

THE ZEN TEACHINGS OF THE SIXTH
PATRIARCH

THE
PLATFORM
SUTRA



A NEW TRANSLATION

TONY CHEN

Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch

Chapter One: Personal History

At that time, when the Great Master arrived at Baolin (a monastery), the Prefect Wei of Shaozhou and the officials went to the mountain to invite the Great Master to come to the lecture hall at Dafan Temple within the city, to preach the Dharma to the public.

When the Master took his seat, there were more than 30 government officials, more than 30 Confucian scholars, and over 1,000 people consisting of monks, nuns, and laypeople, who bowed simultaneously, willing to hear the essentials of the Dharma.

The Great Master said to the assembly: "Good Friends^[1], the nature of the Bodhi is originally pure, and with the use of this mind, one can directly become a Buddha. Good Friends! Listen to how I transpired to realize the Dharma.

"The father of mine, originally from Fanyang, was banished to Lingnan and became a commoner of Xinzhou. Unfortunately, my father died early, leaving my aging mother widowed, and we moved to Nanhai; Experiencing hardship and poverty, I sold firewood in the marketplace.

"One day, a customer brought firewood and ordered it delivered to the lodging house; After receiving his delivery, I received paid, and after I went outside the door, I saw a guest reciting a sutra. As I heard the sutra's words, my mind became enlightened, and I asked, 'What sutra are you reciting?'

"The guest replied, 'The Diamond Sutra.'

"I asked again, 'Where did you receive the scripture you're reciting?'

"He replied, 'I came from Dongchan Temple in Huangmei County, Xinzhou. It's a temple where The Fifth Patriarch, Great Master Hongren, oversees instruction, with over a thousand disciples; I went there to make my worship and listened to this sutra. The Great Master [Hongren] often teaches monks and laypeople to observe the Diamond Sutra, then they will be able to see into their self-nature and can directly become Buddhas.'

"When I listened to what was said, I realized it was a karmic affinity from the past for them. After that, a customer gave me ten silver taels to provide clothing and food for my aging mother. After that I set out for Huangmei to pay respects to the Fifth Patriarch.

"After I made arrangements for the care of my mother and took my leave, in less than thirty days, I arrived at Huangmei to pay respect to the Fifth Patriarch.

"The Fifth Patriarch asked, 'Where are you from, and what are you seeking?'

"I replied, 'Your disciple is a commoner of Xinzhou, Lingnan, and has come from afar to pay reverence to you, seeking only for Buddhahood and not seeking anything else.'

"The Fifth Patriarch said, 'You're a native of Lingnan and a barbarian, so how can you become a Buddha?'

"I said, 'There are people of the north and the south, but Buddha-nature has no north or south. The appearance of a barbarian and a monk is different, but what difference is there in Buddha-nature?'

"The Fifth Patriarch wished to continue the discussion, yet seeing that there were disciples left and right, he ordered me to follow the others to do tasks.

"I said, 'Informing Venerable Master, the disciple's mind always produces wisdom, not separated from self-nature, is a field of blessings. What tasks does the Venerable Master have me to do?'

"The Patriarch replied, 'This barbarian has a sharp wit. There's no need to speak further. Go to the back courtyard.'

"I withdrew to the backcourt, where an attendant told me to chop wood and to pound rice.

"After more than eight months, the Patriarch saw me one day and said, 'I think your understanding is of use, but I am afraid that people of ill-will will harm you, so I have not spoken with you, do you understand?'

"I replied, 'Disciple also understands the Master's intentions, so I don't dare to venture into the main hall lest other people might notice me.'

'One day, the Patriarch summoned all his disciples, 'I tell you, life and death is an important matter. You devotees only seek the field of blessings each day without seeking deliverance from the bitter sea of birth and death. Deluded from your self-nature, how can blessings save you? You should each look for the wisdom within and use your prajna^[2] from your original mind and composes a poem to present to me. If you understand the teachings' essence, I will hand the robe and Dharma to you, and

you will become the Sixth Patriarch. Go quickly! Do not delay! Thinking is useless—those who see their original nature see it upon speaking, for such an individual will still witness it even amongst the whirling swords in the height of a battle.

“Everyone receiving the instruction, the assembly withdrew. But saying to each other, 'We followers do not need to clear our minds and use our intellect to compose verses to present to the Master. What is the point? Shenxiu is the head monk and senior instructor. He will undoubtedly obtain the position. Even if we write our poems, it will be a wasted effort.'

"When everyone heard the discussion, their hearts were at ease, and they said, 'After that, we will follow Master Shenxiu. So why trouble ourselves to write verses?'

"Shenxiu thought, 'The others are not presenting poems since I'm their senior instructor, so I must write a poem and submit it to the Venerable Master. If I do not offer a poem, how will the Venerable Master know the depth of my understanding? Therefore, presenting the poetry, intending to seek the Dharma, will be virtuous. But seeking the patriarch's position is covetous. That would be identical to the ordinary men desiring the exalted status. But without offering a poem, I will never obtain the Dharma. What a challenge! What a challenge!'

"In front of the Five Patriarchs Hall are three corridors arranged for the artist Luzhen to paint the scenes of the Lankavatara Sutra, as well as the pictures portraying the lives of the five patriarchs so that future generations may revere them. When Shenxiu finished writing the poem, he wanted to present it several times. But whenever he reached the front of the hall, his mind would fill with anxiety, and his body was perspiring with sweat, so he didn't dare to submit the poem in four days, where he made thirteen attempts to offer the poem. He then pondered, 'Why not write it on the corridor wall where the Venerable Master can see it? Then, if he should speak well of it, I will come forward and offer my respect, saying that I composed it. If it isn't suitable, these several years have been in vain receiving venerations from others, yet what is the use of further cultivation?'

"During the night, during the third watch (or between 11 pm-1 am), without anyone knowing, holding a candle lamp, he wrote on the wall of the southern corridor the poem that represents the realization his mind had seen. The poem read:

The body is the Bodhi tree,
The mind is like a bright mirror's stand,
At all times, we must strive to polish it
And let no dust alight.

"When Shenxiu finished writing the poem, he returned to his room at once, without anyone knowing about it. Shenxiu thought, 'Tomorrow, if the Fifth Patriarch be delighted to see the poem, then it means I have an affinity with the Dharma. If it isn't satisfactory, then I am in delusion because of karmic hindrances from past lives, and I am not fitting to receive the Dharma.' It isn't easy to fathom the sage's mind. He pondered in his room, restlessly unable to sleep or sit until the fifth watch (before dawn).

"The Patriarch knew that Shenxiu had not passed through the door to realize his self-nature. In the morning, the Patriarch called for Lu to paint the wall of the south corridor. But when he saw the verses, the Patriarch announced, 'It is not necessary to paint anymore. I regret that you have come thus far. The [diamond] sutra says, 'All forms everywhere are unreal and false.' But leaving the poem for people to recite and study. Those who cultivate by following this poem will avoid falling into an evil path. Practice following the poem brings excellent merit.'

"He asks disciples to light incense in reverence, and recite the poem, so that they may be able to see their original nature. The disciples all recited the poem and exclaimed that it was excellent.

"The Patriarch called Shenxiu into the hall at the third watch (between 11 pm-1 am) and asked, 'Is it you or not who wrote the poem?' Shenxiu replied, 'Yes, I wrote it. But I dare not ask for the patriarch position. I hope the Venerable Master will have compassion and see whether the disciple has a little wisdom.'

"The Patriarch said, 'In writing, this poem showed that you have not yet realized your original nature. You have approached

the door but have not entered inside. Therefore, with your current views, you will not attain the supreme Bodhi. The boundless awakening means that even in this momentary verbalization, you recognize your nature, the original mind, that is beyond birth and death. At all times, in every thought, the myriad Dharmas are without obstruction; the one truth is the same for all truths. The ten thousand conditions are thus as they are. The mind's concrete essence [thusness or nature of things before ideas or words about them] is the actual reality. Recognize as thus then it is indeed the self-nature of the unsurpassed Bodhi. Reflect upon this for a day or two when you go and write a new poem to offer to me to see. Then, I will transmit the robe and the Dharma to you if it shows you have entered the door.

"Shenxiu paid respect and left. Several days passed, and he was unable to compose a poem. His mind was in a daze, while his spirit was restless as if he was in a dream, agitated with unease.

"Two days later, a young boy passed by the rice-milling room chanting the poem. When I heard it, I knew that [the writer of] the writer of the verse had not seen his original nature. Although I had not received any teachings, I was already aware of the deeper meaning. Then I asked the young boy, 'What verse are you reciting?' The boy said, 'A barbarian like you wouldn't know. The Great Master said that life and death is an important matter. He wants to pass on the Dharma and the robe, and the disciples are to compose a poem to show [him]. If a person realizes the essence of the teachings, he will inherit the robe and become the Sixth Patriarch. The head monk, Shenxiu, wrote this poem on the South corridor wall, revealing that all things are without form. The Great Master orders everyone to recite it, and by practice following this verse will avoid falling into evil ways and brings about great merit.'

"I said, 'Venerable One, I have been pounding rice here for more than eight months, and I have never been to the front hall. So, I hope the Venerable One can guide me to the front of the verse to pay homage.'

"The boy led me to the front of the verse to pay homage. I said, 'I am illiterate, Venerable One, please read it to me.'

"At this time, an official of Jiangzhou called Zhang Riyong read the verse out loud. After I heard it, I said, 'I also have a verse. I hope the official can help write it for me.'

"The official said, 'You also know how to write verses? That's unusual.'

"I said to the official, 'If you want to learn the Supreme Bodhi, you must not look down on a beginner. The lowest of the low may have a superior understanding, whereas the highest of the high may only have dead knowledge.'

"The official said, 'You can read your verses, and I will write it for you; if you attain the Dharma, you must save me first, don't forget this statement.'

"I recited the verses:

Bodhi originally had no tree

The bright mirror has no stand.

There is not a single thing.

Where could the dust alight?

"When the poetry was written [by the official], the disciples were all astonished, and everyone was astonished, saying to each other, 'It's incredible! You can't judge a book by its cover. He hasn't been here for a long time; how it is that he became a Bodhisattva in the flesh.'

"The Patriarch seeing that the crowd was astonished, was afraid that it would bring harm, so he wiped off the verse with his shoe and said, 'I have not seen Buddha-nature [in this verse].' Everyone believed this was true.

"The next day, the Fifth Patriarch came quietly to the rice milling room. He sees me pounding rice while wearing a stone tied to my waist and says, 'Those who seek after the Dharma, forgetting the body for the sake of the Dharma, this is how they should be!' He asked, 'Is the rice ready?' I replied, 'The rice was ready long ago; it still needs a sieving process.'

"The Fifth Patriarch struck the stone-mill three times and then left. I understood the meaning of the Patriarch and went to his room at the third watch [middle of the night].

"The Patriarch used a Buddhist robe to cover the lights of the window so that nobody could see them and preached the Diamond Sutra. Down to the line, 'They should give rise to an intention with a mind which does not abide in anything^[3]' I awakened in that instant, aware that the ten thousand Dharmas are not separate from the self-nature.

"I addressed the Fifth Patriarch, saying, 'How unexpected that one's self-nature is originally pure. How unexpected that one's self-nature is beyond beginning and end. How unexpected that one's self-nature is already complete. How unexpected that one's self-nature is unswerving and unshakeable. How unexpected one's self-nature is what gives rise to ten thousand Dharmas.'

"The Fifth Patriarch knew that I had already awakened to one's self-nature, so he said, 'If you do not recognize your original mind, studying the Dharma is useless. But if one can realize his original mind, witnessing his original nature, he is then called a true man, a teacher of gods and men, a Buddha.'

I received the Dharma at midnight without anyone knowing about it. The Fifth Patriarch transmitted the Southern School^[4] of Buddhism's Dharma, robe, and bowl to me. And saying, 'You are going to be the Sixth Patriarch, cautiously safeguard your principles, extensively work to deliver sentient beings so that the Dharma will spread forever without interruption. Listen to my verses:

Sentient beings plant their karmic seeds.

Karmic seeds produce karmic fruits.

Without attachments forms no karmic seeds.

Without individual ego forms no rebirth.

"The Fifth Patriarch said again, 'Many years ago, when Bodhidharma first came to this land, the people had yet to believe in him; therefore, he transmitted this robe as a symbol of faith, and from generation passed down to generation. Yet the truth of the Dharma needs to transfer from mind to mind. It must be realized and understood by yourself. Since ancient times, there was only the silent transmission of the realization of self-nature from Buddha to Buddha, and the passing down from

master to master is nothing except that of the original mind; since the robe is the cause of the dispute, don't transmit down the robe now that it has passed to you. If you transfer the robe again, your life will be hanging on a string [cause danger to your life]. You need to leave here quickly. I'm afraid someone will harm you.'

"I asked, 'Where am I to go?'

"The Fifth Patriarch replied, 'Stop at Huai^[5] and hide at Hui^[6].'

"I received the robe and the bowl at the third watch (11 pm-1 am). Then, the Fifth Patriarch accompanied me to Jiujiang station, then let me get on the boat, and the Fifth Patriarch personally took the oar and rowed the boat.

"The Fifth Patriarch said, 'It is appropriate that I should be rowing you.'

I said, 'When confused, the teacher delivered me across. When awakened, he guides himself. Guiding across is still the same term, yet the application is not the same. I had grown up in a remote area, so my pronunciation is not pure [or as accurate]. But since Master has graciously transmitted the Dharma to me, now obtaining realization, I should guide myself across by use of my original self-nature.'

"The Fifth Patriarch said, 'So it is, so it is. In the future, the Dharma will spread all over the world because of you. Three years after you leave, I will depart this world. Strive with an effort to travel to the South. There's no need to hurry for preaching. The rise of Buddhism must go through many tribulations.'

I bid farewell to the Fifth Patriarch and took steps walking towards the South. Finally, after walking for two months, I reached Dayu Mountains. Hundreds of people were chasing from behind, trying to steal the robe and the bowl. One of the monks with the surname Chen and named Huiming was a fourth-rank general before becoming a monk, he had a very rough character and personality, was quite intent on pursuing me, and ran ahead of the group of crowds and caught up with me. I threw the robe and the bowl on top of a big stone and said, 'The robe and the bowl are only a symbol of faith. How can you compete to take it away by force?' Then I hid in the thicket.

When Huiming arrived, he tried to take the robe and bowl yet found that he couldn't lift them. He shouted, 'O Practitioner, O Practitioner, I have come here for the Dharma. I have not come for the robes.'

"I walked out from my hiding place and sat on top of the rock in a mediating position. Huiming greeted me with respect and said, 'O Practitioner, please preach the Dharma to me.' Huineng said, 'Since you are here for the Dharma, still the mind, do not give rise to even a single thought, and I will instruct you.'

"After a long time, I said to him, 'Don't think of what's good, don't think of what's evil, at this present moment, isn't that Venerable Huiming's original face?'

"At these words, Huiming immediately had a great awakening. He asked me again, 'In addition to these secret words and meaning you just spoken, are there any further secret meanings?' I replied, 'What I have told you is not a secret. But if you reflect the illumination inwards, you will find the secret is by your side.'

"Huiming said, 'Although I had been at Huangmei, I had not awakened to my original face. But, from your instructions today, it is like one finally tasting water, knowing for himself what is warm or cold. You are now my master, O Practitioner.'

"I replied, 'If you think like so, you and I share the same teacher of Huangmei; we should work together to maintain the Dharma.'

"Huiming asked again, 'Where should I go in the future?'

"I replied, "Stop at Yuan^[7] and stay at Meng^[8].^[9] Huiming bowed and left.

"After I arrived in Caoxi, men of evil intentions again pursued and searched after me, so I hid in Sihui to avoid difficulties and took refuge with a group of hunters for fifteen years. I would tell the hunters about the Dharma on the occasion when it was appropriate. The hunters often order me to watch their nets for capturing prey, but whenever I see a living animal caught in the traps, I would let the animal go. Whenever it was mealtime, I would put vegetables in the pot alongside the hunters' meat and

cook them. When people asked me about it, I replied, 'I eat vegetables to go alongside the meat.'

"Finally, one day, I thought, it was the proper time to spread the Dharma since I can't be in hiding forever. So, I walked out of the mountains and forests to the Faxing Temple in Guangzhou, where I met Master Yinzong, who was expounding the Nirvana Sutra. At this time [at the monastery], the wind was blowing, and the flag was moving; one monk said the wind was moving, the other said the flag was moving, and there was an endless debate without a conclusion.

"I participated in the discussion and said, 'It's neither the wind nor the flags that are moving; Virtuous Ones, it is the mind that is moving.'

"Everyone was shocked. Thereupon, Master Yinzong invited me to take one of the upper seats of honor and asked me in detail about the esoteric meanings of the Dharma. He saw that my answer was simple and with a concise grasp of the truth, not based on book knowledge.

"Yinzong said, 'Virtuous One, you must not be an ordinary person. I have long heard Huangmei's robe and Dharma had spread to the south; Virtuous One, is it you?'

"I replied, 'Indeed, presuming with modesty.'

"Yinzong then paid respect to me and invited me to take the robe and bowl handed down by the Fifth Patriarch and show them to the community.

"Yinzong asked me, 'What kind of teachings did you receive at Huangmei?'

"I replied, 'There was no instruction or teaching; only discussing to look into one's original nature, without a discussion of meditation and liberation.'

"Yinzong asked, 'Why were there without discussions about the methods of meditation and liberation?'

"I replied, 'These are dualistic Dharmas; it is not Buddhism; Buddhism is a Dharma of non-dualism.'

"Yinzong asked again, 'What is the Buddhism that is a Dharma of non-dualism?'

"I replied, 'Dharma Master, you have been lecturing on the Nirvana Sutra, which is to understand that the Buddha-nature of Buddhism is the Dharma of non-dualism. For example, the Bodhisattva of the Noble King of Virtue once asked the Buddha, 'If someone violated the fourfold prohibition, the five rebellious transgressions, and is an Icchantika^[10], would they have severed the good roots of Buddha-nature?' The Buddha replied, 'There are two kinds of virtuous roots, one permanent and the other impermanent. But Buddha-nature is not permanent nor impermanent, so it cannot be severed.' That is what is meant by non-dualism. The Skandhas [five aggregates of clinging] and the eighteen realms are the only two ordinary people see. But the wise understand that they are, in nature, not dualistic. The non-dualistic nature is the Buddha-nature.'

"After hearing the explanation, Yinzong was full of joy as he joined his palm together in respect, saying, 'My lectures on the scriptures were like rubble; but your lecture, Benevolent One, is like pure gold.'

"So Yinzong then administered the tonsure^[11] for me and wished for me to be his teacher.

"So I began the East Mountain Teachings under the Bodhi tree. I had received the transmission of Dharma from East Mountain Temple. Since then, I have experienced my fill of suffering and danger, and my life has been like a hanging thread. Today, to be with the Prefect, officials, monks and nuns, Taoists, and those who believe in Buddhism in this assembly is the agelong accumulated karmic merits from our collective pasts. It must also be the merit we have obtained from devout offerings to successive generations of Buddhas of the past. So that we have planted good roots in common together to be fortunate enough to hear about the Sudden School's teaching, as mentioned earlier, and the process of me receiving the Dharma. The previous Buddhas and Patriarchs are the ones who passed down the teachings, so it is not of my wisdom; if anyone is willing to listen to the teachings of the Buddhas and Patriarchs, they must first clear their minds. Then, after you have heard it, you must cast away all your hesitations and

doubts; then, you will be no different from the previous ancient sages.

After listening to the narration, everyone was pleased and bowed respectfully before departing."

Chapter Two: Prajna

The next day, Prefect Wei came to ask the Sixth Patriarch for further instructions. The Master ascended to the seat and addressed the large gathering, "You should all purify your minds first, and let's recite the Maha-prajna-paramita." He said again, "Good Friends, the wisdom of the Bodhi is something that all beings in the world naturally have, but because their minds are confused, they cannot realize it for themselves. So, they had to rely on the guidance of a great spiritual advisor to see their true

nature. Everyone should know that regardless of whether it is someone ignorant or wise, there is no fundamental distinction between Buddha-nature. Because of a varying degree of confusion or awareness, there is foolishness and wisdom. I will now explain the Dharma of the Maha-prajna-paramita. So you can develop wisdom. Listen with attention as I say for you:

"Good Friends, people of the world recite prajna^[12] using their mouths all day long but cannot recognize the prajna within their self-nature, just like a hungry person talking about food but unable to fill up his stomach. So, if you speak all day long in vain without practicing it, then even though you have experienced ten thousand eons, you will still not see your original nature, and you won't obtain any benefit after all. Good Friends! 'Maha-prajna-paramita' is a Sanskrit term that means great wisdom going to the other shore, which must be practiced with one's mind, not just verbally. If it's recited and not practiced with the mind, then it's [as empty as] an illusion, a transformation, dew drops, or lighting. But if the mouth recites it and the mind practices it, then the mind and mouth are in mutual harmony. One's original nature is Buddha. Apart from our nature, there is no other Buddha.

"What is Maha? The meaning of Maha is 'great.' That means that the Bodhichitta^[13] is vast, like a void, without boundaries. Also not defined by size like squared or round; big or small; green, yellow, red, or white; up or down; long or short; hatred, anger, or joy; right or wrong; good or evil; head or tail. All the Buddha-field^[14] is like infinite space. The wondrous nature of people is fundamentally empty, and there is no Dharma to be obtained; the emptiness of self-nature is also like this.

"Good Friends! Please don't listen to me talk of the void, then again cling to my explanation of emptiness. You mustn't become attached to emptiness! If you sit still with an empty mind, you manifest attachment to the void of nothingness. Good Friends, the void of the world can contain the ten thousand things of every shape and form: sun, moon, stars, mountains, rivers, the earth, springs, streams, vegetation, jungles, the wicked, the good, evil Dharmas, good Dharmas, heaven, hell, all the sea,

and the mountains of Mount Sumeru are all contained in the emptiness. The emptiness of the world's ordinary people is also like this.

"Good Friends, self-nature can contain the ten thousand Dharmas that is what is meant by great, and the ten thousand Dharmas are in everyone's self-nature. If you see anyone, whether good or evil, without grasping or rejecting, yet without attachment, then your state of mind will be as clear as the void that is the meaning of great; that is why it is called Maha in Sanskrit. Good Friends, the deluded speak with their mouths, but the wise practice with their minds; there are also people in delusion who sit with an empty mind, thinking of nothing, believing that they are great. One should not speak with such people because they have fallen into false thinking.

"Good Friends, the mind's vast capacity encompasses the Dharma realm. It functions by providing a distinct and clear-cut understanding. You can know everything when you apply its use. All is one, and one is all. Coming and going freely, without obstacles to the mind and body. That is prajna.

"Good Friends, the wisdom of prajna is entirely from self-nature, not from the outside. Don't mistake this understanding in your mind; this is the natural function of one's true nature; when one is true, all is true; use the mind to realize true self-nature, and do not follow a limited path. Also, do not talk in vain all day while not cultivating the practicing with your mind. It's like a commoner claiming to be a king, but it's not true. Such individuals are not my disciple.

"Good Friends! What is prajna? Prajna, translated into Chinese, means wisdom. At all times and places, from moment to moment^[15] without delusion, constantly practicing wisdom, that is prajna. With a single deluded thought, you will lose prajna; With a single moment of wisdom, you will produce prajna. Ordinary people who are ignorant or deluded cannot realize the prajna. Although they speak of prajna with their mouths, they are confused with ignorance in their minds; often saying, "I am practicing prajna' and talking about emptiness, but they do not know of the true void. Prajna has neither shape nor

form; such is the prajna mind. To have such an understanding is called the wisdom of prajna.

“What is paramita? It is a Sanskrit term that means 'that which has gone beyond' in Chinese. Interprets its meaning as departing from life and death. When the mind clings to external things, birth and death come like churning waves in the water. That is called this shore. But if the mind lets go of the external things, that is to be without birth and death, like ever-flowing water. That is what is meant by 'the other shore'. Therefore, it is called paramita.

“Good Friends, deluded people only know of reciting with their mouths, but their minds have delusions and untruths while they are reciting. When the practice succeeds from moment to moment, that is one's true nature. One who realizes this is realizing the Dharma of prajna. One who cultivates this way is cultivating the way of prajna. Not cultivating in this way is to be an ordinary person but practicing this way for even a moment makes you equal to the Buddhas.

“Good Friends, a common person is a Buddha, and affliction is Bodhi. Preceding a moment of ignorance, one is a common person. Proceeding through a moment of awareness, you become a Buddha. Proceeding moments with attachments to the external is an affliction, and succeeding moments separate from attachments, that is Bodhi.

“Good Friends, Maha-prajna-paramita is the most honored, supreme, and paramount Dharma. Without staying, without coming, and without going. From this, all Buddhas of the three periods of time emerge through it; one should use such great wisdom to destroy the five aggregates, afflictions, and defilements. If you practice this, you will undoubtedly realize the Buddha Way, transforming the three poisons [greed, ignorance, and hatred] into discipline, concentration, and wisdom.

“Good Friends, in my teachings^[16] from one prajna produces 84,000 wisdoms. Why? Because ordinary people of this world have 84,000 kinds of defilement. In the absence of defilement, wisdom will always be present since it is not separate from self-nature. Those who understand the teachings are without the

taint of thoughts [single-mindedness], without recollection [of the past], without attachments, and without delusions. It is to allow the concrete essence of self-nature to illuminate all things with prajna wisdom; to all the Dharmas without grasping nor avoiding. That is to realize one's nature and attain Buddhahood.

“Good Friends, if you wish to enter the profound Dharma realm and experience the prajna samadhi, you must cultivate the practice of the way of prajna and recite The Diamond Sutra. That is the way you will see your self-nature. Everyone should know that the merit in following this Sutra is immeasurable and boundless, as the Sutra text praises in the highest term, which I cannot fully express in detail. The Dharma teaching within is the supreme vehicle, and it is for preaching to those of wisdom and good roots^[17] when those with poor [spiritual] disposition or little insight hear of it, they will have doubts in their mind. Why is that? It is as if the sky dragon is summoning rain on Jambudvipa, and cities and villages would all be flooded and drift apart like drifting plants and leaves. But if the rain showers on the great sea, its water will neither increase nor decrease; if a follower of the Mahayana or someone of great wisdom hears of the Diamond Sutra, his mind will comprehend and understand. They will know that their mind naturally has the wisdom of prajna. It is attained by frequently using this wisdom and always observing reality, not accomplished by relying on the guise of words or language. It is like rainwater that does not come from the sky. It is from the sky-dragon that brings it forth so people, plants and trees, and sentient creatures can receive its refreshment together. A hundred streams flow into the great ocean and unite in one body of water. The prajna wisdom belonging to the original nature of sentient beings also acts the same.

“Good Friends, those people of poor aptitude when they hear of the teachings of the Sudden School are like plants and trees with shallow roots which when beset by a flood of rain, are all washed away and cannot continue growing. People with poor aptitude are the same when they hear the teachings. They possess the fundamental wisdom of prajna that is no different in

this respect from those with great discernment, so why is it that they hear the Dharma without becoming enlightened? It is because they cling to false beliefs and deep-rooted attachments, like dense clouds blocking the sun; without the wind blowing them away, the sun's light will not be visible. The prajna wisdom is by nature without a difference of large or small; its only difference is the ignorance or awareness in all sentient beings. Those with minds of delusion seek the Dharma in the external. They look outside for the Buddha, unaware of their self-nature; such are those with poor aptitude. So, realize the teachings of the Sudden School, and do not cultivate what's external. When the mind continually has the correct understanding, afflictions or defilement cannot create a stain, thus realizing one's nature. Good Friends, to be without clinging to what's internal nor external, let [mental processes] come and go freely, dispelling craving of the mind, that is to reach the state of ease without obstacles, it is no different from what the Prajnaparamita^[18] describes.

"Good Friends, the sutras, writings of the Mahayana and Hinayana, and the twelve divisions of the scriptures were formed because of people. It was only established [by people] because of the wisdom of self-nature. If there were no people in the world, naturally, there would be without the ten thousand Dharmas. Therefore, one should know that the myriad Dharmas arose because of the people's needs; all scriptures came about because people have spoken about it for them to exist. In this world, some are ignorant, and some are wise. So, the ignorant are known as fools, and the wise are known as noble lords; those who are ignorant approach those who are wise for instruction. And those with wisdom teach to those who are ignorant of the Dharma. If the mediocre man awakens, his mind opens with understanding; then, he no longer differs from the wise.

"Good Friends, in an instant without awakening, the Buddha is a sentient being. In a moment having realization, the sentient being become the Buddha. Therefore, we know that the ten thousand Dharmas are all within one's mind. So why not start

from within one's mind to realize the essence [thusness] of one's true nature? The Bodhisattva Precepts say, 'Our self-nature is initially still and undefiled. If we know our original mind and realize self-nature, we can all attain Buddhahood.' It says in the Vimalakirti Sutra, 'In the instant of sudden realization, returning to the original mind.'

"Good Friends, when I was with the Fifth Patriarch, upon his very words, there was the instant realization, perceiving at once the essence [thusness] of my original nature. Therefore, I had come to propagate the teachings of the Sudden School, so students of the Dharma could awaken to the Bodhi. So, investigate within the mind to perceive the original nature. If you can't realize it yourself, you must seek a wise advisor, someone who understands the Dharma of the Supreme Vehicle to direct according to the right path. Such a wise advisor possesses great karmic affinity with you, so to speak, and will teach and lead you to realize your nature. That is because the wise advisor can initiate the manifesting of good Dharmas. All the Buddhas of the three periods of time and twelve divisions of the scriptures exist immanent within people's natures. But if you cannot realize it yourself, you must seek a spiritual advisor to point to see your nature. But for those who can realize themselves, there is no need to look outside for help. However, if someone persists that the wisdom of an advisor is necessary to attain liberation, they are mistaken. There is already the wisdom that allows for self-realization within one's mind. But if you do not cease giving rise to biases, delusions, and baseless thoughts, your liberation is still impossible, even if a wise counselor guides you. And if you can give rise to the true prajna illumination, you can instantly extinguish the delusions. If you recognize your self-nature, you will have at this second entered the Buddha-field.

"Good Friends, observing one's thoughts with wisdom, which brightly illuminates within and without, you know your original mind. If you can know your original mind, one attains the initial unhindered liberation; the attainment of liberation is the prajna samadhi, which is 'no-thought.' What is meant by 'no-thought'? If you see all Dharmas with your mind undefiled by attachment,

that is called 'no-thought.' It functions by being everywhere yet not lingering upon anything. Purify the original mind to have the six senses flowing through their six gates to encounter the six qualities without the slightest contamination and defilement, coming and going freely, flowing without stagnation nor hindrance. That is the prajna samadhi and emancipating liberation; such is the practice of 'no-thought.' But persevering in not thinking of anything and causing thoughts to cease, should they arise, is a bondage of Dharma and is a wrong view.

"Good Friends, those who understand the Dharma of 'no-thought' completely understand the ten thousand things. Those who understand the Dharma of 'no-thought' sees all the Buddha realms. Those who understand the Dharma of 'no-thought' has arrived at Buddhahood. Good Friends, those future generations who receive my Dharma, follow the discipline of the Sudden School, along with the same views and value the teachings, serving the Buddha in their lives without turning back, may undoubtedly enter the rank of sages. However, it must pass down the teachings the five patriarchs silently transmitted from the beginning without concealing the true doctrine. If they do not share the same beliefs or practices or follow other teachings, do not transmit the instructions. So as not to damage the predecessors' legacy. Or else it will ultimately be of no benefit. Also, I fear that those who are ignorant and without understanding will speak ill of the teaching and eradicate their seeds for Buddhahood for a hundred eons and a thousand lives.

"Good Friends, I have a poem of the formless which you should all recite, whether you're a layman or a monk. You should cultivate following this. It would be no benefit if you don't practice it for yourself but merely memorize these words.

"Listen to my poem:

Speech and mind understood,
Like the sun residing in space,
Only transmitting the teaching of self-nature,
Appear in the world to abolish false doctrines.

Dharma isn't distinguished by sudden or gradual,
Only delusion and realization have fast and slow,
It is the teaching of seeing self-nature,
That the mediocre people do not know.

Although it's explained in ten-thousand ways,
United, the fundamental principle is but one,
Amid the dark dwelling of afflictions,
There's always the sunlight of wisdom.

When delusion comes, heartache arrives,
When virtue comes, heartache dispelled,
Using neither true nor false views,
Purity and tranquility become endless.

Bodhi is originally self-nature,
Rising a single thought, it is deluded,
The silent mind within the false mind,
The right mind beyond three boundaries.

If people practice the teachings,
There is not a single hindrance,
Always searching for past errors,
Being in harmony with the way.

Each form has their Dharma,
Each is not obstructing the other,
Leaving the inward Dharma for another,
At the end of life, not realizing the Dharma.

A frantic life like aimless in the sea,
Nothing but regret and self-reproach,
Wishing to see the true Dharma,
The right practice directs the way.

Without a mind for the Dharma,
Walking blind, not seeing the way,

A true practitioner of the Dharma,
Sees not the faults of the world.

In seeing the deficiencies of others,
The criticism reflects in our deficiencies,
Other's wrongs are not one's wrongs,
Finding wrongs in others is my transgression.

Cast out the mind that finds flaws,
Smash away affliction and troubles,
Removing like and dislike from the mind,
At ease as if stretching legs to lie down.

Hoping to be able to help others,
Must have the resourceful means,
Stopping their harboring of doubt,
It is the appearance of self-nature.

Dharma of Buddhism amidst the world,
Realization is not apart from the world,
To seek the Bodhi apart from the world,
Like searching for the horns of a hare.

The right view liberates one from the world,
The misguided view secures one to this world,
False and right views completely abolished,
Then the Bodhi nature appears spontaneously.

The poem is the Sudden School's teaching,
Also, be named the boat of the great Dharma,
The ignorant hearing sutras for countless eons,
When enlightenment is in the space of an instant.

The Sixth Patriarch said, "Today, at Dafan Monastery, I have explained this Sudden School's doctrine; may all beings in this Dharma-realm, from hearing these words, see their true natures and become Buddhas."

At that time, everyone listening to the Master's preaching—the Prefect Wei, official staffs, monks, and laymen—all experienced enlightenment; together, they bowed, saying, “How wonderful! Who would have thought that in Lingnan a Buddha would appear in the world.”

Chapter Three: Questions

One day, Prefect Wei arranged a big vegetarian feast on behalf of the Master. After eating the feast, Prefect Wei invited the Master to ascend to the seat with official staff, scholars, and laypeople. Then, he respectfully addressed him, saying "Your disciple has heard the Master preaching the Dharma. It is truly too inconceivable to put into words; I now have a few questions and hope the Master will be compassionate enough to make a special effort to explain them."

The Master said, "If you have any questions, ask them, and I will explain them to you immediately."

Lord Wei said, "Is the Dharma that the Master explained, the teaching of the Great Master Bodhidharma?"

The Master said, "Yes."

Prefect Wei said, "I have heard that Bodhidharma first instructed the Emperor Wu of Liang; the Emperor asked him, saying, 'Throughout my life, I had built temples, ordained monks, and held vegetarian feasts. What merits have I gained?' Bodhidharma replied, 'To be honest, there is no merit.' Your disciple doesn't understand this truth. I hope the Master will explain it to me."

The Master said, "There's no merit. Do not doubt the words of the ancient sage. Emperor Wu of Liang's mind has false views without understanding the true Dharma. Building temples, ordaining monks, and holding vegetarian feasts are to seek blessings, which should not regard as merits because merit is originally in the Dharmakāya^[19] it is not in the seeking of blessings."

The Master said again, "To be able to recognize oneself is merit. To perceive all sentient beings equally is merit. And without hindrances between thoughts, continuously perceiving your original nature's profound and genuine effect is merit. Inner humility of the mind is merit. Practicing etiquette in conduct is merit. To establish ten thousand Dharmas from the foundation of the true self-nature is merit; it is a virtue for the mind-body to be free from all thoughts. Not to wander from one's self-nature from instant to instant is merit. Applying [oneself] to circumstances without stain [creating attachments] is merit; if you seek the merit of the Dharmakāya, if you act according to this method, it is true merit. Those who cultivate merit do not despise others in their heart but respect all sentient beings equally. Frequently slighting others in your mind without cutting off your egocentricity is without merit. The character empty of falsehood is naturally without merit because of vanity, constantly arrogant, and despising. Good Friends, when moments flow without interruptions [from thoughts], it is a merit. Uprightness of mind is

merit. Self-cultivation is merit. Good Friends, for merit, you must see within for your self-nature. You do not obtain it through charity and making offerings. Therefore, blessings and merits are not the same. Emperor Wu of Liang didn't recognize this true principle; it wasn't the error of our Patriarch Master (Bodhidharma)."

Prefect Wei asked again, "Your disciple often sees monks or laypeople chanting Amitābha and vowing to be reborn in the Western Pure Land^[20] Master, please tell me if the practice can obtain rebirth there. May the Master dispel my doubts."

The Master said, "Prefect Wei, please listen carefully; I will explain it. In the kingdom of Shravasti, the Buddha preached the sutra concerning the Western Pure Land; he explained that it was not far from here; in a literal sense, it says to be one hundred and eighty thousand miles away. But in immediate terms, it symbolizes the ten evil and eight delusions within sentient beings. And it may be a far distance for those with shallow roots [shallow spiritual disposition] or near for those with superior wisdom; there are two kinds of people, not two kinds of Dharma. Differing in confusion and awareness, some may awaken quickly while others slowly. Those unknowing may recite the Buddha's name, while the ones more aware purify their mind for realization. Therefore, the Buddha says, 'When the mind is clear, naturally the Buddha-land is clear.' Lord Prefect, if a person of the East purifies his mind, then he is without transgression. But even though a person may be in the West, he is at fault if his mind is impure. Therefore, when a person of the East commits a transgression, he may recite the name of the Buddha, seeking rebirth in the West. But when a person of the West commits an offense and recites the Buddha's name, he is a person already in the Western Pure Land, so in what country does he seek rebirth? Those ignorant do not understand their self-nature and do not know that the Pure Land is within. Whether you wish for East or West, all places are the same to the one who has awakened. Therefore, the Buddha says, 'Whatever place you are in, there is peace and joy.' Lord Prefect, the Western Paradise World will not be

far off as long as the mind is not unwholesome^[21]. But if one harbors an unwholesome mind, one may recite the name of the Buddha, but it will be impossible to reborn there.

"Good Friends, I now would advise removing the ten evils firstly, and you will have walked a hundred thousand miles. Next, eliminate the eight delusions; you will have completed the remaining eight thousand miles. Then, when you realize your true nature every second and always practice benevolence and uprightness, reaching the Western Pure Land and seeing Amitabha Buddha will be as fast as a snap of your finger. Lord Prefect, if you do the ten good paths of actions, why should you ask further for rebirth? If you can't eliminate the ten evils from the mind, what Buddha will come to welcome you? If you can understand the Sudden School's teaching of 'beyond birth and death,' then seeing the Western Pure Land would take only an instant. Without realization, one may recite the Buddha's name seeking rebirth, but the road to the West is far, so how can you possibly reach it? I will instantly move the West here so you may see it before your eyes. Do you want to see it?"

Everyone bowed and said, "If we can see it here, why would we make a vow to be reborn there? We ask that the Great Master have the compassion to manifest the West for us all to see."

The Master said, "Great Assembly, the physical body of every ordinary person is the city; your eyes, ears, nose, and tongue are the gates. There are five gates on the outside, and within is the door of the intellect. The ground is the mind, and self-nature is the king—the 'king' living on the 'land' of the mind. When self-nature is present, the king is present; when the self-nature departs, the king departs. The mind and body remain when the self-nature is there, but when it leaves, the body and mind disintegrate. Therefore, Buddhahood is from within your self-nature, so do not seek it outside the body. When self-nature is hidden, one is a sentient being; when self-nature is perceived, one is a Buddha. Therefore, to have compassion, that is Avalokiteśvara; to be cheerful and generous, that is Mahāsthāmaprāpta; able to purify [the mind and spirit], that is

Shakyamuni Buddha; equality and integrity of mind, that is Amitabha Buddha. Having distinction between others and oneself in one's mind is to build a Mount Sumeru, which hinders the right path for oneself. Greed and evil thoughts arising in one's mind are the turbulent water of the ocean. The afflictions of ignorance are the tumbling waves; the intention to harm others is the evil dragon. Hypocrisy is the disturbing ghosts and spirits; worldly attachments are like the fishes and turtles. Greed and hatred are the [self-created] hell; persistent ignorance is equivalent to the unknowing animals."

"Good Friends, if you frequently practice the ten good deeds^[22], then heaven will be present; abolish the distinction [in one's mind] between people and oneself, and Mount Sumeru will collapse. If you let go of your greed and evil from your mind, then the water of the sea will dry up. When afflictions do not arise, the turbulent waves will become still. Forgetting harmful intentions, fish and dragons will vanish. As a result, the awareness of the tathātā^[23] will naturally reveal itself like an illuminating light; radiate through the six gates of the senses clearly and untainted and can break the karma to the six domains of the desire realm^[24]. The inwardly shining self-nature can eliminate the three poisons of greed, ignorance, and hatred and dissolve the karma leading to hell. Such a clear and penetrating light from within and without is the same as the blissful Western Pure Land. How can you get to Western Pure Land if you don't practice like this?"

After hearing Master Huineng's instructions, everyone understood and saw their nature, paid profound respect to the six ancestors, and exclaimed, "Wonderful!" Then, they chanted, "May all sentient beings in the Dharma realm and those who hear this teaching awaken at once and attain realization!"

The Master said, "Good Friends, if you want to practice Buddhism, you can also do so at home; you don't have to become a monk and live in a temple. The householders who practice are like a person of the East whose mind is virtuous. Dwelling in a monastery but not cultivating is like a person of the

West whose mind is with evil. As long as the mind is peaceful and still, it is the Western Pure Land of [one's] self-nature."

Prefect Wei asked again, "How should one practice if one is a householder? May the Master instruct us."

The Master said, "I have composed a poem of the formless for all of you. Practice following this, and you will be as if always by my side [at the monastery]. If you don't practice according to this, even if you shaved your head, what's the benefit of following a religious life? The poem says:

If the mind is at peace, why follow the precepts?
If the mind is upright, what is the need for meditation?

Understanding gratitude is giving filial piety to parents,
Right conduct harmonizes with what's above and below^[25].

Humility is to be in harmony with the honored and lowly,
Forbearance can quench the calamity of evils words^[26].

If you practice as diligently as drilling wood for a fire,
Then the red lotus will certainly spring from the mud.

The bitter-tasting medicine is often the best cure,
Unpleasant words can be faithful words of advice.

Correcting errors arises the birth of wisdom,
Maintaining faults reveals an ignorant mind.

Persist each day in forgiveness and good deeds,
Charity is not the only way to attain the Dharma.

Just seek the Bodhi within the mind,
Why seek mysterious ways outside.

Hear these words and follow with practice,
Heaven is instantly right before your eyes.

Master Huineng said again, "Good Friends, you must all practice following the poem to see the truth of your self-nature and directly achieve the realization of Buddhahood."

At that time, Prefect Wei, officials, and the virtuous men and women who listened all attained the opening of realization and faithfully accepted it without a doubt, determined to practice it.

Chapter Four: Concentration and Wisdom

The Master said to the assembly, "Good Friends, my Dharma teaching takes concentration^[27] and wisdom as its foundation; don't make the mistake of thinking that concentration and wisdom are different. Concentration and wisdom are of one, not two. Concentration is the basis of wisdom; wisdom is the function of concentration. When there is wisdom, concentration is within it; when there is concentration, wisdom is within it. If you understand this truth, it is the equal practice of concentration and wisdom. Therefore, students of the Dharma

must not say develop concentration to produce wisdom or develop the wisdom to give rise to concentration, as if the two are distinct. One holding this opinion is like stating that the Dharma is dualistic. It is like the mouth speaks virtue, but the mind doesn't have goodness. So, it is empty to consider concentration and wisdom as such, not treating concentration and wisdom as equivalents. If both mouth and mind are virtuous, internally and externally, as one, then concentration and wisdom will be equivalents."

"Self-realization and self-cultivation do not lie in arguments. If you debate about which comes first or last, it's the same as a person in delusion. If you can't free yourself from the desire for victory or defeat, you will most certainly increase the ignorance of egocentricity, unable to depart from the four perspectives^[28]. Good Friends, what are to compare concentration and wisdom? It is like the light of a lamp; with the lamp, there is light; but with no lamp, there is darkness. The lamp is the basis of the light, and the light is the function of the lamp. Although with two names, fundamentally, they are the same. The Dharma of concentration and wisdom is as such."

The Master said to the assembly, "Good Friends, the one-pointed samadhi^[29], is to maintain a single-minded samadhi in any situation, whether walking, standing, sitting, or lying down. As the Vimalakirti Sutra says, 'The straightforward mind^[30] is the place of awakening^[31]; the straightforward mind is the Pure Land^[32].' Do not speak of virtue with your mouth but have deceit in your mind. Do not speak of the single-pointed samadhi, yet the mind is without the practice of an upright mind. A mind cultivating virtue needs not an attachment to any Dharma. People who are foolish cling to the Dharmas and cling to single-pointed samadhi. They describe it as sitting properly without motion and not arising any distracting thoughts as being the single pointed samadhi. People who make this interpretation are the same as the inanimate objects. It is an obstacle to the cultivation of Dharma."

The Master said to the assembly, "Good Friends, the Dharma must flow freely, so why does it happen to be stagnant? The

way^[33] will flow freely when the mind does not dwell on the Dharma. The mind which clings to the Dharma is the same as tying oneself up in bondage. If it is sitting without moving, it is to be like Śāriputra^[34] meditating in the forest but reprimanded by Vimalakīrti. Good Friends, some people teach others to sit, watch the mind, contemplate stillness, without moving, without thought arising, and put in effort in such practice. Foolish people do not understand, so they cling to it, becoming mentally unstable^[35]. There are many people like this. It is a significant error to teach others in this way."

The Master said to the assembly, "Good Friends, the traditional^[36] teaching is without a difference of sudden or gradual. The only difference is the sharpness or dullness of the nature of the people^[37]; deluded people gradually practice, while awakened individuals embrace sudden cultivation^[38]. There will be no difference if you can realize your original mind and see your original nature. Therefore, sudden or gradual is a false term."

"Good Friends, my school of teaching, has been from its inception, has first established no-thought as the principle, no-form as the essence^[39], and non-abiding as the foundation. No-form refers to being in all forms and unattached to all forms; no-thought is to think without clinging to thoughts; non-abiding is people's original nature. Towards the world's goodness, evil, pleasing, unpleasing, enemies or kin, words that are offensive, critical, or argumentative, and regard it all as empty^[40], without any thoughts of revenge. Amid each moment, without seeking the past. When thoughts of the past, present, or future are succeeding each other like a continuous series, inseverable, it is binding bondage. Upon all Dharmas, without dwelling on the thoughts as they follow each other, then there will be no bondage. That is what is meant by non-abiding as the foundation."

"Good Friends, if you're separate from all forms, that is the no-form. To be separate from all forms, then the essence of the

Dharma will be calm and tranquil. That is what is meant by no-form as the essence."

"Good Friends, in all situations, for the mind to not to have a stain, that is 'no-thought'; in your mind, you must be apart from all situations without letting any thoughts arise. However, if you cling to not thinking of anything, extinguishing all your thoughts, thinking you will die when every thought has ceased, and still having to undergo the rebirth in another place, that is a great mistake. And the students of the Dharma should deeply reflect upon this; it is understandable if you don't understand the meaning of the Dharma. But if you are misleading others, you are not only blind to seeing the truth but also slandering the scriptures. Therefore, it is necessary to have no-thought as the principle."

"Good Friends, why is no-thought established as the principle? It is because some say they see their self-nature but are in delusions and possessed by thoughts amid situations. The arising of thoughts will lead to deviant views, which creates the birth of all impure and false thinking. From the beginning, there was no Dharma to obtain from self-nature. If you imagine that there is something to obtain, then there is the false idea of success or failure^[41], which are impure and false views. That is why our school establishes no-thought as the principle."

"Good Friends, the so-called 'no' is 'no' what? The so-called 'thought' is 'thought' of what? The so-called 'no' is to be with no difference in characteristics^[42], a mind without impure or false thinking. Then 'thought' would be the thought of our original nature's tathātā (suchness or thusness). Tathātā would be the very essence of 'thought' and 'thought' would be the function of the tathātā. The tathātā (suchness or thusness) of self-nature can give rise to 'thought', not the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and other organs that can think. Because the tathātā has self-nature, there evolves 'thought'; if it is absent, then sight and hearing, color and sound, would disappear.

"Good Friends, when the tathātā (suchness or thusness) self-nature gives rise to thought, the six organs may have sight, hearing, awareness, and knowing, but the tathātā self-nature will

not stain from the ten-thousand conditions since it can always be at ease. Therefore, Vimalakirti Sutra says, 'To distinguish^[43] the various Dharma well is, of the absolute truth^[44], the stillness of perfect tranquility^[45].'

Chapter Five: Seated Meditation

The Master said to the gathering, "In our teaching, the practice of zazen (seated meditation)^[46] is fundamentally not about attaching to the mind, clinging to purity, or motionlessness. Someone might say to attach to the mind, yet the mind is originally false^[47]. Since the mind is illusory, there is nothing for attachment. If someone might say to attach to purity, he should know that one's self-nature is originally pure. It is only because of ignorance and delusion that it covers true nature. When there is no delusion, one's original nature will naturally be

pure. If you start clinging to purity, it will create a false idea of purity. Since there is no premise for falsehood, the attachment is a delusion. Pureness has no form or characteristic, but some establish a characteristic for pureness, saying it like it is something to achieve; with such a wrong perspective, you will set up an obstruction to your true self and become bound by the characteristic of purity."

"Good Friends, those cultivators of motionlessness, if they always regard people without viewing their right or wrong, virtue or vice, merits or demerits. That is the immovability of self-nature. Good Friends, the foolish individuals, their bodies are motionless, but as soon as they open their mouths to speak, they speak of others' right and wrong, good and bad, which is contrary to the right path. If you cling to the mind or purity, that is a barrier to the way."

The Master further said to the assembly, "Good Friends, what is zazen? The zazen mentioned in this school is without obstructions and barriers; towards all external circumstances of good or evil without arising thoughts; that is zazen. To see the immovability of self-nature from within, that is dhyāna."

"Good Friends, what is 'meditation'? To detach from all that is external, that is dhyāna, within without unrest that is concentration. When you cling to the outside world, the mind will be restless. If you can be apart from all forms, the mind will not become in disorder. The original nature is pure and still; it is because of seeing the external that there is restlessness in the mind. It is true concentration if you can view all things external without confusion."

"Good Friends, to be separate from the appearance of all things is dhyāna; the inner mind without confusion is concentration. External dhyāna and internal concentration that is dhyāna concentration. The Bodhisattva Precepts say, 'Our self-nature is originally pure.' Good Friends, from every succeeding instant to another, see that one's original nature is clean and pure. Through diligent practice and cultivation, you will naturally attain Buddhahood."

Chapter Six: Ceremony of Repentance

At that time, the Master, seeing the scholars and laypeople from Guangzhou, Shaozhou, and the four directions assembled on the mountain to hear the Dharma, took his seat, and addressed them, saying, "Come, all Good Friends, this matter must initiate from within your self-nature. At all times, in every moment, one can naturally purify one's mind, correct conduct, see your Dharmakāya (truth-body), see Buddha-nature, deliver

oneself across, and have right conduct. It is only in that way that coming here will not be in vain. Since everyone has come from afar, to be able to meet here together implies a karmic affinity. Now, please kneel on the spot. First, I want to transmit the Five Point Dharma-body Incense of self-nature and then the Formless Repentance."

Everyone knelt.

The Master said, "The first incense is right conduct, which is for your mind to be without neglectfulness, evil, envy, greed, hatred, and hostility; this is the incense of right conduct. The second is the incense of concentration, which is to behold all things good and evil without the mind being in disarray; this is the incense of right conduct. The third is the incense of wisdom, which means having no hindrances in one's mind, and frequently using the light of wisdom to illuminate one's self-nature. Do no evil, practicing all kinds of good deeds without holding attachment to the actions of doing good. Respectful to superiors, considerate of those below, and compassionate to those isolated and impoverished; the incense of wisdom. The fourth is the incense of liberation, which is not to have ambitious aspirations in mind, without thinking good or evil, at ease and without hindrance; its name is the fragrance of liberation. The fifth is the incense of liberation from knowledge, which is for the mind to have no lofty ambitions towards good or evil. But also, not cling to emptiness; instead, one should participate in learning broadly, [be receptive to] frequent listening, recognize one's original mind and comprehend Buddhism's principles. Be humble and kind to others, without [thought of distinction in] self and others, aiming directly at Bodhi, the true self-nature without changing, this is the fifth incense of liberation from knowledge."

"Good Friends, these incenses are meant for you to light within yourself. Do not seek outwards. Now I will teach you Formless Repentance to eliminate the three generations^[48] of [karmic] sins so that you can completely purify the three karmas^[49]. Good Friends let's recite with me, 'May, the disciples, from the time of the past, present, to the future, instant after instant, without the stain of ignorance and delusion. I now

entirely acknowledge and repent all the evil karma accumulated from ignorance and delusion. I vow to eliminate them all at this instant. Never will it arise again. May the disciples, from time of the past, present, to future, moment after moment, without stain of arrogance^[50] and falsehood^[51]. I now entirely acknowledge and repent all the evil karma accumulated from vanity and deceit. I vow to eliminate them all at this instant. Never will it arise again. May the disciples, from time of the past, present, to future, moment after moment, without stain of jealousy. I now entirely acknowledge and repent all the evil karma accumulated from jealousy. I vow to eliminate them all at this instant. Never will it arise again."

"Good friends, what is declared above is the Formless Repentance. What is repentance? What is resolution^[52]? Repentance is to repent of the deeds that were from before, all the evil karma, ignorance, delusion, arrogance, deceit, jealousy, and other sins. To completely repent of them without arising in the future is repentance. Resolution is to resolve to reform from committing the transgressions in the future. From now on, realizing awakening, one will cut off all which causes the rise of all the evil karma, ignorance, delusion, arrogance, deceit, jealousy, and other sins, committing never to repeat it; that is resolution. So, it is named repentance and resolution."

"Ordinary people in ignorance and delusion know only how to repent from past deeds but don't know how to resolve from committing future transgressions. Because it's missing resolution, they have not terminated their past errors, and the wrongs will continue to occur in the future. Since they have not removed the previous karmic sins, and the transgressions will reappear in the future, how can you call this repentance?"

"Good Friends, now that we have made repentance, I will teach everyone how to make the Four Encompassing Vows. Everyone should listen carefully with their minds:

We vow to save all limitless sentient beings
within our minds.

We vow to cut off the limitless afflictions
within our minds.

We vow to learn the immeasurable Dharma within our self-nature.

We vow to attain the supreme Buddhahood within our self-nature.

"Good friends, didn't everyone state to save all limitless sentient beings? But, in doing so, it is not I, Huineng, delivering them across. Good Friends, all beings within the mind that is the thoughts that are deviant, delusional, arrogant, deceitful, unwholesome, jealous, and evil. All these are the beings within the mind. Everyone should use self-nature to deliver them across; this is true deliverance."

"What is the meaning of self-deliverance using one's self-nature? It is to deliver the deviant views, afflictions, and delusions in your mind through the correct perspective. And once you have the proper perspective, you can use the wisdom of prajna to demolish these beings of foolishness and delusion—each delivering itself across. Correct perspective delivers wrongful view; realization delivers delusions; wisdom delivers foolish; virtue delivers evil. In this way, delivering across the beings is true deliverance."

"As to the vow of cutting off the limitless afflictions, it is to use the prajna wisdom of self-nature to eradicate the vain and false thinking from your mind. As to the vow to learn the immeasurable Dharma, it is the need to see your self-nature, continuously practicing the true Dharma; that is genuine learning. Finally, as to the vow to attain the supreme Buddhahood, it is always to practice the Dharma with humility and be unattached to [thoughts of both] delusion and awakening, constantly arising the wisdom of prajna. When you cast off both true and false, you will see your Buddha-nature, instantly realizing Buddhahood. Practicing these vows from each moment to the next has the Dharma of the power in these vows. Good Friends, now that we have made the Four Encompassing Vows, I will teach you the Formless Precepts of the Three Refuges."

"Good Friends, take refuge in awakening, complete in merit and wisdom; take refuge in the right view, free from the bondage

of desire; take refuge in the purity, revered in the multitude. From now on, we take awakening as our teacher, never taking refuge in ideas or teachings that obstruct the right way^[53]; constantly illuminating ourselves by using the Three Jewels of self-nature. Good Friends, I advise you to take refuge in the Three Jewels of your self-nature: the Buddha, which is enlightenment; the Dharma, which is righteousness; the Sangha, which is purity. If in your mind, you take refuge in the awakening, delusion does not arise, desires diminish, realizing contentment, and you can detach from wealth and sensual pleasures; this is the supreme of both merit and wisdom. When your mind takes refuge in the right views, your thoughts have no deviant views. If there are no false views, there is no self, other, arrogance, greed, love, or attachment. That is the meaning of being free from the bondage of desire. When your mind takes refuge in purity, it is to have one's self-nature uncolored by or attached to worldly anxieties, lusts, desires, and conditions. That is what revered in the multitude means. If you can practice following this way, you take refuge in yourself. Ordinary people cannot understand this. That is why they recite the three refuges from morning to night. If you say to take refuge in the Buddha, where is the Buddha? If you can't see the Buddha, what can you rely on as the trust for refuge? So, their talk is false."

"Good Friends, you must experience and observe for yourself and don't misuse your mind in the wrong way. The scriptures clearly say to take refuge in the Buddha within oneself, not refuge in some other Buddha. If you don't take refuge in the Buddha of self-nature, there is no place to take refuge. So now that you have realized it yourself, you must each turn to the Three Jewels of your self-nature. Internally adjust the nature of one's mind, externally, being respectful to other people: this is to take self-refuge."

"Good Friends, now that you have taken refuge in the Three Jewels of self-nature, you should listen attentively; I will explain the trikaya of self-nature of the Buddha. By that, you can see the trikaya and realize your true self-nature; please follow me and recite, "We take refuge Pure Dharmakaya of Buddha within our

physical body. We take refuge Sambhogakaya of Buddha within our physical body. We take refuge in the Myriad Nirmanakaya of Buddha within our physical body. We take refuge in the Perfect Sambhogakaya of Buddha within our physical body."

"Good Friends, the physical body is the inn, but it isn't for you to take refuge in it. The trikaya of Buddha exists within self-nature, and all the people of this world have them. But, because one's mind is confused by ignorance, one cannot see the inner self but always looks outside for the trikaya of Buddha but can't see the trikaya of Buddha that one already has within one's body. Listen to what I say, and you will see the trikaya of Buddha that exists within your body's self-nature. The trikaya of Buddha arises from self-nature and is not from the external. What is the meaning of the Pure Dharmakaya of Buddha? The people's minds are originally pure and undisturbed, and all Dharmas are born of self-nature; the thought of evil in mind will produce evil actions; the thought of virtue in the mind will produce good actions. In this way, all Dharmas exist from self-nature. It is like how the sky is always clear and the sun and moon are always bright, only because the floating clouds obscure them so that it appears bright above but dark below. But if a gust of wind blows away the floating clouds, the sky would be naturally bright from top to bottom; people's natures constantly drift like clouds in the sky. Good Friends, intelligence is like the sun, wisdom is like the moon, and intelligence and wisdom are always as bright as the sun and the moon. But if you are attached to the external, allowing delusion to be like the floating clouds to cover the self-nature, then brightness will not be apparent. So, if you can hear the truth of the Dharma, get rid of the delusions, it will be clear within and without, and from your nature, all the ten thousand Dharmas will be visible. It is the same for people who see their nature; this is the Pure Dharmakaya of Buddha."

"Good Friends, to take refuge in the self-nature within your minds is to take refuge in the true Buddha. To take refuge in yourself is to discard your self-nature of the mind that is unvirtuous, jealous, flattering, vain, deceitful, conceitful, lying, evil, arrogant, and other unwholesome activity upon all times.

Often reflect on one's mistakes, not gossip about the good or bad of others. That is to take refuge in yourself. Always practicing humility and being respectful to all is what it means to see one's nature without hindrance; it is to take refuge in yourself."

"What is the meaning of Myriad Nirmanakaya of Buddha? If you are free of any thought of the ten thousand Dharmas, then your nature is fundamentally like emptiness. But a single moment of pondering is transformation. Thinking about evil, then it transforms into purgatories. Thinking about virtue, then it transforms into the heavens. Malicious thought transforms it into dragons and serpents. Thought of compassion transforms it into Bodhisattvas. Wisdom transforms into the upper realms and delusion into the inferior realms. There are many changes in self-nature; foolish people are unaware of the truth, constantly giving rise to evil thoughts, so they follow the evil paths. But returning to a single virtuous thought will produce wisdom; this is the Myriad Nirmanakaya of Buddha."

"What is the Sambhogakaya of Buddha? It is like how one lamp can disperse the darkness of thousands of years. So, one moment of wisdom can destroy thousands of years of delusion. Do not think back to the past; what has passed cannot be restored. Instead, grasp the present that leads to the future^[54], making each successive moment perfect and bright. Although good and evil are different, there is no difference in self-nature; the non-dual nature is the genuine nature. In true nature, there is no stain of good and evil; this is the Sambhogakaya of Buddha. One thought of evil from self-nature destroys the good karma of ten thousand eons. One thought of virtue from self-nature destroys the evil that is as many as the sands of the Ganges. To directly reach the supreme Bodhi, seeing oneself in every moment without losing the original mind. That is the Sambhogakaya of Buddha."

"Good Friends, when thinking arises in the Dharmakaya, it is the Myriad Nirmanakaya of Buddha. To see your nature in every moment is the Sambhogakaya of Buddha. Self-realization and the effort to cultivate the merits of self-nature are one's true

refuge. One's skin and flesh are of the physical body, but the body is like an inn, which cannot be said to be a refuge. As long as you can realize the three-body of your self-nature, you are to know the Buddha of self-nature."

"I have a poem of the formless. If you can recite and memorize it, you will, upon hearing the words, instantly wipe out the accumulation of many lifetimes of delusions and transgressions. The poem goes:

Those confused cultivate merits but do not cultivate the way,
So, they say practicing for merits is practicing the way,
Although charity and offerings can bring boundless blessings,
But it is in the mind that the three evils^[55] have their origin.

They attempt to destroy the evil karma by cultivating merits,
Merits may come in future lives, but transgressions still exist,
Only by eradicating the origin of evil from their mind,
Can they genuinely repent within their self-nature.

Sudden enlightenment of the Mahayana is true repentance,
Cast out the false and practice the right that's to have no sin,
Study the way by always looking to your self-nature,
Then you will be identical to all lineages of Buddhas.

Our patriarchs have transmitted only this teaching,
Wishing for all to see their nature so to be as one,
If you want to find the Dharmakaya in the future,
Discard forms of Dharma by washing the mind within.

Resolve to see into yourself without wasting more time,
When the final moments come, then it is the end of life,
If you want to realize the Mahayana and see your self-nature,
Reverently join your palms and strive for it with all your heart.

The Master says, "Good Friends, you should all recite this poem and discipline yourselves according to it. If, upon hearing these words, you see your nature, then even if we are a

thousand miles apart, you will always be by my side. But without awakening upon hearing these words, we are a thousand miles apart, even if we stand face to face. Therefore, what use is it for you to come so far? Take care in your going."

When the public heard the words of the Sixth Patriarch, they all understood them, rejoicing enthusiastically and joyfully practice them.

Chapter Seven: Opportunities

After the Master obtained the Dharma at Huangmei, he returned to Caohou Village in Shaozhou, where no one knew him.

At that time, a Confucian scholar named Liu Zhiluo in the village received the Master with great respect. Liu Zhiluo has an aunt who is a nun named Wu Jincang. She would always recite the Mahayana Mahaparinirvana Sutra; when the Master heard it, he instantly grasped its profound principle and explained it to

her. The nun took up the scroll and asked him about certain characters.

The Master said, "I don't know the character, but you can ask me about the meaning."

The nun asked, "If you cannot read the characters, how can you understand the meaning?"

The Master replied, "The subtle truth of all Buddhas does not lie in words."

The nun was startled when she heard this, calling all the elders and virtuous people in the village, saying, "Here is a man in possession of the Dharma; we should all make offerings to him."

There was present the great-grandson of the Marquis of the Wei Dynasty, Cao Shuliang, and the people of the village rushed to pay tribute. At that time, war and fire at the end of the Sui Dynasty had destroyed the old monastery of Baolin. So, they rebuilt the temple upon its original foundation and invited the Master to reside there. Soon, the temple became a revered place. The Sixth Patriarch lived there for more than nine months. But when ill-intentioned people once again pursued him, he hid in the mountain in front of the temple. Later, the wicked people set fire to the vegetation, so the Master hid by squeezing himself between the rocks to avoid the flames. That stone still bears knee marks from when the Master was sitting in meditation and the texture of the clothing he was wearing, so they call this stone the Stone of Refuge. The Master then remembered the Fifth Patriarch's instructions to stop at Huai and hide at Hui. Thereupon, he lived in seclusion within these two cities.

When the monk, Fahai, a native of Qujiang in Shaozhou, first visited the Patriarch, he asked, "The mind is the Buddha. May you please explain this [sentence] to me?"

The Master said, "When preceding thoughts do not arise, this is mind; When succeeding thoughts aren't cut off, this is Buddha; that which creates all forms is the mind; that which transcends all forms is Buddha. If I were to explain it fully, I could go on for eons without finishing. Listen to my poem:

When it is of the mind, it's called wisdom,
When it is of the Buddha, it's called concentration.

Concentration and wisdom equally present,
Then all is clean and pure in the mind.

If you can understand this teaching,
Then practice it within your self-nature.

Its function is fundamentally birthless,
It is virtuous to cultivate both.

Fahai suddenly became enlightened upon hearing these words. He spoke a poem in praise:

The mind is the origin of the Buddha,
By not understanding, I wronged myself.

I now know the cause of concentration and wisdom,
By the practice of both, one can transcend all things.

The monk Fada, a native of Hongzhou, left home at the age of seven and often recites the Lotus Sutra. He came to pay his respects to the Patriarch but did not touch his head to the ground.

The Master rebuked him, "A bow that does not reach the ground. Isn't it better not to bow? You must have something on your mind. What do you practice?"

The monk said, "The Lotus Sutra, which I have already read three thousand times."

The Master said, "If you read ten thousand and can comprehend the meaning of the scriptures without feeling that you are superior to others, then you can walk side by side with me. You are now parading this achievement and don't know your mistakes. Now listen to my verse:

Reverence is fundamentally for cutting off egotism,
Why do you not touch your head to the ground?

Having the illusion of selfhood produces transgression,
Forgetting merit, then your wealth is immeasurable.

The Master asked again, "What's your name?"

The monk replied, "Fada^[56]."

The Master said, "Your name is Fada, but when have you ever understood the Dharma?" He spoke this poem:

Your name is Fada,
Reciting the sutra diligently without rest.

But recitation is mere sound,
The understanding mind is the Bodhisattva.

Since you have such a karmic affinity,
I will now explain to you:

Have faith in the Buddha that is without words,
The lotus flower will bloom from the mouth.

After listening to the poem, Fada repented and expressed gratitude, saying, "From now on, I will be humble and respectful to everyone. I recited the Lotus Sutra but did not understand the meaning of the sutra, so there were doubts in my mind; Reverent Master, your wisdom is vast and great, so please briefly explain the sutra's meaning."

The Master said, "Fada, the Dharma is profoundly accessible to comprehend, but your mind has not comprehended it. The sutra is without doubt; it is your mind that doubts. Since you recited this sutra, what do you take to be its teaching?"

Fada said, "The disposition of this student is slow-witted. I have only recited the words. So how could I understand the essential teaching?"

The Master said, "I don't recognize the words, but if you recite the sutra for me once, I will explain it."

Fada recited the sutra out loud until he came to the chapter on analogies. Then, the Master said, "Stop! The central teaching of the sutra is the fundamental of causes and conditions and the Buddha's appearance in the world. No matter how many parables are said, it will not surpass this. What are the causes and conditions? The sutra says, 'All the world-honored Buddhas manifest on earth through the causes and conditions only for one great cause.' The so-called great event is the true knowledge and vision of the Buddha. Worldly people attach themselves to forms under the delusion of the external world. And deluded under an inward delusion, they attach themselves to emptiness. If in the world of forms one can be unattached from forms, and in the world of emptiness one can be unattached from emptiness, then there are no delusions within or without. If you realize this teaching, your mind will awaken in a single moment. That is to recognize the true knowledge and vision of the Buddha. Buddha is enlightenment of which there are four aspects:

1. Open to the knowledge and vision of enlightenment
2. Practice the knowledge and vision of enlightenment
3. Awaken to the knowledge and vision of enlightenment
4. Enter the knowledge and vision of enlightenment

"If upon hearing this, open and practice, one should be able to awaken and enter. That is the true knowledge and vision of the Buddha, which is manifesting because of your true self-nature. However, you should be careful not to misinterpret the sutra and have a mistaken view of another path. If you watch someone else in the process of opening, practicing, awakening, and entering and think, 'This must be the true knowledge and vision of the Buddha. However, it has no fate for ordinary people like me.' Such an interpretation is to slander the scriptures and the Buddha. It is because he is a Buddha already, perfect in

knowledge and vision. So, what use would it be for him to open to it again?

"Don't seek it outside yourself, for there is no other Buddha. It is because all ordinary people, with their greed and love of temporal conditions, have covered their brilliance from themselves, and so external incidents disturb them. That's why the World Honored One appeared in the world from samadhi, painstakingly using all kinds of eloquence to persuade them to stop their greed and other delusions and refrain from seeking outside their minds. This way, there might be no duality between themselves and the Buddha. That is opening to the knowledge and vision of enlightenment."

"I also often advise everyone to open up to the knowledge and vision of the Buddha in their minds. However, people in the world are confused, deluded, and commit offenses. Their speech may be good, but their minds are vicious, greedy, hateful, envious, and given over to flattery, deceit, and arrogance. Infringe on others and damage other things. It is why they open the knowledge and vision of sentient beings [and not of the Buddha]. If you can have an upright mind, constantly develop wisdom, illuminate your mind, and practice what's good without creating evil, this is how you can open your vision and knowledge of Buddha. You must focus on opening the knowledge and vision of the Buddha and not open to the knowledge and vision of sentient beings. To open the knowledge and vision of the Buddha is to be in the world of the Buddha. To open the knowledge and vision of sentient beings is to be still in the world of sentient beings. If all you do is work hard in reciting the Lotus Sutra, thinking of it as a task, what is the difference between this and the plow cow chasing its tail?"

After hearing this, Fada asked, "According to this, as long as you can understand the scriptures, then you don't have to recite the scriptures?"

The Master replied, "What is wrong with the Buddhist scriptures themselves? Did it hinder your recitation? Delusion or realization lies in the individual. Loss or gain is due to oneself. If you recite the scriptures with your mouth and practice with your

mind, that is to turn the sutra. If reciting the scriptures with your mouth and don't practice with your mind. That that is to be turned by the sutra, listen to me:

When deluded in mind, the Lotus rotates us,
When awakened in mind, one rotates the Lotus,
Reciting the sutra so long without understanding,
It is to make yourself the enemy of its meaning;

Without thought, that is the proper recitation,
With thoughts, then your recitation is wrong,
To be unattached regardless with or without,
You will always ride the cart of the white ox.

While listening to this poem, Fada couldn't help but be moved and wept. When he heard the spoken words, he immediately realized and said to the Master, "From long ago until the present, I have never turned the Lotus, but the lotus has been turning me."

Fada asked again, "The Lotus Sutra says, 'All the great śrāvakas^[57] and bodhisattvas, even if they exhaust all their thought and evaluating, cannot fathom the wisdom of the Buddha.' Now, you allow that an ordinary person has only to realize his mind and may then call it the knowledge and vision of the Buddha. But, if it is not a person of superior disposition, it might lead them to have doubt and slander the sutra. Furthermore, the sutra speaks of three carts: the cart of the goat, deer, and white ox. How is it to distinguish? May you please explain this to me?"

The Master said, "The sutra's meaning is quite clear; it is you who is mistaken. The disciples of all three vehicles are unable to fathom the Buddha's wisdom because of their error in trying to evaluate. Trying to figure it out as much as possible, they only get further away from the truth. From the start, the Buddha speaks for the sake of ordinary people, not for the sake of other Buddhas. Those who didn't believe this truth were free to withdraw from the meeting. They were completely unaware that

they were sitting on the cart of the white ox, so they sought the three vehicles outside the gate. Furthermore, the sutra clearly explains that there is only one vehicle of Buddhism, and there are no other vehicles. Whether there might be two or three or countless numbers of expedient stories, metaphors, and sayings, the teachings constitute the one buddha vehicle. Why don't you wake up to the fact that the three carts were expedient preliminaries for people who needed them in the past? The truth is that there is but one vehicle, and it is what sentient beings of the present need. It teaches you to go from the false and return to the truth. After reverting to the truth, then the truth will also be nameless. You should know that this treasure and wealth is your own for your use. So do not further give it for your father's use, your children's use, or any other idea of its use; this is what it means to observe the Lotus Sutra. Then from eon to eon, your hands will never let go of the scripture. From morning to night, there is no time you are not reciting it."

From the instruction, Fada felt over-joyed from the revelatory inspiration, so he used a poem to praise:

Reciting the Lotus Sutra three thousand times
Extinguishing from just one sentence at Caoxi

Not knowing the cause of why the Buddhas appear
How can I cease the delusion since the tribulation?

Three carts of sheep, deer, and ox are an expediency
The beginning, middle, and end is perfectly explained

Who knew that within the house of fire
Dwells the righteous lord of the Dharma

The Master said, "From now on, you can be called a true chanting monk." Fada has since realized the profound and mysterious truth and has not stopped his recitation.

There was a monk who was Zhitong, from Anfeng, Shouzhou. Initially, he had read the Lankavatara Sutra more than a thousand times, but he couldn't understand the meaning of the three bodies (trikaya) and four wisdoms. So, he respectfully sought the Master to explain their meanings.

The Master said, "The so-called trikaya are: Pure Dharmakaya of Buddha, is your self-nature; Sambhogakaya of Buddha, is your wisdom; Myriad Nirmanakaya of Buddha, is your conduct. Therefore, speaking of the trikaya as apart from original nature, that is to have the bodies without having wisdom. To remember that the three bodies have no self-nature is to understand the four wisdoms of Bodhi. Hear my poem, which says:

Self-nature originally had three bodies,
Forming the four wisdoms when perfected,
Without excluding the external sight and sound,
One can ascend to the Buddha-realm.

These teachings I'm explaining to you,
Believe and be without delusion forever,
Don't learn from those who seek the external,
Talking all day about the Bodhi with their mouth.

Zhitong asked, "Can I ask the master to tell me the meaning of the four wisdoms?"

The Master said, "If you understand the three bodies, then you will understand the four wisdoms. Why do you ask further? If we discuss the four wisdoms apart from the three bodies, this would be called wisdom without bodies. Even if there is wisdom, it would be equivalent to being without wisdom." He spoke another poem, saying:

The wisdom of the great round mirror is pure by nature,
The wisdom of universal nature is the mind without sickness,
The wonderful discerning wisdom sees without falsehood^[58],

The wisdom of unrestricted activity^[59], like the round mirror of wisdom.

Five, eight, six, seven, cause and effects transform,
They are merely useful names but have no real nature,
Without lingering sentiments upon realizing the way,
Prospering forever and abiding in the Naga^[60] concentration.

"What I have described above is the change of consciousness into wisdom. The teaching says, 'The first five consciousnesses transform into the wisdom of unrestricted activity; the sixth consciousness transforms into the wonderful discerning wisdom; the seventh consciousness transforms to become the wisdom of universal nature; the eighth transforms into the wisdom of the great round mirror.' So, though the sixth and seventh contain the cause. The first five and the eighth have the results of the transformation. It is only a change of their names and not a transformation of their essence."

Zhitong immediately understood the four wisdoms of nature after hearing the verse, so he said in a poem:

The three bodies are originally my real nature,
The four wisdoms are my original bright mind,
When the bodies and wisdoms fuse without obstruction,
Then one responds to all things according to their forms.

Deliberately cultivating is an entirely false activity,
Guarding over them is also not the best method,
Wonderful insight illuminated by the Master,
Now at last, I will forget the stain of names.

A monk named Zhichang from Guixi, Xinzhou, who became a monk in childhood and aspired to see into his nature, came to pay his respects one day.

The Master asked him, "Where are you from, and what do you seek?"

Zhichang replied, "Your disciple recently went to Baifeng Mountain in Hongzhou to pay my respects to High Master Datong and heard his teaching on seeing one's nature and achieving Buddhahood. As I have not yet resolved my doubts, I have come from a great distance to bow reverently and request the Master's compassionate instruction."

The Master said, "What did he say to you? Try to repeat it to me."

Zhichang said: "When I got there, I lived for about three months without receiving his teachings. So then, because of my eagerness to seek the Dharma, one night, I entered the abbot's room alone and asked him, 'What are one's original mind and original nature?'"

"He said, 'Have you ever seen the void?'"

"I replied, 'I have seen it.'"

"He asked again: 'Does the void you see have any appearance?'"

"I replied: 'The void has no form, so what is the appearance?'"

"He said, 'Your nature is like the void. To understand that there is nothing to see is the right view; knowing that there is nothing to be known is true knowledge. There is no green nor yellow, long nor short. Just see that the fundamental source is clean and pure. The essence of Bodhi is perfect and bright: this is to realize the true nature and achieve Buddhahood. It is the knowledge and vision of the Buddha.'"

"Although I listened to his instruction, I still couldn't solve my inner doubts, so I beg the Master to teach me."

The Master said, "Your former master's explanation still has the concepts of knowing and seeing, and that's why it can't make you fully understand. Now I will give you a poem:

Not seeing a single Dharma is to retain no-seeing,
Like how the floating clouds obscure the sun,
Not to know a single Dharma is to retain not-knowing,
Like a flashing of lighting piercing through the emptiness.

Knowing and seeing arise in the twinkling of an eye,

When seen wrongly, can expedients be understood?
Understand your erroneous mistakes in every instant,
The numinous brilliance of the self will always manifest.

After Zhichang had listened to this poem, his mind suddenly opened in enlightenment. So, he also said a poem:

The baseless arising of knowing and seeing,
Attaching to forms when seeking the Bodhi,
Harboring a single thought of enlightenment,
How can one transcend above former delusions?

The source of enlightenment is in self-nature,
It was in vain following the twist-turning flow,
But had I not entered the Patriarch's room,
I would still be adrift between the two shadows.

One day, Zhichang asked the Master and said, "The Buddha teaches the three vehicles of the Dharma, but also the Supreme Vehicle, and I do not yet understand it. So, I wish you would instruct me."

The Master said, "You should observe your mind and don't cling to the forms of the Dharma outside your mind. There are no four vehicles in the Dharma, but people's minds differ. From sight, hearing, and reciting is the small vehicle. The person who realizes and understands the meaning of the Dharma is the middle vehicle. Those who practice according to the Dharma belong to the great vehicle. To comprehend completely and entirely the ten thousand Dharmas, not to be attached to anything, to sever all forms and methods, without gaining a single thing, that is the Supreme Vehicle. The vehicles are a matter of practice that is not of verbal discussion. You should practice by yourself; you don't have to ask me. At all times, your self-nature is as it is."

Zhichang thanked the Master for enlightenment and served the Master for the rest of his life.

One day, a monk named Zhidao from Nanhai, Guangzhou, asked the Master, "Since I have left home [to become a monk], I have spent more than ten years studying the Nirvana Sutra and have still not understood its main principles. Therefore, I wish the Master would bestow his explanation to me."

The Master asked, "What is it you do not understand?"

Zhidao said, "All actions are impermanent, whether rising or ceasing; when rising and ceasing is gone, there is the bliss of joyful cessation. That is the part which I have doubt."

The Master asked, "What doubts do you have?"

Zhidao said, "All sentient beings have two bodies: the physical body and the Dharma-body. The physical body is impermanent; there is life and death. The Dharma-body is permanent, and there is no knowing or awareness. It is said in the scriptures, 'When rising and ceasing is gone, and there is the bliss of joyful cessation.' but I do not know which body is experiencing joyful cessation and which receives the bliss. The four elements will disperse when it ceases if it's the physical body. That is undoubtedly suffering, and suffering cannot be bliss. If the Dharma body is in joyful cessation, it is the same as grass, trees, and tiles; what then enjoys the bliss? Furthermore, the Dharma-nature is the origin of arising and ceasing, and the five aggregates are the function of arising and ceasing, for there is one origin and five functions. Arising and ceasing are perpetual. At the time of arising, the functions arise from the origin. And at the time of cessation, the functions return to their source. If they are allowed to arise again, sentient beings will never perish. If they are not allowed to arise, they will always return to the state of joyful cessation, which is no different from insentient things. Thus, Nirvana would suppress all Dharmas, and there would not even be any arising. How could there be bliss?"

The Master said, "You are a disciple of Buddhism. So why do you study the erroneous views of annihilation and permanence and criticize the Dharma of the Supreme Vehicle? According to what you said, there is another Dharma body other than the

physical body. So, it must be apart from arising and ceasing to seek joyful cessation. Moreover, you propose that there is a body that enjoys the permanence and bliss of Nirvana. That is to cling to samsara and crave worldly pleasures."

"You should know that the Buddha preached for all the deluded sentient beings who mistook the union of the five aggregates [in the form of a physical body] as their selves, distinguishing all Dharmas as external forms of matter, covet life and fear death. So, they drift from moment to moment, not knowing that it is an empty, false, illusory fantasy. They suffer from the cycle of life and death in vain and regard the permanent joy of Nirvana as a form of suffering. All day long, they sought after something else. Hence, taking pity on them, the Buddha revealed the true joy of Nirvana. In an instant, there was no form of arising to be seen; in a moment, there was no form of ceasing to be found. There was no rising or ceasing to extinguish. It is the manifestation of joyful cessation, and its manifestation is incomparable, being permanent and blissful. Of this joy, there is neither a recipient nor a non-recipient. How can there be categories of one essence and five functions? How can Nirvana suppress all Dharmas, and there would not even be any arising? That is to slander the Buddha and destroy the Dharma. Listen to my poem:

The supreme peerless Nirvana,
Perfect, bright, serene, and illuminating,
Ordinary people and fools call it death,
The uninitiated grasp at it as annihilation.

Those who seek the second vehicle,
Regard it as a state of inactivity,
These notions arise entirely from emotions,
Forming basis of the sixty-two wrong views.

Foolishly establishing empty names,
How can these be genuine principles?
Only those who far transcend beyond,

Understands there's no grasp nor reject.

Knowing the Dharma of the five aggregates,
And of the false ego amid the five aggregates,
Outward appearances all a mass of physical images,
Marks for each and every type of tone and sound.

All equally are like the illusion of dreams,
Not arising the views of ordinary people or sages,
Nor forming an interpretation of Nirvana,
Eradicating the two extremes^[61] and three periods.

Constantly responding to the functions of the senses,
Without ever arising the thought of their functions,
Distinguishing between all the Dharmas,
Without arising the thought of distinguishing.

Even when the fire of eon's end burns to the ocean depth,
Or when the blowing winds pound the mountains together,
Yet this true, permanent bliss of joyful cessation,
Is the essence of Nirvana's unchanging suchness.

I have struggled to explain it fully now,
For you to abandon your erroneous views,
If you do not follow it by mere words alone,
It will enable you to understand a part of it.

After listening to the verses, Zhidao was greatly enlightened,
overwhelmed with joy and enthusiasm. Then he made
obeisance and withdrew.

There was a Chan Master named Xingsi, born in the Liu family in Ancheng, Jizhou. Hearing of the flourishing influence of the Dharma at Caoxi, Xingsi went directly there to pay homage and asked, "What should I do to not fall from the successive categories?"

The Master said, "What have you done before?"

He said, "I don't even do the Noble Truths^[62]."

He replied, "If I haven't even practiced the Noble Truths yet, what class is there to fall?"

The Master valued him very much and ordered him to be the leader of the assembly.

One day, the Master said to him, "You should go off somewhere to educate and not cut off the teaching."

After inheriting the Dharma, he returned to Qingyuan Mountain, Jizhou, where he disseminated the Dharma and taught people; he had the posthumous title Chan Master Hongji.

Chan Master Huaijang was the son of the Du family in Jinzhou. Initially, he went to Mount Song to pay homage to Master Huian, and Master Huian sent him to Caoxi to study. When he arrived at Caoxi, he bowed piously, and the Master asked him, "Where are you from?"

He replied, "From Mount Song."

The Master asked, "What is it that comes like this?"

He said, "It's wrong to say it is like a thing is off the point."

The Master asked, "Then can it still be cultivated and verified?"

He replied, "Cultivation and verification are not absent, but it is impossible to be tainted by defilement."

The Master said, "It is this lack of taint by defilement which all the Buddhas value. You are like this as I am like this."

At that moment, Huaijen understood it clearly and served the Master for fifteen years, gradually penetrating more deeply into the profound subtlety of the teachings. Later, he went to Mount Hengshan in Nanyue to expound on the teachings of Chan Buddhism. As a result, he had the posthumous title Chan Master Dahui^[63].

Chan Master Yongjia Xuanjue was the son of the Dai family in Wenzhou. Since childhood, he studied the sutras and was proficient in the teachings of the Tiantai School. Because of reading the Vimalakirti Sutra, he was able to understand the

mind clearly. By chance, he met Xuance, a disciple of the Master, and had a pleasant conversation.

Xuance asked, "Under which teacher did you obtain the Dharma?"

He answered, "I have read many sutras and scriptures, receiving each from a master. Later on, from the Vimalakirti Sutra, I realized the doctrine of the Buddha's mind, only there is no one to confirm for me yet."

Xuance said, "It was possible to self-realize without a teacher before the advent of Buddha Bhīṣmagarjitasvararāja^[64]. But, afterward, all those who self-realized without a teacher were natural outsiders of the way."

Xuanjue said, "I hope Benevolent Sir can confirm it for me."

Xuance said, "My words are of little worth. The Sixth Patriarch is in Caoxi, and people gather there like clouds from four directions. And they are all people who have received the Dharma. Therefore, I can go with you if you want to go."

So Xuanjue came with Xuan Ce to visit the Master. On arriving, he walked around the Master three times, shook the tin stick, then stood still.

The Master said, "A monk should understand the three thousand majestic rituals and eighty thousand fine deeds; from what place does this Virtuous One come from, and why are you so arrogant?"

Xuanjue replied, "The issue of life and death is a serious matter, for life is impermanent and comes and goes quickly."

The Master said, "Why don't you realize no-birth? So, you can understand that there is no such thing as swiftness in the coming and going of life?"

He said, "If one recognizes the self-nature is inherently free of birth and death, and since there is no birth and death, there is no swiftness."

The Master said, "That is true, that is true."

Only then did Xuanjue make obeisance, thank the Master, and proceed to take his leave at once.

The Master said, "Isn't it too quick to go back like this?"

He said, "There is no movement in the first place, so how is there quickness?"

The Master asked, "Who knows there is no movement in the first place?"

He replied, "It is you, Benevolent Sir, who has given rise to distinctions in your mind."

The Master said, "You have deeply realized the meaning of no birth."

He asked, "Since it is no-birth, where does the meaning come from?"

The Master said, "If there is no meaning, who will make the distinction?"

He answered, "Distinction itself is also meaningless."

The Master said, "Very well! Please stay for one night."

Since that time, people have called him 'One Night Stay'. Later, he wrote the "Song of the Way of Enlightenment," which circulated widely. Posthumously, he was called Master Wusang; during his lifetime, they called him [Great Master] Zhenjue^[65].

Chan Master Zhihuang first studied under the Fifth Patriarch and claimed to have obtained the 'right receiving'^[66]. For a long time, he had been practicing meditation in a small temple for twenty years. When the Master's student Xuance reached Heshuo^[67] during his traveling, he heard of Zhihuang's reputation and visited the temple where he was staying, asking him, "What are you doing here?"

Zhihuang said, "Enter into concentration."

Xuance said, "When you talk about entering into concentration, is it with the mind? Or is it a mindless entry? If it is a mindless entry, all insentient beings such as grass, trees, tiles, and stones should have attained concentration; if it is an entry with the mind, all sentient beings with consciousness should also have attained concentration."

Zhihuang said, "When I enter concentration, I do not see any mind or no mind."

Xuance said, "You are in permanent concentration if you do not see a mind with or without a mind. So, what is there to say

about going in and out of meditation? If there is a discrepancy, it is not the great concentration."

Zhihuang was speechless. After a long time, he asked, "From which master's teaching did you inherit?"

Xuance said, "My Master is the Sixth Patriarch of Caoxi."

Zhihuang said, "What did the Sixth Patriarch take as concentration?"

Xuance said, "My Master describes it as subtle, profound, perfect, and silent; original nature's function is pure suchness. The five aggregates are fundamentally empty; the six sense objects are not real. Not out and not in; not still nor restless. The nature of concentration is without dwelling, free from the abiding of stillness of concentration. The nature of concentration is without birth, free from arising the idea of concentration. The mind is like emptiness, and there is no measure for emptiness."

When Zhihuang heard this truth, he came directly to visit the Master.

The Master asked, "Where have you come from?"

Zhihuang then recounted the story of his encounter with Xuance.

The Master said, "Indeed, it is, as Xuance said. If your mind is like emptiness and you do not cling to the idea of emptiness, you will function in application unhindered. Without mind in either motion or stillness. Forget the distinction between sage and mortal. Eliminate both subject and object. The characteristic of nature is suchness. There will naturally be no time when you're not in concentration."

[In another text, all it had was: The Master took pity that he had come from afar and cleared his remaining doubts.]

Then Zhihuang became enlightened, and the mind he had practiced for twenty years was utterly silent and without sight. On that night, the people in Hebei heard a voice in the air, 'Chan Master Huang has attained enlightenment today.'

Afterward, he thanked the Master and returned to the vast area north of the Yellow River to teach all sentient beings.

A monk asked the Master, "What kind of person can obtain the teaching of Huangmei?"

The Master said, "Those who know the Dharma will get it."

The monk asked, "Your Reverence, have you obtained it?"

The Master said, "I do not know Buddha-Dharma."

The Master wanted to wash the clothes when he inherited one day. But there was no beautiful spring. So, he went to the back of the temple for about five miles, where he saw lush mountain and forest, with auspicious air circulating. The Master shook his staff and stood it upright on the ground, and a spring flowed forth where he pointed. The water collected into a pond, and he knelt to wash the robe.

Suddenly, a monk came to make obeisance, saying, "I am Fangbian, a native of Xishu. When I was in India, I saw Master Bodhidharma. He told me, 'Go to China quickly, where I have transmitted Mahākāśyapa's True Dharma Eye Treasury^[68] and saṃghāti^[69]. It has been transmitted through six generations and is now in Shaozhou, Cao Xi. So, you should go to make homage.' I have come from afar and would like to see the robe and bowl my Master has passed down."

After hearing this, the Sixth Patriarch showed him the mantle and asked him, "Reverent One, what sort of work do you engage in?"

Fangbian said, "I am very good at shaping Buddha statues."

The Sixth Patriarch said to him straightly, "Try to shape one that is of me."

After hearing this, Fangbian was at a loss for words. So, after a few days, he sculpted a seven-inch-high statue of the Sixth Patriarch that was wonderful in every detail. He presented this statue to the Sixth Patriarch, who laughed when he looked at it and said, "You only understand sculpting, not Buddha nature."

The Master stretched out his hand and rubbed the top of Fangbian's head, saying, "Eternally be a field of blessings for men and gods."

There was a monk who cited the poem of the Chan Master Wolun:

Wolun has the tricks,
To break a hundred thoughts,
Mind not rising in response to situations,
Bodhi grows longer day by day.

When the Master heard it, he said, "This verse does not clarify the mind. If you follow this verse, you will not only not see your nature but may have trouble and grow in ignorance." So, he revised the verse and composed another verse, saying:

Huineng has no tricks,
Constantly a hundred thoughts,
Mind rise in response to situations,
How could the Bodhi grow longer?

Chapter Eight: Sudden and Gradual

At that time, the Patriarch lived in the Baolin Monastery in Caoxi, and Master Shen Xiu lived in the Yuquan Monastery in Jingnan. At that time, both sects flourished, and everyone called them South Neng and North Xiu. Therefore, there was a division between the two sects of North and South, gradual and sudden, and students did not know the distinction.

The Master said to the multitude, "There is only one Dharma. People have North and South. But the Dharma is one, some people see it early, and others see it late. So, what is meant by

sudden or gradual? There is no gradualness in the Dharma, but there are sharp and slow people. So that's why it's called sudden or gradual.

However, the disciples of Master Shenxiu often ridiculed the Sixth Patriarch of the Southern Sect, saying what is to learn from him who does not know a single word? Master Shenxiu said, "He has already attained the wisdom of Buddha without a teacher and is deeply enlightened in the highest Dharma, so I am not as good as him. The Fifth Patriarch himself transmitted the robe and Dharma to him. Would he have done so without good cause? I regret that I cannot go all the way to be with him. It is in vain that I have received an honor from the nation. You should not stay here but go to Caoxi to visit him and decide for yourself."

One day, he ordered his disciple Zhicheng and said, "You are gifted and wise, so you can go to Caoxi for me and listen to the Dharma; if you hear anything, take it down well and come back and tell me."

Zhicheng then followed the order to go to Caoxi. When he arrived, he followed the crowd to participate in the assembly but did not say where he had come from beforehand.

At that time, the Patriarch told the gathering, "Someone has come to steal the Dharma today. And is lurking in this Dharma assembly of ours."

As soon as he heard this, he came out from the public and bowed [to the Sixth Patriarch], explaining in detail why he had come to seek the Dharma.

The Master said, "You come from the Yuquan Temple and should be considered a spy."

Zhicheng said, "No."

The Master said, "Why not?"

Zhicheng said, "You can say it is before I stated the intention of coming, but since I have stated it, it is not."

The Master said, "How does your teacher instruct the assembly?"

Zhicheng said, "My master often taught people to concentrate on the mind until it abides in stillness, and always practice

meditation without lying down."

The Master said, "To concentrate on the mind until it abides in stillness, that is a disease, not meditation. What good does it do to sit for a long time? Listen to my verse:

When living, sit and not lie down,
When dead, lie down and not sit.
It is nothing but stinking bones,
Where is the basis of merit and demerit?

Zhicheng bowed again and said, "I have been studying with Master Xiu for nine years, but I have not been able to realize it. Life and death are of great importance to the disciple. May I ask you, out of your great compassion, to instruct me further?"

The Master said, "I have heard your teacher teaches students morality, concentration, and wisdom. What does your teacher say about morality, concentration, and wisdom? Please tell me."

Zhicheng said, "Master Shenxiu said, 'To refrain from all evil is called morality, to practice all kinds of virtue is called wisdom, and to purify one's mind is called concentration. That is what he said. So, I wonder what Dharma Your Reverence teaches the students on?"

The Master said, "If I say I have the Buddha's Dharma for people, I would be deceiving you. It is only to follow expedients to relieve people of their bondage and give it a false name called concentration. As for what your teacher said about morality and wisdom, it is quite unbelievable, and I have a different opinion about morality and wisdom."

Zhicheng said, "There is only one kind of morality and wisdom. How can it be more different?"

The Master said, "Your teacher's words of morality and wisdom are to guide people to the Mahayana, and my morality and wisdom are to guide people to the Supreme Vehicle. The difference in comprehension and understanding makes the difference in the speed of seeing. Do you hear the difference between what I say and what he says? The Dharma I speak is not separate from self-nature. If one speaks apart from self-nature, it is speaking in pretense and would constantly obscure the self-nature. You must know that all Dharmas arise from self-

nature, this is the true teachings of morality, concentration, and wisdom. Listen to my verse:

Mind^[70] absent of faults is the morality of self-nature,
Mind absent of delusions is the wisdom of self-nature,
Mind absent of disorder is the concentration of self-nature,
Neither increasing nor decreasing the self is as firm as vajra^[71],

The body comes and goes from meditative consciousness^[72].
After hearing the verse, Zhicheng repented and thanked the Master, and presented a verse:

Five aggregates into an illusionary body
How can the illusionary be the ultimate?
Even if you return to true suchness^[73],
The Dharma will still be impure.

The Master agreed, then he said to Zhicheng, "Your teacher's morality, concentration, and wisdom are to advise those with a low disposition for wisdom, but my morality, concentration, and wisdom are to advise those with an excellent disposition for wisdom. If one can realize self-nature, one does not need to establish the idea of Bodhi and nirvana or the liberation of knowledge and vision. It is necessary to come to a state where there is without a single Dharma to obtain to establish all Dharmas. If one can comprehend this truth, that is to achieve the Buddha's Body, which is also Bodhi, Nirvana, and the liberation of knowledge and vision. Those who have already seen their nature can establish these Dharma names or not as they choose, free to come and go without any hindrance. To respond to all applications as they arise, to respond to all words as they arise. To see all manifestations without departing from the self-nature, that is, to attain self-effulgent divine power and playful samadhi^[74]; this is seeing nature."

Zhicheng asked the Master again, "What is the meaning of 'non-establishment'?"

The Master said, "It is when self-nature is free from wrongs, foolishness, and disorder, with the illumination of Bodhi in every moment, free from attachment to the appearances of Dharma, then you can be free and at ease. What else is there to establish

if one can be at ease across the three worlds and ten directions^[75]? Self-nature is from oneself, realization is instantaneous, and cultivation is immediate. There is no order of progression, so there is no need to establish all Dharmas. All Dharmas are inherently still and silent, so what order is there to establish?"

After hearing this, Zhicheng bowed in gratitude and wished to be his attendant, never ceasing to serve him from morning to night.

There was a monk from Jiangxi named Zhiche, whose original name was Zhang Xingchang. When he was a teenager, he had been a chivalrous warrior. Since the North and South Sects have divided to promote their teachings, although the two patriarchs do not distinguish between each other, the disciples competed with love and hate. At that time, the disciples of the Northern Sect had elected Master Shenxiu as the Sixth Patriarch. They feared that the Fifth Patriarch's passing of the robe and Dharma to the Sixth Patriarch would become known to the world, so they sent Xingchang to assassinate the Sixth Patriarch. However, the Master had a clear and bright mind and had already foreseen this, so he prepared ten taels of gold and placed them on a seat.

One night, Xingchang sneaked into the room of the Master and was about to stab him; the Master calmly stretched out his neck and received the blade.

Xingchang swung his blade three times but could not harm him.

The Master said:

The sword of virtue is not evil,
The sword of evil is not virtuous,
I only owe you the debt of gold,
I don't owe you the debt of life.

Xingchang was so frightened that he fainted on the ground, and it took him a long time before he woke up again; he begged for repentance and was willing to become a disciple. The Master gave the gold to Xingchang and said, "Leave for the time being,

for fear that my disciples will harm you if they know about it; then, you can change your appearance and come again after some more time, and I will accept you."

In compliance with the Master's order, Xingchang fled late that night. Later, he joined the monastic community.

One day he remembered the Master's words and came from a distance to pay his respects.

The Master said, "I have been thinking of you. How come you are so late?"

Xingchang said, "I am grateful to the monk for forgiving my sins in the past, but even though I am now a monk, I find it difficult to repay the Your Reverence's benevolence. Since I became a monk, I have often read the Nirvana Sutra, but I don't understand the meaning of permanence and impermanence, so I ask Your Reverence to be merciful and explain it to me."

The Master said, "What is called impermanence is the Buddha-nature; what is called permanence is the distinguishing mind of all good and evil Dharmas."

Xingchang said, "What Your Reverence said is the exact opposite of what the scriptures say."

The Master said, "What I teach is the seal of the Buddha-mind, so how would I dare go against what the Buddha said in the scriptures?"

Xingchang said, "The sutra says that Buddha-nature is permanent, but Your Reverence says it is impermanent. And all Dharmas of good and evil and even Bodhicitta^[76] are impermanent. Still, Your Reverence says they are permanent, which contradicts the sutra and makes me even more puzzled about this issue."

The Master said, "The Nirvana Sutra when I had heard the nun Wu Jincang recite it once in the past. I explained the main meaning of the sutra to her, and there was not a single word or meaning that did not fit the sutra, that is, what I am saying for you now, and it is still not different."

Xingchang said, "My understanding is shallow and foolish, so I hope Your Reverence will be merciful and enlighten me in detail."

The Master said: "Don't you understand? If Buddha-nature is permanent, what more is there to say about good and evil Dharmas? Since no one will develop an enlightenment-mind, even until the end of the infinite number of eons. Therefore, I say that Buddha's nature is impermanent, which is the true and constant truth that Buddha spoke. Besides, if all Dharmas are impermanent, then all Dharmas will have a self-nature to accept birth and death, and the true impermanent nature would not pervade all places. Therefore, I say that all good and evil Dharmas are permanent, which is the truth of impermanence spoken by the Buddha. However, those who follow the Second Vehicle insist that true permanence is impermanence, formulating The Eight Perverse Views. Therefore, the Buddha broke down their prejudices in his teaching of Nirvana, revealing true permanence, true happiness, true self, and true purity. You are now going against the sutra's true meaning by following the mere words. You take annihilation as impermanence and the certainty of death as permanent. That is to misunderstand the Buddha's subtle and wonderful last words. So even if you read the Scriptures a thousand times, what good will it do?"

Xingchang suddenly became enlightened and uttered a verse:

Because the mind clings to impermanence,
The Buddha said Nirvana has permanence,

Not understanding it is an expediency,
Like picking rubbles from spring pond.

But now, without expending any effort,
The Buddha-nature appears before me,

If the master had not taught it to me,
I would not have obtained it myself.

The Master said, "Now that you have attained complete enlightenment, you should be named Zhiche."

Hearing this, Zhiche replied to the Master with a bow of thanks and withdrew.

There was a child named Shenhui, the son of the Gao family in Rangyang, he was thirteen years old, and came from the Yuquan Temple in Jingnan to pay his respect.

The Master said, "You have come a long and difficult way, but do you come as one who has grasped the fundamentals? If you have the fundamentals, then you are the Master of your mind. Try and say something so that I can see your understanding."

Shenhui said, "I take the mind without abiding as the fundamental, and 'seeing' is the master."

The Master said, "How can you, a sāmaṇera^[77], speak so casually?"

Shenhui then asked, "When Your Reverence sits in meditation, does he see, or does he not see?"

The Master struck him three times with his staff and said, "When I strike you, does it hurt, or does it not hurt?"

Shenhui replied, "It also hurts and does not hurt."

The Master said, "I also see and do not see."

Shenhui asked, "How is it that you see and do not see?"

The Master said, "What I see is the frequent internal faults within myself, but I do not see the right and wrong of others. That is why I say I also see and do not see. What do you mean by also hurting and not hurting? If you don't have pain, you are just like wood and stone; if you have pain, you are just like a mortal, and you will have anger and hatred. You have not even seen your self-nature, and yet you dare to make a fool of people like this?"

After hearing these words, Shenhui bowed to the Master and thanked him.

The Master also said, "If you are confused in your mind and cannot see your original nature, you can ask a Good Advisor for the way to see your original nature. If your mind is enlightened, you can see your original nature and practice according to the Dharma. You are blind and do not see your nature, yet you come to ask me whether or not I see. I know my nature, but how

can I replace the ignorance in your mind? If you see your original nature, you can't replace the foolishness in my mind either. Why don't you know your nature instead of asking me whether I see it or not?"

Hearing this, Shenhui bowed to the Sixth Patriarch again with more than a hundred obeisance and asked for his forgiveness. From then on, he served the Master and never left his side.

One day, the Master said to the multitude, "I have something without a head or a tail. Without a name or a word, without a back or a front. But does anyone recognize it?"

Shenhui stepped forward and said, "This is the original nature of the Buddhas and the Buddha nature of Shenhui."

The Master said, "I have told you that there is no name and no word, but you still call it the original Buddha nature. So, even if you have a thatched roof in the future to live in, you will only be a person who has an understanding of the Buddha's teachings."

After the passing of the Master, Shenhui went to Jingluo, the capital of Luoyang, to promote the Sudden School's teaching of Caoxi. And he wrote the Records of Manifestation, which became widely circulated.

The Master saw that people from various sects were asking questions about the Buddha's teachings and that they all had bad intentions. So, he gathered them under his seat and said compassionately, "Those who study the Dharma should do away with all thoughts of good and evil. When there is no thought of good or evil, this is the state without a name but is falsely called self-nature, and this non-dual self-nature is called true reality. Establishing all teachings on the true nature, at these words, one should see one's nature."

After listening to the teachings, they all bowed in reverence and asked to serve him as their teacher.

Chapter Nine: The Imperial Summon

On the fifteenth day of the first month of the first year of the Shenlong reign (705 A.D.), Empress Dowager Zetian and Emperor Zhongzong issued a proclamation saying, "We have invited Huian and Shenxiu, the two masters, to come to the palace to make offerings. So, in the leisure time remaining after our myriad duties, we may investigate the One Vehicle. But both

masters humbly excused themselves, saying, 'In the south, there is the Chan Master Huineng, who has received the secret teachings of the Fifth Patriarch Hongren and is the one who has the transmission of the seal of the Buddha-mind; you should invite him.' We have now sent Xuejian, the palace chamberlain, with an imperial edict to invite the Master; we hope the Master will be compassionate and come to the capital swiftly."

The Master sent back a petition pleading illness, saying that he wished to spend his remaining years at the foot of the mountain.

Xuejian said, "The virtuous Chan masters in the capital say, 'If you want to attain the Dharma of the Buddha, you must sit in meditation and practice concentration. It is impossible to achieve liberation without practicing concentration.' I wonder what the Master's opinion is?"

The Master said, "One must realize the Dharma from one's mind. How is it to be in sitting? The Sutra says, 'If you say that the Buddha sits or lies down, this is practicing an evil path.' Why? Nothing comes, and nothing goes; nothing is born and destroyed, which is the pure meditation of the Buddha. The Dharmas are empty and silent. That is the pure sitting of the Buddha. There is no one way to prove the ultimate truth. What is there in sitting?"

Xuejian said, "After the disciple returns to the capital, their majesties will certainly ask me. And I hope the Master will be compassionate and instruct me the essentials of mind so that I can report to the two palaces and tell all those in the capital who are learning the Dharma. It is like lighting one lamp which sets a hundred thousand lamps ablaze to illuminate the dark places forever."

The Master said, "There is no distinction between light and darkness in the Dharma; light and darkness belong to the idea of alternations. To say that light never ends is relative because it also has an end, for the terms light and darkness are mutually opposites. The Vimalakirti Sutra says, 'The Buddha's Dharma is incomparable because there are no opposites.'"

Xuejian said, "Light is like wisdom, and darkness is like trouble. So, how can those who practice the Buddha's Way be free from beginningless birth and death if they do not use the light of wisdom to shine through ignorance and trouble?"

The Master said, "Affliction is Bodhi, it is not two things, and there is no difference. One who uses the light of wisdom to shine through afflictions of ignorance has the perspective of the second vehicle. That is the disposition of the sheep and deer cart. No one with superior wisdom and great disposition would have such an opinion."

Xuejian asked, "What is the view of Mahayana?"

The Master said, "Enlightenment and ignorance seem to the common person to be two different things, but those who have wisdom realize that there is no difference between their natures. The non-dual nature is the true nature of reality. The essence of true nature does not diminish in mortal fools, nor does it increase in sages. It does not disperse amid troubles, nor does it stagnate amid meditation; not cut off, nor is it permanent; it does not come and go, nor is it in the middle, nor is it inside or outside. It is not born, not extinguished. Nature's suchness is as it is, everlasting and unchanging, and is called the Dharma."

Xuejian asked again, "What differs between what the Master says about no birth, no death and what the laymen say?"

The Master said, "The no birth and no death spoken of by laymen is to use non-existence to end existence and to use existence to reveal non-existence. Their non-existence is not non-existence; what they call existence is not existence. Therefore, my explanation of no birth and no death is this: originally, there was no existence and no non-existence. For this reason, my explanation differs from that of others. To know the essence of the Buddha's teachings, you must not think about good and evil. You will naturally realize the pure body of the mind, which is clear and always silent and infinite in its wonders."

When Xuejian received the instruction, he suddenly became very enlightened, so he thanked the Master and returned to the capital, where he presented the words of the Master to the

emperor. Then, on the third of September of that year, giving an imperial edict. It commends and praises the Master. And it says, "On account of age and illness, the Master has declined [to come to the capital]. Yet, he practices and teaches the Dharma to benefit us all. He is indeed a source of the nation's virtues. The Master is like Vimalakirti, who pleaded illness in Vaishali. He transmits the mind of the Buddhas and discusses the nondual Dharma. Xuejian has transmitted the Master's instructions, which are the perceptual understanding of a Tathāgata. It must be due to accumulated good acts, abundant blessings, and good roots planted in former lives that we now have met with the Master when he appears in the world and has suddenly enlightened us to the Supreme Vehicle. We are deeply grateful for the Master's favor and will keep it uppermost in our minds without ceasing. We also presented him with a cassock robe and a crystal bowl. We ordered the Shaozhou provincial governor to rebuild the temple and convert the Master's former dwelling place into a temple to be called Guoen Monastery^[78]."

Chapter Ten: Transmission

One day, the Master called his disciples, Fahai, Zhicheng, Fada, Shenhui, Zhichang, Zhitong, Zhiche, Zhidao, Fazhen, and Faru, and said to them, "You are different from the rest of the disciples. After my death, you will all be Masters who abide in a separate area and teach the Dharma. I will now teach you how to explain the Dharma so that you do not lose the fundamentals of our school. When you speak the Dharma, you should first cite the three branches of the Dharma and apply the 36 pairs of

opposites. If there is out and out, it will fall on both sides. Don't deviate from your nature when you speak of the Dharma. If someone suddenly asks you about the Dharma, take the duality in his words and answer him with its opposite. In the end, the duality and opposition are all removed. There is nothing else to hold.

"The three categories of teaching are aggregates, realms, and entry. The five aggregates are form, feeling, perception, impulses, and consciousness. As to the entrances, there are twelve: the six external sense qualities of color, sound, odor, taste, stimulus, and incidents, and the six organs, the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind. The eighteen realms: six types of sensory data, the six senses, and the six consciousnesses. The self-nature can contain all Dharmas; it is the encompassing-store-consciousness. If the thought arises, this is the transmigration of consciousness. The six consciousnesses arise from the transmigration of consciousness, go out of the six sense organs, and outwardly contact the six sense qualities. And in this way, the eighteen realms all arise from the true nature of the Self. If the self-nature is evil, the eighteen realms will be evil; if the self-nature is right, the eighteen realms will be right. If it shows the use of evil, it is the use of sentient beings; if it shows the use of good, it is the use of a Buddha. What is the functioning based upon? It comes from self-nature.

"In terms of external insentience, there are five pairs of opposites: heaven and earth, sun and moon, light and dark, yin and yang, and water and fire. As to methods and terminology, there are twelve pairs of opposites: words versus Dharma, existence versus non-existence, form versus formlessness, characteristics versus without characteristics, defiled versus undefiled, appearances versus emptiness, movement versus stillness, clear versus muddy, mundane versus holy, monks versus laypeople, old versus young, large versus small. These are the twelve pairs of opposites.

"There are nineteen pairs of dharmas in the aspect of self-nature: long versus short, evil versus right, demented versus

wise, foolish versus wise, chaotic versus fixed, compassionate versus vicious, pure versus wrongful, straight versus crooked, real versus imaginary, dangerous versus peaceful, affliction versus Bodhi, permanent versus impermanent, compassion versus cruelty, happy versus angry, generosity versus avariciousness, advance versus retreat, birth versus death, Dharma body versus physical body, and spiritual body versus temporal body. These are the nineteen pairs of relatives.”

The Master said, "If one knows how to apply the 36 pairs of Dharma, one can make the path penetrate all the sutras and not fall into two sides. When talking to people, one should be able to be in all forms externally without clinging to all forms and have inward emptiness without clinging to emptiness. If you are completely attached to the forms, you will promote evil views; if you are completely attached to emptiness, you will grow in ignorance. Some of those who hold on to emptiness slander the sutras and say, 'There is no need for written words.' Since they say there is no need for words, they should not speak because written words are merely the marks of spoken language. They say, furthermore, that you can't establish the true Dharma on words and letters, but 'not-established' are two words and are words and letters. When they encounter others talking, they at once sneer at them, saying they are attached to words and letters. You should know that it isn't that they are only blindly delusion, but they also slander the sutras. Do not slander the sutras, or you will create infinite sins! The one seeking the true path by attaching to external forms or by lavish endowments of religious monasteries and debating the faults of existence, such a person will not be able to see his nature even after many eons. Listen, and cultivate according to the Dharma. You must not think about the hundred things, for this will cause obstacles on the path of Buddha. If one only listens to what is said but does not practice, it will lead to evil thoughts. Be sure to put the Dharma into practice, and in your teaching of the Dharma, do not dwell on forms. If you can understand and follow this way of speaking, using, practicing, and doing, you will not lose the purpose of this sect.

"If someone asks you about the meaning of Dharma, and the question is about existence, answer with non-existence; if they asked about non-existence, answer with existence. When they ask of the ordinary, respond with what is holy. And when they ask about what is holy, you should respond with the ordinary. You will generate the meaning of the Middle Way through the two modes of speaking. If you answer all the questions this way, you will not lose the truth of the Middle Way. If someone asks, 'What is darkness?' Then answer him, 'Light is the cause, and darkness is the condition; when light disappears, there is darkness. The light reveals the darkness, and the darkness reveals the light, and one is the cause of the other, and it becomes the meaning of the Middle Way.' You can answer all the rest of the questions in this way. When you teach the Dharma, follow this method in the future so you do not lose the central doctrine."

In the first year of the Daji reign, in the seventh month of Yanhe. The Master ordered his disciples to build a pagoda at Guoen Temple in Xinzhou. It was finally complete by the end of the following year's summer. Then, on the first day of July, the Master gathered his disciples and said, "I will be leaving this world in August, so if you have any questions, you must ask them before it is too late. Once I pass away, there will be no one to teach you."

When Fahai and the others heard this, they were all sad and tearful, but only Shenhui remained calm and did not cry.

The Master said, "The Young Master Shenhui can understand the equality of good and bad, not swaying by slander or praise, and does not feel sadness or happiness. No one else can do this. What kind of path have you been practicing in the mountains these years? For whom are you worrying and weeping now? If you are worried because you do not know where I am going, I know where I am going; if I did not know where I was going, I would not have told you in advance. I would not have told you in advance if I did not know where I was going. There is no birth, death, or coming and going of the Dharma nature, all of you sit down, and I will say a verse for

you. It is called the true-false, movement-stillness verse. If you recite this verse, you will be able to share the same mind as I am; if you practice according to this verse, you will not lose the purpose of the sect."

All the disciples made obeisance and asked the Master to say the verse. The verse went like this:

There is no truth in anything,
So do not see them as true,
If one regards them as truth,
It is seeing all that is not true.

If you can realize the truth in your mind,
Free from falsehoods, your mind is true,
If the mind is not free from falsehoods,
Where is truth where there is no truth?

Sentient beings are dynamic,
Insentient beings are motionless,
If you practice non-movement,
You are as the insentient things.

If you are seeking non-movement,
In motion, there is non-movement,
Non-movement is non-movement,
Insentient lacks the Buddha-seed.

Capacity to distinguish between forms,
The ultimate meaning of no movement,
As long as one can perceive in this way,
It is the function of one's true suchness.

I tell you, learners of the Dharma,
Make an effort and be careful,
Don't be under the gate of the Mahayana,
But cling to the wisdom of life and death.

If mutual discourses are in agreement,
Then discuss the Buddha's teachings,
If there is no correspondence, then
Greet cordially and wish happiness.

The sect is originally free of conflict,
Any conflict, the true doctrine is lost,
If you hold to the Dharma of rebellion
Then self-nature enters birth and death.

At that time, after hearing the verse, all the disciples bowed to the Sixth Patriarch. Then, understanding the Master's intention, they collected their scattered minds and practiced according to the correct teachings, not daring to deny them. Finally, knowing that the Master would not be able to live in the world for long, the Senior Seated Fahai bowed to the Master again and asked, "After Your Reverence's death, to whom will the clothes and teachings be passed on?"

The Master replied, "Since the time I lectured on the Dharma in Dafan Temple, transcriptions of my lectures have been circulating. Entitle it Dharma Treasure Altars Sutra. Therefore, you should guard this sutra and transmit it to all sentient beings. As long as you speak according to this sutra, it is called the Orthodox Dharma. Now, I will speak the Dharma on behalf of all of you. I will not transmit the robe because your roots of faith are genuine and mature and are competent to carry out the great task of teaching the Dharma. Therefore, following the intention of the former patriarch, Great Master Bodhidharma, in the meaning of the transmission poem, the robe should not be transmitted. His verse went:

I originally came to this land,
For transmitting the Dharma
and save the sentient beings,
A flower blossoming five petals,
The fruit naturally appears of itself."

The Master added, "Good Friends, all of you listen to my words. To attain the Buddha's all-embracing wisdom, you must

attain the Samadhi of One Form and Samadhi of One Practice. One can be in all places without abiding in any forms, amid all forms arising no hatred or affection, nor is there any clinging or renunciation, not caring about success or failure, at ease and tranquil, empty and harmonious. That is the Samadhi of One Form. If in all places, whether walking, living, sitting, or lying down, one is with a pure and upright mind, not moving from the Bodhimaṇḍa^[79], truly creating a pure land. That is the Samadhi of One Practice. If one can have these two samadhi, it is like a seed in the ground, which grows from being stored and nurtured, and eventually, the fruit ripens. The same is true of Samadhi of One Form and Samadhi of One Practice. The Dharma I speak of now is like the timely rain that universally moistens all of the great earth. Your innate Buddha nature is like all seeds that can sprout and grow when this timely rain nourishes it. Whoever accepts my teachings will surely attain Bodhi, and whoever practices what I say will achieve the wondrous fruit. Listen to my verse:

The mind contains a multitude of seeds,
The universal rain sprouts all the seeds,
Having realized the flowering conditions^[80],
Then the fruit of Bodhi comes into being.

After the Master finished his verse, he said, "The Dharma is without dualism; the same is true of the mind. The Dharma is pure and free from all forms. You must not be partial to 'looking at the stillness' and 'emptying the mind', for your mind is originally pure, and there is nothing to hold on to or abandon. Make your efforts and cherish them as you see fit."

At this point, the disciples bowed to the Master and withdrew.

On the eighth day of the seventh month, the Master suddenly said to his disciples, "I am going back to Xinzhou, so go and prepare the boat quickly."

Everyone firmly begged him to stay; the Master said, "All Buddhas appear in the world for the revelation of nirvana; where there is coming, there must be going; it is a natural principle; my body must also return somewhere."

They said, "Master! If you go to Xinzhou now, when can you come back again?"

The Master replied, "Leaves fall to their roots and are born with nothing to say."

They further asked, "Who has received the transmission of the True Dharma Eye Treasury."

The Master said, "Those who have the Dharma get it, those who have no mind pass through it."

They asked, "Is there anything difficulties in the future?"

The Master said, "About five or six years after my passing away, there should come a man to steal my head. Listen to my prediction:

Take head for supporting parents,
But the mouths must eat a meal,
When the case of 'Man' will occur,
The officials will be Yang and Liu.

And he said, "Seventy years after my passing away, two Bodhisattvas will come from the East, one a monk and one who is a layman. They will simultaneously establish my teaching and make it flourish, decorating the monasteries and making many transmissions."

They said, "We do not know through how many generations the teachings have passed from the first Buddha until now. Therefore, we wish you would be so kind as to explain this."

The Master said, "Since ancient times, Buddhas have entered the world are numberless and cannot uncountable. But now, I will begin with the last seven Buddhas: Vipassī Buddha, Sikhī Buddha, Vessabhū Buddha, Kakusandha Buddha, Koṇāgamana Buddha, Kassapa Buddha, Gautama Buddha. From Gautama Buddha, the transmission went to:

1. Arya Mahākāshyapa
2. Arya Ānanda
3. Arya Śānavāsa
4. Arya Upagupta
5. Arya Dhrtaka

6. Arya Miccaka
7. Arya Vasumitra
8. Arya Buddhanandi
9. Arya Buddhmitra
10. Arya Pārśva
11. Arya Punyayaśas
12. Arya Aśvaghōṣa
13. Arya Kapimāla
14. Arya Nāgārjuna
15. Arya Kānadeva
16. Arya Rāhulata
17. Arya Sanghānandi
18. Arya Sanghayaśas
19. Arya Kumārata
20. Arya Śayata
21. Arya Vasubandhu
22. Arya Manorhita
23. Arya Haklenayaśas
24. Arya Simhabodhi
25. Arya Vasiasita
26. Arya Punyamitra
27. Arya Prajñātāra
28. Arya Bodhidharma
29. Great Master Huike
30. Great Master Sengcan
31. Great Master Daoxin
32. Great Master Hongren

I, Huineng, am the thirty-third generation ancestor. From the beginning, the patriarchs have each had successors. In the future, you must not make mistakes when it comes to letting the transmission carry onward.

The assembly heard and faithfully accepted what the Master had said, bowed, and withdrew.

On the third day of the eighth month of the year Guichou, in the second year of Emperor Xuanzong's reign. After eating a

meal at Guon Temple in Xinzhou. He told all the disciples, "Sit down in your seats, for I am about to take leave of you."

Fahai asked, "What teachings will Your Reverence leave behind for future generations so that those who are confused will be able to see their Buddha-nature?"

The Master said, "All of you listen attentively. If the deluded people of future generations can recognize sentient beings, this is Buddha-nature. But not knowing sentient beings makes it difficult to find the Buddha even after ten thousand eons; I will now teach you to recognize the sentient beings in your mind and see the Buddha-nature in your mind. If you wish to see the Buddha, recognize sentient beings, for it is sentient beings who are confused about the Buddha and not the Buddha who is confused about sentient beings. When awakened to self-nature, sentient beings are Buddhas; when self-nature is disillusioned, Buddhas are sentient beings. When one's self-nature is in a state of equality, sentient beings are Buddhas. When one's self-nature is with ill-intent, Buddhas are the sentient being. If your mind is sinister and unrighteous, it is the same as Buddha amid sentient beings. If a single thought is truthful, it is the same as sentient beings becoming Buddhas; we have Buddha in our mind, and this Buddha of self-natured is the true Buddha. If you do not have a Buddha-mind, where can you find the true Buddha? Your mind is the Buddha, don't doubt it anymore. Nothing outside the mind can establish, and all Dharmas manifest from our minds. That is why the sutra says, 'When the mind is alive, all kinds of Dharmas are born with it, and when the mind is dead, all kinds of Dharmas are dead with it.' I now leave you with a verse to bid farewell, called the verse of 'Self-nature of Buddha'. If future generations understand the meaning of this verse, they will naturally be able to see their original mind and achieve the Dharma of the Buddha Way."

The verse says:

True suchness of self-nature is the true Buddha,
Deviant views and three poisons are the demon king,

When there is evil confusion, the demon king is the one's home,

When there is the right perspective, the Buddha presides in the hall.

Deviant views and three poisons arise in our nature,
That is for the demon king to come to reside in one's home,
Right views cast the three poisons from the mind,
Demon king becomes the Buddha, truth without falsehood.

Dharmakāya, Saṃbhogakāya, and Nirmāṇakāya—
The three bodies are originally of one body,
Realizing them within your nature,
Perfect one's change to realizing Buddhahood.

Fundamentally the Nirmāṇakāya births the pure nature,
Pure nature is eternally within the Nirmāṇakāya,
Pure nature causes Nirmāṇakāya to walk on the right path,
In the future, completion and perfection will be endless.

Licentious nature is the source of the pure nature,
Removing lust at once is the pure nature's body,
Each of you, abandon the five desires within your nature,
In this instant, see that your self-nature is the truth.

In this life, if you can encounter the Sudden Teaching,
The sudden realization of self-nature is to see the World-Honored One,
If you cultivate by seeking to become a Buddha,
You won't know where to seek the truth.

If you can see the truth within your mind,
That truth is the origin of Buddhahood,
Not seeing your nature and seeking Buddha outside,
It is very foolish to have such thoughts.

The teaching of the Sudden School is left to you now,

The deliverance of all beings starts from self-cultivation,
I tell you and those studying the Dharma in the future,
It is great foolishness not to have these views.

When the Master finished this verse, he told the assembly, "All of you, please take care of yourselves. After I have passed away, do not weep and grieve as ordinary people do. If you wear mourning clothes when you receive condolences, you are not my disciples because these activities are not consistent with the true Dharma. Instead, realize your mind and see the nature of your mind, which has no movement or stillness, birth or death, coming or coming, right or wrong, dwelling or departing. I am afraid your mind is still under delusion, and you don't understand my meaning. Therefore, I will tell you again to make you see your nature; after my death, practice according to my teachings as if I were still alive. Because if you go against the teaching, it would be of no benefit to you, even if I were still in this world." Then he said another verse:

Still and unmoving, not cultivating goodness^[81].
Ease and leisure, not creating the deeds of evil.
Quiet and serene, clearness in sight and hearing.
Vast and empty, the mind without an attachment.

When the Master had finished his verse, he sat until the third hour [of the night] and suddenly told his disciples, "I am going." Then, he passed away in a flash. At that time, a strange fragrance filled the room. The sky was clear, the rainbow illuminated the ground, the trees turned white, and the birds and animals cried in sorrow.

In November, the officials of the three prefectures of Guangzhou, Shaozhou, Xinzhou, the monks, and the laypeople argued over who would receive the body. Since they could not decide, they burned incense and prayed, saying, "The smoke from the incense will indicate the direction in which the Master's body should return."

At that time, the smoke went straight to [the direction] of Caoxi. On November 13, they moved the shrine, the robe, and the bowl back to Caoxi.

On the 25th day of the 7th month of the following year, opening the casket, the disciple Fangbian embalmed the body with fragrant clay. Then, remembering the prediction about the taking of the head, they lacquered the Master's neck with metal sheets and placed his body in the pagoda. Suddenly a white light radiated from within the stupa and went straight up into the skies remaining for three days before it dispersed. The Prefect of Shaozhou reported this to the throne and received an imperial edict ordering to set up a monument to commemorate the Master's deeds.

The Master lived to be seventy-six years old. He received the transmission of the robe at the age of twenty-four, and when he was thirty-nine, he received the tonsure. He preached the Dharma to benefit sentient beings for thirty-seven years and transmitted the Dharma to forty-three people. At the same time, innumerable others awakened to the teachings and rose above the ordinary. The robe of faith that the Bodhidharma had handed down, the precious bowl presented by Emperor Zhongzong, and the lifelike image sculpted by Fangbien, together with other ritual objects, are entrusted to the attendant in charge of the stupa will always be stored at Baolin Monastery. The "Dharma Treasure Altars Sutra" has been handed down to reveal this school's principles, glorify the Three Jewels, and benefit all sentient beings universally.

[1] The Chinese text uses '善知识', which is Kalyāṇa-mittatā. It is used throughout the text and relates to the concept of "admirable friendship" within Buddhist community life. Alternative definitions include virtuous and learned counselors, good-knowing advisors, noble friends, and such.

[2] Buddhist term often translated as wisdom, intelligence, or understanding

[3] Diamond Sutra Chapter 10

[4] Southern and Northern Schools. An early division of Ch'an Zen Buddhism in China. Its Chinese word in the text was 顿教; considering the context, it signifies the sudden enlightenment Master Huineng was teaching, which contrasts with the gradual school of thought of the Northern School. It is more proper to use the exact name for the school of teaching for readers.

[5] Huaiji County

[6] Sihui County

[7] Yuanzhou now Yichun County, Jiangxi Province

[8] Yuanzhou Mengshan, a mountain place in Yichun County, Jiangxi Province

[9] There's another possible translation for these words: Stop when the understanding is complete and stay when there is confusion. Yuan, in Chinese, could also possibly mean 'complete' in another context. And Meng could be stating for 'confusion' in that context.

[10] Deluded being who can never attain Buddhahood

[11] Shaving of hair.

[12] term for "wisdom"

[13] Translated as "awakening mind" or "mind of enlightenment"

[14] Buddha-kṣetra

[15] In the text, the words were 念念; the first obvious translation of the word's meaning is 'thought to thought.' But its meaning is basically 'from one second to the next' in the stated context. And because it's a preferable definition of the word and seemed more reasonable. So the word 念 could mean one thought or, depending on the context, one instant.

[16] According to the context, it was best to use a more straightforward explanation in replacement. But dharmaparyāya (धर्मपर्याय) refers to the "exposition of the dharma."

[17] Good spiritual aptitude is the closest explanation of the word 上根 [上: High, 根: root]. The better the aptitude, the easier or faster the person will realize Enlightenment. Mahakasyapa, who "smiled" in Buddhist scriptures, and Master Huineng, the sixth patriarch, belong to the highest possible root [上上根]. You don't need to go around the corners. You don't need to talk conveniently. Just tell him the Dharma that has the ultimate meaning. He will be enlightened immediately by a sentence, even an action or demonstration.

[18] Sutra of Transcendental Knowledge

[19] One of the three bodies of the Buddha

[20] Sukhavati is known by different names in other languages. East Asian names are based on Chinese translations, and longer names may consist of the words "Western", "Blissful" and "Pure Land" in various combinations.

[21] *akusala*, relates to the three poisons of ignorance, attachment, and aversion

[22] The 'Ten Good Paths of Action' or 'Ten Good Deeds' formulation of moral precepts: (1) not to kill; (2) not to steal; (3) to avoid sexual misconduct; (4) not to lie; (5) abstention from slanderous speech; (6) abstention from harsh speech; (7) abstention from the idle talk; (8) non-greed; (9) non-hatred; (10) right views.

[23] In the text, it states 觉性如来 [觉性: awareness], 如来 can mean the literal definition of the Buddha, but according to the context, it seems more similar to the purpose of Tathātā, which means the ultimate inexpressible nature of all things.

[24] In Tibetan Buddhism, there are six domains of the desire realm. The six domains of the desire realm are also known as the "six paths of suffering", the "six planes", and the "six lower realms". A being's karma (previous actions and thoughts) determines which of the six domains it will be reborn into in the next life:

- The deity domain
- The asura domain
- The human domain
- The animal domain
- The hungry ghost domain
- The hell domain

[25] Another meaning of the words could also mean the people above and below, as in superiors and inferiors.

[26] 忍则众恶无喧, 忍则: forbearance, to endure, uphold 则: rules, regulations, or principles, 无: without, 喧: noise, clamor. 众恶 means 'all kinds of evil' or simply all evil.

[27] In Chinese, the word 定 translates to meditative consciousness, concentration, or the literal meaning of fixity. Its meaning in Chan Buddhism is the stable and unmoving mind.

[28] From Chapter Three of the Diamond Sutra: "Because if a disciple still clings to the arbitrary illusions of form or phenomena *such as an ego, a personality, a self, a separate person, or a universal self-existing eternally*, then that person is not an authentic disciple." The nature of buddhas and beings is not different. But because beings suffer from these four perceptions, they cannot achieve complete liberation. To employ these four perceptions is to be an individual with an ego. Letting go of them is a Buddha.

[29] 三昧: the words in the text translate to the Sanskrit word samadhi. But in this context, it doesn't seem like Master Huineng is describing the state of spirituality as enlightenment. He has used other words, such as realization, awakening, or Buddhahood, in replacement in the previous texts. So, it seems more according to the context that it represents the second meaning of eliminating all distracting thoughts and making the mind calm.

[30] 直心: A straightforward mind; an honest and sincere mind; may relate to 菩提心 (bodhicitta), which is the mind that aims at awakening for the sake of all sentient beings.

[31] 道场: Bodhimandala or Buddhist term for the position of awakening, where the essence of enlightenment is present.

[32] 净土: Pure Land.

[33] 道: Can refer to the Dao in Taoism. In this context, the use of 'Dao' refers to Buddhism's literal 'way', the return to the universal source, Dharma, proper meditation, and nirvana, among other associations.

[34] Śāriputra was one of the top disciples of the Buddha. He is the first of the Buddha's two chief male disciples.

[35] In the text, it was the words 成颠. 成: in this context, it means to become. 颠: crazy/insane, in some cases, refers to the crown of the head.

[36] 正教: its literal translation is the word orthodox

[37] This sentence refers to the ripeness of the person for spiritual awakening or how quickly the person can grasp the essence of the teachings.

[38] 顿修: It refers to a cultivation practice of Buddhism, the first letter 顿 means sudden, and the second letter 修 translates to cultivate.

[39] 体: refers to either body, substance, shape, physique, or frame. In this context, it doesn't seem to refer to these translations. It is trying to say that no-form is an important part of the school of teaching or the core of the teaching.

[40] 并将为空: In the sentence, the word 空 stands for emptiness. The other three letters before it seems to translate to 'to make become' or 'will transform to' and such. In this context, it could mean you should treat it all as empty, and all worldly things are empty.

[41] 祸福: fortune or misfortune, good times or bad times, happiness or suffering. It spells something good in contrast to something bad. In the current context is the preaching of obtaining something, so the only reasonable explanation is the fortune of obtaining it or the misfortune of not obtaining it. It is why it is appropriate to use success or failure so the reader can understand better instead of blessing or misfortune.

[42] 无二相: 无, means 'no' or 'non'. 二: two. 相: characteristic or mark. It is not reasonable to conjecture that 无二 would refer to non-duality, in which case, Huineng would use the letters 不二 instead to more appropriately signify he is talking about non-dualism.

[43] 分别: translates to separate, distinct, differentiate.

[44] 第一义谛: translates as ultimate truth, the absolute truth, first/primary meaning. In Sanskrit term: paramārtha-satya.

[45] 如如不动: The four words are in the Diamond Sutra under Chapter 32 as '不取于相, 如如不动', which translates to 'free from any attachment to appearances, *the mind in perfect tranquility*.'

[46] 坐禅: translates to the word 'zazen', a meditative discipline. Its literal meaning of the word is seated meditation.

[47] 虚妄: translate to as false, fabricated, or unreal.

[48] 世: a lifetime, generation, past life. Suppose Master Huineng describes the sins of three past lifetimes or three generations. In that case, the credible explanation is that he's talking about the karma generated from the past.

[49] 三业: It is a Buddhism term to describe the karma from the behavior of the body, speech, and mind:

1. Bodily karma - If the body does not follow the wrong path, does not suffer from bad habits, does not allow harm to the living, that is, does not kill, steal, or prostitute, then the body karma is purified.
2. Oral karma - if the mouth does not lie, speak bluntly, gossip, or speak badly, you will purify the karma of speech.
3. Karma of the mind - you will purify the karma of the mind by being without greed, hatred, and delusion.

[50] 憍: Translates to arrogance.

[51] 诳: Translates to deceit, falsehood, slander, deception.

[52] 悔: Its common translation is also the same meaning of repent. Its secondary meaning is regret. But both translations do not accord with the current context. In the current context, the word's use is to express remorse for what you have committed in the past and vow a new beginning (悔改). Using the word resolution to express the Master's teaching is more in harmony with the context.

[53] 邪魔外道: a metaphor for goblins, ghosts, or people with bad behavior. A metaphor for ideas or teachings that do not conform to orthodox thinking or refer to unorthodox theory.

[54] 常思于后: the sentence could mean often think of the future. However, it doesn't make sense considering the previous sentence tells the reader not to cling to the past. So why would Master Huineng instruct the reader to attach to the future instead? In this context, it seems to mean if you want to change the results of tomorrow(于后), you must seize the moment by using this moment which can be pure and perfect(念念圆明).

[55] 心中三恶: Can refer to the three evil negative actions and beliefs of human beings such as greed, anger, and ignorance that give rise to evil. These three things stop Buddhists from reaching enlightenment.

[56] 法: Dharma 达: Comprehend, lead to, attain, thoroughly understand. So, his name roughly translates to Dharma comprehension, or he who understands the Dharma.

[57] Śrāvaka: Śrāvaka or Sāvaka means hearer or, more generally, disciple.

[58] 见非功: 见: See; 非功: without effort. Wonderful Observation is the function of distinguishing. If it distinguishes all dharmas without attachment or delusions and hindrance in the distinction, this is truly marvelous observing wisdom.

[59] 成所作智: anusthānam-nispatti, kṛtya-anusthāna-jñāna, one of the "four wisdoms" 四智. Through this wisdom, one brings to fulfillment the work of saving sentient beings.

[60] It is the tranquility from the concentration like a dragon (Naga) diving into the abyss.

[61] It means two relative aspects: existence and non-existence, permanent and impermanent, etc.

[62] 圣谛: or the Four Noble Truths (四圣谛), they are the truth of suffering, the truth of the cause of suffering, the truth of the end of suffering, and the truth of the path that leads to the end of suffering. More simply, suffering exists; it has a cause, an end, and a cause to bring about its end.

[63] Great Wisdom

[64] "King of Imposing Sound"

[65] 真觉大师: Great Master of True Awareness

[66] 正受: I can't find an English translation for this term. But it is a Zen meditation. It is one of the Buddhist cultivation methods. To be calm and free from evil and chaos is what 'right' (正) means; No thoughts, no thoughts, no Dharma in the heart, that is, receiving (受).

[67] Heshuo refers to the vast area north of the Yellow River.

[68] In Mahayana Buddhism the term True Dharma Eye Treasury (Japanese: Shōbōgenzō) generally refers to the Buddha Dharma. In Zen Buddhism, it refers explicitly to the realization of Buddha's awakening that is not in the sutras' written words.

[69] 僧伽梨: Translates to saṃghāti or robe of a Buddhist priest; a ceremonial garment of a Daoist priest; robe of a judge, nun, priest, etc.; cassock; vestment.

[70] 心地: pronounced xīn dì, is a Chinese word that means the mind of a person. In Buddhism, it refers to the mind, i.e., thoughts, ideas, etc. Confucianism uses this term to refer to the cultivation of the mind.

[71] It means that our true nature is strong, bright, and clean. The vajra is the weapon of Indra, the Indian Vedic rain and thunder-deity. It is used symbolically by the dharma traditions of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism often to represent firmness of spirit and spiritual power.

[72] The verse the body comes and goes from samadhi directed at what Master Shenhui said about always practicing meditation without lying down. The body may be lying down, standing, or sitting straight [coming and going], but meditation isn't about sitting erect or posture. Meditation is about observing self-nature, not observing postures, or breathing.

[73] 回趣真如: 回: means return, 趣: aspiration or interest, 真如: Tathātā, the essence of everything as it is, beyond the state of words or conception. The Heart Sutra says, 'There is no wisdom nor attainment.' If you seek with the mind, you will not be able to obtain it; if you seek without the mind, you will not be able to realize it either; you must leave both the mind and the absence of the mind to recognize the true nature.

[74] 游戏三昧: A Chinese idiom, pinyin is yóu xì sān mèi, a Buddhist term meaning to exclude distracting thoughts and calm the mind; also a metaphor for the essence of things and decisiveness

[75] 纵横 the pinyin is zòng héng (1) horizontal and vertical; (2) spontaneous; (3) unhindered 自在 means free and at ease; 纵横自在 describes unrestrained and very peaceful and casual. The four words together describe an idiom that means unrestrained freedom across all directions.

[76] In Mahayana Buddhism, Bodhicitta is the mind aiming at awakening with wisdom and compassion for the benefit of all sentient beings. Therefore, Bodhicitta is the defining quality of the Mahayana bodhisattva. And giving rise to Bodhicitta is what makes a bodhisattva a bodhisattva.

[77] Sāmaṇera: is a novice male monastic in a Buddhist context. A female novice is a śrāmaṇerī or śrāmaṇerikā.

[78] Monastery of the Nation's Gratitude

[79] Bodhimaṇḍa: 道场 is a term used in Buddhism, meaning the position of awakening where the essence of enlightenment is present.

[80] 情: There are a couple of meanings for the word qíng and function, such as feelings (感情), love (爱情), and also conditions (情况).

[81] A possible interpretation of the text is to practice goodness but practice goodness without clinging to it. That is the unmoving and stillness of the mind, unattached to forms of actions.