup>154</sup> When the mud has been removed leaving behind only the clear water, this is called the permanent cutting off of basic ignorance."<sup>155</sup>

Our habitual passions are likened to mud and sediment, which is why we must make use of the hua t'ou. The hua t'ou is likened to alum used to clarify muddy water in the same manner as passions are brought under control. If in his training, a man succeeds in achieving the sameness of body and mind with the resultant appearance of the condition of stillness, he should be careful and should never abide in it. He should know that it is (only) an initial step but that ignorance caused by passions is still not wiped out. This is (only) the deluded mind reaching the state of purity, just like muddy water which, although purified, still contains mud and sediment at the bottom. You must make additional efforts to advance further. An ancient master said:

Sitting on a pole top one hundred feet in height<sup>156</sup>  
One will still perceive (that) which is not real.  
If from the pole top one then takes a step  
One's body will appear throughout the Universe.

If you do not take a step forward, you will take the illusion-city for your home and your passions will be able to rise (again). If so, it will be difficult for you to become even a self-enlightened person.<sup>157</sup> For this reason, the mud must be removed in order to retain the (clear) water.

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<sup>154</sup> Agantu-klesa in Sanskrit, the foreign atom, or intruding element, which enters the mind and causes distress and delusion. The mind will be pure only after the evil element has been removed.

<sup>155</sup> Water is the symbol of self-nature and mud of ignorance caused by passions.

<sup>156</sup> A state of empty stillness in which all thoughts have ceased to arise and Prajna is not yet attained.

<sup>157</sup> In contrast with a Bodhisattva who seeks self-enlightenment to enlighten the multitude.

This is the permanent wiping out of the basic ignorance and only then can Buddhahood be attained. When ignorance has been permanently wiped out, you will be able to appear in bodily form in the ten directions of the Universe to expound the Dharma, in the same manner as Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva who can appear in thirty-two forms and who, manifesting to teach the Dharma, can choose the most appropriate form to liberate a responsive living being. You will be free from restraint and will enjoy independence and comfort (everywhere)—even in a house of prostitution, a public bar, the womb of a cow, a mare or a mule, in paradise or hell.

On the other hand, a discriminating thought will send you down to the turning wheel of births and deaths. Formerly, Ch'in Kuai,<sup>158</sup> who had (in a former life) made offerings of incense and candles to Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva but did not develop an enduring mind (in his training) because of his failure to wipe out his ignorance caused by passions, was the victim of his hatred-mind (in his following reincarnation). This is just an example.

If your believing-mind is strong and your enduring-mind does not retrograde, you will, in your present bodily form, be able to attain Buddhahood, even if you are only an ordinary man.

Formerly there was a poor and miserable man who joined the order (sangha) at a monastery. Although he was keen to practice (self-) cultivation, he did not know the method. As he did not know whom to ask about it, he decided to toil and moil every day. One day, a wandering monk came to the monastery and saw the man toiling. The monk asked him about his practice and the man replied: "Every day, I do this kind of hard work. Please show me the method of (self-) cultivation." The monk replied: "You should inquire into (the sentence:) 'Who is the repeater of Buddha's name?'" As instructed by the visiting monk, the man managed to bear the word "Who" in mind while he did his daily work. Later, he went to stay in a grotto on an islet to continue his training, using leaves for clothing and plants for food. His mother and sister, who were still living, heard of his retreat in a grotto on an islet where he endured hardships in his self-cultivation. His mother sent

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<sup>158</sup> A statesman of the Sung dynasty, through whom Yueh Fei, a good commander, was executed; he is universally execrated for this and his name is now synonymous with traitor.

his sister to take him a roll of cloth and some provisions. When she arrived, she saw him seated (in meditation). She called him but he did not reply, and she shook him but he did not move. Seeing that her brother neither looked at nor greeted her but continued his meditation in the grotto, she was enraged, left the roll of cloth and provisions there and returned home. Thirteen years later, his sister went again to visit him and saw the same roll of cloth still lying in the same place.

Later a hungry refugee came to the grotto wherein he saw a monk in ragged garments; he entered and begged for food. The monk (got up and) went to the side of the grotto to pick some pebbles which he placed in a pot. After cooking them for a while, he took them out and invited the visitor to eat them with him. The pebbles looked like potatoes and when the visitor had satisfied his hunger, the monk said to him: "Please do not mention our meal to outsiders."

Sometime later, the monk thought to himself: "I have stayed here so many years for my (self-) cultivation and should now form (propitious) causes (for the welfare of others)." Thereupon, he proceeded to Hsia Men<sup>159</sup> where on the side of a road, he built a thatched hut offering free tea (to travelers). This took place in Wan Li's reign (1573-1619) about the time the Empress Mother passed away. The Emperor wanted to invite eminent monks to perform (Buddhist) ceremonies for the welfare of his deceased mother. He first intended to invite monks in the capital but at the time, there were no eminent monks there. (One night) the Emperor saw in a dream his mother who said that there was one in the Chang Chou prefecture of Fu Chien province. The Emperor sent officials there to invite local monks to come to the capital for the ceremonies. When these monks with their bundles set out on their journey to the capital, they passed by the hut of the poor monk who asked them: "Venerable masters, what makes you so happy and where are you going?" They replied: "We have received the Emperor's order to proceed to the capital to perform ceremonies for the spirit of the Empress Mother." The poor monk said: "May I go with you?" They replied: "You are so miserable, how can you go with us?" He said: "I do not know how to recite sutras but I can carry your bundles for you. It is worthwhile to pay a visit to the capital." Thereupon, he picked up the bundles and followed the other monks to the capital.

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<sup>159</sup> Hsia Men, Amoy, a town on the south coast of Fukien province.

When the Emperor knew that the monks were about to arrive, he ordered an official to bury a copy of the Diamond Sutra under the doorstep of the palace. When the monks arrived, they did not know anything about the sutra, crossed the doorstep and entered the palace one after another. When the miserable monk reached the threshold, he knelt upon his knees and brought his palms together but did not enter (the palace). In spite of the door-keepers who called him and tried to drag him in, he refused to enter. When the incident was reported to the Emperor who had ordered the burial of the sutra, he realized that the holy monk had arrived and came personally to receive him. He said: "Why don't you enter the palace?" The monk replied: "I dare not, because a copy of the Diamond Sutra has been buried in the ground." The Emperor said: "Why don't you stand on your head to enter it?" Upon hearing this, the monk placed his hands upon the ground and somersaulted into the palace. The Emperor had the greatest respect for him and invited him to stay in the inner palace.

When asked about the altar and the ceremony, the monk replied: "The ceremony will be held tomorrow morning, in the fifth watch of the night. I will require only one altar with one leading<sup>160</sup> banner and one table with incense, candles and fruit for offerings (to Buddhas)." The Emperor was not pleased with the prospect of an unimpressive ceremony and was at the same time apprehensive that the monk might not possess enough virtue to perform it. (To test his virtue), he ordered two maids of honor to bathe the monk. (During and) after the bath, his genital organ remained unmoved. The maids of honor reported this to the Emperor whose respect for the monk grew the greater for he realized now that the visitor was really holy. Preparation was then made according to the monk's instruction and the following morning, the monk ascended to his seat to expound the Dharma. Then he ascended to the altar, joined his palms together (to salute) and holding the banner, went to the coffin, saying:

In reality I do not come;  
(But) in your likes you are one-sided.  
In one thought to realize there is no birth  
Means that you will leap o'er the deva realms.

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<sup>160</sup> To lead the spirit of the deceased to the Pure Land.

After the ceremony, the monk said to the Emperor: "I congratulate you on the liberation of her majesty the Empress Mother." As the Emperor was doubting the efficiency of a ceremony which ended in such a manner, he heard in the room the voice of the deceased saying: "I am now liberated; you should bow your thanks to the holy Master."

The Emperor was taken aback, and his face beamed with delight. He paid obeisance to the monk and thanked him. In the inner palace, a vegetarian banquet was offered to the Master. Seeing that the Emperor was wearing a pair of colored trousers, the monk fixed his eyes on them. The Emperor asked him: "Does the Virtuous One like this pair of trousers?" and taking them off he offered them to the visitor who said:

"Thank your Majesty for his grace." Thereupon, the Emperor bestowed upon the monk the title of State Master Dragon Trousers. After the banquet, the Emperor led the monk to the imperial garden where there was a precious stupa. The monk was happy at the sight of the stupa and stopped to admire it. The Emperor asked: "Does the State Master like this stupa?" The visitor replied: "It is wonderful!" The Emperor said: "I am willing to offer it to you with reverence." As the host was giving orders to remove the stupa to Chang Chou, the monk said: "There is no need, I can take it away." After saying this, the monk placed the stupa in his (long) sleeve, rose in the air and left. The Emperor stunned and overjoyed at the same time, praised the unprecedented occurrence.

Dear friends, it is a (wonderful) story indeed and it all came about simply because from the time he left his home, the monk never used his discriminating mind and had a lasting faith in the truth. He did not care for his sister who came to see him, paid no attention to his ragged garments, and did not touch the roll of cloth lying thirteen years in the grotto. We must now ask ourselves if we can undergo our training in such a manner. It would be superfluous to talk about our inability to follow the monk's example when our sisters come to see us. It is enough to mention the attitude we take after our meditation when, while walking, we cannot refrain from gazing at our leader when he offers incense or at our neighbor's movements. If our training is done in this manner, how can our hua t'ou be firmly held?



Dear friends, you have only to remove the mud and retain the water. When the water is clear, automatically the moon will appear.<sup>161</sup> Now it is time to give rise to your hua t'ou and to examine it closely.

### *The Sixth Day*

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The ancients said: "Days and months pass quickly like a shuttle (and) time flies like an arrow." Our Ch'an week began only the other day and will come to an end tomorrow. According to the standing rule, an examination will be held tomorrow morning, for the purpose of a Ch'an week is to set a time limit for experiencing (the truth). By experiencing, it means awakening to and realization (of the truth). That is to say, the experiencing of one's fundamental self and the realization of the Tathagata's profound nature. This is called the experiencing and realization (of the truth).

Your examination is for the purpose of ascertaining the extent to which you have reached attainment during these seven days and you will have to disclose your achievement to the assembly. Usually this examination is called the collection of (the bill of) fare<sup>162</sup> from all of you. (This means that) you must all appear for this examination. In other words, all of you must be awakened (to the truth) so that you can expound the Buddha Dharma for the liberation of all the living. Today, I am not saying I expect that you must all be awakened to the truth. If even one of you is awakened, I can (still) collect this bill of fare. That is to say, one person will pay the bill for the meals served to the whole assembly. If all of us develop a skilful and progressive mind in quest of the truth, we will all be awakened to it. The ancients said:

"It is easy for a worldly man to win Buddhahood,  
(But) hard indeed is it to bring wrong thinking to an end."

It is only because of our insatiable desires since the time without beginning that we now drift about in the sea of mortality, within which there are 84,000 passions and all sorts of habits which we cannot wipe out. (In consequence), we are unable to attain the truth and to be like

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<sup>161</sup> Water is the symbol of self-nature and the moon of enlightenment.

<sup>162</sup> Lit. 'cost of the dumplings'.

Buddhas and Bodhisattvas who are permanently enlightened and are free from delusion. For this reason, (Master) Lien Ch'ih said:

It is easy to be caught up in the causes of pollution,<sup>163</sup>  
(But) to earn truth producing karma is most hard.<sup>164</sup>  
If you cannot see behind what can be seen,  
Differentiated are (concurrent) causes,  
(Around you) are but objects which, like gusts of wind,  
Destroy the crop of merits (you have sown).<sup>165</sup>  
The passions of the mind e'er burst in flames,  
Destroying seeds of Bodhi (in the heart).  
If recollection<sup>166</sup> of the truth be as (intense as) passion,  
Buddhahood will quickly be attained.  
If you treat others as you treat the self;  
All will be settled (to your satisfaction).  
If self is not right and others are not wrong,  
Lords and their servants will respect each other.  
If the Buddha-dharma's constantly before one,  
From all passions this is liberation.

How clear and how to the point are these lines! The (word) pollution means (the act of) making unclean. The realm of worldly men is tainted with desires of wealth, sensuality, fame and gain as well as anger and dispute. To them, the two words "religion" and "virtue" are only obstacles. Every day, they give way to pleasure, anger, sorrow and joy and long for wealth, honor, glory and prosperity. Because they cannot eliminate worldly passions, they are unable to give rise to a single thought of the truth. In consequence, the grove of merits is ruined and all seeds of Bodhi are destroyed. If they are indifferent to all worldly passions; if they give equal treatment to friends and foes; if they refrain from killing, stealing, committing adultery, lying and drinking intoxicating liquors; if they are impartial to all living beings; if they regard other people's hunger as their own; if they regard other people's

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<sup>163</sup> Nidina or cause of pollution, which connects illusion with the karmic miseries of reincarnation.

<sup>164</sup> Good karma which leads to enlightenment.

<sup>165</sup> Accumulation of merits leading to realization of the truth.

<sup>166</sup> Smṛti in Sanskrit.

drowning as if they get drowned themselves; and if they develop the Bodhi mind, they will be in agreement with the truth and will also be able to attain Buddhahood at a stroke. For this reason, it is said: "If recollection of the truth be (as intense) as passions, Buddhahood will quickly be attained." All Buddhas and saints appear in the world to serve the living, by rescuing them from suffering, by bestowing happiness upon them and by aiding them out of pity.

We can practice self-denial as well as compassion for others, thus foregoing all sorts of enjoyment. (If we can do so), no one will have to endure suffering and there will remain nothing that cannot be accomplished. It will follow that we will be able to obtain the full fruit of our reward, in the same manner as a boat rises automatically with the tide. When dealing with others, if you have a compassionate and respectful mind, and are without self-importance, arrogance and deception, they will certainly receive you with respect and courtesy. On the other hand, if you rely on your abilities and are unreasonable, or if you are double-faced aiming only at (your own enjoyment of) sound, form, fame and wealth, the respect with which they may receive you, will not be real. For this reason, Confucius said: "If you respect others, they will always respect you. If you have sympathy for others, they will always have sympathy for you."

The Sixth Patriarch said:

"Although their faults are theirs and are not ours, should we discriminate, we too are wrong." <sup>167</sup>

Therefore, we should not develop a mind which discriminates between right and wrong and between self and others. If we serve other people in the same manner as Buddhas and Bodhisattvas did, we will be able to sow Bodhi seeds everywhere and will reap the most excellent fruits. Thus, passions will never be able to hold us in bondage.

The twelve divisions of the Mahayana's Tripitaka were expounded by the World Honored One because of our three poisons, concupiscence, anger and stupidity. Therefore, the aims of the twelve divisions of this Tripitaka are: discipline (sila), imperturbability (samadhi), and wisdom (prajna). Their purpose is to enable us to wipe out our desires, to embrace (the four infinite Buddha states of mind): kindness (maitri),

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<sup>167</sup> Quotation from a hymn chanted by the Sixth Patriarch (Cf. Altar Sutra, Chapter II).

pity (karuna), joy (mudita)<sup>168</sup> and indifference (upeksa)<sup>169</sup> and all modes of salvation,<sup>170</sup> to eliminate the delusion of ignorance and the depravity of stupidity, to achieve the virtue of complete wisdom and to embellish the meritorious Dharmakarya. If we can take such a line of conduct, the Lotus treasury<sup>171</sup> will appear everywhere.

Today, most of you who have come for this Ch'an week are virtuous laymen (upasakas). You should subdue your minds in an appropriate manner and get rid of all bondages. I will now tell you another kung-an so that you can follow the example (given by those mentioned in it). If I do not tell it, I am afraid you will not acquire the Gem and will go home empty-handed, and (at the same time) I will be guilty of a breach of trust. Please listen attentively:

In the T'ang dynasty, there was an upasaka whose name was P'ang Yun, alias Tao Hsuan, and whose native town was Heng Yang in Hu Nan province. He was originally a Confucian scholar and since his youth, he realized (the futility of) passions and was determined in his search for the truth.

At the beginning of Chen Yuan's reign (A.D. 785-804), he heard of Master Shih T'ou's learning and called on him (for instruction). (When he saw the Master), he asked him: "Who is the man who does not take all dharmas as his companions?"<sup>172</sup> Shih T'ou stretched out his hand to close P'ang Yun's mouth and the visitor immediately understood the move.<sup>173</sup>

One day, Shi T'ou asked P'ang Yun: "Since you have seen this old man (i.e., me), what have you been doing each day?" P'ang Yun replied: "If

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<sup>168</sup> Joy on seeing others rescued from suffering.

<sup>169</sup> Rising above these emotions, or giving up all things, e.g., distinctions of friend and foe, love and hatred, etc.

<sup>170</sup> The six paramitas are: dana (charity), sila (discipline), ksanti (patience or endurance), virya (zeal and progress), dhyana (meditation) and prajna (wisdom).

<sup>171</sup> Lotus treasury: Lotus store, or Lotus world, the Pure Land of all Buddhas in their sambhogakaya, or reward bodies.

<sup>172</sup> In plain English the question means: Who is the man who has no more attachments to things, or the phenomenal?

<sup>173</sup> In Shih T'ou's move, P'ang Yun perceived that which stretched out the hand to close his mouth and became awakened to the self-nature which was invisible and manifested itself by means of its function.

you ask me what I have been doing, I do not know how to open my mouth (to talk about it)." Then he presented the following poem to Shih T'ou:

There is nothing special about what I do each day;  
I only keep myself in harmony with it,<sup>174</sup>  
Everywhere I neither accept nor reject anything.  
Nowhere do I confirm or refute a thing.<sup>175</sup>  
Why do people say that red and purple differ?  
There's not a speck of dust on the blue mountain.<sup>176</sup>  
Supernatural powers and wonder-making works  
Are but fetching water and the gathering of wood.<sup>177</sup>

Shi T'ou approved of the poem and asked P'ang Yun: "Will you join the Sangha order or will you remain a layman (upasaka)?" P'ang Yun replied: "I will act as I please," and did not shave his head.<sup>178</sup>

Later, P'ang Yun called on (master) Ma Tsu and asked him: "Who is the man who does not take all dharmas as his companions?" Ma Tsu replied: "I will tell you this after you have swallowed all the water in the West River."<sup>179</sup> Upon hearing this, P'ang Yun was instantaneously awakened to the profound doctrine. He stayed two years at the monastery (of Ma Tsu).

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<sup>174</sup> After enlightenment one attends to one's daily task as usual, the only difference being that the mind no longer discriminates and harmonizes with its surroundings.

<sup>175</sup> Mind is now free from all conceptions of duality.

<sup>176</sup> The blue mountain symbolizes that which is immutable and free from dust, or impurities. A misprint occurs in the printed text, so I have followed the ancient version of the story of 'Upasaka P'ang Yun'.

<sup>177</sup> Carrying water and fetching wood are the functions of that which possesses supernatural powers and accomplishes wonderful works; in other words, the self-nature which is immaterial and invisible, can be perceived only by means of its functions which are no longer discriminative.

<sup>178</sup> He did not join the sangha order.

<sup>179</sup> The one who has no more attachment to worldly things is the enlightened self-nature which is beyond description. Ma Tsu gave this reply, because when one attains enlightenment, his body or substance pervades everywhere and contains everything, including the West River which is likened to a speck of dust inside the immense universe; he knows everything and does not require any description of himself.—A misprint in the text has been corrected.

Since his complete realization of his fundamental nature, the Upasaka gave up all worldly occupations, dumped into the Hsiang River his whole fortune amounting to 10,000 strings of gold and silver (coins) and made bamboo-ware to earn his living.

One day, while chatting with his wife on the doctrine of the unborn, the Upasaka said: "Difficult! Difficult! Difficult! (It is like unpacking and) distributing ten loads of sesame seeds on the top of a tree."<sup>180</sup>

His wife interjected: "Easy! Easy! Easy! A hundred blades of grass are the masters' indication."<sup>181</sup>

Hearing their dialogue, their daughter Ling Chao said laughingly: "Oh, you two old people! How can you talk like that?" The Upasaka said to his daughter: "What, then, would you say?" She replied: "It is not difficult! And it is not easy! When hungry one eats and when tired one sleeps."<sup>182</sup>

P'ang Yun clapped his hands, laughed and said: "My son will not get a wife; my daughter will not have a husband. We will all remain together to speak the language of the un-born."<sup>183</sup> Since then, his dialectic powers became eloquent and forcible and he was admired everywhere.

When the Upasaka left (master) Yo Shan, the latter sent ten Ch'an monks to accompany him to the front door (of the monastery). Pointing his finger at the falling snow, the Upasaka said to them: "Good snow! The flakes do not fall elsewhere." A Ch'an monk named Ch'uan asked

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<sup>180</sup> The Patriarchs' doctrine was very profound and was as difficult to teach as the unpacking and distributing of sesame seeds on the top of a tree, an impossible thing for an unenlightened man.

<sup>181</sup> In order to wipe out the conception of difficulty, the wife said the doctrine was easy to expound for even the dewdrops on blades of grass were used by eminent Masters to give the direct indication of that which saw these dewdrops. This was only easy for enlightened people.

<sup>182</sup> If it is said that the doctrine is difficult to understand, no one will try to learn it. If it is said that it is easy to understand, people will take it as easy and never attain the truth. So the daughter took the middle way by saying that it was neither difficult nor easy. Her idea was that one who is free from discrimination and who eats when hungry and sleeps when tired, is precisely the one meant by eminent Masters. Therefore, the doctrine is not difficult for an enlightened man and not easy for an unenlightened man, thus wiping out the two extremes which have no room in the Absolute.

<sup>183</sup> This sentence is omitted in the Chinese text and is added here to be in accord with Master Hsu Yun's lecture.

him: "Where do they fall?" The Upasaka slapped the monk in the face, and Ch'uan said: "You can't act so carelessly." The Upasaka replied: "What a Ch'an monk you are! The god of the dead will not let you pass." Ch'uan asked: "Then what does the (Venerable) Upasaka mean?" The Upasaka slapped him again and said: "You see like the blind and you talk like the dumb."<sup>184</sup>

The Upasaka used to frequent places where sutras were explained and commented on. One day, he listened to the expounding of the Diamond Sutra, and when the commentator came to the sentence on the non-existence of ego and personality, he asked: "(Venerable) Sir, since there is neither self nor other, who is now expounding and who is listening?" As the commentator could not reply, the Upasaka said: "Although I am a layman, I comprehend something." The commentator asked him: "What is the (Venerable) Upasaka's interpretation?" The Upasaka replied with the following poem:

There is neither ego nor personality,  
Who is distant then and who is intimate?  
Take my advice and quit your task of comment  
Since that cannot compare with the direct quest of the truth.  
The nature of the Diamond Wisdom  
Contains no foreign dust.<sup>185</sup>  
The words "I hear", "I believe" and "I receive"  
Are meaningless and used expediently.

After hearing the poem, the commentator was delighted (with the correct interpretation) and praised (the Upasaka).

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<sup>184</sup> All Ch'an masters had compassion for unenlightened people and never missed a chance to enlighten them. Yo Shan sent ten Ch'an monks to accompany the eminent visitor to the front of the monastery so that they could learn something from him. Out of pity, the Upasaka said: "Good snow! The flakes do not fall elsewhere!", to probe the ability of the monks and to press them hard so that they could realize their self-minds for the attainment of Buddhahood. However, the monks seemed ignorant and did not realize that since the mind created the snow, the snow could not fall outside the mind. If they could only perceive That which slapped the unenlightened monk in the face, they would realize their self-nature. A serious monk would, under the circumstances, devote all his attention to inquiring into the unreasonable conduct of the visitor and would at least make some progress in his training.

<sup>185</sup> i.e., free from external impurities.

One day, the Upasaka asked Ling Chao: "How do you understand the ancients' saying: 'Clearly there are a hundred blades of grass; clearly these are the Patriarchs' indication?'" Ling Chao replied: "Oh you old man, how can you talk like that?" The Upasaka asked her: "How would you say it?" Ling Chao replied: "Clearly there are a hundred blades of grass; clearly these are the Patriarchs' indication."<sup>186</sup> The Upasaka laughed (approvingly).

(When he knew that) he was about to die, he said to Ling Chao:

"(Go out and) see if it is early or late; if it is noon, let me know." Ling Chao went out and returned, saying: "The sun is in mid-heaven, but unfortunately is being swallowed by the heaven-dog."<sup>187</sup> (Father) why don't you go out to have a look?" Thinking that her story was true, he left his seat and went outside. Thereupon, Ling Chao (taking advantage of her father's absence) ascended to his seat, sat with crossed legs and with her two palms brought together, and passed away.

When the Upasaka returned, he saw that Ling Chao had died and said, with a sigh: "My daughter was sharp-witted and left before me." So he postponed his death for a week, (in order to bury his daughter).

When magistrate Yu Ti came to inquire after his health, the Upasaka said to him:

Vow only to wipe out all that is;  
Beware of making real what is not.<sup>188</sup>  
Life in this (mortal) world  
A shadow is, an echo.

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<sup>186</sup> The daughter seemed at first to criticize her father and then repeated the same sentence to confirm what he had said. Similar questions and answers are found frequently in Ch'an texts where Ch'an masters wanted to probe their disciples' abilities by first criticizing what they said. Any hesitation on the part of the disciples would disclose that they only repeated others' sayings without comprehending them. This was like a trap set to catch unenlightened disciples who claimed that they had realized the truth. When a disciple was really enlightened, he would remain undisturbed and would ask back the question. When the master was satisfied that the disciple's understanding was genuine, he would simply repeat the same sentence to give more emphasis to what the disciple had said.

<sup>187</sup> i.e., eclipse of the sun.

<sup>188</sup> Existence and non-existence are two extremes which should be wiped out before one can attain the absolute reality.



After saying this, he rested his head on the magistrate's knees and passed away. As willed by him, his body was cremated and the ashes were thrown into the lake.

His wife heard of his death and went to inform her son of it. Upon hearing the news, the son (stopped his work in the field), rested his chin on the handle of his hoe and passed away in a standing position. After witnessing these three successive events, the mother retired (to an unknown place) to live in seclusion.

As you see, the whole family of four had supernatural powers and could do works of wonder and these laymen who were also upasakas like you, were of superior attainments. At present, it is impossible to find men of such outstanding ability not only among you upasakas (and upasikas) but also among monks and nuns who are no better than myself, Hsu Yun. What a disgrace!

Now let us exert ourselves again in our training!

### *The Seventh Day*

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Dear friends, allow me to congratulate you for the merits you have accumulated in the Ch'an week which comes to an end today. According to the standing rule, those of you who have experienced and realized (the truth) should come forward in this hall as did candidates who sat for a scholar's examination held previously in the imperial palace. Today, being the day of posting the list of successful graduates, should be one for congratulations. However, (the venerable) abbot has been most compassionate and (has decided to) continue this Ch'an meeting for another week so that we can all make additional efforts for further progress (in self-cultivation).

All the masters who are present here and are old hands in this training, know that it is a wonderful opportunity for co-operation and will not throw away their precious time. But those who are beginners, should know that it is difficult to acquire a human body<sup>189</sup> and that the

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<sup>189</sup> i.e., to be reborn in the human world. The realm of human beings is difficult of attainment; it is one of suffering and is the most suitable for self-cultivation, for human beings have more chance to study the Dharma in order to get rid of their miseries. The other five worlds of existence either enjoy too much happiness (devas and asuras) or

Master Hsu Yun's Discourses and Dharma Words

question of birth and death is important. As we have human bodies, we should know that it is difficult to get the chance to hear the Buddha Dharma and meet learned teachers. Today you have come to the "precious mountain"<sup>190</sup> and should take advantage of this excellent opportunity to make every possible effort (in your self-cultivation) in order not to return home empty-handed.

As I have said, our Sect's Dharma which was transmitted by the World Honored One when he held up a flower to show it to the assembly, has been handed down from one generation to another. Although Ananda was a cousin of the Buddha and left home to follow him as an attendant, he did not succeed in attaining the truth in the presence of the World Honored One. After the Buddha had entered nirvana, his great disciples assembled in a cave (to compile sutras) but Ananda was not permitted by them to attend the meeting. Mahakasyapa said to him: "You have not acquired the World Honored One's Mind Seal, so please pull down the banner-pole in front of the door." Thereupon, Ananda was thoroughly enlightened. Then Mahakasyapa transmitted to him the Tathagata's Mind Seal, making him the second Indian Patriarch. The transmission was handed down to following generations, and after the Patriarchs Asvaghosa and Nagarjuna, Ch'an master Hui Wen of T'ien T'ai mountain in the Pei Ch'i dynasty (A.D. 550-578) after reading (Nargajuna's) Madhyamika Sastra, succeeded in realizing his own mind and founded the T'ien T'ai School.<sup>191</sup> At the time, our Ch'an Sect was very flourishing. Later, when the T'ien T'ai School fell into decadence, State master Teh Shao (a Ch'an master) journeyed to Korea (where the

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endure too much suffering (animals, hungry ghosts and hells), thus having no chance to learn the Dharma.

<sup>190</sup> 'The Sutra of Contemplation of Mind' says: "Like a handless man who cannot acquire anything in spite of his arrival at the precious mountain, one who is deprived of the 'hand' of Faith, will not acquire anything even if he finds the Triple Gem."

<sup>191</sup> The nine Patriarchs of the T'ien T'ai sect are: (1) Nagarjuna, (2) Hui Wen of the Pei Ch'i dynasty, (3) Hui Ssu of Nan Yo, (4) Chih Che, or Chih I, (5) Kuan Ting of Chang An, (6) Fa Hua, (7) T'ien Kung, (8) Tso Ch'i and (9) Chan Jan of Ching Ch'i. The 10th, Tao Sui was considered a patriarch in Japan, because he was the teacher of (the Japanese) Dengyo Daishi who brought the Tendai system to that country in the ninth century. The T'ien T'ai (or Tendai in Japanese) Sect bases its tenets on the Lotus, Mahaparinirvana and Mahaprajnaparamita Sutras. It maintains the identity of the Absolute and the world of phenomena, and attempts to unlock the secrets of all phenomena by means of meditation.

only copy of Chihi's works existed), copied it and returned to revive the Sect.

Bodhidharma who was the twenty-eighth Indian Patriarch, came to the East where he became the first (Chinese) Patriarch. From his transmission (of the Dharma) until the (time of the) Fifth Patriarch, the Mind-lamp shone brilliantly. The Sixth Patriarch had forty-three successors among whom were (the eminent) Ch'an masters Hsing Szu and Huai Jang. Then came (Ch'an master) Ma Tsu who had eighty-three successors. At the time, the Right Dharma reached its zenith and was held in reverence by emperors and high officials. Although the Tathagata expounded many Dharmas, the Sect's was the unsurpassed one.

As to the Dharma which consists in repeating only the name of Amitabha (Buddha), it was extolled by (Ch'an Patriarchs) Asvaghosa and Nagarjuna,<sup>192</sup> and after master Hui Yuan,<sup>193</sup> Ch'an master Yen Shou of the Yung Ming monastery became the Sixth Patriarch of the Pure Land Sect (Chin T'u Tsung), which was subsequently spread by many other Ch'an masters.

After being propagated by Ch'an master I Hsing, the Esoteric Sect<sup>194</sup> spread to Japan but disappeared in China where there was no one to succeed to the master.

The Dharmalaksana Sect<sup>195</sup> was introduced by Dharma master Hsuan Tsang but did not last very long.

Only our (Ch'an) Sect (is like a stream) which is still flowing from its remote source bringing devas into its fold and subduing dragons and tigers.<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> The 12th and 14th Patriarchs of the Ch'an sect respectively. Readers will notice that these two Patriarchs and many other Ch'an masters were not sectarian and extolled also the Pure Land School which was also a Dharma door expounded by the Buddha.

<sup>193</sup> Hui Yuan was an eminent master of the Pure Land Sect.

<sup>194</sup> Chen Yen Tsung, also called "True Word" Sect, or Shingon in Japanese. The founding of this Sect is attributed to Vairocana, through Bodhisattva Vajrasattva, then through Nigarjuna to Vajramati and to Amoghavajra.

<sup>195</sup> The Dharmalaksana Sect is called 'Fa Hsiang' in Chinese and 'Hosso' in Japanese. This school was established in China on the return of Hsuan Tsang, consequent on his translation of the Yogacarya works. Its aim is to understand the principle underlying the nature and characteristics of all things.

Lu Tung Pin, alias Shun Yang, a native of Ching Ch'uan, was one of the (famous) group of eight immortals.<sup>197</sup> Towards the end of the T'ang dynasty, he stood thrice for the scholar's examination but failed each time. Being disheartened, he did not return home, and one day, he met by chance in a wine-shop at Ch'ang An, an immortal named Chung Li Ch'uan who taught him the method of lengthening his span of life infinitely. Lu Tung Pin practiced the method with great success and could even become invisible and fly in the air at will all over the country. One day, he paid a flying visit to the Hai Hui monastery on Lu Shan mountain; in its bell tower, he wrote on the wall:

(After) a day of leisure when the body is at ease,  
The six organs<sup>198</sup> (now) in harmony, announce that all is well.  
With a gem in the pubic region<sup>199</sup> there's no need to search for truth,  
When mindless of surroundings, there's no need for Ch'an.

Sometime later, as he was crossing the Huang Lung mountain, he beheld (in the sky) purple clouds shaped like an umbrella. Guessing that there must be some extraordinary person (in the monastery there), he entered it. It happened at the same time that in the monastery, after beating the drum, (Ch'an master) Huang Lung was ascending to his seat (to expound the Dharma). Lu Tung Pin followed the monks and entered the hall to listen to the teaching.

Huang Lung said to the assembly: "Today there is here a plagiarist of my Dharma; the old monk (i.e., I) will not expound it." Thereupon, Lu Tung

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<sup>196</sup> Maleficent beings.

<sup>197</sup> The immortals practice Taoism and sit in meditation with crossed legs. Their aim is to achieve immortality by putting an end to all passions, but they still cling to the view of the reality of ego and things. They live in caves or on the tops of mountains and possess the art of becoming invisible. A Chinese bhiksu who is a friend of mine, went to North China when he was still young. Hearing of an immortal there, he tried to locate him. After several unsuccessful attempts, he succeeded finally in meeting him. Kneeling upon his knees, my friend implored the immortal to give him instruction. The latter, however, refused saying that the visitor was not of his line, i.e. Taoism. When the young man got up and raised his head, the immortal had disappeared and only a small sheet of paper was seen on the table with the word "Good-bye" on it.

<sup>198</sup> According to the ancients, the six viscera are: heart, lungs, liver, kidney, stomach and gall-bladder.

<sup>199</sup> Pubic region, two and a half inches below the navel, on which concentration is fixed in Taoist meditation.

Pin came forward and paid obeisance to the master, saying: "I wish to ask the Venerable Master the meaning of these lines:

A grain of corn contains the Universe:  
The hills and rivers (fill) a small cooking-pot."

Huang Lung scolded him and said: "What a corpse-guarding devil (you are)." Lu Tung Pin retorted: "But my gourd holds the immortality-giving medicine." Huang Lung said: "Even if you succeed in living 80,000 eons,<sup>200</sup> you will not escape from falling into the dead void." Forgetting all about the (fortitude advocated in his own line:)

"When mindless of surroundings there's no need for Ch'an."

Lu Tung Pin burned with anger and threw his sword at Huang Lung. Huang Lung pointed his finger at the sword which fell to the ground and which the thrower could not get back. With deep remorse, Lu Tung Pin knelt upon his knees and inquired about the Buddha Dharma. Huang Lung asked: "Let aside (the line:) 'The hills, and rivers (fill) a small cooking-pot' about which I do not ask you anything. (Now) what is the meaning of: 'A grain of corn contains the Universe?'"<sup>201</sup> Upon hearing this (question), Lu Tung Pin instantaneously realized the profound (Ch'an) meaning. Then, he chanted the following repentance-poem:

I throw away my gourd and smash my lute.  
In future I'll not cherish gold in mercury.  
Now that I have met (the master) Huang Lung,  
I have realized my wrong use of the mind.<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>200</sup> The digit 8 in 80,000 symbolizes the 8th Consciousness (Vijnana) which is an aspect of the self-nature under delusion. The sentence means that Lu Tung Pin was still unenlightened in spite of his long life.

<sup>201</sup> The grain of corn is created by the mind and reveals the mind which is immense and contains the whole Universe, also a creation of the mind. Being hard pressed, Lu Tung Pin instantly realized his self-mind and was awakened to the real.

<sup>202</sup> In ancient times, Taoists in China claimed to be able to "extract quicksilver by smelting cinnabar", i.e., they knew the method which enabled them to become immortals, or Rsis, in Sanskrit, whose existence was mentioned by the Buddha in the Surangama Sutra. Their meditation aimed at the production of a hot current pervading all parts of the body and successful meditators could send out their spirits to distant Master Hsu Yun's Discourses and Dharma Words

This is the story of an immortal's return to and reliance on the Triple Gem and his entry into the monastery (Sangharama) as a guardian of the Dharma. Lu Tung Pin was also responsible for reviving the Taoist Sect at the time and was its Fifth (Tao) Patriarch in the North. The Taoist Tzu Yang also realized the mind after reading the (Buddhist) collection "Tsu Ying Chi" and became the Fifth (Tao) Patriarch in the South.<sup>203</sup> Thus the Tao faith was revived thanks to the Ch'an Sect.

Confucius' teaching was handed down until Mencius, after whom it came to an end. In the Sung dynasty Confucian scholars (also) studied the Buddha Dharma, and among them, (we can cite) Chou Lien Ch'i who practiced the Ch'an training and succeeded in realizing his mind, and others such as Ch'eng Tzu, Chang Tzu and Chu Tzu (all famous Confucians). Therefore, the Ch'an Sect contributed (in no small measure) to the revival of Confucianism.

Nowadays, there are many people who despise the Ch'an Dharma and who even make slanderous remarks about it, thus deserving hell.<sup>204</sup> Today, we have this excellent opportunity of being favored with a cooperating cause (which gathers us here). We should feel joy and should take the great vow to become objects of reverence for dragons and devas and to perpetuate the Right Dharma forever. This is no child's play; so please make strenuous efforts to obtain more progress in your self-cultivation.

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places. They differed from Buddhists in that they held the conception of the reality of ego and of dharmas, and could not attain complete enlightenment. They used to wander in remote places, equipped with a gourd, a guitar and a "divine" sword to protect themselves against demons. Today, adherents of the Taoist Sect are still found in great number in the Far East.

<sup>203</sup> Tzu Yang was an eminent Taoist who was well-versed in the Ch'an Dharma and his works attested his realization of the mind. Emperor Yung Cheng considered him a real Ch'an Buddhist and published his works in "The Imperial Selection of Ch'an Sayings".

<sup>204</sup> An evil karma which causes the sinner to be reborn in the Avici hell. Lit: committing the Avici-karma.

# Daily Lectures at Two Ch'an Weeks

Given at the Jade Buddha Monastery, Shanghai, in 1953

*(from the Hsu Yun Ho Shang Nien Pu)*

## The Second Week

### *The First Day*

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My coming here has already caused much inconvenience to the monastery and I do not deserve the generous hospitality extended to me by the (Venerable) Abbot and group leaders. Today, I am again asked to preside over this (second Ch'an) week. I must say I am not qualified to do so. It is quite logical that the (venerable) old Dharma Master Ying Tz'u who is advanced in age and Dharma years<sup>205</sup> should preside over this meeting. There are also in this monastery many learned and virtuous Dharma Masters. I am only 'duckweed' floating on water<sup>206</sup> and am, therefore, a completely useless man. It would be wrong to say that I am accorded priority and courtesy because of my age.<sup>207</sup> Even, in the world-dharma,<sup>208</sup> no consideration is given to the question of age. Formerly, when the scholar's examination was held in the imperial palace, no matter whether a candidate was young or old, he called the examiner "my old teacher" for the latter was respected (because of his rank and) not because of his age. In the Buddha Dharma also, no consideration is given to age. (I cite) Manjusri Bodhisattva who very long ago attained Buddhahood and was the teacher of sixteen princes, one of whom was Amitabha Buddha. Sakyamuni Buddha was also his disciple, but when Sakyamuni Buddha attained Buddhahood, Manjusri came to assist him (in teaching his disciples). Thus we know

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<sup>205</sup> The Dharma age of a monk is the number of summer or discipline years since his ordination.

<sup>206</sup> i.e., a man of no fixed abode. Master Hsu Yun had come from the Yun Men monastery in South China and did not yet know where he was going to settle. The Yun Men monastery was that of Ch'an master Yun Men, founder of the Yun Men Sect, one of the five Ch'an Sects in China. The monastery was rebuilt by master Hsu Yun.

<sup>207</sup> Master Hsu Yun was then 114 years old.

<sup>208</sup> World-dharma or worldly affairs.

there is only One equality which is neither high nor low. Therefore, please make no mistake about all this.

As we are learning (the Dharma), we should respect (and observe) the rules and regulations (set up for the purpose). The (Venerable) Abbot has in mind the enlightenment of others, the expounding of sutras, the holding of Ch'an meetings and the spreading of the Buddha Dharma. This is indeed a very rare opportunity.

All of you have been braving the cares and confusion of travel and giving yourselves a great deal of trouble to come of your own accord to attend this retreat. This shows that you have in mind the rejection of passions and desire of quiet.

In reality, you and I have only one mind but because of the difference between delusion and enlightenment, there are living beings who are busy from morning till evening without a day of rest. If we give some thought to this (state of things), we will see that no advantage can come from it. In spite of this, there are people who are busy all day long foolishly thinking of an abundance of food and clothing for themselves and anxious to find pleasure in singing and dancing. They want their children and grandchildren to have wealth and fame and their descendants to enjoy glory and prosperity. Even when they are about to breathe their last to become ghosts, they still think of protection and prosperity for their children. These people are really foolish and stupid.

There are also people who know something about good and evil and about cause and effect. They do meritorious acts which consist only in holding Buddhist ceremonies, in giving offerings to monks, in commissioning statues of Buddhas and in repairing temples and monastic buildings. Their acts contribute to the worldly cause,<sup>209</sup> and they hope to be rewarded with happiness in the next rebirth. Because they do not know anything about the passionless merits which are unsurpassed, they do not perform them. The Lotus Sutra says: "Sitting in meditation (even) for a short while is better than erecting as many seven treasure stupas as the sand grains in the Ganges." For this method of sitting in meditation will enable us to wipe out our passions and to have peace of mind and body, resulting in the complete

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<sup>209</sup> Worldly cause, or asrava in Sanskrit, meaning 'leaking' cause; inside the passion-stream as contrasted with anasrava, outside the passion-stream; no drip or leak.



realization of the self-nature with liberation from birth and death. By "a short while", it means a moment as short as an instant (ksana).<sup>210</sup> If one cleanses and purifies his mind and turns the light inwards on himself, his sitting in meditation even for an instant will (at least) enable him to sow the direct<sup>211</sup> cause of attainment of Buddhahood, if it does not ensure the (immediate) realization of the truth. His ultimate achievement can be expected (sooner or later). If his training is effective, Buddhahood can be attained in an instant. For this reason, Ananda said in the Surangama Sutra: "The Dharmakaya can be realized without having to pass through countless eons (kalpas)."<sup>212</sup>

However, you and I, and all other people in general, live in the midst of passions, of joy and anger, of gain and loss, of the five desires<sup>213</sup> and pursuits of pleasure and enjoyment. All these things are no more seen and heard as soon as we step into this Ch'an hall where our six senses are exactly like the black tortoise's six (vulnerable) parts which shrink into its shell and where nothing can disturb your minds. This is the practice of the passionless Dharma and (is also) the passionless Dharma (itself). Therefore, the merits derived from the erection of as many seven treasure stupas as the sand grains in the Ganges cannot be compared with those resulting from a moment spent sitting in meditation. The simile of the black tortoise comes from the (story of) the fish-eating seal which swam to catch the tortoise on the seashore. Seeing that it was attacked, the tortoise withdrew its head, tail and legs into its shell, so evading the seal's efforts to bite it.<sup>214</sup>

In this world, when we have no money, we are worried about our food and clothing, and when we have money, we cannot free ourselves from passions. We are thus caught and eaten by the seal. If we know of the danger to which we are exposed, we should bring our six senses under control and turn the light inwards on ourselves so that we can be liberated from mortality. Two days ago, I talked on our Sect's Dharma,

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<sup>210</sup> Ksana: the shortest measure of time, as kalpa or aeon, is the longest. 60 ksanas equal a finger-snap, 90 a thought and 4,500 a minute.

<sup>211</sup> Direct cause, a truth, as compared with a contributory cause.

<sup>212</sup> Asankhya in Sanskrit, or innumerable aeons.

<sup>213</sup> The five desires arising from the objects of the five senses, things seen, heard, smelt, tasted and touched.

<sup>214</sup> This parable is frequently used in Buddhist Scriptures to advise us to shut the six gates of our senses so as to be detached from external surroundings.

dealing with the Right Dharma Eye, the Tathagata's Mind-dharma and the basis of liberation from birth and death. Other Dharma doors<sup>215</sup> including the expounding of sutras, in spite of their aims which are the arousing of faith and understanding, are only accessories<sup>216</sup> and do not advance the perfect (experiential) understanding. If the sutra expounding Dharma is used to ensure liberation from birth and death, there must still be (two complementary phases) to pass through: practice and witnessing which are very difficult to achieve. For this reason, very few cases have been recorded of those who listened to the expounding of sutras or followed other Dharma doors and who thereby attained instantaneously complete enlightenment and acquired transcendental powers. These cases were few as compared with those in the Ch'an Sect. According to our Sect, not only Ch'an monks and laymen (upasakas) possessed the inconceivable device, but Ch'an nuns were also of outstanding abilities.

Ch'an master Kuan Ch'i was a disciple of Lin Chi<sup>217</sup> but did not realize the truth in spite of having stayed several years at his master's monastery. One day, he (left his master) to call at other places (for instruction). When he arrived at a nunnery on Mo Shan mountain, a little nun reported his arrival to (Ch'an Bhiksuni,) Mo Shan who sent her attendant to ask him this question; "Venerable Master, do you come here for sightseeing or for learning the Buddha Dharma?" Kuan Ch'i replied that he came for learning the Buddha Dharma. Mo Shan said: "If you come for the Buddha Dharma, there are here also rules about beating the drum and ascending to the seat." Thereupon, she ascended to her seat, but Kuan Ch'i bowed only and did not kneel down. Mo Shan asked him: "What place did the Venerable Bhiksu leave today?" He replied: "I left the entrance to the road." She asked him: "Why didn't you cover it up?"<sup>218</sup> Kuan Ch'i could not reply and knelt down (to pay his

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<sup>215</sup> Dharma doors to enlightenment or methods of realizing the self-nature.

<sup>216</sup> Lit. 'leaves and branches in literary forms', i.e. accessories not fundamental in the experiential realization of the real. On the other hand, the Ch'an Sect aims at the direct pointing at the Buddha nature which every living being possesses and the instantaneous realization of the mind leading to the attainment of Buddhahood.

<sup>217</sup> Founder of the Lin Chi Sect.

<sup>218</sup> Mo Shan's question means: If you think you are really enlightened and can dispense with kneeling, you should have realized your Dharmakaya which pervades everywhere and covers also the entrance to the road, for it is free from coming or going, and does not leave one place to come to another.

respects), asking: "What is Mo Shan?" She replied: "The top of the head is not exposed."<sup>219</sup> He asked: "Who is the owner of Mo Shan (mountain)?" She replied: "He is neither male nor female." He shouted: "Why does he not transform himself?" She asked back: "He is neither a ghost nor a spirit, into what should he transform himself?"<sup>220</sup> He could not reply and submitted to her authority. He became a gardener at the nunnery where he stayed three years during which he was completely enlightened.

(Later) when Kuan Ch'i went to the Ch'an hall (to instruct his own disciples), he said to them: "When I was at my father Lin Chi's place, I got a half-ladle (and) when I was at my mother Mo Shan's, I got another half-ladle, thus obtaining a full ladle which has enabled me to satisfy my hunger up to now." Thus, although Kuan Ch'i was Lin Chi's disciple, he was also Mo Shan's Dharma successor.

We can see that among the nuns, there existed also people of real ability. There are many nuns here as well; why do not they come forward to show their abilities and reveal the Right Dharma on behalf of their predecessors? The Buddha Dharma extols equality (of sex) and we are only required to make efforts in our training without backsliding so as not to miss this (rare) opportunity.

The ancients said:

In one hundred years or six and thirty thousand days,<sup>221</sup>  
There is not a quiet moment to lay down mind and body.

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<sup>219</sup> The question: "What is Mo Shan?" means: "What is the state of the enlightened mind in the Mo Shan nunnery?" The questioner wanted a description of the Bodhi mind. The nun's reply refers to the small lump on the top of the Buddha's head which could not be seen by his disciples. Mo Shan meant that since the visitor was unenlightened, he could not perceive her Dharmakaya which was indescribable.

<sup>220</sup> When Kuan Ch'i asked about the owner of Mo Shan, i.e. about herself, she replied that the owner was neither male nor female for sex had nothing to do with enlightenment, and the Dharmakaya was neither male nor female. Generally, women had many more handicaps than men, and Kuan Ch'i seemed to look down upon her because of her sex and asked her why she did not change herself into a man if she was enlightened. His question showed that he was still under delusion.

<sup>221</sup> The maximum life span of each individual.

For countless eons, we have been floating in the sea of mortality because we have never wanted to lay down our bodies and minds in order to have quiet for our learning and self-cultivation, with the result that we have been turned round by the wheel of transmigration without a chance of liberation. For this reason, all of us should lay down both body and mind and sit in meditation for a moment with the hope that the bottom of the cask of (black) lacquer will drop off<sup>222</sup> and that we will together experience the law of no-birth.<sup>223</sup>

### *The Second Day*

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This is the second day of the second Ch'an week. The increasing number of those who come to this meeting shows how really good-hearted are the people of Shanghai and the excellence of their blessed virtues. It also indicates every man's aversion to disturbance (caused by passions) and longing for the quiet (found in meditation), and every man's desire to escape from sorrow and to seek happiness. Generally speaking, there is more suffering than happiness in this world and, as time passes very quickly, the short space of several decades slips away in the twinkling of an eye. Even if one can live 800 years like Peng Tsu,<sup>224</sup> this space of time is (still) short in the eye of the Buddha Dharma. However, worldly men who can reach the age of seventy are rarely seen. Since you and I know that this short length of time is like an illusion and a transformation, and is really not worth our attachment (to it), we have come to this Ch'an week and this is certainly due to our having grown good roots in our former transmigrations.

This method of (self-) cultivation requires an enduring mind. Formerly, all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas reached their goal after spending many eons in self-cultivation. The Surangama Sutra's chapter on 'Avalokitesvara's Complete Enlightenment' says:

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<sup>222</sup> In Ch'an parlance, our ignorance is symbolized by the thick black lacquer contained in a wooden cask, because nothing can be seen through it. Ch'an training will cause the bottom of the cask to drop off, thus emptying it of the black lacquer, i.e. our body and mind of delusion. This is the moment when we can perceive the real.

<sup>223</sup> Law of no-birth: lit. 'endurance leading to the personal experiencing of the law of no-birth, or immortality', i.e., the absolute which is beyond birth and death, boundless patience or endurance being required for subduing the wandering mind.

<sup>224</sup> The Methuselah of China.

"I remember that long before the elapsing of as uncountable a number of eons as there are sand grains in the Ganges, a Buddha by the name of Avalokitesvara appeared in the world. At that time I developed the Bodhi mind, and for my entry into Samadhi was instructed by Him to practice (self-) cultivation through (the faculty of) hearing."

From the above statement, we can see that Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva did not achieve his goal in one or two days. At the same time, he clearly told us about the method of his training. He was head (of the group of) twenty-five "Great Ones" who attained complete enlightenment. His method consisted of (self-) cultivation of the ear which enabled him to transmute the faculty of hearing into perfection which led to (the state of) Samadhi. Samadhi means the (state of) undisturbedness. Therefore, he continued:

(I) "At the start, by directing the hearing (ear)  
Into the stream (of meditation), this organ became detached from its  
object."

This method consists in turning the hearing inwards (on the self-nature) to hear the self-nature so that the six senses will not (wander outside to) be in touch with the six external objects. This is the collection of the six senses into the Dharma nature.<sup>225</sup> Therefore, he continued:

(II) "By wiping out (the concept of) both sound and stream-entry,  
Both disturbance and stillness  
Became clearly non-existent."

He said again:

(III) "The advancing step by step,  
Both hearing and its object came to an end.  
But I did not stop where they ended."

He meant that we should not allow our training, by turning our hearing inwards (on the self-nature) to come to a halt; he wanted us to move forward little by little and to make additional efforts to reach (another stage about which he said as follows:)

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<sup>225</sup> Dharmata in Sanskrit, i.e. the nature underlying all things, the Bhutatathata.

(IV) "When the awareness (of this state) and this state itself (were realized) as non-existent,  
The awareness of voidness became all-embracing  
After the elimination of both subject and object relating to voidness.  
Then the disappearance of both creation and annihilation  
(Resulted in) the state of Nirvana becoming manifest."

This state results from the training which consists in turning the ear inwards to hear the self-nature and after all kinds of creation and annihilation are realized as non-existent, the true mind will manifest itself. This is the (meaning of the saying:) "When the mad mind is brought to a halt, it is Bodhi (i.e. perfect wisdom)."

After attaining this stage, Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva said:

"Suddenly I leaped over both the mundane and supramundane and realized an all-embracing brightness pervading the ten directions, acquiring two unsurpassed (merits). The first one was in accord with the fundamental Profound Enlightened Mind of a Buddha high up in the ten directions, possessing the same merciful power as the Tathagata. The second one was in sympathy with all living beings in the six realms of existence, here below in the ten directions, sharing with them the same imploration of pity."

Today, in our study of the Buddhist's doctrine for our (self-) cultivation, we should first succeed in our training by liberating all the living beings of our self-nature such as concupiscence, anger, stupidity and arrogance and by realizing the fundamentally pure and clean Profound Enlightened Real Mind.<sup>226</sup> Only then can we perform the Buddha work high above for the salvation of living beings here below, as did Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva who could manifest in thirty-two different forms, each being suitable for the liberation of the corresponding individual, and only then can we possess the required (transcendental) powers. Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva (can) appear in the world as a boy or a girl,

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<sup>226</sup> The profound enlightenment of Mahayana, or self-enlightenment to enlighten others. The 51st and 52nd stages in the enlightenment of a Bodhisattva, or the two supreme forms of Buddha-enlightenment are respectively: (1) Samyak-sambodhi, or absolute universal enlightenment, omniscience, and (2) the profound enlightenment of Mahayana, or self-enlightenment to enlighten others. The first is the "cause" and the second is the "fruit", and a Bodhisattva becomes a Buddha when the "cause is complete and the fruit is full".

but worldly men do not know that he has already attained Buddhahood, has no sex and is neither an ego nor a personality, making a (particular) appearance only in response to each individual potentiality. When a worldly man (in China) hears the Bodhisattva's name, thoughts of devotion and reverence for him arise. This is due to the fact that in their former lives, they had repeated his name so that the seeds previously sown in the field of their store-consciousness (alaya-vijnana) now develop in them. For this reason, the sutra says:

"After entering through the hearing,  
The Bodhi-seed is sown forever."

Today, as we come here for our self-perfuming<sup>227</sup> and self-cultivation, we should rely on the Dharma of the Supreme Vehicle practiced and experienced by all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. This Dharma consists in clearly recognizing the fundamental Profound Enlightened Mind; that is to say, the perception of the self-nature leading to the attainment of Buddhahood. If this mind is not recognized, Buddhahood can never be attained. In order to recognize the mind, we should begin with the performance of virtuous deeds. If every day, from morning until evening, we perform all good actions and refrain from committing evil deeds, we will accumulate merits; and if in addition we hold a hua t'ou constantly (in our minds), we will be able to realize, in a moment's thought, the state of no-birth and will (thereby) attain Buddhahood instantaneously.

Dear friends, please make a profitable use of your time and do not give rise to wrong thoughts in your minds. Now is the time to give rise to a hua t'ou for your self-cultivation.

*Explanatory Note:*

When the Buddha expounded the Surangama Sutra, he ordered the twenty-five "enlightened ones" who were present to talk about the various means by which they had attained enlightenment, so that the assembly could learn something from them. After the statements by twenty-four of the "enlightened ones" of their realization of the real by means of the six gunas: (1) sound, (2) sight, (3) smell, (4) taste, (4) touch and (6) idea; the five sense-organs: (7) the eye, (8) nose, (9) tongue, (10)

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<sup>227</sup> i.e., to be under the beneficial influence of the fragrance of Buddha Dharma.

body, and (11) mind; the six perceptions of (12) sight, (13) ear, (14) nose, (15) tongue, (16) body, and (17) faculty of mind; and the seven fundamental elements of (18) fire, (19) earth, (20) water, (21) wind, (22) space, (23) knowledge and (24) perceptibility, Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva declared that he had attained enlightenment by means of (25) the organ of hearing. In order to teach Ananda and the assembly, the Buddha asked Manjusri for his opinion on these twenty-five methods. Manjusri praised the method used by Avalokitesvara saying that he himself had also used it for his own enlightenment and that it was the most suitable one for human beings.

The following is a commentary on the verses of the Surangama Sutra:

(I) At the start, by directing the hearing  
Into the stream, this organ became detached from its object.

This was the turning of the ear inwards on the self-nature to hear it so that hearing and its object, i.e. the sound, became detached. When hearing was brought under control in this manner, the other five senses had no chance of wandering outside to get in touch with the corresponding external objects. Stream here means the inward stream of meditation, or correct concentration.

The mind was brought under control to free it from external disturbance. Could it really be controlled by using it to direct the ear inwards to hear the self-nature? The mind was already disturbed when it was directed inwards. Therefore, efforts should be made to free it from disturbance so that stillness can prevail.

(II) By wiping out (the concept of) both sound and stream-entry,  
Both disturbance and stillness  
Clearly became non-existent.

As the sound and stream were realized to be non-existent, both disturbance and stillness also became non-existent. The mind was thus disentangled from the gunas, or sensation-data.



(III) Thus advancing step by step,  
Both the hearing and its object came to an end;  
But I did not stop where they ended.

By making additional efforts, I advanced further step by step until both hearing and sound came completely to an end. However, I did not stop there. Thus the mind was disentangled from the sense-organs. The voidness of which the meditator was aware then appeared. This incomplete or partial awareness should also be wiped out.

(IV) When the awareness (of this state) and this state itself (were realized as) non-existent  
The awareness of voidness became all-embracing,  
After the elimination of subject and object relating to voidness.  
Then the disappearance of creation and annihilation  
(Resulted in) the state of Nirvana becoming manifest.

With further progress, the meditator perceived that both the incomplete awareness (subject) of voidness and the voidness itself (object) were non-existent. After the elimination of both subject and object relating to the false conception of relative voidness, the complete awareness of the absolute voidness became all-embracing, ensuring the end of the dual conception of creation and annihilation of even subtle phenomena, perceptible only at this last stage of meditation, such as relative voidness and incomplete awareness, which were only creations of the mind. As creation existed only as a relative term and was followed by annihilation, so long as this duality existed, the mind was still held in bondage. Now as this pair of opposites was non-existent, the awareness became complete. When this last stage was reached the resultant state of Nirvana became manifested. This stage ensured the instantaneous leap over both the mundane and supramundane when the meditator attained the all-embracing illumination of absolute wisdom.

Master Han Shan also followed this method and attained Samadhi during his stay on the Five Peaked Mountain. (See Han Shan's Autobiography.)

The holding of a hua t'ou also enables a Ch'an student to realize the disentanglement of his mind from gunas (or external objects), sense-

organs, incomplete awareness (or inner subject) and relative voidness for the same purpose of attaining the absolute voidness of complete awareness, or wisdom.

### *The Third Day*

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This is the third day of this second Ch'an week. Those who are already familiar with this training, can always control their minds no matter where they may happen to be either in the midst of disturbance or of stillness. To them, there is no difference between the first and second week or between the second and third day. But those who are beginners should endeavor to make progress in their training which they should not undergo in a careless manner, in order not to waste their (precious) time. I will now tell the beginners another story and hope they will listen to it attentively.

In every Ch'an hall, there is (a statue of) a Bodhisattva called the "Holy Monk". He was a cousin of the Tathagata Sakyamuni and his name was Arya Ajnata-Kaundinya. When the World Honored One left home, His father sent three paternal and two maternal clansmen to go with and look after Him in the Himalayas. This cousin was one of the two maternal clansmen. After the World Honored One had attained enlightenment, He went to the Mrgadava Park (Deer Park) where He expounded the Four Noble Truths and where this cousin was the first disciple awakened to the truth. This cousin was also one of His great disciples and the first to leave home. For this reason, he was called the "Holy Monk". He was also known as the Sangha Head.<sup>228</sup> His method of self-cultivation is clearly described in the Surangama Sutra which says:

After I had attained enlightenment, I went to the Mrgadava park where I declared to Ajnata-Kaundinya and the other five bhiksus as well as to you, the four varga,<sup>229</sup> that all living beings failed to realize Enlightenment (Bodhi) and attain Arhatship because they were misled by foreign dust<sup>230</sup> which (entering the mind) caused distress and

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<sup>228</sup> Head of the order.

<sup>229</sup> The four varga, groups or order, i.e., bhiksu, bhiksuni, upasaka and upasika; monks, nuns, male and female devotees.

<sup>230</sup> Foreign dust: guna, in Sanskrit, small particles; molecules, atoms, exhalations; element or matter, which is considered as defilement; an active conditioned principle in nature, minute, subtle and defiling to pure mind; impurities.

delusion. What, at the time, caused your awakening (to the truth) for your present attainment of the holy fruit?<sup>231</sup>

This was the Buddha's talk about the cause of our failure to realize Bodhi and to attain Arhatship. He also asked his great disciples in the assembly about the methods they used for their awakening (to the truth). At the time, only Ajnata-Kaundinya knew this method. So he arose from his seat and replied to the World Honored One as follows:

I am now a senior in the assembly in which I am the only one who has acquired the art of explaining because of my awakening to (the meaning of) the two words "foreign dust" which led to my attainment of the (holy) fruit.

After saying this, he gave the following explanation (of these two words) to the World Honored One:

World Honored One, (foreign dust) is like a guest who stops at an inn where he passes the night or takes his meal, and as soon as he has done so, he packs and continues his journey because he has no time to stay longer. As to the host of the inn, he has nowhere to go. My deduction is that one who does not stay is a guest and one who does stay is a host. Consequently, a thing is "foreign" when it does not stay.

Again, in a clear sky, when the sun rises and its light enters (the house) through an opening, the dust is seen moving in the ray of light whereas the empty space is unmoving. Therefore, that which is still is the void and that which moves is the dust.

How clearly he explained the two words "host" and "guest"! You should know that this illustration shows us how to begin our training. In other words, the real mind is the host who does not move and the moving guest is our false thinking which is likened to dust. Dust is very fine and dances in the air. It is visible only when the sunlight enters through the door or an opening. This means that false thoughts within our minds are imperceptible in the usual process of thinking. They become perceptible only when we sit in meditation during our training. In the midst of the unending rise and fall of mixed thoughts and in the tumult of false thinking, if your training is not efficient, you will not be able to act as a host; hence your failure to attain enlightenment and your drifting about

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<sup>231</sup> Fruit of saintly life, i.e., Bodhi, Nirvana.

in the ocean of birth and death, wherein you are a Smith in your present transmigration and will be Jones in the next one. Thus you will be exactly like a guest who stops at an inn and will not be able to remain there forever. However, the true mind does not act in that way; it neither comes nor goes, is not born and does not die. It does not move but remains motionless, hence the host. This host is likened to the immutable voidness in which the dust dances. It is also like the host of an inn who always stays there for he has nowhere else to go.

Dust is like one of the passions and can be wiped out completely only when one reaches the Bodhisattva-stage. By falsehood, is meant illusion. There are eighty-eight kinds of illusory view and eighty-one of illusory thought. These (misleading) views come from the five stupid temptations,<sup>232</sup> and in self-cultivation, one should wipe out all of them in order to attain the first stage of the Arhat (Srota-apanna).<sup>233</sup> This is the most difficult thing to do, for the cutting of illusory views is likened to the cutting (or stopping) of the flow of a forty-mile stream. Thus we can see that we should have a great measure of strength in our training. We can attain Arhatship only when we have succeeded in cutting out all misleading thoughts. This kind of self-cultivation is a gradual process.

(In our Ch'an training), we have only to make use of a hua t'ou which should be kept bright and lively and should never be allowed to become blurred and which should always be clearly cognizable. All misleading views and thoughts will thus be cut off (by the hua t'ou) at a single blow leaving behind only something like the cloudless blue sky in which the bright sun will rise. This is the brightness of the self-nature when it manifests itself.

This saint (arya)<sup>234</sup> was awakened to this truth and recognized the original host. The first step in our training today is to be cognizant of the fact that the foreign dust (or guest) is moving whereas the host is motionless. If this is not clearly understood, we will not know where to begin our training, and will only waste our time as heretofore.

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<sup>232</sup> The five stupid temptations, or panca-klesa, in Sanskrit, i.e. the five dull, unintelligent, or stupid vices or agents: desire, anger or resentment, stupidity or foolishness, arrogance and doubt.

<sup>233</sup> One who has entered the stream of holy living or who goes against the stream of transmigration; the first stage of the Arhat.

<sup>234</sup> Meaning Ajnata-Kaundinya.

I hope all of you will pay great attention to the above.

### *The Fourth Day*

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It is very difficult to meet with the unsurpassed Profound Dharma in a hundred, a thousand or ten thousand eons, and the present opportunity of our gathering for a Ch'an week in this Monastery of the Jade Buddha is really afforded by an unsurpassed co-operating cause. The fact that lay men and women have come from all directions in an increasing number to attend this meeting for the sowing of the direct cause of the attainment of Buddhahood, proves that this opportunity is rarely available.

The Buddha Sakyamuni said in the Lotus Sutra:

If men, with minds disturbed,  
Enter a stupa or a temple  
(And) call: Namó Buddhaya!  
Buddhahood they will attain.

In a short period of several decades, worldly men are not aware of the passing of time. Those who have money pursue wine, sex and prosperity. Those who have no money have to work hard for their food, clothing, shelter and travel. Thus (all of them) rarely have a moment's leisure and comfort and their sufferings are beyond description. However, if they happen to enter a Buddhist temple, they will find happiness in the majesty of its quiet. They will behold the statues of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, and may repeat at random the Buddha's name; or they may be impressed with the sudden quiet of their (temporarily) purified minds, and praise the Tathagata's bliss which is so rarely found (elsewhere). All this comes from their having acquired very deep good roots in their former transmigrations and provides the cause of their future attainment of Buddhahood. For, in general, what their eyes want to see is only merry-making; what their ears want to hear is only songs and music, and what their mouths want to taste is only succulent dishes and rare delicacies. All this soils their thinking and this defiled thinking produces a disturbed mind, the deluded mind of birth and death. Now, if, while in a stupa or temple, one has a chance of calling the Buddha's name, this is the awakened mind, the pure mind and the Bodhi seed leading to attainment of Buddhahood. The Sanskrit

word "Buddha" means the Enlightened One, that is one who is (completely) enlightened and is no more deluded. When the self-nature is pure and clean, one possesses the awakened mind.

Today, we do not come here for fame and wealth and this is our awakening power which manifests itself. However, many are those who hear of the Ch'an week but do not know anything about its real meaning. They come to see this bustling meeting to satisfy their curiosity and this is (certainly) not the highest mind. Now that you have come to this place, you are like those who arrive at the mountain of precious gems and you should not return empty handed. You should develop the highest Truth-Mind, and sit in meditation during the time of the burning of an incense stick, in order to sow the direct cause of attainment of Buddhahood and to become Buddhas later on.

Formerly, Sakyamuni Buddha had a disciple whose name was Subhadra.<sup>235</sup> He was very poor and was all alone, without anybody to support him. His heart was full of sadness and he wanted to follow the Buddha as his disciple. One day, he went to the World Honored One's place but it happened that He was not there.

After looking into Subhadra's former transmigrations for the purpose of finding out whether there existed some co-operating cause, the Buddha's great disciples found that in the past 80,000 eons,<sup>236</sup> he had not planted any good roots. They then decided not to allow him to stay and sent him away. With a heart full of sadness, Subhadra left the place and when he reached a walled town, he thought that if his karma was so bad, it would be better for him to kill himself by knocking his head against the wall. As he was about to commit suicide, the World Honored One happened to arrive there and asked him about his intention. Subhadra related his story to the World Honored One who accepted him as His disciple. They returned together to His place where seven

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<sup>235</sup> The last convert of the Buddha, "a Brahman 120 years old".

<sup>236</sup> The digit 8 in 80,000 symbolizes the eighth or store (alaya) consciousness (vijnana), the deluded aspect of the self-nature. So long as the self-nature is under delusion, it is controlled by the discriminating mind and will never perceive the real which is beyond all numbers. The great disciples did not perceive the unconditioned cause of the attainment of Buddhahood, and saw only worldly events occurring in the former transmigrations of Subhadra. The Buddha who possessed the Sarvajna or All-wisdom, saw clearly his new disciple's cause of Arhatship, which cause being beyond all numbers is inherent in the self-nature.

days later, Subhadra attained Arhatship. The great disciples who did not know the cause of Subhadra's attainment, asked the World Honored One about it.

The World Honored One said to them: "You only know things which happened in the last 80,000 eon, but before then Subhadra had already planted good roots. At that time, he was also very poor and gathered firewood as his means of subsistence. One day, he met a tiger on the mountains, and seeing that his escape was cut off; he hurriedly climbed a tree. The tiger saw that he was up the tree which it began to gnaw to fell it. At the critical moment, as no one came to his rescue, he had a sudden thought of the great enlightened Buddha who possessed the power of compassion and could save all sufferers. Thereupon, he called:

"Namo Buddhaya! Come quickly to save me!" Upon hearing the call, the tiger went away and did not harm his life. He thus sowed the direct cause of Buddhahood which became ripe today, hence his attainment of the Arhat-stage." After hearing the story, all the great disciples were delighted and praised the marvelous (achievement of the poor man).

Today you and I meet here under auspicious circumstances, and if we can sit in meditation during the time of the burning of a (whole) incense stick, our (resultant) good karma will exceed many times the (one narrated in the above story). We should never take this meditation as child's play. If we come here to see a bustling meeting, we will simply miss a very good opportunity.

### *The Fifth Day*

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Those of you who have a deep believing mind are naturally making efforts in their training in this hall. The (venerable) group leaders who are experienced in this self-cultivation, are already familiar with it. However, experienced men must know the interplay of activity (phenomenon) and principle (noumenon).<sup>237</sup> They should probe it

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<sup>237</sup> i.e., practice and theory; phenomena ever change; the underlying principle, being absolute, neither changes nor acts; it is the *Bhutatahata*. When we see a flag streaming in the wind, we know that, in theory, only the mind moves and not the wind or the flag. In practice, we cannot deny that the wind blows and the flag moves. We know also that in theory mind, wind and flag are but one undivided whole. Now, how can we have an experiential realization of this sameness? If we fail to experience it, we will also fail in Master Hsu Yun's Discourses and Dharma Words

exhaustively and make sure that (they experience) the unhindered interdependence of the noumenal and phenomenal and of the immutable and mutable. They should not sit like dead men; they should never be immersed in the void and cling to stillness, with delight in it. If there be delight in the still surrounding and absence of (realization of) the interchange (of practice and theory), this is likened to fish in stagnant water, with no hope of jumping over the Dragon Door.<sup>238</sup> They are also like fish in frozen water (and) this is a fruitless type of training.

In this training, beginners should be earnest (in their desire to escape) birth and death, and should develop a great mortification-mind by laying down all kinds of (productive) causes.<sup>239</sup> Only then can their training be effective. If they are unable to lay down these causes, the (round of) birth and death will never come to an end. For, since we have been deluded by the seven emotions and six sexual attractions<sup>240</sup> from the time without beginning, we now find ourselves, from morning to evening, in the midst of sounds and forms, without knowing the permanent true-mind, hence our fall into the bitter ocean (of birth and death). As we are now awakened to the fact that there is only suffering in all worldly (situations), we can (certainly) lay down all (our thoughts of) them and (thereby) attain Buddhahood at once.<sup>241</sup>

### *The Sixth Day*

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In this Ch'an hall, I have noticed that many male and female participants are only beginners who do not know the (standing) rules and regulations and whose unruly behavior interferes with the calm meditation of others. However, we are fortunate in that the Venerable Abbot is most compassionate and is doing all he can to help us achieve

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our self-cultivation. This is the most important phase of the meditation, which can be achieved only if we put an end to our feelings and discrimination.

<sup>238</sup> In ancient China, it was believed that some fish, especially carp, could jump out of the sea to become dragons. A metaphor meaning that these meditations will never obtain liberation.

<sup>239</sup> i.e., all causes including feelings and passions which are productive of effects and contribute to the turning wheel of births and deaths.

<sup>240</sup> The seven emotions are: pleasure, anger, sorrow, joy, love, hatred and desire. The six attractions arise from color, form, carriage, voice or speech, softness or smoothness and features.

<sup>241</sup> Lit. 'on the spot'.



our religious karma.<sup>242</sup> (Moreover) the group leaders who have developed the unsurpassed mind bent on the right Way, are here to lead us so that we can undergo an appropriate training. This is (indeed) an opportunity rarely available in myriad of eons.

(Therefore), we should strive resolutely to make further progress in our inner and outer training. In our inner training, we should either concentrate pointedly on the hua t'ou: "Who is the repeater of Buddha's name?" or repeat the name of Amitabha Buddha,<sup>243</sup> without giving rise to desire, anger and stupidity and all kinds of thought so that the Dharma nature<sup>244</sup> of the Bhutatathata<sup>245</sup> can manifest itself.

In our outer training, we should not kill the living but should release all living creatures; we should transmute the ten evils<sup>246</sup> into the ten good virtues;<sup>247</sup> we should not eat meat and drink alcoholic liquors in order not to produce the sinful karma<sup>248</sup> of unintermittent suffering; and we should know that the Buddha-seed arises from conditional causation, that the commitment of many evil karmas is followed by the certain fall into the hells, and that the performance of many good karmas is rewarded with blessing ensuring our enjoyment of them. And so the ancients taught us this: "Refrain from committing all evil actions (and) perform all good actions." You have already read the causal circumstances of the killing of members of the Sakya clan by the Crystal King (Virudhaka) and know of this (law of causality).<sup>249</sup>

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<sup>242</sup> ... which leads to Buddhahood?

<sup>243</sup> i.e., the repetition of Amitabha's name as taught by the Pure Land School; this repetition also enables the repeater to disentangle his mind from all feelings and discrimination and to attain Samadhi. Cases are on record of adepts of the Pure Land School, knowing, in advance, of the time of their death. This is possible only after their attainment of samadhi which manifested itself simultaneously with prajna, or wisdom, called the wisdom of mutual response.

<sup>244</sup> Dharma nature, or Dharmata in Sanskrit, is nature underlying all things.

<sup>245</sup> Bhutatathata is the real, "as thus always", or "certainly so"; i.e., reality as contrasted with unreality or appearance, and unchanging or immutable as contrasted with form or phenomena.

<sup>246</sup> The ten evils are: killing, stealing, adultery, lying, double-tongue, coarse language, filthy talk, covetousness, anger and perverted views.

<sup>247</sup> The ten good virtues are defined as the non-committal of the ten evils.

<sup>248</sup> That which sin does, its karma, producing subsequent suffering without interruption.

<sup>249</sup> See 'The Chan Training Hall >>> (1) Firm belief in the (law of) causality.

At present, all over the world, people are suffering from (all sorts of) calamity and are in the depth of the eon (kalpa) of slaughter. This is the retribution (for evil actions). We (should) always exhort worldly men to refrain from taking life and to release living creatures, to take vegetarian food, to (think of the Buddha and) repeat His name, so that everybody can escape from the turning wheel of cause and effect.

All of you should believe and observe (this teaching) and sow now the good cause for reaping later the Buddha-fruit.

### *The Seventh Day*

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This ephemeral life is like a dream,  
(And) this illusory substance is not stable.  
If we rely not on the compassion of our Buddha  
How can we ascend the transcendental Way?

In this life which is like a dream and an illusion, we pass our time in an upside-down manner. We do not realize the greatness of the Buddha and do not think of escaping from (the realm of) birth and death. We let our good and evil (actions) decide our rise and fall and we accept the retribution according to their karmic effects. This is why in this world, few accomplish good deeds but many commit evil actions, and few are rich and noble but many are poor and mean. In the six worlds of existence, there are all kinds of suffering. There are living beings who are born in the morning and die in the evening. There are those who live only a few years and others who live many years. They are not all masters of themselves. For this reason, we should rely on the Buddha's compassion if we want to find a way (out of this mess), because the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas possess the power of their vows of kindness, pity, joy and renunciation and can deliver us from the bitter ocean (of mortality) for our (safe) arrival at the bright "other shore". They are kind and compassionate and when they see living beings enduring suffering, they take pity on them and liberate them so that they can escape suffering and enjoy happiness. Their joy and renunciation consist in their rejoicing and praise for living beings who accomplish meritorious deeds or give rise to thoughts of kindness in the mind, and in granting all requests according to the latter's requirements.

When the World Honored One practiced His self-cultivation from the causal ground,<sup>250</sup> His deeds (in the successive Bodhisattva stages of His former lives) consisted in His renunciation of His own head, brain, bone and marrow. For this reason, He said:

In the Universe, there is not a spot of land as small as a mustard-seed where I have not sacrificed my lives or have not buried my bones.

Today, all of you should endeavor to hold the hua t'ou firm (in your mind); be careful not to waste your time.

### *The Closing Day*

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Dear friends, I congratulate you all on the conclusion of this Ch'an week. You have completed your merit-(orious training) and in just a moment, the gathering will come to an end and I will have to congratulate you.

According to the ancients, the opening and closing of a Ch'an week do not mean much, for it is (more) important to hold a hua t'ou continuously (in mind) until one's complete enlightenment. At present, no matter whether you have been awakened or not, we must follow the procedure set forth in the (standing) rules and regulations. During these (two) Ch'an weeks, you did not make any difference between day and night, because your (only) aim was your own awakening. The (ultimate) purpose of the meeting was, therefore, to produce men of ability for (spreading) the Buddhist doctrine. If you have wasted your time without achieving any result, you will indeed have missed a (great) opportunity.

Now, the (Venerable) Abbot and group leaders will follow the ancient rules and regulations and will examine the result of your training. I hope you will not talk wildly (when questioned); you should, in the presence of others, give in a sentence (a summary of) your achievement. If your replies are in order, the (Venerable) Abbot will confirm your realization. The ancients said:

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<sup>250</sup> ... or cause-ground, the stage of self-cultivation which leads to the fruit-ground, or stage of attainment of Buddhahood.

"(Self-) cultivation takes an unimaginable time<sup>251</sup>  
(While) enlightenment in an instant is attained.

If the training is efficient, enlightenment will be attained in one finger-snap.

In days gone by, Ch'an Master Hui Chueh of Lang Yeh mountain, had a woman disciple who called on him for instruction. The master taught her to examine into the sentence: "Take no notice."<sup>252</sup> She followed his instruction strictly without backsliding. One day, her house caught fire, but she said: "Take no notice." Another day, her son fell into the water and when a bystander called her, she said: "Take no notice." She observed exactly her master's instruction by laying down all causal thoughts.<sup>253</sup>

One day, as her husband lit the fire to make fritters of twisted dough, she threw into the pan full of boiling (vegetable) oil a batter which made a noise. Upon hearing the noise, she was instantaneously enlightened.<sup>254</sup> Then she threw the pan of oil on the ground, clapped her hands and laughed.<sup>255</sup> Thinking she was insane, her husband scolded her and said: "Why do you do this? Are you mad?" She replied: "Take no notice." Then she went to master Hui Chueh and asked him to verify her achievement. The master confirmed that she had obtained the holy fruit.

Dear friends, those of you who have been awakened (to the truth), please come forward and say something about your realization.

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<sup>251</sup> Lit. 'three great asarikhya': kalpas beyond number, the three timeless periods of a Bodhisattva's progress to Buddhahood.

<sup>252</sup> Lit. 'Let it go'.

<sup>253</sup> Thoughts productive of causes leading to effects.

<sup>254</sup> Her training was already very effective in disentangling her mind from the sense-organs, sense-data and perceptions, i.e., her mind was undisturbed at the time, and the noise had a tremendous effect on it. She did not hear it by means of her faculty of hearing which had ceased functioning, but through the very function of her self-nature which exposed her real "face", hence her enlightenment.

<sup>255</sup> Usually after an awakening, or satori in Japanese, one is seized with a desire to cry, jump, dance or do something abnormal, like throwing down the pan of oil. If one fails to subdue this desire, one will catch the Ch'an illness described in Han Shan's autobiography.

(After a long while, as no one came forward, Master Hsu Yun left the hall. The (Venerable) Dharma master Ying Tz'u continued to hold the examination, and when it was over, Master Hsu Yun returned to the hall to instruct the assembly.)

(Master Hsu Yun said:)

In this tumultuous world and (especially in this) bustling and disorderly city, how can one have spare time for, and thought of, coming here to sit in meditation and to hold a hua t'ou? (However), the deep good roots possessed by the people of Shanghai, in combination with the flourishing Buddha Dharma and the unsurpassed co-operating cause have made this great opportunity available for our gathering.

From olden time till now, we have had the Teaching, the Discipline (Vinaya), the Pure Land and the Esoteric (Yoga) Schools. A rigorous comparison between these schools and the Ch'an Sect proves the superiority of the latter. Earlier, I also spoke of this unsurpassed Sect, but owing to the present decline of Buddha Dharma, men of ability are not available. Formerly, in my long journeys on foot I went to and stayed at various monasteries but what I see now cannot be compared with what I saw then. I am really ashamed of my ignorance, but the (Venerable) Abbot who is very compassionate, and the group leaders who are very courteous, have pushed me forward (to preside over this meeting). This task should have been entrusted to the (venerable) old Dharma Master Ying Tz'u who is an (acknowledged) authority on both Ch'an and the scriptures and is an (experienced) senior. I am now a useless man and cannot do anything, and I hope you will all follow him and push forward without backsliding.

Ancestor Kuei Shan<sup>256</sup> said: "It is regrettable that we were born at the end of the semblance period,<sup>257</sup> so long after the passing of the holy period, when the Buddha Dharma is disregarded and when people pay little attention to it. I am (however) expressing my humble opinion to make the coming generation understand it."

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<sup>256</sup> Wei Shan in modern Romanization. [Editor of the web edition.]

<sup>257</sup> The three periods of Buddhism are: (1) the period of the holy, correct or real doctrine of the Buddha, lasting 500 years, followed by (2) the image, or semblance period of 1,000 year. and then by (3) the period of decay and termination, lasting 3,000, some say 10,000 years, after which Maitreya Buddha is to appear and restore all things.

The Dharma name of (Master) Kuei Shan<sup>258</sup> was Ling Yu; he was a native of Fu Chien<sup>259</sup> province. He followed Ancestor Pai Chang and realized his (self-) mind (at the latter's monastery.) The ascetic<sup>260</sup> Szu Ma saw that Kuei Shan mountain in Hunan province was auspicious and would become the meeting place for an assembly of 1,500 learned monks. At the time Kuei Shan was a verger of Pai Chang monastery where, during a visit Dhuta Szu Ma met him, recognized him as the right owner of the mountain and invited him to go there to establish a monastery. Kuei Shan was a man of the T'ang dynasty (618-906) and the Buddha Dharma was already at the end of its semblance period. For this reason, he was sorry he was not born earlier, because at the time the Buddha Dharma was difficult to understand and worldly men, whose believing minds were retrograding, refused to make efforts in their study of the doctrine, with the result that there was no hope for their attainment of the Buddha fruit. Over a thousand years have elapsed since the time of Kuei Shan and not only has the semblance period passed, but over 900 years of the present period of termination have also elapsed. (Therefore), worldly men of good roots are now very much fewer. This is why men believing in the Buddha Dharma are many and men who actually realize the truth are very few.

I now compare my own case with that of those who are now studying the Buddha Dharma and who have the advantage of all kinds of convenience. In the reigns of Hsien Feng (1851-61) and Tung Chih (1862-74), all monasteries were destroyed in the region south of the three rivers, where only the T'ien T'ung monastery remained intact. During the Tai Ping rebellion (1850-64) monks of the Chung Nan mountains came (to the South) to rebuild (these monasteries) and at the time, they were equipped each with only a gourd and a basket, and did not possess as many things as you have now. Later, the Buddha Dharma gradually flourished again, and monks began to carry their loads (with a pole over the shoulder). At present, they even carry leather suitcases but they do not pay much attention to the correct practice of the doctrine. Formerly, Ch'an monks wishing to call at various monasteries for instruction, had to journey on foot. Now, they

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<sup>258</sup> In deference to him, Master Ling Yu was called Kuei Shan, after the name of the mountain.

<sup>259</sup> The map version is Fukien (Fujian) province.

<sup>260</sup> Dhuta: a monk engaged in austerities: an ascetic.

can travel by train, motor car, steamer and airplane which relieve them of all (previous) hardships but intensify their enjoyment in indulgence and ease. At present, in spite of the increasing number of Buddhist institutions and Dharma masters, no one pays attention to the fundamental question, and from morning to evening everybody seeks only knowledge and interpretation with the least heed for (self-) cultivation and realization. At the same time, they do not know that (self-) cultivation and realization are the essentials of the doctrine.

(Ch'an master) Yung Chia said in his 'Song of Enlightenment':

Get at the root. Do not worry about twigs.  
(Be) like pure crystal round the precious moon.<sup>261</sup>  
Alas! in this time of decay and in this evil world  
Living beings of ill fortune are hard to discipline.  
The holy period's long passed and perverted views are deep.  
With Demon strong and Dharma weak, hatred and harm prevail.  
When they hear the Tathagata's Instantaneous Dharma door,  
They hate not having smashed it into pieces.  
While their minds so act their bodies will then suffer;  
They cannot accuse or blame their fellow-men.  
If you would avoid unintermittant karma,<sup>262</sup>  
Do not vilify the wheel of the Buddha's Law.<sup>263</sup>  
In my youth I amassed much learning,  
Sought sutras, sastras, and their commentaries  
Endlessly discriminating between name and form.<sup>264</sup>  
As one vainly counting sand grains in the ocean  
I was severely reprimanded by the Buddha,  
Who asked what gain derived from counting others' gems.

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<sup>261</sup> Enlightenment is the root and other details, such as supramundane powers and wonderful works are twigs. This is why enlightened masters never talked about miracles. All this is likened to the crystal which, if clung to, will hinder the attainment of enlightenment, symbolized by the moon.

<sup>262</sup> Karma which sends the sinner to the Avici hell, the last of the eight hot hells in which punishment, pain, form, birth, death, continue without intermission.

<sup>263</sup> Dharma cakra in Sanskrit, Buddha truth which is able to crush all evil and all opposition, like Indra's wheel, and which rolls on from man to man, place to place, age to age.

<sup>264</sup> Name and form: everything has a name, e.g., sound, or has appearance, i.e., the visible; both are unreal and give rise to delusion.

Yung Chia called on the Sixth Patriarch for instruction and was completely enlightened. The Patriarch called him the "Overnight Enlightened One". For this reason, the ancients said: "The search for truth in sutras and sastras is like entering the sea to count its sand-grains."

The Ch'an Sect's device is likened to the precious Vajra king sword<sup>265</sup> which cuts all things touching it and destroys all that runs up against its (sharp) point. It is the highest Dharma door (through which) to attain Buddhahood at a stroke.<sup>266</sup> (To give you an example, I will tell you the story of) Ch'an master Shen Tsan who traveled on foot when he was young and who became enlightened after his stay with ancestor Pai Chang. After his enlightenment, he returned to his former master and the latter asked him: "After you left me, what (new) acquisition did you make at other places?" Shen Tsan replied: "I made no acquisition." He was then ordered to serve his (former) master.

One day, as his (former) master took a bath and ordered him to scrub his dirty back, Shen Tsan patted him on the back and said: "A good Buddha hall but the Buddha is not saintly." His master did not understand what he meant, turned his head and looked at the disciple who said again: "Although the Buddha is not saintly, he sends out illuminating rays."

Another day, as his master was reading a sutra under the window, a bee knocked against the window paper<sup>267</sup> trying to get out (of the room). Shen Tsan saw the struggling bee and said: "The universe is so vast and you do not want to get out. If you want to pierce old paper, you will get away in the (non-existent) year of the donkey!"<sup>268</sup> After saying this, he sang the following poem:

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<sup>265</sup> The royal diamond gem, or indestructible sword which destroys ignorance and delusion.

<sup>266</sup> Lit. 'on the spot'.

<sup>267</sup> In the East, thin sheets of white paper were, and are still, used instead of window glass.

<sup>268</sup> Old paper is old sutras. The sentence means: If you want to search for the truth in old sutras, you will never realize it, for it can only be experienced in the training. The meaning is: If you want to "pierce" old sutras in your quest of your self-nature, you will never succeed in experiencing it.



"It refuses to get out through the empty door  
And knocks against the window stupidly.  
To pierce old paper will take a hundred years,  
Oh when will it succeed in getting out?"

Thinking that Shen Tsan was insulting him, the (old) master put his sutra aside and asked him: "You went away for so long: whom did you meet, what did you learn and what makes you so talkative now?" Shen Tsan replied: "After I left you, I joined the Pai Chang community where master Pai Chang gave me an indication as to how to halt (thinking and discriminating). As you are now old, I have returned to pay the debt of gratitude I owe you." Thereupon, the master informed the assembly (of the incident), ordered a vegetarian banquet (in honor of Shen Tsan) and invited him to expound the Dharma. The latter ascended to the seat and expounded the Pai Chang doctrine, saying:

Spiritual light shines on in solitude<sup>269</sup>  
Disentangling the sense organs from sense data.<sup>270</sup>  
Experience of true eternity  
Depends not just on books.<sup>271</sup>  
Mind-nature being taintless  
Fundamentally is perfect.  
Freedom from falsehood-producing causes  
Is the same as absolute Buddhahood.

After hearing this, his master became awakened to the truth and said: "I never expected that in my old age I would hear about the supreme pattern." Then he handed over the management of the monastery to Shen Tsan and respectfully invited him to become his own master.

You see how free and easy this all is! We sat in this Ch'an meeting for over ten days and yet why did we not experience the truth? This is because we were not seriously determined in our training, or we took it for child's play, or we thought it required sitting quiet in meditation in a Ch'an hall. None of this is correct, and men who really apply their minds

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<sup>269</sup> i.e., independent, not attached to and relying on anything.

<sup>270</sup> This disentanglement is followed by the state of Samadhi, with simultaneous functioning of Prajna, or Wisdom.

<sup>271</sup> If one clings to names and terms, one will be held in bondage by them.

to this training do not discriminate between the mutable and immutable, or against any kind of (daily) activity. They can do it while in the street, at the noisy market place, or anywhere (they may happen to be).

Formerly, there was a butcher monk who called on learned masters for instruction. One day, he arrived at a market place and passed a butcher's shop where every buyer insisted on having "pure meat".<sup>272</sup> Suddenly, the butcher got angry and, putting down his chopper, asked them: "Which piece of meat is not pure?" Upon hearing this, the butcher monk was instantaneously enlightened.<sup>273</sup>

This shows that the ancients did not require sitting in meditation in a Ch'an hall, when they underwent their training. Today, not one of you speaks about awakening. Is this not a waste of time? I now (respectfully) request the (Venerable) Master Ying Tzu and the other masters to hold the examination.

*Master Hsu Yun's saying at the closing of the (two) Ch'an weeks.*

After tea and cakes had been served, all the assembly stood up when the Venerable Master Hsu Yun, in formal robe (with large sleeves) entered the hall again and sat in front of the (jade) Buddha. With a strip of bamboo, he drew a circle<sup>274</sup> in the air, saying:

Convocation and meditation!  
Opening and closing!  
When will all this come to an end?<sup>275</sup>  
When (productive) causes halt abruptly.

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<sup>272</sup> Prime meat is called "pure meat" in China.

<sup>273</sup> The butcher monk was so called because he attained enlightenment upon hearing the butcher's voice. He was undergoing intense training when he passed the butcher's shop and his mind was already still and free from all thinking and discerning. The butcher's loud voice made a great impact on the monk's mind and was heard, not by the ear's faculty of hearing, but by the very function of the self-nature. When the function of the self-nature manifested itself, the substance or essence of the self-nature, became apparent, hence his enlightenment.

<sup>274</sup> The circle symbolizes the completeness of the Dharmakaya.

<sup>275</sup> These three lines show the illusory mundane activities which have nothing to do with the experiencing of the truth.

External objects will vanish.  
Mahaprajnaparamita!<sup>276</sup>

When mind is still, essence and function (of themselves) return to normal.<sup>277</sup> Fundamentally there is no day nor night but only complete brightness.<sup>278</sup>

Where's the dividing line 'twixt South and North, 'twixt East and West?<sup>279</sup>

Without hindrance things are seen to be the product of conditioning causes.<sup>280</sup>

While birds sing and flowers smile, the moon reaches the stream!<sup>281</sup>

Now, what shall I say to close the meeting?

"When the board is struck, the bowl springs up!  
Let us scrutinize the Prajnaparamita!"<sup>282</sup>

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<sup>276</sup> When all causes productive of effects come to an end, the phenomenal also disappears, and this is the moment when one's "great wisdom reaches the other shore", or Mahaprajnaparamita.

<sup>277</sup> When the mind is stripped of feelings and passions, it will be still; this is the moment the essence and function of the self-natured Buddha are restored to normal.

<sup>278</sup> Fundamentally, there is only the immutable bright wisdom which is unchanging.

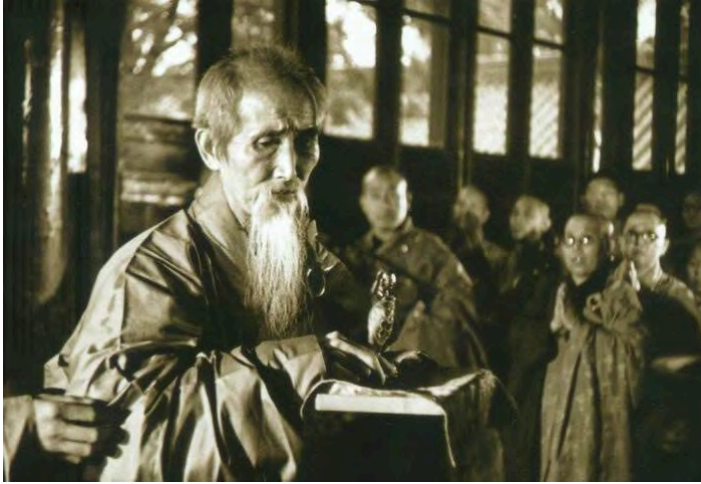
<sup>279</sup> When the self-nature is under delusion, it is split into ego and dharma, or subject and object, hence all kinds of discrimination between East and West and North and South. Now that enlightenment is attained, where is all this division?

<sup>280</sup> The phenomenal is created only by conditioning causes but is devoid of real nature.

<sup>281</sup> Our delusion is caused by our attachment to things heard, seen, felt and known, but if the mind is disentangled from the hearing, seeing, feeling and knowing or discerning, we will attain the Complete Enlightenment of Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva (see discourse on the second day of the second Ch'an week). The two faculties of hearing and seeing are mentioned here because they are constantly active, whereas the other four faculties are sometimes dormant. If one succeeds in disentangling the hearing from the bird's song and the seeing from the smiling flowers, the moon, symbol of enlightenment, will shine on the stream, for water is a symbol of the self-nature. This sentence means that one can attain enlightenment while in the midst of sound and sight which symbolize the illusory world.

<sup>282</sup> In a monastery, the board is struck for calling to meals. If the mind is efficiently stripped of all feelings and passions, all the eight vijñanas or consciousnesses will be frozen and inactive. This moment is referred to, in Ch'an parlance, as "a temporary death followed by a resurrection", i.e., death of delusion and resurrection of self-nature. When the self-nature recovers its freedom, it will function and hear the sound of the board. As the phenomenal and noumenal are now an undivided whole, the self-natured Master Hsu Yun's Discourses and Dharma Words

Now let us close the meeting.



When mind is still, essence and function (of themselves) return to normal. Fundamentally there is no day nor night but only complete brightness.



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Dharmakaya will pervade everywhere, including the bowl which reveals its presence. For this reason, the ancients said: "The exuberant green bamboos are all Dharmakaya and luxuriant yellow flowers are nothing but Prajna." This attainment is made possible only by the Prajnaparamita which all seekers of the truth should put into practice.

# Master Hsu Yun's Sermon

at the Prayer Meeting in Shanghai on 17 December 1952

Tr. Lu K'uan Yu (Charles Luk)

This Prayer Meeting for World Peace which began a few days ago is virtually unique. Today the Dharma-master Wei-fang, Abbot Miao-zhen and Upasakas Zhao Bo-zhu, Li Si-hao and Fang Cu-hao have asked me to preach the Dharma. I avail myself of this occasion to speak of the interrelation between the Chan and Pure Land Schools so that beginners can understand both. Today is the first day set for the Pure Land practice, which consists of reciting the Buddha's name. It was decided that Abbot Miao-zhen should be the speaker but my venerable friend has been very modest and has asked me to take his place.



Winter 1952. In Shanghai with Ven. Lai Kuo  
Invierno de 1952. En Shanghai con Ven. Lai Kuo

This saha world in which we live is a bitter sea of suffering from which all of us want to escape, but to do so we must rely on the Buddhadharma. Strictly speaking, Reality as taught by the Buddhadharma cannot be spoken of, for it is indescribable in word and speech. Therefore, the Surangama Sutra says. 'The language used has

no real meaning [in itself]'. However, to cope with the great variety of living being's propensities; countless expedients have been devised to guide them. In China, the Buddhadharma is divided into the Chan School, the Teaching School (sutras), the Vinaya School and the Pure Land and Yogacara Schools. To learned and experienced practitioners, this division is superfluous because they are already clear about the Dharma-nature which does not admit differentiation. But beginners hold conflicting opinions and like to drive the Dharma into sects and schools which they discriminate between and thereby greatly reduce the value of the Dharma for enlightening people.

We should know that the hua tou technique<sup>283</sup> and the repetition of the Buddha's name are only expedient methods which are not the ultimate and are useless to those who have already achieved their goals by efficient training. Why so? Because they have realized the absolute state in which movement and stillness are one, like the moon reflected in a thousand rivers in which it is bright and clear without obstructions. Obstructions come from floating clouds in the sky and the mud in water (deluded thoughts). If there are obstructions, the moon cannot appear in spite of its brightness and its reflection will not be seen in spite of the clear water.

If we practitioners of the Dharma understand this truth and are clear about the self-mind which is like the bright moon in autumn and does not wander outside in search of externals but turns back its light to illumine itself, without giving rise to a single thought and without any notion of realization, then how can there be room for different names and terms? It is only because for countless eons we have been clinging to wrong thoughts, and because of the strong force of habits, that the Lord Buddha held three hundred assemblies during his forty-nine years of teaching. But the aim of all expedient methods is to cure living beings of different ailments caused by desire, anger and stupidity and perverted habits. If we can keep away from all this, how can there be differences among living beings? Hence an ancient said:

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<sup>283</sup> Hua tou is the mind before it is stirred by a thought. The technique was devised by enlightened Masters who taught their disciples to concentrate their attention on the mind for the purpose of stopping all thought to realize singleness of mind for the perception of their self-nature.

'Though there are many expedients for the purpose  
They are identical when returned to the source'.<sup>284</sup>

The most popular methods in use today are Chan and Pure Land. But it is regrettable that many members of the Sangha overlook the rules of discipline without knowing that the Buddhadharma is based on discipline (sila), meditation (dhyana) and wisdom (prajna); it is like a tripod which cannot stand if one of its legs is lacking. This is so important a thing that no students of the Buddhadharma should disregard it.

The Chan transmission began when in the assembly on Vulture Peak, the World-Honored One held up a flower, a gesture which was acknowledged by Mahakasyapa with a smile. This is called the sealing of mind by mind and is the 'Transmission outside the Teaching'; it is the foundation of the whole Buddhadharma. The repetition of Amitabha's name, sutra-reading and concentration upon mantras are also designed to help us escape from birth and death.

Some say that Chan is a sudden method while the Pure Land and Mantrayana are gradual ones; it is so, but this is only a difference in names and terms because in reality all methods lead to the same result. Hence the Sixth Patriarch said, 'The Dharma is neither instantaneous nor gradual, but man's awakening may be slow or quick.'<sup>285</sup> If all methods are good for practice and if you find one which suits you, practice it; but you should never praise one method and vilify another, thereby giving rise to discrimination. The most important thing is sila (discipline) which should be strictly observed. Nowadays there are corrupt monks who not only disregard the rules of discipline, but who say that to observe them is also a form of clinging; such an irresponsible statement is harmful and dangerous to beginners.

The Chan doctrine of the Mind was handed down through Mahakasyapa and his successors in India and reached China where it was eventually transmitted to Master Hui-neng, its Sixth (Chinese) Patriarch. This was the Transmission of the Right Dharma which then flourished (all over China). The Vinaya-discipline School began with Upali, who received it

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<sup>284</sup> Quoted from Manjusri's *Long Gatha* in the *Surangama Sutra*. (See *The Secrets of Chinese Meditation*, page 34, and *The Surangama Sutra*, pages 143-9

<sup>285</sup> See *Chan and Zen Teaching, Third Series, Part 1, The Altar Sutra*.

from the Lord Buddha who declared that sila is the teacher of all living beings in the Dharma-ending-age. After Upagupta,<sup>286</sup> it was divided into five schools (the Dharmagupta, Sarvastivada, Mahisasaka, Kasyapiya and Vatsuputriya). In China, Dao-xuan (a celebrated monk of the Tang Dynasty) of Mount Nan studied the Dharmagupta, wrote a commentary on it and founded the Vinaya School, becoming its Chinese Patriarch.

The Tian-tai School was founded in China by Hui-wen of the Bei-qi Dynasty (550-78) after he studied Nagarjuna's *Madhyamika Shastra* and realized the Mind-ground.

Du-shun [d. 640] studied the Avatamsaka Sutra and subsequently founded the Hua-yan School, which was later called the Xian-shou School after its Third Patriarch.<sup>287</sup>

Hui-yuan [d. 416] founded the Pure Land School which was handed down through its Nine Patriarchs. Its Sixth Patriarch, Yan-shou Yong-ming [d. 975] and three succeeding ones were enlightened Chan Masters who spread the Pure Land doctrine, and the two schools [Chan and Pure Land] intermingled like milk and water. In spite of the division of the Buddhadharma into different schools, these do not stray from the underlying meaning revealed by the Buddha when he held a flower aloft. Thus we realize that Chan and Pure Land are closely related and that the ancients were painstaking when they taught the Buddhadharma.

The Yogacara (Mi-zong) School was introduced in China by Vajrabodhi (who arrived there in 619). It was spread by Amogha [d. 774] and then flourished thanks to the efforts of Chan Master Yi-xing [672-717].

The above expedient methods of teaching the Buddhadharma are mutually complementary and should never be categorized as separate denominations, contrary and hostile to one another, for this would run counter to the intentions of the Buddhas and Patriarchs. An ancient said that they are but like yellow leaves given to children to prevent them from crying.

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<sup>286</sup> The Fourth Patriarch of the Chan sect in India. See *Chan and Zen Teaching, Second Series*, page 34.

<sup>287</sup> Otherwise known as Fa-zang (643-712). He was a prolific commentator on the Hua-yan.



People who do not understand the real reason for sayings such as Chaozhou's 'I do not like hearing the word 'Buddha' or 'If I mistakenly utter the Buddha's name but once, I shall rinse my mouth out for three days,' are unaware of the compassionate heart he had when teaching his disciples to disengage themselves from illusory 'Buddhas' and quote him to vilify the Pure Land method as the concern of ignorant old women. Again, some people regard the Chan practice as the occupation of heretical seekers of emptiness. In short, they pretend that they are always right whereas others are always wrong.

This sort of controversy is endless and not only contradicts the good intention of the Buddha and Patriarchs in setting up convenient methods of teaching the Dharma, but it also furnishes outsiders with a good pretext to criticize and hinder it. The consequences being so great, I especially draw the attention of experienced devotees as well as beginners to this unfortunate state of things so that they can put an end to it; if it is allowed to continue, it will strangle the Buddhadharma to death.

We should know that all methods lead to the same result. Students of Buddhism should read and reread Chan Master Yong-ming's works *Zong Jing Lu* and *Wan Shan Tong Gui Ji*.<sup>288</sup> Students of the Pure Land School should read and understand well the chapter on Mahastharna's means of perfection in the Surangama Sutra, and so recognize the self-natured Pure Land by keeping from delusion and turning to the inner reality without wandering in search of externals. If we comprehend this truth we can, while not straying from it, speak of either Chan or Pure Land, of either East or West, both of which are reachable, and of either 'existence' or 'non-existence' which will no longer hinder us. This is the moment when either 'form' or 'smell' are but the Profound Mean, the self-natured Amitabha and the Pure Land which is but Mind, all of which will be attainable in a place where there are not too many creepers [i.e., expedient methods which, in Chan terminology, are likened to creepers which hide the trunk of the tree and should never be clung to in quest of the latter, or self-nature].

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<sup>288</sup> Both works explain the inter-relationship of all methods of practice and their common aim, i.e. the realization of Bodhi, despite their classification into different schools.

The Surangama Sutra says, 'Just wipe out all worldly feelings and passions, beyond which nothing can be interpreted as holy'. If we can do so and thereby cut off all false thoughts, attachments and habits, we shall be Bodhisattvas, Patriarchs and Buddhas; otherwise we shall continue to be living beings.

Reciters of the Buddha's name should never cling to that name for it can become as harmful as poison. We now recite the Buddha's name because our habits are deeply rooted from time without beginning and our thoughts cannot be easily stopped. So we use his name as a prop in our striving to wipe out all rising thoughts until they eventually vanish completely and give way to the Pure Land which will then manifest itself. So why should we seek it from outside?

# Master Hsu Yun's Discourse

on the 12th Anniversary of the Death of Dharma-Master Yin-Guang, a Saint of the Pure Land on 21 December 1952

Tr. Lu K'uan Yu (Charles Luk)

Today is the twelfth anniversary of the death of the late Dharma-Master Yin-guang, who was reborn in the Western Paradise (of Amitabha). All of you, his disciples, have gathered in this hall to celebrate the occasion. As when one drinks water and thinks of its source, so your celebration today is in memory of your fatherly Master. In Buddhism, a Master is the father of one's Dharmakaya, so to commemorate the death of one's Master is to have filial thoughts of him. This filial piety is much deeper than that towards one's parents. I still remember meeting the Master on Pu-tuo Island in the twentieth year of Emperor Chang-xu (1894). He had been asked by Abbot Hua-wen to expound the Sutra of Amitabha at Qian-si Temple and stayed there for over twenty years to read the Tripitaka. He isolated himself to practice the Pure Land method and although he was an authority on the Buddhist Sutras, he used only the word 'Amitabha', which was recited in his daily practice. He never pretended that, with his deep knowledge of the sutras, he could slight and dispense with this simple practice of the Pure Land School.

All expedient methods taught by the Buddha are good for treating worldly illnesses and the recitation of the Buddha's name is an agada (medicine) that cures all diseases. However, each of these methods requires a firm faith, an inflexible resolution and considerable practice in order to give good results. If you are strong in faith, you will achieve the same perfection whether you concentrate on mantras, practice Chan or repeat the Buddha's name.

If you are weak in faith and rely on your tiny good roots, little intelligence and shallow knowledge, or if you memorize a few Buddhist terms or a few gong-ans and then talk aimlessly, praising and censuring others, you will only increase your karma-producing habits and when death closes in, you will follow your karma to transmigrate again in samsara. Is it not a great pity?

As you commemorate the death of your Master, you should commemorate this true practice and observance of the Dharma. He was firm in this practice and kept in step with the ancients. He understood Mahasthama Bodhisattva's means of perfection, which consists of concentrating all thoughts upon the Buddha; he put it into actual practice and thereby realized the state of samadhi which resulted from this concentration upon Amitabha. He then spread the Pure Land Dharma for the benefit of living beings, unflinchingly and without tiring for several decades. Today, you cannot find another man like him.



*Pure Land Master Yin-Guang*

A true practitioner always avoids discriminating between self and others, but concentrates and relies on the Buddha at all times and in all situations. He firmly holds on to this single thought of the Buddha, which is intimate and unbroken, until it becomes effective and causes the manifestation of Amitabha's Pure Land from which he will enjoy all benefit. In order to realize this, one's believing mind should be firm and set solely on remembering Amitabha Buddha. If one's believing mind wavers, nothing can be achieved.

For instance, if someone says that Chan is better than Pure Land, you try Chan and stop reciting the Buddha's name; then if others praise the Teaching School, you read the sutras and drop Chan meditation; or if you fail in your studies of the teachings, you concentrate upon mantras instead. If you practice the Buddha-dharma in this way, you will be confused and achieve no result. Instead of blaming yourself for this ineffectual practice, you will accuse the Buddha of deceiving living

beings; by so doing, you will slander the Buddha and vilify the Dharma, thereby creating an unintermittently (avici) hellish karma.

Therefore, I urge all of you to have faith in the profitable practice of the Pure Land School and to follow the example set by year late Master, whose motto was, 'Only sincere recitation of the Buddha's name,' to develop and inflexible resolution, to develop a bold mind and to regard the Pure Land as the sole concern of your life.

Chan and Pure Land seem to be two different methods as seen by beginners, but are really one to experienced practitioners. The hua tou technique in Chan meditation, which puts an end to the stream of birth and death, also requires a firm believing mind to be effective. If the hua tou is not firmly held, Chan practice will fail. If the believing mind is strong and if the hua tou is firmly held, the practitioner will be mindless of even eating and drinking and his training will take effect; when sense-organs disengage from sense data, his attainment will be similar to that achieved by a reciter of the Buddha's name when this training becomes effective and when the Pure Land manifests in front of him. In this state, noumenon and phenomenon intermingle, Mind and Buddha are not a duality and both are in the state of suchness which is absolute and free from all contraries and relativities. Then what difference is there between Chan and Pure Land? Since you are all adherents of the Pure Land School, I hope you will rely on the Buddha's name as your support in your lifetime and that you will truly and sincerely recite it without interruption.

Our Grand Master Hsu Yun (Empty Cloud)



Courtesy: Dharma Master Hin Lik and Buddhist community on Lantau Island, Hong Kong.





## Master Hsu Yun (虚云)

1840-1959 C. E.