

# 禅画禅语 Chan Heart, Chan Art

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## 1. NO MERIT AT ALL

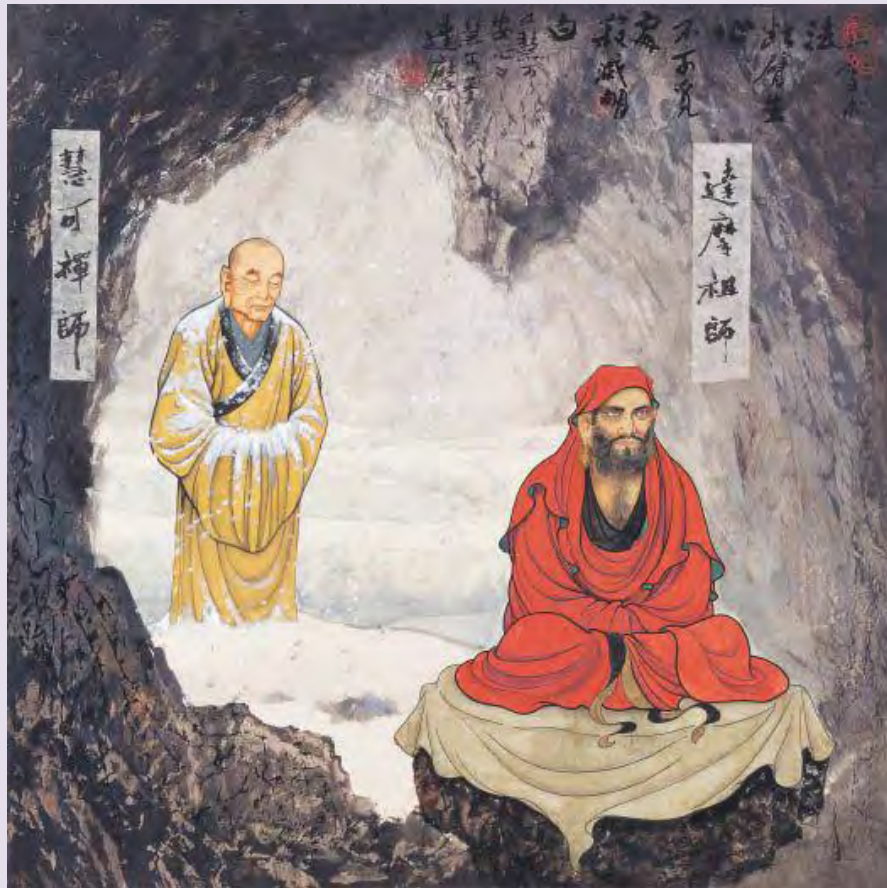
Emperor Wu of the Liang Dynasty was a model ruler in Chinese history who supported Buddhism. When he was on the throne, he built numerous temples and erected a large number of Buddhist statues. He repaired and constructed bridges and roads for the welfare of the people. At that time, Chan Master Bodhidharma came from India to China to propagate the Dharma. Emperor Wu of Liang invited the Chan Master and asked him about the Dharma, saying, “ In the way that I have continually done good deeds, what merit will I gain?”

“No merit at all,” said Chan Master Bodhidharma, as though pouring a bucket of cold water on him.

Emperor Wu was very unhappy to hear this, and then asked him why. The Chan Master did not reply. In the end, because there was no meeting of the minds, he left with a flip of his sleeve.

*In fact, how could Emperor Wu's good deeds have no merit at all? "No merit at all," which the Chan Master spoke of, explains the Chan Master's state of mind. The concept of duality*

*between existence and non-existence in phenomena was not present. We just need to transcend our deluded attachment to this duality between existence and non-existence. Only then can we see through the reality of all dharmas, which is “there is nonexistence, there is existence; there is not non-existence, there is not existence; there may be existence, there may be non-existence; there is originally existence, there is originally non-existence.” This kind of transcendence is the path that every Chan practitioner must take. This kind of state is the original face of the Chan practitioner.*



## 2. HUIKE'S SETTLED MIND

Chan Master Shenguang Huike, traveling over mountains and valleys, arrived at Mt. Song's Shaolin Temple to pay his respects to Patriarch Bodhidharma. He requested instruction and also asked to be taken in as a disciple. Bodhidharma, facing the wall, sat in

silent meditation and ignored him. Shenguang, therefore, stood outside the door waiting as the wind and snow blew everywhere. After a long time, the snow was so deep that it was up to his knees. Seeing that he was truly sincere in seeking the Dharma, Bodhidharma then asked, "You have been standing in the snow for a long time. What is it that you seek?"

Shenguang said, "My only wish, Venerable, is that you open the gate of the sweet dew and universally liberate all beings."

Bodhidharma said, "The supreme and wondrous Way of the Buddhas, despite vast kalpas of dedication and diligence, being able to practice what is difficult to practice, being able to endure what is difficult to endure, still cannot be attained. You, sir, with your frivolous and arrogant heart, longing and hoping for the true vehicle, toil in vain."

Shenguang, hearing this encouraging instruction, immediately cut off his arm with a knife in front of Bodhidharma.

Bodhidharma said, "All Buddhas seeking the Way for the sake of the Dharma, disregard their physical form. Now that you have cut off your arm, what else are you seeking?"

Shenguang answered, "Your disciple's mind is not yet settled. Please, Patriarch, settle the mind for me!"

Bodhidharma shouted, "Bring forth the mind. I will settle it for you!"

Dumbfounded, Shenguang said, "I cannot find the mind!"

Bodhidharma smiled and said, "I have already settled the mind for you."

*Shenguang Huike was at the point of not finding; then there was a turning around and entry. Finally, he had a clear and great awakening. Our afflictions are originally empty; unwholesome karma has no intrinsic nature. The place where the mind attains the state of nirvana, where there are no delusions and no arising of thought, is supreme enlightenment. This is the Buddha Way. If you are able to preserve a true mind of equanimity, your Buddha nature will be revealed at that moment.*





### 3. WHERE ARE YOU FROM?

When Huineng first met the Fifth Patriarch, the first thing Fifth Patriarch Hongren asked him was, “Where are you from?”

“I come from Lingnan,” Huineng replied.

“Lingnan is a place of barbarians. Barbarians don’t have Buddha nature!” Hongren said.

Huineng then replied, saying, “People come from the North and the South. Does Buddha nature also have a north and south?”

Because of this important conversation, Fifth Patriarch Hongren held Huineng in especially high regard and, moreover, transmitted his robe and bowl to him.

Later, Sixth Patriarch Huineng also often used the same question to take in and benefit many disciples. Cited below are four instances that illustrate this point:

(1) When Master Shenhui came to study with the Sixth Patriarch, the Sixth Patriarch asked him, “Where are you from?” Shenhui replied, “I don’t come from anywhere.”

This answer received the Sixth Patriarch’s admiration.

(2) When Chan Master Nanyue Huairang was twenty-three

years of age, he paid a visit to the Sixth Patriarch. The Sixth Patriarch also asked him, "Where are you from?"

"I come from Venerable An."

The Sixth Patriarch then asked, "What brings you here?"

Chan Master Huairang was not able to answer this question.

Therefore, he lived at Caoxi for more than ten years. He did not awaken until he was over thirty years old.

(3) When Chan Master Qingyuan Xingsi first arrived at Caoxi, the Sixth Patriarch also asked him in this way, "What did you do before you came here?"

Chan Master Xingsi answered him, saying, "I don't even practice the Noble Truths." The meaning is: "I don't even want to become a Buddha or a patriarch. What else do I need do?" These words were also affirmed and highly regarded by the Sixth Patriarch.

(4) Chan Master Nanyang Huizhong was once the Imperial Master of the Tang Dynasty. When he first came to study, the Sixth Patriarch asked him, "Where are you from?" Huizhong replied, "I come from nearby."

*Since the Fifth Patriarch had asked him in the past, "Where are you from?" this consequently opened up the conditions for the Sixth Patriarch to enter the Way. Therefore, when the Sixth Patriarch later received and guided practitioners of Chan, he also used, "Where are you from?" to inspire them, to test them. He wanted them to question the fundamental origin of their own life, to deeply investigate the truth. Raising questions is an important method that the Chan School often uses to connect with one's potential. In these questions and answers, from one to the next, the Chan practitioner finally reflects his own intrinsic nature, recognizing his own original face.*



#### 4. A MODEL THROUGH THE AGES

After Chan Master Baizhang Huaihai of the Tang Dynasty succeeded Chan Master Mazu Daoyi, who founded the Chinese monastic community, he drew up a set of systematic monastic rules—the *Monastic Regulations of Baizhang*. This is what is known as “Mazu founded the Chinese monastic community, Baizhang established the monastic regulations.” Chan Master Baizhang advocated the agricultural Chan lifestyle of “a day without working, a day without eating.” He had already encountered many difficulties because Buddhism had up to that time taken precepts as the standard for life, but Chan Master Baizhang changed the system to take agricultural Chan as a lifestyle. There were even people who criticized him as a heretic. Since the monastic community of which he was the abbot was on the peak of Mt. Baizhang, he was also called Chan Master Baizhang. Every day, besides leading the sangha in practice, he would always do the hard labor himself and work diligently. He was very earnest about the lifestyle of living by one’s own efforts. With regard to trivial matters, he was especially unwilling to make



others do the work for him.

Gradually, Chan Master Baizhang got older. Yet every day, he still went with his disciples up the mountain to carry firewood and down into the fields to farm because the agricultural Chan lifestyle is you grow what you eat. His disciples finally could not bear to let the old master do such hard physical labor, so the sangha community implored him not to follow the disciples out to work. However, Chan Master Baizhang still firmly said, "I am not virtuous enough to bother other people. Living in this world, if we don't do the work ourselves, wouldn't we become useless people?"

The disciples were unable to prevent the determined Chan Master from serving. All they could do was hide the Chan Master's carrying pole, his hoe, and other tools in order to keep him from working.

Chan Master Baizhang could do nothing but use not eating as a means of protest. His disciples anxiously asked why he was not drinking or eating.

Chan Master Baizhang said, "Since I don't work, how can I eat?"

The disciples had no choice but to return his tools to him and allow him to live as the sangha members did. The spirit of Chan Master Baizhang's "a day without working, a day without eating" has become a model for the monastic community through the ages.

*Some people think that to contemplate Chan, you not only have to cut off worldly conditions completely, but that you also do not need to work. They think that they only have to do sitting meditation. In fact, if we do not work and we depart from life—where is there still Chan? To cure the sickness of Chan practitioners of the time, Chan Master Baizhang not only undertook the life of "a day without working, a day without eating," he even shouted out the slogan, "Chopping wood and carrying water is none other than Chan."*

*Whether reciting the Buddha's name or contemplating Chan, practice is not an excuse for laziness. I hope that the Chan practitioners of this generation will listen to what Chan Master Baizhang said.*



## 5. LIKE AN INSECT EATING WOOD

One time, when Chan Master Guishan Lingyou was at the side of Chan Master Baizhang, Chan Master Baizhang asked, “Who’s there?”

Chan Master Guishan replied, “Lingyou!”

Chan Master Baizhang said, “Poke around in the firepot and see if there is still a fire or not.”

Chan Master Guishan stirred the ashes in the firepot and answered, “No fire.”

Chan Master Baizhang stood up, went to the firepot, and used a poker to stir deeply in the firepot, causing a few sparks. He took out an ember to show to Guishan. Then he said, “You said there wasn’t. Isn’t this fire?”

Chan Master Guishan Lingyou said, “I know there is. It’s just that I didn’t poke deeply enough.”

Chan Master Baizhang said, “This is just a temporary path off the main road. In the sutras, it says if you want to awaken to Buddha nature, you should contemplate timing, causes, and conditions. When the time and conditions come, it is like

suddenly awakening from delusion, like suddenly remembering what was forgotten. Only then will you know that the self is originally complete; it is not obtained from outside. Therefore, the patriarch said,

The awakened state is the same as nonawakening,  
No-mind is like mind.  
The ordinary and the sacred are illusory,  
Originally, the essence of the Dharma  
Is complete in and of itself.

“Right now, you are already like this. Carefully protect and hold onto it!”

The next day, Chan Master Guishan followed Chan Master Baizhang into the mountains to work. Chan Master Baizhang asked Guishan, “Did you bring the kindling?”

Chan Master Guishan answered, “I brought it.”

Chan Master Baizhang pressed further, asking, “Where is it?”

Chan Master Guishan picked up a twig, blew on it twice, and then handed it to Chan Master Baizhang.

Chan Master Baizhang said happily, “Like an insect eating wood, occasionally a word is made.”

*“Kindling”—what does it represent? What does it suggest? It is Buddha nature. When Chan Master Baizhang wanted Guishan to go to the firepot and stir the fire, this was hinting for him to find his own Buddha nature. Finding one’s Buddha nature and the original mind is by no means easy. Chan Master Baizhang had no choice but to show him by example. Only by poking deeply can our intrinsic nature be revealed. Even when master and disciple went out to work, they were encouraging each other not to forget their intrinsic nature in daily life. In this phrase, “Did you bring the kindling,” how much compassion, how much wisdom, how much living Chan there is.*



## 6. WILD FOX CHAN

Chan Master Baizhang Huaihai was Chan Master Mazu Daoyi's successor. From "Mazu founded the Chinese monastic community, Baizhang established the monastic regulations," we can see his contribution to the Chan School.

One day, after Chan Master Baizhang had completed his talk on the Dharma and everyone had already departed, an old man stayed and did not go. The Chan Master asked, "Who is standing before me?"

The old man replied, "I am not a human being. Actually, I am a wild fox. In the time of the ancient Buddhas, I practiced on this very Mt. Baizhang. Later, a student monk asked me, 'Do great practitioners still fall under cause and effect, or not?' and I answered, 'They don't fall under cause and effect!' Because of this one answer, I've been reborn in the body of a fox for five hundred lifetimes. Today, I ask the Chan Master to help me with a turning word so that I may be liberated from the wild fox's form."

After Chan Master Baizhang heard this, he said compassionately, "Please ask."

The old man joined palms and asked, "Do great practitioners still fall under cause and effect, or not?"

Chan Master Baizhang replied, "They're not ignorant of cause and effect."

With these words, the old man had a great awakening.

Afterwards, he made a bow and took his leave. The next day, Chan Master Baizhang led everyone in the monastery to a cave in the mountain behind the monastery, where he pulled out the dead body of a wild fox with his staff. The Chan Master instructed that it be cremated in accordance with the rites of a deceased monastic.

*This is a famous gongan. Why was he reborn in the body of a fox for five hundred lifetimes just because he answered the student monk by saying, "They don't fall under cause and effect"? Why was he able to be liberated from the suffering of five hundred lifetimes in the body of a fox when Chan Master Baizhang said a turning word, "They're not ignorant of cause and effect," on his behalf? Between them, there is the difference of a few words; but actually, there is a difference of heaven and earth. The question was: "Do great practitioners still fall under cause and effect, or not?" The answer said: "They do not fall under cause and effect." This suggests that people with cultivation are not affected by the retribution of cause and effect. This kind of careless and reckless instruction is mistaken, because no one can escape from the retribution of cause and effect. Chan Master Baizhang's "They're not ignorant of cause and effect" is actually a saying of the supreme truth because anyone who has cultivated and awakened to the Way must not be "ignorant of cause and effect."*

*Therefore, Chan Master Wumen once had a verse that said:*

*Not falling, not ignorant,  
Two banners in competition  
Not ignorant, not falling,  
A thousand mistakes, ten thousand mistakes.*





## 7. SELF-LIBERATING PERSON

Chan Master Huangbo had left home as a child to become a monk. One time, when he made a trip to Mt. Tiantai, he ran into a fellow practitioner whose behavior was unusual. The two of them talked and laughed just like old friends. When they reached the edge of a small stream, the water in the stream just so happened to rise sharply. The fellow practitioner called on Huangbo to cross the river together. Huangbo then said, "My dear friend, the water in the stream is so deep. Can it be crossed?"

The fellow practitioner subsequently lifted his pant legs and crossed the river as naturally as if he were walking on level ground. As he walked, he turned his head back and said, "Come! Come!" Huangbo then shouted, "Hey! You self-liberating fellow! If I had known earlier that you were like this, (had known you were a self-liberating practitioner with supernatural powers), then I would have broken your heels."

The fellow practitioner whom he had scolded was moved and sighed, "You really are a great vessel of the Dharma. In fact, I am not equal to you!"

Speaking, he then vanished.

*Buddhism is divided into the Great Vehicle and the Small Vehicle. The Small Vehicle stresses self-liberation. The Great Vehicle emphasizes liberation of others. Sages who only focus on self-liberation, even if they attain the Way, still are not comparable to practitioners who have made the vow to liberate others. With the style of, "Even if pulling out one hair could help the world, I won't do it!" one cannot ever become a Buddha. "You, yourself, are not yet liberated; you first liberate others—this is the bodhisattva vow." Huangbo reprimanded the self-liberating fellow; it's no wonder the sage was moved, and moreover, sang the praises of the great vessel of the Dharma.*



## 8. CAN'T BE SNATCHED AWAY

One day, Chan Master Linji followed his teacher, Chan Master Huangbo, down to the fields to work. Chan Master Linji

walked behind Chan Master Huangbo. Chan Master Huangbo looked back and discovered Chan Master Linji's hands were empty and then said to him, "How come you forgot to bring your hoe?"

Chan Master Linji replied, "I don't know who took it."

Chan Master Huangbo stopped walking and said, "Come over here. I have something to discuss with you."

Chan Master Linji came forward. Chan Master Huangbo then stood his hoe upright, saying, "Only 'this.' There is no one in the world who can move it."

As soon as he heard those words, Chan Master Linji, rudely and immediately snatched the hoe from Chan Master Huangbo's hand. Firmly grasping it in his hand, he said, "Just a moment ago teacher, you said no one could move 'this.' Now, why is 'this' in my hand?"

Chan Master Huangbo said, "What is in the hand is not really in the hand, and what is not in the hand is not really not in the hand. Tell me, who will cultivate the fields for us today?"

Chan Master Linji replied, "Those who cultivate the field, let them cultivate. Those who harvest the field, let them harvest. What does this have to do with us?"

After Chan Master Linji said this, Chan Master Huangbo did not say a single word. He turned around and went back to the monastery.

Not long after, Chan Master Guishan asked Chan Master Yangshan about this matter, saying, "The hoe was in Chan Master Huangbo's hand. Why was it snatched away by Linji?"

Chan Master Yangshan answered, "Although the one who seized by force was a petty person, his wisdom was superior to that of a gentleman."

Chan Master Guishan again asked Yangshan, saying, "With regard to cultivating and harvesting, why would Linji say this had nothing to do with himself?"

Chan Master Yangshan did not answer, but on the contrary, asked, "Is it not possible to transcend duality?"

Chan Master Guishan, without saying a word, turned around and also went back to the monastery.

*The turning around of Chan Master Huangbo, the turning around of Chan Master Guishan, the world of turning around, is*

*the world that affirms everything. People of reason have a lot to say. Those without reason have even more to say. If you are able to turn around in front of truth, is that not another kind of world?*



## 9. THE BUDDHAS DO NOT LIE

After Chan Master Huangbo became a monk, he thought, "One must let go of devotion to one's parents. When one attains the unconditioned state, only then can one truly repay debts of gratitude." As a result, he passed the life of a Chan practitioner for thirty years without ever returning home to visit his relatives. However, in his innermost heart, he was very concerned about his aged mother. When he was fifty years old, during one of his travels, he unwittingly walked in the direction of his hometown. His mother also missed this son who had become a monk, but she had not the slightest bit of news from him. Every day from morning till night, she wept with such sorrow that she lost her

eyesight. Because she missed her son, the mother set up a tea stand by the side of the road. Not only did she personally serve the wandering monks who were coming and going, but she also invited them into her home and washed their feet for them to show her respect. Aside from this, there was still another reason: it was because Chan Master Huangbo had a big mole on his left foot. Although she was blind, she hoped that in a one-in-a-thousand chance to wash his feet, she might be able to recognize her beloved son.

On this day, Chan Master Huangbo also accepted his mother's offering. While he was letting his mother wash his feet, he told his mother the story of the Buddha's renunciation. He hoped his mother could gain faith and settle her mind because of it. Chan Master Huangbo would only give his mother his right foot to wash, but he would not let her wash his left foot.

Chan Master Huangbo then returned home a second time. Although he felt it was difficult to leave, he still endured the pain and started on his journey to continue traveling and visiting. The neighbors could not bear the truth and told his mother, "That person who told you the story of Sakyamuni Buddha's renunciation is, in fact, the son you have constantly longed for." His mother nearly went mad upon hearing this and said, "No wonder that voice was like my son's." Having said this, she then chased after him all the way to the riverbank. As luck would have it, Chan Master Huangbo had already boarded the boat by this time. Moreover, the boat had also set off. The mother desperately jumped into the river and unfortunately drowned.

Standing on the opposite shore, Chan Master Huangbo saw his mother lose her footing, fall into the water, and drown. He could not help the sadness from welling up inside and wept bitterly, saying:

One son renounces,  
Nine clans of kinsmen ascend to heaven.  
If they do not ascend to heaven,  
The Buddhas tell lies.

After Chan Master Huangbo spoke, he immediately took a boat and returned to cremate his mother. He recited a gatha, saying:



For many years, my mother's mind was deluded,  
Now a flower blooms in the bodhi forest,  
If we can meet each other again in the future,  
Take refuge in the great compassionate Avalokitesvara.

While Chan Master Huangbo was reciting the gatha, the villagers all saw his mother rise from the flames into the sky and depart.

*Chan Master Huangbo Xiyun was a native of Fujian. He became a monk in Jiangxi and received the Dharma from Chan Master Baizhang Huaihai, but he also received the seal of approval from Chan Master Nanquan in Anhui.*

*Chan Master Huangbo was not an unfilial person. What we call filial piety has three levels: (1) Basic filial piety is to willingly support your parents; (2) Intermediate filial piety is to bring honor to your ancestors; (3) Great filial piety is to liberate the deceased from the cycle of birth and death. The Chan Master's liberating his mother is the greatest demonstration of great filial piety.*



## 10. THE WAY TO RECEIVE GUESTS

Lord Zhao from the city of Zhaozhou paid a special visit to Chan Master Zhaozhou Congshen. At the time, Chan Master Zhaozhou Congshen was resting on a bed. Lying there, he addressed the visitor and said, “Great Lord! I am already very old. Although you have made a special trip to come see me, I really don’t have the strength to get up out of bed to receive you. Please don’t be offended.”

Not only did Lord Zhao not take offense, on the contrary, he had even more respect for Zhaozhou. The next day, Lord Zhao dispatched a general to present gifts to him. As soon as he heard this, Zhaozhou immediately got out of bed and went outside the door to greet the general.

After this incident, his disciples did not understand, and so asked Chan Master Zhaozhou, “The day before yesterday, when Lord Zhao came, you did not get off the bed. This time, when a subordinate of Lord Zhao came, why did you, on the contrary, get out of bed and go outside the door to receive him?”

Chan Master Zhaozhou explained, saying, “You are unaware

of some things. The way I receive guests has three different levels of high, middle, and low. When the first and highest level person comes, I remain on the bed and, using my original face, receive the guest. When the second and middle level person comes, I get off the bed, go to the reception room, and receive him politely. When the third level person comes, I use common social courtesies and go to the front door to welcome him.”

*Some people take the words “tea,” “making tea,” “making good tea,” or “sit,” “please have a seat,” “please take the seat of honor” to sneer at the snobbishness of the guest master at temples. In fact, it is not snobbishness. It is just the common etiquette of human relationships. In the ways of the mundane world, of course there are distinctions within the principle of equality. Like Chan Master Zhaozhou’s ways of receiving guests, to contemplate and demonstrate different worldly views with the Chan mind is the level of a master. As people conducting our lives in this world, should we follow mundane truth? Supramundane truth? Should we harmonize supramundane and mundane truth? I hope those of you who have the heart will contemplate this!*



## 11. SPACE WINKS

One time at a Dharma function, Emperor Suzong of the Tang Dynasty sought instruction from Imperial Master Nanyang Huizhong, asking him many questions. However, the Chan Master did not even give him a glance. Emperor Suzong very angrily said, "I am the Son of Heaven of the Great Tang! How dare you not look at me?"

Without directly responding, Imperial Master Huizhong instead asked Emperor Suzong of the Tang Dynasty, "Oh, great emperor, have you ever seen space?"

"I've seen it!"

"Then, let me ask, has space ever winked at you?"

Emperor Suzong could say nothing in response.

*In our lives, what we care about most are interpersonal relationships. Who is nice to me? Who treats me badly? Every day, we worry about gains and losses. If we are not haggling over money, then we are worrying about love. Besides these concerns about money and love, there are also the concerns about*

*being respected. Throughout the day, we want people to praise us, we want people to hold us in high esteem, and we want people to notice us. Contrast this with space. Space does not need us to wink at it. Why would we need space to wink at us? The true principle of the Dharmakaya is like space. It vertically penetrates the three time periods; horizontally permeates the ten directions; fills the universe; and includes heaven and earth. According to conditions, it proceeds and responds. There is no place it is not. Emperor Suzong did not understand this. No wonder Imperial Master Nanyang asked, "Has space ever winked at you?"*



## 12. NOT BELIEVING IS THE ULTIMATE TRUTH

A student monk requested instruction from Imperial Master Huizhong: "The ancient sage said,

The verdant green bamboo all are Dharmakaya;  
The luxuriant yellow flowers are nothing but prajna.



Non-believers think this wrong; believers think it is inconceivable. But I do not know what is correct?”

Imperial Master Huizhong replied, “Such is the state of beings like Manjusri Bodhisattva and Samantabhadra Bodhisattva. It is not something that ordinary people and Hinayana practitioners can believe or accept, so the *Flower Ornament Sutra* says, ‘The Buddhakaya permeates all dharma realms, universally manifests before all beings, and following conditions, responds to seekers completely. Yet, it eternally dwells in this bodhi seat.’ Since the green bamboo does not go beyond the dharma realms, what is not the Dharmakaya? In addition, the *Prajna Sutras* say, ‘Form is limitless, thus, prajna is also limitless.’ Since yellow flowers do not go beyond form, what is not prajna? Therefore, the sutras originally are undetermined Dharmas, and the Dharma originally is without many seeds.”

After the student monk listened to this, he still did not understand. He then asked, “As to that statement, are the believers correct? Are the non-believers correct?”

Imperial Master Huizhong, hinting at an even higher state of mind, answered, “The believers are the mundane truth; the nonbelievers are the ultimate truth.”

Astonished, the student monk said, “The non-believers ridicule it as wrong view! How can the Chan Master say they are the ultimate truth?”

“The non-believers, themselves, do not believe the ultimate truth, itself, is the ultimate truth. Because it is the ultimate truth, ordinary people denounce it as wrong. Those with wrong views—how can they speak the ultimate truth?” Imperial Master Huizhong concluded.

Just then, the student monk awakened to the ultimate truth, which is not easy to believe.

*When the Buddha first attained enlightenment, he lamented that what he had awakened to went against sentient beings’ beliefs. Sentient beings think sensual pleasures are real; the Buddha realized sensual pleasures are false. Sentient beings think that Buddha nature and suchness do not exist; the Buddha held they do. As a result, in the ways of the mundane world, there is*

*no one who does not use belief or non-belief as standards, there is no one who does not use speaking of good or bad as standards. The truth is that those on the Buddha Way belong to the Buddha Way, and those with wrong views belong to wrong views.*



### 13. I'M AN ATTENDANT

The Imperial Master Nanyang Huizhong was grateful for his attendant's thirty years of service and wanted to repay him by helping him attain awakening. One day, he called out, "Attendant!"

As soon as the attendant heard the Imperial Master call him, he immediately responded, "Imperial Master, what do you need?"

The Imperial Master said helplessly, "Nothing!"

After a while, the Imperial Master again called out, "Attendant!"

The attendant immediately replied, "Imperial Master, what do you need?"

Once again, the Imperial Master said helplessly, “ Nothing!”  
After many times of this, the Imperial Master changed his  
approach towards the attendant, crying out, “Buddha! Buddha!”  
Completely at a loss, the attendant asked in return, “Imperial  
Master, whom are you calling?”  
The Imperial Master had no choice but to instruct clearly,  
“I’m calling you!”  
The attendant did not understand, so he said, “Imperial  
Master, I’m an attendant, not a Buddha!”  
This time, Imperial Master Huizhong could only sigh with  
lament, “In the future, do not blame me for letting you down,  
when in fact, it is you who has let me down!”  
The attendant still obstinately said, “Imperial Master! No  
matter what, I will never let you down and you will never let me  
down!”  
The Imperial Master said, “The truth is, you’ve already let  
me down.”

*Imperial Master Huizhong and the attendant—who let whom  
down? Let us not discuss it. However, the attendant only  
recognized himself as an attendant and was afraid to shoulder the  
title of Buddha. This is extremely regrettable. The Chan School  
stresses, “directly shouldering responsibilities.” What we call the  
mind, Buddha, and sentient being are no different. However,  
sentient beings only recognize themselves as sentient beings and  
do not recognize themselves as Buddhas. They sink in the cycle of  
birth and death, and are unable to return home. This is very sad!  
Chan Master Wumen said,*

*Wanting others to shoulder an iron cangue without openings,  
Implicates the descendants, giving them no rest.  
Wanting to support the door and prop up the house,  
You must climb up a mountain of knives barefoot!*

*The Imperial Master, advanced in years and of solitary mind,  
used the method of “pressing an ox’s head down to eat the grass”  
on the attendant to make him awaken. It could not be helped that  
the attendant was only an attendant, not a Buddha.*



#### 14. MIND AND NATURE

There was a student monk who went to Imperial Master Nanyang Huizhong's place to study. He asked for instruction, saying, "Chan is another name for mind, and 'mind' is the true nature of suchness that is neither increased in Buddhas nor decreased in the ordinary. The patriarchs of the Chan School changed the term 'mind' to 'nature.' May I ask the Chan Master, what is the difference between 'mind' and 'nature'?"

Huizhong replied without the slightest reservation, "When deluded, there is a difference; when awakened, there is no difference."

The student monk then, taking it a step further, asked, "The sutras say, 'Buddha nature is eternal; the mind is impermanent.' Why would you say that there's no difference?"

Imperial Master Huizhong patiently explained by way of analogy: "You're only relying on words, and not relying on the meaning. For example, when it's cold, water solidifies into ice; when it's warm, ice melts into water. When deluded, nature solidifies into mind; when awakened, mind melts into nature."

Mind and nature are originally the same. Depending on delusion or awakening, there is a difference.”

The student monk finally came to a deep understanding.

*In Buddhism, there are many names for “mind” and “nature,” such as: “the original face,” “Tathagatagarbha,” “Dharmakaya,” “the ultimate truth,” “intrinsic nature,” “suchness,” “the essence,” “true mind,” “prajna,” “Chan,” etc. This is nothing other than applying various ways for us to recognize ourselves. Although there is a difference between delusion and awakening, there is no difference in true nature. For example, gold is gold, yet it can be made into earrings, rings, bracelets, and various kinds of gold objects. Although these objects may be different, they are really all gold. Understand this: though the terms mind and nature are different, they both actually refer to our own essence.*





## 15. FLOWING OUT FROM THE MIND

When Chan Master Xuefeng and Chan Master Yantou were traveling together to Mt. Ao in Hunan Province, they ran into snow and were unable to go forward. All day long, if Yantou was not idling away the time, he was sleeping. Xuefeng was always sitting in meditation. He reproached Yantou for only caring about sleeping. Yantou reproached him for only caring about sitting in meditation every day. Xuefeng pointed to his chest and said, "I'm still not steady enough here. How dare I deceive myself and deceive others?"

Yantou was very surprised, his eyes gazing intently at Xuefeng.

Xuefeng said, "Actually, since I began practicing Chan, I have yet to settle my mind!"

Chan Master Yantou felt the opportunity was ripe, so he compassionately instructed, "If this is really the case, tell me what you have seen one by one. What is correct, I will affirm for you. What is incorrect, I will break for you!"

Xuefeng then recounted the course of his own cultivation one

time. After Yantou listened to Xuefeng's account, he shouted, "Haven't you ever heard? 'What enters through the door is not the family treasure.'"

Xuefeng then said, "What should I do from now on?"

Chan Master Yantou lowered his voice again, saying, "If you propagate the great doctrines, all your words and deeds must flow out from your mind, and must be performed with integrity and responsibility."

Xuefeng, hearing these words, immediately had a clear awakening.

*All worldly knowledge, even science, is comprehended from external phenomena. However, the Dharma is realized from the inner mind and original essence. Xuefeng did not awaken for a long time because, due to myriad external phenomena in the universe, he still had attachments in the mind and was unable to stop his deluded thoughts. "What enters through the door is not the family treasure," which must be able to "flow out from the mind—only that is original nature." This means that we should not study and delve into it from the ends of the branches. We must establish the roots from the fundamental essence.*



## 16. NOT EVEN A THREAD

Bhiksuni Xuanji of Jingju Temple often meditated and practiced Chan in a small cave on Mt. Dari. One day, a thought suddenly arose: "Dharma nature is pure and profound. It originally has no form of coming and going. Detesting noise and tending towards the tranquility of samadhi as I do, I cannot be considered a person who fully comprehends Dharma nature."

Therefore, she immediately set off to call upon Chan Master Xuefeng.

When they first met, Xuefeng asked, "Where are you from?"

Xuanji replied, "Mt. Dari."

Using sharp words, Xuefeng asked, "Has the sun come out yet or not?"

Xuanji, unwilling to show weakness, said, "If the sun comes out, it will melt the snowy peak."

Xuefeng saw that her response was out of the ordinary. He then asked, "What is your name?"

"Xuanji."

“How much can you weave in a day?”

“Not even a thread!”

When Xuanji had bowed and was withdrawing, just as she had taken just a few steps, Xuefeng said, “Your robe is dragging on the ground!”

After Xuanji heard this, she quickly turned her head and glanced at the hem of her robe. Xuefeng roared with laughter and said, “Some ‘not even a thread’ you are!”

*From the exchange between Xuanji and Xuefeng, we see the different states of Chan. Xuanji's words were quick and sharp—they were not Chan. Chan Master Xuefeng's one line, “Some ‘not even a thread’ you are!”—now that is the spirit of Chan.*



## 17. BETTER SILENT THAN NOISY

One year, during the summer retreat at Lingshu Monastery, King Liu of the Later Han of the Five Dynasties Period insisted on inviting Chan Master Yunmen and the entire community of the

monastery to pass the summer in his palace. At the palace, several monks received the court ladies paying their respects and inquiring about the Dharma. The women gathered together chattering pleasantly, so it was very noisy. Especially since King Liu was devout and valued the Dharma, not a day passed without the practice of Chan meditation and lectures. The elders of the monastery were also happy to give Dharma talks to the court ladies and eunuchs. However, only Chan Master Yunmen sat alone meditating silently to the side. As a result, the court ladies did not dare to get close and ask for instruction.

There was an official on duty at the palace who often saw this kind of situation, so he asked Chan Master Yunmen for instruction on the essentials of the Dharma. Chan Master Yunmen always remained silent. Not only was the palace official not offended, he was even more respectful. On the front of Biyu Hall, he posted a poem that said:

The cultivation of great wisdom begins with Chan,  
In the Chan gate, it is better to be silent, not noisy.  
All the clever ways of speaking, competing for the Truth,  
Still defeated by the “ non-speaking” of the Chan gate.

*The great masters of the Chan School have always been like leisurely clouds and wild cranes, sometimes dwelling in the mountain forests, sometimes living by the water. With three robes and one mat, they follow their conditions and let things follow their own course. Even when their Dharma conditions are remarkable or they are among royalty, they are not tempted by material gain or moved by power. Just as in Chan Master Yunmen's “a moment of silence, a clap of thunder,” even though no words are spoken, his instructions are like thunder rumbling over our heads. If we understand the countless insights in our hearts when we are in silence, then it can be said that we have penetrated a little bit of Chan.*





## 18. I WANT EYEBALLS

When Chan Master Yunyan was weaving straw sandals, Chan Master Dongshan passed by and upon seeing him, said, “Teacher, can I ask you for one thing?”

Chan Master Yunyan answered, “Tell me and we shall see.”

Dongshan rudely said, “I want your eyeballs!”

Chan Master Yunyan very calmly replied, “Want eyeballs?

What about your own eyeballs?”

Dongshan said, “I don’t have eyeballs!”

Chan Master Yunyan said with a faint smile, “If you had eyeballs, how would you settle them?”

Dongshan had no words to respond with.

Only at this time did Chan Master Yunyan very sternly say, “I think the eyeballs you want should not be my eyeballs, but your own eyeballs!”

Chan Master Dongshan changed his tone of voice again and said, “Actually, what I want are not eyeballs.”

Chan Master Yunyan could no longer stand this contradictory manner of speaking, so he shouted at Chan Master Dongshan,

“You! Get out!”

Chan Master Dongshan really was not surprised, yet he still said very sincerely, “I can leave. It’s just that I don’t have eyeballs and can’t clearly see the road ahead of me.”

Chan Master Yunyan touched his own heart and said,

Chan Master Yunyan touched his own heart and said,

“Didn’t I give this to you long ago? How can you still say you can’t see?”

Chan Master Dongshan finally awakened with these words.

*Chan Master Dongshan asking for eyeballs from other people is a very strange matter. Even someone as clever and wise as Chan Master Yunyan could only tell him in the beginning that his eyes were growing on his own head; why ask others for them? Eventually realizing that what Dongshan wanted was not the physical eyes, Chan Master Yunyan hinted at the wondrous way of the mind’s eye. Only then did Dongshan have an awakening. Physical eyes are that which look upon the world’s myriad phenomena: long, short, square, circle, blue, red, maroon, white. This kind of looking is only superficial and phenomenal, with arising and extinguishing. However, only the mind’s eye is able to see and observe the essence of all phenomena in the universe. This kind of observing is universal, and has no differentiation within and without. It is no wonder that, although Dongshan had physical eyes, he still could not clearly see the road ahead of him. This road is your original face. It is the goal of becoming a Buddha and a patriarch. When Yunyan told him about the wondrous function of his mind’s eye, Dongshan had an awakening.*



## 19. QUESTION AND ANSWER IN THE CHAN SCHOOL

When Chan Master Dongshan met with Head Monk Chu, the Head Monk said, “Too wonderful! Too wonderful! The world of the Buddha Way is so profound it cannot be known.”

Chan Master Dongshan therefore asked, “Regarding whether the world of the Buddha Way can or cannot be fully fathomed, let’s not talk about that for the time being. Now, just let me ask you, person who speaks of the world of the Buddha Way, exactly what world is that person from?”

Head Monk Chu was silent and did not answer. Chan Master Dongshan asked more persistently, “Why don’t you answer me quickly? Tell me! Which world are you from?”

Head Monk Chu said, “ You shouldn’t be so rash and impatient!”

Chan Master Dongshan said, “You didn’t even answer my main point. How can I not be rash and impatient?”

Head Monk Chu still did not answer. Chan Master Dongshan continued to ask persistently, “Whether it is the ‘Buddha’ or the ‘Way,’ it is just a name. Then why don’t you speak by quoting

the sutras?”

As soon as Head Monk Chu heard this, he enthusiastically asked, “What do the sutras say?”

Chan Master Dongshan replied, “In the sutras, the Four Reliances speak of relying on the meaning, not the words. The meaning is: as long as the significance is firmly grasped, you don’t need to differentiate between the words.”

Head Monk Chu, taking exception to this, said, “You are still creating a disease in the mind based on the sutras!”

Chan Master Dongshan said, “Your illness of arguing that the world of the Buddha Way cannot be fully fathomed; this sickness of passive ineptitude and an unwillingness to directly take responsibility—what about it?”

Now, Head Monk Chu was once again silent. This was not not answering. This was already not being able to answer. The next day, someone said that Head Monk Chu had suddenly died. Therefore, the Chan practitioners of the day all called Dongshan “the Chan Master Liangjie who questioned Head Monk Chu to death.”

*It is very hard to determine whether there was any real relationship between the sudden death of Head Monk Chu and the persistent questioning of Chan Master Dongshan Liangjie. However, the question and answer of the Chan School is truly like sparks from flint or flashes of lightning. It is so fast it does not allow you to differentiate: “With just one blink of an eye, the hen becomes a duck.” The world of the Buddha Way does not allow discussion of its deepness or shallowness. Therefore, beyond this so-called deep and shallow, within and without, is there still differentiation or not?*



## 20. ORIGINAL FACE

Chan Master Xiangyan Zhixian was a disciple of Chan Master Baizhang who was well versed in the sutras and commentaries. Later, he studied with his Dharma brother Chan Master Lingyou. One day, Lingyou said to him, “I’ve heard that you are well-read in a wide range of studies. Now I ask you—‘Before my parents gave birth to me, what was my original face?’”

Chan Master Zhixian was stumped for a moment. He returned to his residence, looked through his all books, but still could not find an answer. He again returned to the Chan Master and said, “Venerable, be compassionate. Please instruct me! What is the original face before my parents gave birth to me?”

Chan Master Guishan Lingyou said firmly and clearly, “I can’t tell you because if I tell you the answer, it is still mine and has nothing to do with you. If I tell you, you will regret it in the future and might even blame me.”

Chan Master Zhixian, seeing that his Dharma brother would not instruct him, sadly burned all of his sutras. From then on, he went to Mt. Ziyai in Nanyang to watch over the tomb of Imperial



Master Huizhong. Day and night, he contemplated this question like a mute who had swallowed a ball of fire. One day, while weeding in the fields, his hoe suddenly hit a stone and made a clacking sound. Immediately, his body and mind dropped off and he had a great awakening. Thereupon, he bathed and lit incense. Facing Mt. Gui, he bowed from afar and said, "Venerable, you really are too compassionate. If you had told me in the beginning, I would not have today's joy!"

*Chan awakening is not something that is given to us by other people. It requires us to understand with the mind and the spirit.*



## 21. ARRIVE AT LONGTAN

Chan Master Deshan was a great master who lectured on the sutras and the Dharma in the North. Because he was dissatisfied with the Southern Chan School's method of "special transmission outside the scriptures," carrying his work the *Blue Dragon*

*Commentary on the Diamond Sutra*, he went to the South to debate. No sooner had he arrived in the South than he had to endure an old granny's taunting. From then on, he reined in his overbearing ego. He also asked the old lady if there was a great master nearby whom he could visit and study with. The old lady told him that five *li* away, there was a Chan Master Longtan who was very accomplished.

When Chan Master Deshan arrived at Longtan, as soon as he saw Chan Master Longtan, he eagerly asked, "What is this place?"

Chan Master Longtan answered, "Longtan!"

Chan Master Deshan asked more insistently, "Since it is called Longtan, as I walk around here, I don't see dragons and I don't see ponds. Why is this?"

Chan Master Longtan directly told Chan Master Deshan, "You've gone to great lengths to get here. You have arrived at Longtan!"

That very night, Deshan went to seek instruction from Chan Master Longtan. He stood before the seated Chan Master Longtan for a long time, not leaving. Chan Master Longtan said, "It is very late. Why won't you go?"

Deshan bid him good night and took his leave. He got to the door, then came back and said, "It's really too dark outside. I'm new here and do not know my way around."

Chan Master Longtan lit a candle for him, but just as Deshan reached out to take it, Chan Master Longtan blew out the flame. At that moment, Deshan suddenly had a great awakening. He immediately knelt down and bowed to Chan Master Longtan.

Chan Master Longtan asked, "What did you see?"

Chan Master Deshan replied, "From this day forward, with regard to the tongues of all Chan Masters under Heaven, I will never again have any doubts."

The next day, Chan Master Deshan took out his commentary and burned it. As the flames rose, he said, "Exhausting all abstruse debates is like sending a single hair into the universe; exhausting the matters of the world is like casting a single droplet into a great valley."

*The sutras, no matter how profound the lectures, are still discriminating knowledge. The Chan School is without words—*

*ultimately, it is the awakening of the non-differentiating mind. The night is dark; lighting a candle, then blowing it out signifies that after external light is extinguished, the Chan light of the inner mind will begin to glow. With this Chan light, we clearly see our true self. What we call language, the written word, and discriminating consciousness are all droplets in a great ocean.*



## 22. ONE AND TEN

Chan Master Longtan Chongxin was a native of Hunan Province. Before becoming a monk, he was extremely poor. Next to Chan Master Tianhuang Daowu's temple, he set up a stand selling cakes. He did not even have a place to live. Chan Master Daowu took pity on his destitution and gave him a small room in the temple to reside in. To show his gratitude, Chongxin sent ten cakes to Chan Master Daowu every day. After receiving them, Chan Master Daowu would always have his attendant take one to give back to Chongxin. One day, Chongxin finally protested to

Chan Master Daowu, “The cakes are my gift to you. How can you return one to me each day? What is the meaning of this?”

Chan Master Tianhuang Daowu explained gently, “If you can give me ten every day, why can’t I return one to you every day?”

Unconvinced, Chongxin countered, “Since I can give ten to you, why would I care to have you return one to me?”

Daowu roared with laughter and said, “Are you complaining that one is too few? If I haven’t complained that ten is too many, how can you still complain that one is too few?”

After Chongxin heard this, he seemed to have an awakening.

He then resolutely requested Chan Master Daowu to tonsure him and allow him to become a monk.

Chan Master Daowu said, “One gives rise to ten, ten gives rise to a hundred, and can even give rise to millions. All dharmas originate from one.”

Chongxin confidently answered, “One gives rise to all dharmas; all dharmas are one.”

Chan Master Daowu tonsured him. Afterwards, he settled in Longtan, building a small hut to live in. He came to be known as Chan Master Longtan Chongxin.

*This gongan completely shows the oneness of self and other, and the Chan mind in which there is no duality between subject and object. Chan Master Tianhuang Daowu’s house—by allowing Chan Master Longtan Chongxin to go live in it, this demonstrated that what is mine is yours. Chan Master Longtan Chongxin’s cakes—after Chan Master Tianhuang Daowu accepted them and then returned one to Chan Master Longtan Chongxin, this demonstrated that what is yours is mine. Of course, at the time, the great pains taken by Chan Master Tianhuang Daowu could not be understood by an ordinary person who sold cakes. However, constantly interacting like this finally triggered Chongxin’s epiphany. From contemplating this ball of doubt to directly debating, Longtan Chongxin ultimately awakened to the non-duality of many and few, the non-duality of you and me, the non-duality of mind and matter, and the non-duality of with and without. It turns out the myriad things in the universe, with their numerous differences, are all one Chan mind.*





### 23. THE CHAN IN TEA AND MEALS

Chan Master Longtan Chongxin of the Tang Dynasty became a monk under Chan Master Tianhuang Daowu. For several years, he chopped firewood and prepared meals, carried water and made soup, but he had never received so much as a word of the essentials of the Dharma from Chan Master Daowu. Therefore, one day, he said to his teacher, “Master, it’s been many years since I became a monk under you. Yet, not once have I received instruction from you. Please, Master, be compassionate and teach me the essentials of the Dharma for cultivating the Way.”

After hearing this, Chan Master Daowu immediately responded, saying, “What you just said does a very grave injustice to your master! Think about it: ever since you became a monk under me, not a day has passed that I haven’t transmitted to you the essential teachings for cultivating the Way.”

“Your disciple is stupid and does not know what you’ve taught and transmitted to him,” Chongxin said in astonishment.

“When you bring tea to me, I drink it for your sake. When you bring food to me, I eat it for your sake. When you join palms



to show respect to me, I nod my head to you. There hasn't been a day in which I have been remiss. Have I not been instructing you in the essential teachings of the mind all along?"

Upon hearing this, Chan Master Chongxin immediately awakened.

*From this exchange between master and disciple, we can understand that Chan is life. In our daily activities—such as hauling firewood, carrying water, drinking tea, or eating food—all are rich in the boundless subtleties of Chan.*



## 24. WHERE CAN WE ABIDE IN PEACE?

One time, Chan Master Danxia of the Tang Dynasty wanted to call on Chan Master Mazu. On the way, he met an old man with a white beard and a boy with a topknot. Chan Master Danxia saw that the man had an uncommon aura about him, so he stepped forward and respectfully asked, "Sir, where do you live?"

The old man pointed up and down and answered, "Above is heaven; below is earth." His meaning was that, in the universe, everywhere can be home.

As if seizing on a flaw in the old man's statement, Danxia pursued the matter, "What would you do if you were to encounter heaven collapsing and earth sinking?" The meaning is: what would you do if the universe were destroyed?

The old man loudly cried out, "Heaven! Heaven!" meaning that the universe, that heaven and earth, have formation, abiding, decaying, and emptiness.

The boy standing at his side said, "Shhh!" The meaning of this shushing sound was to reveal that the abode of one's original nature is not arising nor extinguished.

Danxia greatly praised them, saying, "Without this father, there wouldn't be this son."

The old man and the boy immediately entered the mountain and were gone.

*Abide! Where should we abide? Venerable Cihang said, "As long as we have peace in the mind—north, south, east, or west are all fine." Therefore, above is heaven and below is earth; everywhere is not home, everywhere is home.*

*However, people of the mundane world dwell in sound, form, material things, and profit; they dwell in fame and power. Since sound, form, material things, profit, fame, and power are all constantly changing, where are we able to safely and peacefully abide?*

*If we can be sure of ourselves, if we do not allow the five desires and the six dusts to lead us by the nose, and if our minds can be settled, then when heaven collapses and earth cracks, what do we have to fear?*

*Bodhisattvas, like the pure and clear moon, roam continuously through the ultimate emptiness. When we see the moon in the sky with nothing to support it, it seems really dangerous but is actually very safe. It is because bodhisattvas abide in prajna-wisdom and the nature of emptiness completely without attachments, that they can live at ease.*



## 25. HOE THE WEEDS, CHOP THE SNAKE

A student monk went to the temple of Chan Master Zhichang to study.

Chan Master Zhichang was hoeing weeds. Just then, a snake slithered out from among the weeds. The Chan Master raised his hoe and chopped.

The student monk said very disapprovingly, "For a long time, I've admired the compassionate style of practice in this place. Arriving here, I only see a coarse brute."

Chan Master Zhichang said, "The way you talk, are you coarse or am I?"

Still upset, the student monk asked, "What is coarse?"

Chan Master Zhichang put down the hoe.

The student monk then asked, "What is fine?"

The Chan Master raised the hoe and struck the pose of chopping the snake.

The student monk did not understand Chan Master Zhichang's meaning and said, "The 'coarse' and 'fine' you speak of, people are unable to understand."

Chan Master Zhichang asked in return, “For the time being, let’s not speak of ‘coarse’ and ‘fine’ in this way. May I ask, where and when did you see me chop the snake?”

Not at all courteous, the student monk said, “Right here and now!”

Chan Master Zhichang admonished, “You, ‘right here and now,’ do not see yourself but come here to see the chopping of the snake—what are you doing?”

The student monk finally had an awakening.

*In the history of the Chan School, there is the story of Chan Master Nanquan killing a cat. Some say that no killing is a fundamental precept in Buddhism, and Nanquan should not kill. Some say that this was Nanquan’s great capacity and great application, and we cannot use a narrow perspective to slander a great sage. Nanquan chopping the cat—perhaps he was striking the pose with his hands to cut off our material desire and attachment. In the case of Zhichang chopping the snake, this may have also been striking the pose of chopping. The student monk, seeing the wind, took it for rain. Therefore, without thinking, he criticized the Chan Master for being too coarse, implying that he had no compassion at all.*

*However, since Chan Master Zhichang had a virtuous reputation, he could draw in students. How could anyone be allowed to speak of “coarse” and “fine”? Therefore, he admonished the student monk not to linger in sight, sound, sensation, and perception. In Chan, we should cut off ordinary sentiment and knowledge. Why do we have to differentiate and attach to external phenomena, and why are we unable to take care of ourselves right here and now?*



## 26. BIG AND SMALL HAVE NO DUALITY

During the Tang Dynasty, Jiangzhou's Prefect Li Bo asked Chan Master Zhichang, "As is said in the Buddhist sutras, 'Mt. Sumeru contains mustard seeds; a mustard seed embraces Mt. Sumeru.' This is just too unfathomable. A tiny mustard seed—how could it embrace something as large as Mt. Sumeru? It really goes beyond common sense. It has to be a lie, right?"

Chan Master Zhichang heard these words and laughed. He asked, "People say that you've 'read more than ten thousand scrolls.' Is this true?"

"Of course! Of course! How could I have read only ten thousand scrolls?" Li Bo had an air of self-satisfaction about him.

"Then, where are these ten thousand scrolls you've read now?"

Li Bo raised his hand and pointed to his head, saying,

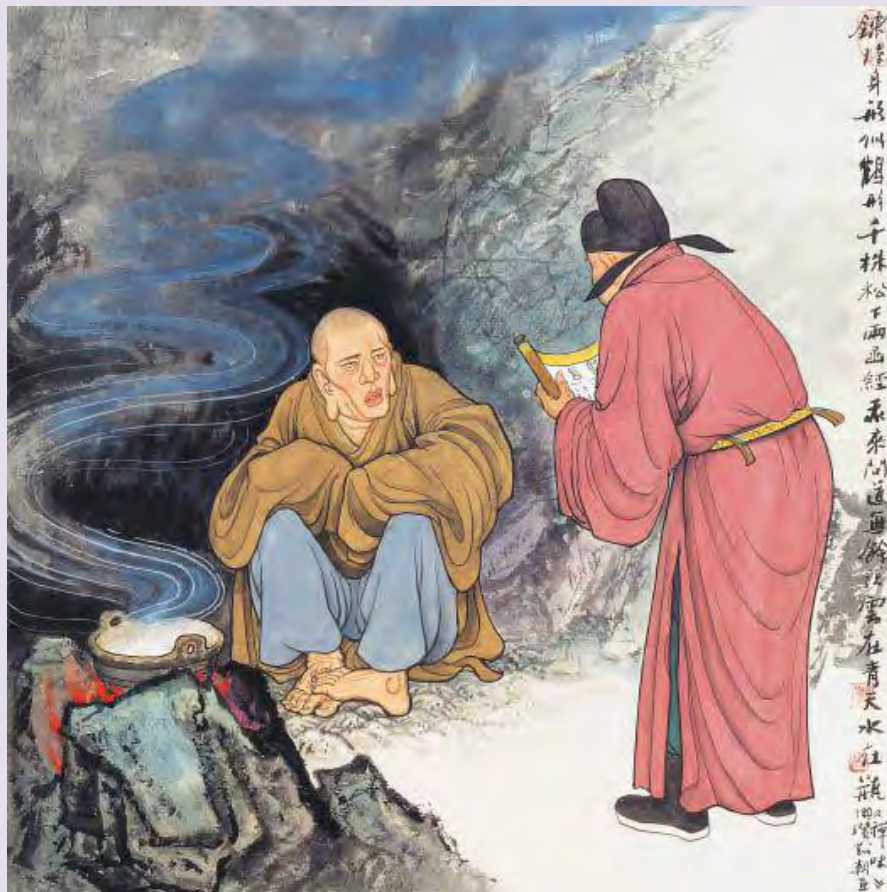
"They're all in here!"

Chan Master Zhichang said, "Strange. When I look at your head, it is only as big as a coconut. How can it possibly store ten thousand volumes of books? Can it be that you are lying too?"



After Li Bo heard this, a deafening sound went off in his mind. At that moment, he suddenly had a great awakening.

*All dharmas are sometimes explained from phenomena and sometimes comprehended from principle. We have to understand that in this universe, there is principle in phenomena and there are phenomena in principle. "Mt. Sumeru contains mustard seeds" is phenomena. "A mustard seed embraces Mt. Sumeru" is principle. If we are able to understand that principle and phenomena do not obstruct each other, this is completely harmonizing all dharmas.*



## 27. A TASTE OF CHAN

During the Tang Dynasty, there was a Chan Master Lanzan who lived in seclusion in a cave on Mt. Nanyue in Hunan Province. He once wrote a poem expressing his state of mind:

Worldly affairs pass slowly by,  
Incomparable to the mountains and hills,  
Lying under wisteria vines,  
With a stone for my pillow.  
No audience with the Son of Heaven,  
Why envy princes and nobles?  
No worries about life and death,  
What further distress could there be?

The meaning of this poem explained his carefree life.

Afterwards, when the poem reached the ears of the Tang Emperor Dezong, Dezong very much wanted to meet this Chan Master and see what kind of person he was. Therefore, he dispatched an official to welcome the Chan Master to the imperial court.

The official, carrying the imperial decree, found the cave just in time to see the Chan Master cooking inside the cave. At the mouth of the cave, the official then cried out loudly, "The imperial decree has arrived. Quick! Kneel down to receive it!" Inside the cave, Chan Master Lanzan, pretending to be deaf and dumb, did not pay him the slightest bit of attention.

The official poked his head in and only saw the Chan Master using cow dung to stoke the fire. Roasting in a clay pot were sweet potatoes. The fire burned more and more intensely, smoke permeated everywhere, and black fog swirled around and around completely engulfing the inside and outside of the cave. Smoke assailed the Chan Master, causing tears and mucus to run down his face. Seeing this, the attending guard could not help but call out, "Hey Chan Master! Snot is dripping down your nose! Why don't you wipe it off?"

Chan Master Lanzan, without even turning his head, replied, "I don't have the time to clean off snot for ordinary people!"

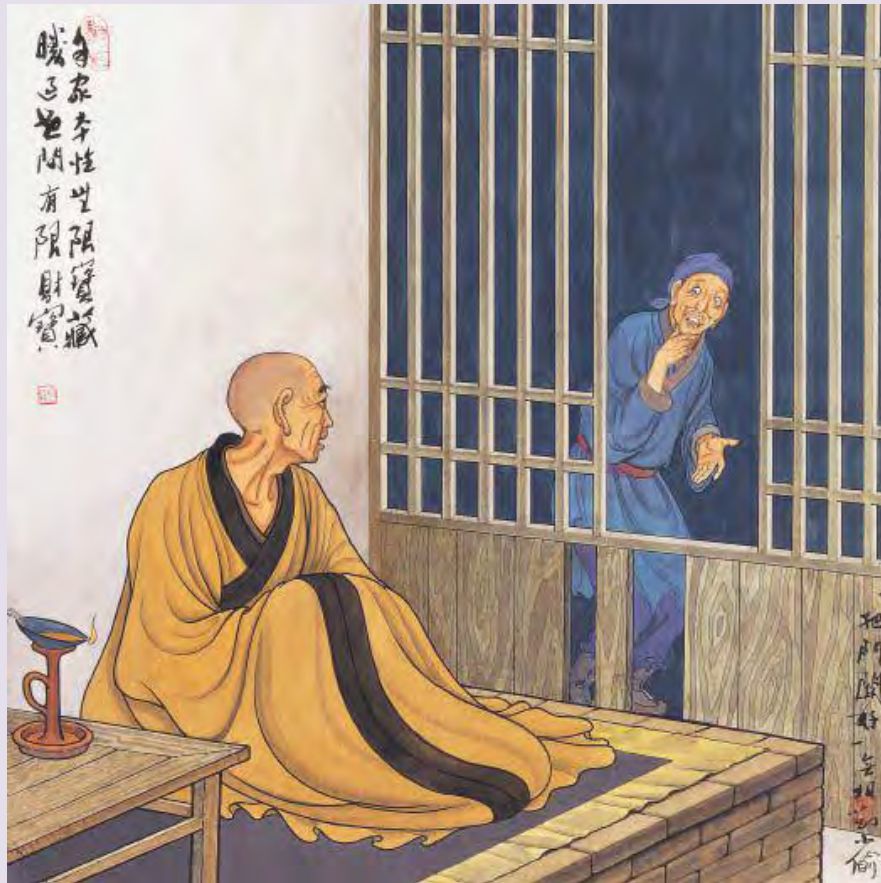
After Chan Master Lanzan said this, he immediately picked up a piping hot sweet potato, put it in his mouth, and said again and again in praise, "Delicious! Delicious!"

Seeing this, the official was stunned speechless because what Chan Master Lanzan was actually eating was one rock after another. While Chan Master Lanzan was eating, he casually picked up two more and handed them to the official, saying, "Please eat them while they're hot! The three realms are only of the mind; the myriad dharmas are only of the consciousness. Poor and rich,

noble and mean, raw and cooked, soft and hard—in the ground of the mind and the ocean of consciousness, do not separate them into two.”

The official, seeing the Chan Master’s unusual behavior and hearing his inscrutable Dharma teaching, did not dare answer, so he hurried back to the imperial court and faithfully reported to the emperor. After listening to this, Emperor Dezong sighed with great emotion and said, “That our country has such a Chan master is truly everyone’s blessing!”

*Among monastics, there are bhiksus of the people and there are also bhiksus who live in seclusion. The bhiksus of the people propagate the Dharma to benefit sentient beings and serve society. The bhiksus living in seclusion in caves deep in the mountains tranquilly cultivate the Way. Some bhiksus living among people are in the mundane world, but their minds are in the mountain forests. Some bhiksus living in seclusion are in a place of practice, but their minds are in the secular world. Like Chan Master Lanzan, when he met with the favor of the emperor, he looked upon it as a summons from Yama, the King of Hell; when rewarded with treasures, he regarded them as burdens. He truly is a sagely monastic who transcended the human world.*



## 28. CLOSE THE DOOR PROPERLY

There was a thief who made his way into a monastery at night hoping to steal something. However, after rummaging through chests and cabinets, he could not find anything valuable to steal. Having no choice, he was just about to leave when Chan Master Wuxiang, who had been sleeping on the bed, called out, “Hey, Friend! Since you are leaving, please close the door for me on your way out!”

The thief, who was at first taken aback, then promptly said, “So, this is how lazy you are. Even the door has to be closed by someone else. No wonder there isn’t anything of value in your monastery.”

Chan Master Wuxiang said, “You, my friend, have gone too far. Do you expect this old man to work hard every day to earn the money to buy things for you to steal?”

The thief felt that, encountering such a monk, there really was not a thing he could do.

*It was not that the Chan Master did not have anything. What*

*the Chan Master possessed was an inexhaustible treasure that others could not steal. People in the world only know how to accumulate. People would die for wealth, and their minds are burdened by material things. Once you have money, even thieves will not leave you alone. This is not as good as possessing the boundless treasure of wisdom from your original nature. Who can steal it then?*



## 29. EVERYTHING IS CHAN

A wandering monk heard others say that Chan Master Wuxiang's cultivation of Chan was excellent, so he wanted to debate with him about the methods of Chan. It just so happened that the Chan Master was away, and the attendant novice monk came out to receive the visitor, saying, "The Chan Master isn't here. If you need something, I can help you in his place." The wandering monk said, "You're too young. You can't." The novice attendant replied, "Although my age is young,



my wisdom is not insignificant!”

As soon as the wandering monk heard this, he felt it wasn't too bad. He then drew a small circle with his finger and pointed ahead. The attendant spread out both of his hands and drew a big circle. The wandering monk held out a finger. The attendant held out five fingers. The wandering monk then held out three fingers. The attendant pointed at his eyes with his hand.

Very uneasy and afraid, the wandering monk knelt down, prostrated three times, turned around, and left. The wandering monk thought to himself, “I drew a small circle with my hand and pointed ahead to ask him, ‘How great is your capacity?’ He spread out both hands and drew a big circle, saying it was as big as the ocean. I then held out one finger to ask him, ‘How about yourself?’ He held out five fingers, saying that he upholds the Five Precepts. I then held out three fingers to ask him, ‘How about the three realms?’ He pointed at his eyes, saying that the three realms are within the eyes. If even the attendant is this wise, then who knows how deep the cultivation of Chan Master Wuxiang is! I think my best course of action is to leave.”

Later, when Chan Master Wuxiang returned, the attendant reported all that had happened, saying, “Master, I don't know why that wandering monk knew my family sells cakes. He drew a small circle with his hands, saying, ‘Your family's cakes are only this big.’ I then spread out both hands to say, ‘They are this big.’ He held out one finger, saying, ‘One for one penny?’ I held out five fingers to say, ‘Five pennies will buy you one.’ He then held out three fingers, saying, ‘Will three pennies do?’ I thought, ‘Too heartless!’ and pointed at my eyes, accusing him of not knowing their value. I never thought he would run away in fear!”

After Chan Master Wuxiang heard this, he said, “ Everything is Dharma; everything is Chan! Attendant, do you understand?”

The attendant was at a loss and did not know how to respond.

*Buddhist teaching stresses the right conditions. Chan is the right conditions. If you understand this, there is no moment that is not Chan, no place that is not Chan, no person that is not Chan, nothing that is not Chan. If you do not understand this, even if it is said in a flowery way, it has nothing to do with Chan. In the history of Chan, there are the tales of Zhaozhou's*

*tea and Yunmen's cakes. They are all Chan. There is a saying, "The speaker has no intent, but the listener has his own notions." Therefore, Chan Master Wuxiang said, "Everything is Dharma; everything is Chan."*



### 30. TRANSFERRING MERITS

There was a farmer who respectfully invited Chan Master Wuxiang to his home to recite sutras for his deceased wife. After the Dharma service had ended, the farmer asked, "Chan Master, how much benefit do you think my wife can receive from this Dharma service?"

Chan Master Wuxiang truthfully said, "Of course! The Dharma is like a boat of compassion that ferries all beings to liberation, or like sunlight that shines everywhere. Not only can your wife receive benefit, but all sentient beings, without exception, will receive benefit."

Unsatisfied, the farmer said, "But my wife was very delicate and frail. Other sentient beings may take advantage of her and rob

her of her merit. Could you recite the sutras for her alone, and not transfer the merit to other sentient beings?”

Chan Master Wuxiang sighed at the farmer’s selfishness, but he still compassionately explained, “Transferring one’s own merit to others, so that every sentient being equally shares in the benefits of the Dharma is a very good Dharma method of cultivation. The meaning of “transferring merits” includes returning the phenomena to the principle, returning the causes to the effects, and returning the small to the big. Just like a light does not shine on one person; a light can shine on all people. Just like the one sun in the sky envelopes all things in its illumination, one seed can produce thousands of fruit. You should use the candle lit by your heart to light millions of other candles. Not only does the brightness increase by a million fold, but your own candle also does not diminish in radiance because of this. If everyone could embrace this concept, then our diminutive self would receive much benefit because of the transferring of merit by innumerable people. Why not do it happily then? Therefore, we Buddhists practitioners should treat all sentient beings equally!”

The farmer still stubbornly said, “This teaching is very good, but I still want to ask the Master to make an exception. I have a neighbor, Old Zhao. It could be said that he bullies me and entraps me. If I could just exclude him from ‘all sentient beings,’ that would be great.”

Chan Master Wuxiang said in a stern tone, “Since I said everything, how could there be exceptions?”

The farmer was completely at a loss.

*In this person of the farmer, we can completely see the selfishness, pettiness, and narrow-mindedness of human nature. As long as he is happy and has what he desires, who cares whether other people are dead or alive. How could you not know that other people are suffering, and indulge yourself? Speaking in terms of the world, there are the two aspects of phenomena and principle. With regard to the forms of phenomena, there are variations in number and there are differences. However, with regard to the principle, there is no variation in number and there are no differences. Everything is equal. This is the same as a lamp illuminating a dark room—the entire room is bright. How could it just shine on one object, other objects not benefiting from*

*the light?*

*Only those who understand everything can embrace everything. To abandon one is to abandon all. If you abandon everything, what else is there in life?*



### 31. A PLACE FOR LIVING IN SECLUSION

Chan Master Wude always traveled far and wide to study and learn. One day, he came to the place where Chan Master Foguang lived. Chan Master Foguang said to him, “You are a very famous Chan practitioner. It’s too bad! Why not find a place to live in seclusion?”

Chan Master Wude helplessly answered, “Where exactly is my place for living in seclusion?”

Chan Master Foguang said, “Although you are a very good elder Chan master, you don’t even know a place of seclusion.”

Chan Master Wude said, “I have ridden horses for thirty years. I never thought I would be thrown off by a donkey today.”

Chan Master Wude settled down at Chan Master Foguang’s

place. One day, a student monk asked, "Away from the study of Buddhist doctrine and terminology, please Chan Master, help me decide!"

Chan Master Wude told him, "That kind of person will be fine."

The student monk was just about to bow, when Chan Master Wude said, "Good question! Good question!"

The student monk said, "At first, I wanted to ask the Chan Master, but..."

Chan Master Wude said, "I will not answer today!"

The student monk asked, "When it is so clean it does not even have a speck of dust, then what?"

Chan Master Wude answered, "This place of mine does not keep that kind of guest."

The student monk asked, "What is your style of teaching, Chan Master?"

Chan Master Wude said, "I won't tell you."

Unsatisfied, the student monk demanded, "Why won't you tell me?"

Chan Master Wude also bluntly replied, "This is my style."

The student monk even more earnestly demanded, "Your style doesn't even have one word?"

Chan Master Wude said, "Sit and meditate!"

The student monk retorted, "The beggars on the street, aren't they all sitting?"

Chan Master Wude took out a coin and gave it to the student monk.

The student monk finally awakened.

When Chan Master Wude next saw Chan Master Foguang, he reported, "When traveling and studying, travel and study. When living in seclusion, live in seclusion. Now, I have already found a place for living in seclusion!"

*Since ancient times, some Chan monks have traveled like clouds and water. Some have lived in seclusion. Some, wishing to hide from the burden of fame, have entered into the mountains only fearing that they were not in deep enough. Some have received people from the ten directions, waiting for the person destined to receive transmission. In fact, what is the Chan monk's true behavior and conduct? Just as Chan Master Wude said,*



*"When traveling and studying, travel and study. When going into hiding, go into hiding."*



### 32. HIGH AND FAR

The student monks of the Chan Hall at Longhu Temple were copying a painting of a fierce battle between a dragon and a tiger onto the enclosing wall in front of the monastery. In the painting, the dragon was circling amidst the clouds, about to swoop down, while the tiger crouched on a mountaintop, getting ready to pounce. Even though the monks had altered it many times, they still thought the dynamics in the painting were insufficient. Just by chance, Chan Master Wude was returning from outside, so the student monks asked the Chan Master to critique their work.

After Chan Master Wude looked it over, he said, "The outward appearance of the dragon and tiger were drawn quite well, but how much do you know about the characteristics of dragons

and tigers? Now, what you should understand is that before a dragon attacks, it must draw back its head; when a tiger is going to pounce upward, it must lower its head. The greater the angle a dragon's neck is drawn back and the closer a tiger's head is to the ground, then the faster they can charge forward and the higher they can leap."

The student monks very happily received this advice and said, "Teacher, your words really cut to the point! We not only drew the dragon's head too far forward, but the tiger's head is also too high. No wonder we always felt that the dynamics were insufficient."

Chan Master Wude took the opportunity to instruct them, saying, "The principles of conducting oneself, handling affairs, practicing Chan, and cultivating the Way are also the same. Only after retreating a step to prepare, can one charge ahead even farther.

Only after humble self-reflection can one climb even higher."

Seeming not to understand, the student monks asked, "Teacher, how can one who retreats move forward? How can a humble person go even higher?"

Chan Master Wude said earnestly, "Just listen to my Chan poem:"

Planting a field full of green seedlings by hand,  
Lowering my head, I then see the sky in the water.  
When body and mind are pure, this is the Way,  
Stepping back is, in fact, moving forward.

"Do all of you comprehend the meaning?"

At that, the student monks were all able to understand.

*Self-respect is one aspect of the Chan practitioner's character. They are sometimes independent and indomitable, proud and solitary, like a dragon raising its head and a tiger pouncing. But sometimes, they are very humble like a dragon drawing back and a tiger lowering its head. This explains that when we have to advance, advance; when we have to retreat, retreat; when we have to ascend, ascend; and when we have to descend, descend. This is what we call the grounds for advancing and retreating, and the timing for ascending and descending. The*

*dragon is the spirit of beasts, the tiger the king of beasts. Chan practitioners are the virtuous among people, taking retreat as advance and modesty as esteem. Is this not fitting?*



### 33. THE ROOSTER AND THE BUG

There was a child who was only seven years old. However, he would often seek out Chan Master Wude and talk with him about everything. Nevertheless, Chan Master Wude thought the child's quick wit was extraordinary, for the words that came out of him often had a little bit of Chan flavor. One day, Chan Master Wude said to him, "This old monk is very busy every day. I don't have time to frequently debate and chatter with you. Now, I will debate with you once more. If you lose, you'll have to buy cakes and offer them to me. If I lose, I will buy cakes for you."

After listening to this, the child said, "Then please, Master, take the money out first!"

Chan Master Wude said, "It is most important when one

loses a debate; only then do you need the money. If one wins the debate, then it actually isn't an issue. First, let's suppose this old monk is a rooster."

The child said, "I am a little bug."

Chan Master Wude seized the opportunity and said, "Yes, you are a little bug. You should buy a cake for me, this big rooster, to eat!"

The child would not admit defeat and argued, "No way, Master! You should buy the cake for me! You are a big rooster. I am a little bug. When I see you, I can fly away. Because of our master and disciple relationship, we cannot argue! Then, haven't you lost?"

Chan Master Wude grabbed the child's hand and led him to a large crowd of people. Chan Master Wude said, "This issue is similar to war and politics. If a local official cannot make a decision, then we must ask the people to make a ruling. There are three hundred villagers here. Among them, it cannot be said that we do not have any supporters. Everyone! Will you please determine for this old monk and child which one is more reasonable."

The people were unable to decide. Therefore, Chan Master Wude earnestly and solemnly said, "One must be a Chan master with eyes opened to be able to judge this."

Three days passed. Only then did all the people in the monastery notice that Chan Master Wude had secretly bought cakes for the seven-year-old child.

The rooster and the bug—between this pair of old and young Chan practitioners, there must be many more humorous tales.

*In Chan, there is no big or small, long or short, right or wrong, good or bad. Of course, in Chan, there is also no losing or winning. From the beginning, Chan Master Wude wanted to triumph over the seven-year-old child. However, the seven-year-old child was willing to be a weak, little bug. When the big rooster stretches out to peck with his beak, the bug is the most appetizing of foods. Yet, the little bug can fly away. This symbolizes that the master and the disciple cannot argue. Chan is a world of no arguing, but Chan is also a world of regularity and order.*



#### 34. THE MOST CHARMING

There was once a female patron of Buddhism whose family was very wealthy. Whether it was her riches, social status, abilities, power, and outward beauty, no one could compare. However, she still felt low-spirited and unhappy. She did not even have anyone to have a heart-to-heart with. Therefore, she went to Chan Master Wude to ask for instruction on how to become charming in order to win the admiration of others.

Chan Master Wude told her, "If you are able to cooperate with all kinds of people at all times and in all places, and also have compassion like that of the Buddhas in your heart, speak some Chan words, hear some Chan sounds, do some Chan deeds, apply the Chan mind, then you can become a charming person." After the female patron heard this, she asked, "How are Chan words spoken?"

Chan Master Wude said, "Chan words are speaking joyful words, speaking true words, speaking modest words, speaking words that benefit others."

The female patron then asked, "How are Chan sounds heard?"



Chan Master Wude said, “Chan sounds transform all sounds into wondrous sounds, taking scolding sounds and turning them into compassionate sounds, taking slanderous sounds and turning them into helpful sounds. Crying sounds, noisy sounds, crude sounds, ugly sounds—when you can pay no mind to all of these, then that is the sound of Chan.”

The female patron then asked, “How are Chan deeds done?”

Chan Master Wude answered, “Chan deeds are acts of charity, acts of benevolence, acts of service, acts that are in accordance with the Dharma.”

The female patron took it one step further and asked, “How is the Chan mind applied?”

Chan Master Wude said, “The Chan mind is the mind of you and me as one, the mind where sacred and ordinary are one and the same, the mind that embraces everything, the mind that universally benefits everything.”

After the female patron listened to this, she completely changed from her former arrogance. In front of others, she no longer flaunted her wealth and never again presumed upon her own beauty. Towards others, she was always respectful and courteous. Towards her family especially, she showed considerate and sympathetic concern. Before long, she was praised as “the most charming patron.”

*Chan is not theory. Chan is life. When there is Chan in life, then the power of the Dharma is boundless, you will be respected by everyone, you will be valued everywhere. When there is Chan, everything you do in life will be successful.*



### 35. A STICK OF INCENSE INCREASES MERITS

Prime Minister Pei Xiu of the Tang Dynasty was a very devout Buddhist. His son, Pei Wende, at a very young age, achieved the highest score in the imperial examination and was appointed as a Hanlin Academy Scholar by the emperor. However, Pei Xiu did not wish for his son to rise to such success so early in life, and to advance as an official at a young age. Therefore, he sent his son to a monastery to cultivate and practice. Furthermore, he wanted him to first do manual labor as a water hauler and fire tender.

This young and successful Hanlin Academy Scholar carried water and chopped firewood at the monastery every day. It made him physically and mentally exhausted, and also extremely vexed. Muttering without end in his heart, he constantly resented his father for sending him to such an old monastery deep in the mountains to be a beast of burden. But because he could not disobey his father's orders, he forced himself to tolerate it. After unwillingly doing this for a period of time, he finally could not stand it, so he complained resentfully:

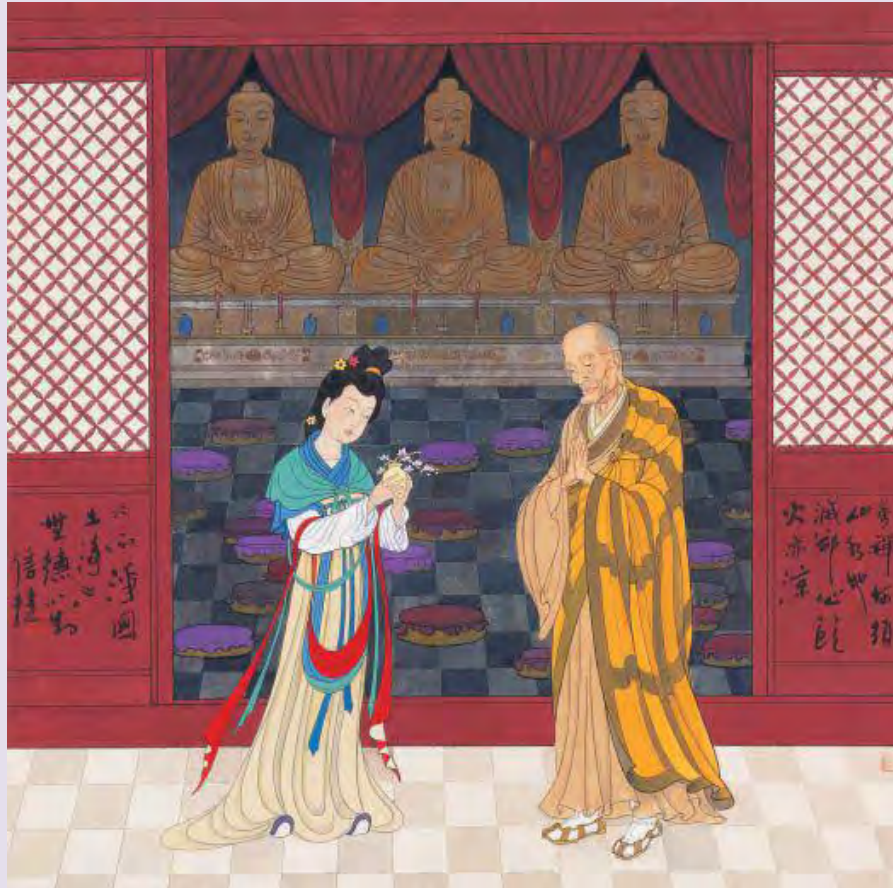
Hanlin Academy Scholar, carrying water, sweat dripping to  
the waist,  
Monk, upon drinking it, how can he take it?

The abbot of the monastery, Chan Master Wude, happened to  
hear this. With a faint smile, he also recited two verses in  
response:

This old monk's one stick of incense,  
Can take on ten thousand kalpas of food.

Pei Wende was shocked. From then on, he disciplined his  
body and mind, and did the hard labor.

*Great people do not sit up on a seat high for others to  
idolize. Chan practitioners practice what they advocate from  
doing humble work and performing hard labor to train their  
willpower. As Mencius said, "Thus, when Heaven is about to  
confer a great office on a man, it must first strengthen his mind  
and will, toil his sinews and bones, starve his body, and  
impoverish the self." Buddhism further emphasizes discipline  
and laborious training. However, this only enriches the  
conditions of merit and virtue, which belong to worldly  
conditioned dharma. Like the Chan Master's stick of incense, the  
mind can horizontally permeate the ten directions and the nature  
can vertically penetrate the three time periods. When the mind and  
nature can correspond with unconditioned dharma, then of  
course, "This old monk's one stick of incense can take on ten  
thousand kalpas of food."*



### 36. PURIFY THE MIND, PURIFY THE LAND

There was a devout Buddhist devotee who picked fresh flowers from her own garden every day and brought them to the temple to make an offering to the Buddha. One day, just as she was delivering flowers to the Buddha Hall, she happened to run into Chan Master Wude who was coming out of the Dharma Hall. Chan Master Wude said joyfully, “You come so devoutly every day with fragrant flowers to make offerings to the Buddha! According to accounts in the sutras, those who often make offerings of fragrant flowers to the Buddha will have the blessing of a dignified countenance in a future life.”

The devotee very happily replied, “This is as it should be. Every time I come to the temple to pay my respects to the Buddha, I feel that my spirit is pure and refreshed, as though it has been washed clean. But when I get home, my mind is troubled and agitated. As a housewife, how can I maintain a pure and clear mind in the chaotic and noisy city?”

Chan Master Wude asked in return, “Since you offer fresh flowers to the Buddha, I believe you must have some general

knowledge regarding plants. I now ask you: how do you preserve the freshness of flowers?”

The devotee answered, “The way to preserve the freshness of flowers is nothing other than changing the water every day and, when changing the water, cutting off a section of the stem because the end of the stem in the water rots easily. After it rots, the moisture is difficult to absorb, so it withers easily!”

Chan Master Wude said, “To maintain a pure and clear mind, the principle is also the same. Our living environment is like the water in a vase and we are the flowers. Only by continuously purifying our bodies and minds, changing our dispositions, and constantly repenting, examining ourselves, and correcting our bad habits and faults, can we unceasingly absorb the nutrients from nature.”

After the devotee heard this, she happily bowed and gratefully said, “Thank you, Chan Master, for your instruction. I hope, in the future, I’ll have the opportunity to be near the Chan Master, to live the life of a Chan practitioner in the monastery, and to enjoy the tranquility of the morning bell, evening drum, and bodhi chanting.”

Chan Master Wude said, “Your breathing is the chanting, the beating of your pulse is the bell and drum, your body is the temple, and your two ears are bodhi. There is no place that is not tranquil. Why must you wait for an opportunity to live in a monastery?”

*An ancient virtuous one said, “Make the bustling marketplace a place of practice.” Tranquility—so long as we cease our delusional conditions and cast aside distracting thoughts, where can there not be tranquility? Ancient monasteries deep in the mountains—if we do not rid ourselves of delusional thinking, even if we live in ancient monasteries deep in the mountains, we will still be unable to cultivate. Chan practitioners emphasize “the present moment.” Why tomorrow? “When practicing Chan, what need is there for mountains, water, or land? But when you extinguish the fire of the mind, it is cool.” This is the way to describe it.*





### 37. ORIGINALLY EMPTY WITHOUT EXISTENCE

One day, Chan Master Foyin ascended the high seat to give a discourse on the Dharma. Su Dongpo heard about this and hurried to attend. All the seats had already been taken; there were no empty places. The Chan Master, upon seeing Su Dongpo, said, "People have already filled the seats. This place has no seat for you, Scholar."

Su Dongpo, who had always been fond of Chan, immediately responded to the Chan Master, saying, "Since there are no seats, I will use the Chan Master's body of the four great elements and five aggregates as a seat."

Seeing that Su Dongpo wanted to debate Chan with him, the Chan Master then said, "Scholar! I have a question to ask you. If you can answer it, then this old monk's body can be taken as your seat. If you cannot answer it, then you have to leave the jade belt you are wearing at this temple as a memento." Su Dongpo had always thought highly of himself. He had no doubt that he would win, so he agreed. Chan Master Foyin then said, "The four great elements are originally empty and the five aggregates have no

substantial existence. May I ask, Scholar, where do you want to sit?"

Su Dongpo was unable to utter a word.

*Because our physical bodies are a temporary composition of the four great elements of earth, water, fire, and wind, they all do not have any real existence. Unable to peacefully sit here, Su Dongpo's jade belt was lost to Chan Master Foyin. It remains at Jinshan Temple to this very day.*



### 38. LIKE COW DUNG

Su Dongpo of the Song Dynasty went to Jinshan Temple to practice meditation and contemplate Chan with Chan Master Foyin. Su Dongpo felt his body and mind flowing freely, so he asked the Chan Master, "Chan Master! When you look at my manner of sitting, what do you think?"

"Very dignified, like a Buddha!"

Hearing this, Su Dongpo was very pleased. Chan Master

Foyin then asked Su Dongpo, "Scholar! When you look at my sitting posture, what do you think?"

Su Dongpo, never passing up an opportunity to mock the Chan Master, immediately replied, "Like a pile of cow dung!" Hearing this, Chan Master Foyin was also very delighted! When the Chan Master was compared to cow dung and surprisingly could not respond, Su Dongpo thought to himself that he had triumphed over Chan Master Foyin. Therefore, he told whomever he came across, "I won today!"

When the news reached the ears of his little sister, Su Xiaomei, she asked, "Older brother! How, exactly, did you defeat the Chan Master?" Su Dongpo was beside himself with joy. In high spirits, he related the facts one more time. Su Xiaomei's natural gifts surpassed that of others and she was of uncommon brilliance. After listening to Su Dongpo's self-satisfied narration, she sternly said, "Older brother, you lost! The Chan Master's mind is like the Buddha's. Therefore, he saw you as a Buddha. But your mind is like cow dung. Therefore, you saw the Chan Master as cow dung!"

Su Dongpo was dumbstruck. Just then, he realized his own Chan attainment was not as good as that of Chan Master Foyin.

*Chan is not knowledge; it is awakening to one's nature.*

*Chan is not clever debate; it is spiritual wisdom. Do not think that the exchanges of Chan masters are always sharp. Sometimes, they are silent and do not speak. They do not communicate through spoken language and written words, yet they have the same earsplitting Dharma sounds.*



### 39. THE EIGHT WINDS CANNOT MOVE ME

Su Dongpo of the Song Dynasty held a government post in Guazhuo, located in Jiangbei, which was only separated from Jinshan Temple in Jiangnan by the Yangzi River. He and Chan Master Foyin, abbot of Jinshan Temple, often conversed about Chan and debated the Way. One day, Su Dongpo, feeling that his cultivation had attainment, composed a poem and dispatched his young attendant across the river to deliver it to Chan Master Foyin for his approval. The poem said:

Bowing, Heaven within Heaven,  
 A light that illuminates the boundless universe,  
 The eight winds cannot move me,  
 Sitting mindfully upon the purple golden lotus.

After the Chan Master received it from the hands of the young attendant and read it, he took a brush and wrote a one-word comment. He then summoned the young attendant to take it back. Su Dongpo, thinking that the Chan Master would surely praise the

state of his cultivation and Chan practice, hurriedly opened the Chan Master's written comments. As soon as he looked, he only saw the word "fart" written on it. The uncontrollable fire of anger began to rise, so he took a boat across the river in search of the Chan Master to debate with him.

When the boat was nearing Jinshan Temple, Chan Master Foyin was already standing on the shore waiting for Su Dongpo. As soon as Su Dongpo saw the Chan Master, he said, panting with rage, "Chan Master, we are the closest of Dharma friends. My poem, my cultivation—if you don't praise it, that's fine. But how could you insult me?"

The Chan Master, acting as if nothing had happened, said, "How did I insult you?"

Su Dongpo took the one-word comment, "fart," written on the poem and showed it to the Chan Master.

The Chan Master roared with laughter and said, "Oh! Didn't you say 'the eight winds cannot move me?' How come 'a fart has knocked you across the river'?"

Su Dongpo was terribly ashamed.

*Cultivation is not something you talk about. Doing it is the real accomplishment.*





#### 40. THE UNIVERSE AS MY BED

One time, Su Dongpo wanted to call on Chan Master Foyin, so he wrote a letter to the Chan Master in advance, telling the Chan Master that, in the same manner Chan Master Zhaozhou had received Lord Zhao, it was not necessary to come out and greet him.

Su Dongpo was confident that he understood the subtleties of Chan, and Chan Master Foyin should receive him with the highest courtesy—receiving by not receiving. However, he still saw Chan Master Foyin run out of the monastery gate to receive him.

Finally, seizing the opportunity to make fun of the Chan Master, he said, “Your cultivation is not as carefree as Chan Master Zhaozhou’s. I told you not to come and receive me, but you just couldn’t ignore social convention, coming all this way to receive me.”

Su Dongpo thought that the Chan Master was undoubtedly at a disadvantage this time, but the Chan Master still responded with a gatha, saying:

Zhaozhou, on that day, was less than modest,  
Not coming out of the monastery gate to receive Lord Zhao.  
How can it be like the boundless form of Mt. Jin,  
The great universe, a Chan bed!

*The meaning is: Zhaozhou did not rise from his bed to receive Lord Zhao because Zhaozhou was not modest, not because his state was superior. However, I, Foyin, came out to receive you, but do you think that I have really gotten out of bed? The great universe is my Chan bed. Although you saw me get out of bed to receive you, I am, in fact, still lying on the great universal Chan bed sleeping. You, Su Dongpo, only know about the bed with form that can be seen with the physical eye. Yet, my bed is the vast bed that extends across all space and pervades the dharma realms."*



41. WHAT ARE LICE MADE OF?

One day, Su Dongpo and Qin Shaoyou were having a meal together. Because both of these men were very talented, they were often mutually unyielding on account of discussing and debating the Way. On this day, when they were eating, they just so happened to see a person walk by. Since he had not bathed for many days, his body was crawling with lice. Su Dongpo then said, "That person is really dirty. The filth on his body has given birth to the lice!" Qin Shaoyou, insisting on another opinion, said, "That's not so! The lice grew from the cotton batting in his clothes!" The two people each held fast to their opinions, arguing on with no resolution. They then decided to go ask Chan Master Foyin to make an impartial judgment, regarding how lice came about. Moreover, they mutually agreed that the person who lost the debate would have to give a banquet.

Striving to gain victory, Su Dongpo secretly ran to Chan Master Foyin's place and asked the Chan Master to help him by all means. After a while, Qin Shaoyou also went to ask for the Chan Master's help. Chan Master Foyin promised them. Both people thought for sure, they would be victorious. Feeling assured, they waited for the result of the judgment. The Chan Master decided, saying, "The head of the louse is born from the filth, but the feet of the louse grows from the cotton batting."

The Chan Master was a fine peacemaker. There was a poem that said,

A tree in the spring breeze has two conditions,  
Southern branches face the warmth, northern ones face the  
chill.  
Before me, a message coming from the West:  
One piece flies west, one piece flies east.

*What does this poem tell us? It is the unity of things and self; things and self are one. The external forms of mountains, rivers, and this great earth are the internal mountains, rivers, and great earth. The great chiliocosm is precisely our internal world. Things and self already have no differentiation, and they are completely harmonized together. Just like on a tree, although they receive the same air, sunlight, and water, tree leaves actually have a different vitality. Moreover, they are able to not obstruct each other and exist on the same tree.*



## 42. SPEAKING OF THE SUPREME DHARMA

Chan Master Foguang brought up a gongan to a student monk, saying:

In ancient times, most people used paper lanterns with candles to light up the road. One day, a blind person paid a visit to one of his friends. When he was taking his leave, because the sky was already dark, his friend gave him a lantern to light his way home.

The blind one politely declined his friend's kindness, saying, "I don't need a lantern. No matter whether it is light or dark, it is all the same to me."

The friend explained, "I know you don't need a lantern to light your way home. But, if you don't carry a lantern, other people might run into you. Therefore, you better still take it."

The words he spoke sounded reasonable, so this blind person took the lantern and went back home. But, he had not gone far when someone ran right into him. The blind one scolded the other

person, saying, "Look where you're going! Can't you see the lantern in my hand?"

Besides offering an apology, the wayfarer said, "My dear fellow, your candle is already extinguished."

The blind one said, "It's the light of your mind that has been extinguished. What does that have to do with my candle going out?"

*To people who see their nature, bright prajna and dark ignorance are the same. There is no difference. Although dark afflictions cause people to suffer, does not the brightness of the scorching sun also burn people? Even though this is the case, why not employ compassionate means, raising a torch of wisdom to illuminate and reveal the light in the minds of all sentient beings? Sentient beings, from beginningless time, have had deep and strong attachments to the self. Birth and death, death and birth: the long night is very dark. Although he has two eyes, yet he cannot see the person on the road right before his eyes. When blaming the blind man's lantern for being extinguished, he had his eyes open, but did not use his mind. Only the extinguishing of the light of the mind is more lamentable. For example, everyday people who have not yet understood the great meaning of the Dharma misinterpret the Dharma and slander the Triple Gem everywhere. This is like a seeing person running into a blind man's lantern. How can you still blame the lantern for not being lit?*





#### 43. NO TIME TO FEEL OLD

Chan Master Foguang's disciple Dazhi, having returned after twenty years of studying and traveling, was in the Dharma hall recounting to Chan Master Foguang his various experiences studying outside the monastery. Chan Master Foguang listened carefully from beginning to end with a comforting and encouraging smile. At last, Dazhi asked, "Teacher! These past twenty years, how have you been?"

Chan Master Foguang said, "Very well! Very well! Teaching, lecturing, writing, and transcribing sutras—I drift along in the ocean of the Dharma every day. In the world, there is no life more joyful than this. Each day, I enjoy being so busy."

Dazhi said in caring tone, "Teacher, you should spend more time resting!"

Late into the night, Chan Master Foguang said to Dazhi, "Go rest! If you have something to say, we can talk about it later."

Early in the morning, in his sleep, Dazhi vaguely heard the intermittent sound of the wooden fish used in chanting coming from Chan Master Foguang's meditation room. During the day,

Chan Master Foguang very patiently gave instruction and spoke the Dharma to the groups of devotees and disciples that came to pay respect to the Buddha. As soon as he returned to the meditation hall, if he was not reading and commenting on the reports of student monks, then he was preparing teaching material for devotees. Each day, there were always things to keep him busy. Finally, seeing a break in the conversation between Chan Master Foguang and the devotees, Dazhi seized the moment. He quickly asked Chan Master Foguang, "Teacher! In these twenty years we've been apart, your daily life is still so busy. How come you don't seem to be getting older?" Chan Master Foguang said, "I don't have time to feel old." Later on, this saying, "No time to feel old," continued to echo in Dazhi's ears.

*Of the people in the world, some are still very young, but their mind is in decline so they feel old. Some are already old, but their mind is vigorous so they still feel energetic. In old age, they are more robust.*

*"No time to feel old" actually means that there is no concept of being old in one's mind. As Confucius said, "He is a person who is so eager that he forgets to eat, so joyous that he forgets his worries, and is unaware of the approaching of old age." The Chan practitioner's view of life is also like this.*

*Once there was an old man whose hair was turning gray. When someone asked about his age, he replied that he was four years old. Everyone was surprised. He said, "For the past seventy years, I lived for myself! The selfish life had no meaning whatsoever. Only in these last four years did I understand how to serve society and people, which I feel is very meaningful. This is why I say I have lived four years."*

*Not having time to feel old is very good. Otherwise, being a four-year-old old man is also very meaningful.*



#### 44. I CAN BE BUSY FOR YOU TOO

One time, Chan Master Foguang saw the Chan Monk Keqi and asked, "Since you came here to study Chan, time seems to have flown by. It's already been twelve autumns and winters. Why have you never asked me about the Way?"

Chan Monk Keqi answered, "The elder Chan Master is very busy every day. I really do not dare to bother you!"

Time sped by, and another three years passed. One day, on the road, Chan Master Foguang ran into Chan Monk Keqi again and asked, "Do you have any questions about practicing Chan and cultivating the Way? Why haven't you come to ask me?"

Chan Monk Keqi replied, "The elder Chan Master is very busy. I dare not speak to you at will!"

Another year went by. When Chan Monk Keqi passed by Chan Master Foguang's room, the Chan Master again said to Keqi, "Come here. I have time today. Please come to my room to talk about the Way of Chan."

Chan Monk Keqi quickly joined palms and bowed, saying,

“The elder Chan Master is very busy. How would I dare waste your time whenever I please?”

Chan Master Foguang knew that Chan Monk Keqi was too modest and would not have the courage to directly take responsibility. No matter how he practiced Chan, he would still not be able to awaken.

Chan Master Foguang knew he had to take the initiative, so when he ran into Chan Monk Keqi once again, he asked, “Learning the Way and practicing meditation require continuous investigation and contemplation. Why don’t you ever come to ask me?”

Chan Monk Keqi still said, “Elder Chan Master, you are very busy. It is inappropriate for me to disturb you!”

Chan Master Foguang immediately shouted, “Busy! Busy! Busy for whom? I can be busy for you too!”

Chan Master Foguang’s one statement, “I can be busy for you too!” struck a chord in Chan Monk Keqi’s heart, and with these words, he immediately had an awakening.

*Some people care too much about themselves and do not care about others. Even over little things, they bother others time and again. Some people care too much about others and are unwilling to act on their own behalf, ultimately losing many opportunities. The original face of Chan is to directly take responsibility. When it is time to eat, eat; when it is time to cultivate the Way, cultivate the Way; when it is time to ask questions, ask important questions; when it is time to answer, answer with certainty. Do not run around in circles, where what seems right is actually wrong!*

*I can help. Why do you not want me to help? You want me to help. Why can’t I be busy for you too? Other and self—do not distinguish so clearly between them!*



#### 45. DOING EVIL AND CULTIVATING GOODNESS

A student monk asked Chan Master Junji for instruction, saying, “What is a person who practices and performs good deeds?”

Chan Master Junji replied, “Those who shoulder pillories and wear chains.”

The student monk then asked, “What is a person who does evil?”

Chan Master Junji answered, “Those who practice Chan and enter samadhi.”

The student monk said, “Your disciple is ignorant. The Master’s instruction is very confusing and difficult to understand. I beseech the Master to use clear and simple words to instruct me!”

Chan Master Junji explained, “So-called evil-doers—the evil do not follow good. Do-gooders—the good do not follow evil.”

As if lost in a dense fog, the student monk was still confused.

After quite some time, Chan Master Junji asked the student monk, “Understand?”

The student monk replied, “Don’t understand.”



Chan Master Junji said, “Those who do evil have no good thoughts. Those who do good have no evil mind. Therefore, we say good and evil are like drifting clouds, with nothing born and nothing extinguished.”

With these words, the student monk had an awakening.

*Speaking of good and evil in the mundane world, we call doing good deeds “goodness,” we call doing bad deeds “evil”; goodness has its reward, evil has its retribution. In terms of phenomena, the cause and effect of the three time periods is completely real. However, in terms of original nature, what we call good and evil do not exist. If we are able to not differentiate between good and evil, this we call “seeing the nature,” (seeing the original face). This is what is meant by, “Evil, originally empty, is created from the mind. If the mind is extinguished, evil is empty.”*

*Doing good is having shackles and doing evil is called samadhi—we cannot blame the Chan Master for turning it upside down. In terms of the Truth, if we do good deeds but are doggedly attached to worldly and heavenly rewards, is this not being imprisoned by shackles? If we do evil things, although we will transmigrate to the lower realms, our original nature is still the same. Therefore, Chan Master Junji, giving rise to great compassion, presented this profound teaching because he wanted us not to be deluded by good and evil. We should know that when we do good deeds and are reborn into a higher realm, then we attach ourselves to conditioned dharma and take it as the ultimate liberation, this is wrong. When we do evil and fall into the lower realms, then feel discouraged thinking that life is without hope, this is also wrong. The truth is, “good and evil are dharmas, but the Dharma is not good nor evil.”*



#### 46. HONESTY WITHOUT DECEPTION

After Chan Master Daokai of the Song Dynasty had attained the Way, he expounded on the style of Chan practice. He had served as the abbot of big temples such as Jingyin Temple and Tianning Temple. One day, the emperor dispatched an envoy to bestow a purple kasaya in praise of his sagely virtue and confer upon him the title of “Chan Master Dingzhao—Samadhi Illumination.”

The Chan Master resolutely declined to accept. The emperor then ordered Li Xiaoshou, a member of the imperial family in Kaifeng, to go to the Chan Master to convey the imperial court’s commendations and good intentions. The Chan Master still would not accept. As a result, the emperor was infuriated and issued an imperial decree for the prefect to take him into custody. The prefect knew that the Chan Master was benevolent, generous, loyal, and honest. When he arrived at the temple, he quietly asked, “The Chan Master’s body is weak and his face looks haggard. Are you ill?”

The Chan Master replied, “No!”

The prefect said, "If you say you're sick, then you can avoid punishment for defying the imperial decree."

The Chan Master said, "If I'm not sick, then I'm not sick.

How could I feign illness in order to avoid punishment?"

The prefect had no choice but to banish the Chan Master to Zizhou. All those who heard about it wept without end.

*We often see that the personalities of Chan practitioners are witty and lively. However, the honesty and persistence of Chan practitioners can be seen in Chan Master Daokai's conduct and virtue. As Venerable Master Lianchi of the Ming Dynasty said in praise, "When honor comes, to decline it is difficult for people. To decline and bring about punishment, and to receive punishment but not deceive—is this not the most difficult of difficulties? In the biographies of the loyal and righteous, how could this be left out? I record it as a model for the monastics of the world."*



#### 47. TRANSCEND THE ORDINARY AND THE SACRED

When Chan Master Nanta Guangyong first went to study with Chan Master Yangshan, Yangshan asked him, “What have you come here for?”

Guangyong answered, “I’ve come to pay my respects to the Chan Master.”

Yangshan then asked, “Have you seen the Chan Master?”

Guangyong answered, “I’ve seen him.”

Yangshan further asked, “Is the Chan Master’s appearance like a donkey or a horse?”

Guangyong said, “I think the Chan Master is also not like a Buddha!”

Yangshan would not let up and proceeded to ask, “If he’s not like a Buddha, then what is he like?”

Not wanting to be outdone, Guangyong answered, “If he’s like anything at all, then what difference is there from a horse or donkey?”

Yangshan exclaimed in great admiration, “You’ve transcended the ordinary and the sacred! Emotions ceased, true

essence revealed. In the next twenty years, no one will surpass you. Take good care of yourself.”

After this, whenever Chan Master Yangshan met anyone, he would say in praise, “Guangyong is a Buddha in the flesh.”

*What, exactly, is the meaning contained within this gongan? For instance, some have asked, what are people like? This is a very difficult question to answer because if there are things they are like, then there are things they are not like. If we answer that people are like ghosts, then there are also people among ghosts. If we say ghosts are like people, then there are also ghosts among people. The Diamond Sutra says, “All forms are illusory. If we see that the various forms are formless, then we see the Tathagata.” What is space like? Space is without form and without formlessness. Because space has no form, it can embrace the myriad phenomena. Space has no form, so it is like the forms of all phenomena. Chan Master Yangshan and Chan Master Guangyong debated that he was not like a donkey and not like a Buddha. Then what exactly was he like? He was like himself. Only by seeing our own intrinsic nature can we be as one with space. What is it like? It is like the form of space without form. If we are able to transcend the ordinary and the sacred, and if essence and function are one, then that is seeing the truth of formlessness.*





#### 48. I'M NOT A SENTIENT BEING

Chan Master Weikuan was once asked by a student monk,

“Do dogs have Buddha nature?”

“They do,” answered Chan Master Weikuan.

“Do you have Buddha nature?”

“I don’t.”

“Why do all sentient beings have Buddha nature, yet you do not?”

“Because I am not the sentient being you are talking about.”

“You’re not a sentient being. Are you a Buddha?”

“I’m not that either.”

“Then what exactly are you?”

“I’m not a ‘what!’”

The student monk finally asked, “Then, is it something we can see or think of?”

“It is the inconceivable, beyond thinking and beyond discussing.”

*What am I? I am myself. If everyone could affirm the self,*

*then that is the true self. That which we call the true "self" is neither sentient being nor non-sentient being. Then what is it?*



#### 49. CANNOT TAKE YOUR PLACE

Chan Master Daoqian and his good friend, Zongyuan, traveled far and wide together to visit and study. On the way, Zongyuan could not bear the fatigue of crossing mountains and rivers, so he grumbled time and again about wanting to turn back.

Daoqian comforted him, saying, "We already pledged to go forth to study, and we've also walked such a long way. Now, giving up halfway and going back would be a real shame. How about this: from now on, if there is anything I can do for you along the way, I will certainly do it for you. However, there are only five things I can't help you with."

Zongyuan asked, "What five things?"

Daoqian said very matter-of-factly, "Dress, eat, shit, piss, and walk."

With Daoqian's words, Zongyuan finally had a great awakening. From then on, he never again dared to speak of hardship.

*As the saying goes: "When gold flows in with the tide, you should still get up early to scoop it up!" In this world, there is no achievement that can be attained without effort. A thousandfoot tower rises from the ground up; a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. In afflictions and the cycle of birth and death, other people cannot take our place in the slightest. Everything depends on oneself!*



## 50. THE MANIFESTATION OF MANJUSRI

Chan Master Wenxi was on a pilgrimage to Mt. Wutai. Before he arrived, he stayed overnight in a thatched hut where an old man lived. Wenxi asked the old man, "How is it in this place of practice?"

The old man replied, "Dragons and snakes intermix; the

ordinary and the sacred intermingle.”

Wenxi asked, “How many live here?”

The old man answered, “Three three in front, three three in back.”

When Wenxi woke up the next day, the thatched hut had disappeared, and he saw Manjusri riding a lion hovering in midair. He regretted that though he had eyes, he had not recognized the bodhisattva and let a chance slip by.

When Wenxi later went to study with Chan Master

Yangshan, he attained awakening. Therefore, he settled down to work as a cook. One day, amidst the steam from the rice cooker he again saw the manifestation of Manjusri. Wenxi then raised a wooden rice spoon, struck, and said, “Manjusri is Manjusri; Wenxi is Wenxi. You won’t fool me today!”

Manjusri recited a gatha:

Bitter melons are bitter even at the root,  
Sweet melons are sweet to the stem;  
Cultivating over three great kalpas,  
Yet, snubbed by this monk.

*Because we do not understand our intrinsic nature, we seek the Dharma outside of our mind from morning to night. Therefore, we worry about gains and losses. If we could awaken to our intrinsic nature, then “Manjusri is Manjusri; Wenxi is Wenxi.” Although the two are different, they are actually not different. Why should we be regretful or troubled then? In Manjusri’s gatha, he was not afraid of others snubbing him, but rather, was explaining that after three great kalpas of cultivation, only today did he truly come across a close friend, someone who really knew him. All along, Manjusri and Wenxi were one and the same!*



## 51. I'M HERE

Chan Master Yunyan Tancheng and Chan Master Daowu Yuanzhi of Changsha were both disciples of Chan Master Yaoshan Weiyan, and they had a very close friendship. Chan Master Daowu, forty-six years of age when he became a monk, was eleven years older than Yunyan. One day, Chan Master Yunyan fell ill. Chan Master Daowu then asked him, "If you leave this leaking shell, where are you going and when can we see each other?" Without any hesitation, Chan Master Yunyan said, "The place without arising and without extinction." Chan Master Daowu disagreed and offered a different view, "Why not say the place not without arising and without extinction, and also that we do not seek to see each other?" After Chan Master Daowu said this, without waiting for Yunyan's reply, he picked up his bamboo hat and headed outside. Chan Master Yunyan then said, "Please wait a moment before you go. I want to ask you, what are you taking that hat for?" Chan Master Daowu replied, "It has its uses." Chan Master Yunyan asked more insistently, "When the



wind and rain come, what is it for?”

Chan Master Daowu replied, “It’s covered.”

Yunyan asked, “Is it still being covered or not?”

Daowu said, “Even though this is the case, it must also be without outflow.”

When Yunyan had recovered from his illness, he was brewing tea because he was thirsty. Chan Master Daowu asked, “What are you doing?”

Yunyan said, “Making tea!”

Daowu asked, “Making tea for whom?”

Yunyan said, “Someone wants to drink it!”

Daowu asked, “Why doesn’t he brew it himself?”

Yunyan said, “Fortunately, I’m here.”

*Yunyan and Daowu were Dharma brothers, but they had different styles of practice. Daowu was active and enthusiastic; Yunyan was old-fashioned and reserved. But, in terms of their cultivation, they were mutually encouraging and supportive, and they never bore grudges against one another. When they were discussing birth and death, one spoke of seeing each other in the place with arising and extinction and the other spoke of seeing each other in the place without arising and extinction. “Arising and extinction” and “without arising and extinction” are actually one and the same in the Chan practitioner’s mind. Daowu took a bamboo hat to let his intrinsic nature be without outflow. A house and a teacup that leak are not good vessels. If we can attain the state without outflow (staying far away from affliction), then we become complete beings. While Yunyan was sick and discussing birth and death, he was very detached. When discussing the brewing of tea, his response was “Fortunately, I’m here.” This kind of self-affirmation, not following birth and death, not differentiating between with and without, is the liberation of Chan.*



## 52. HOW HEAVY

Su Dongpo, a scholar of the Hanlin Imperial Academy, once had a discussion with Chan Master Zhaojue about the Way. After talking about “sentient and non-sentient beings both having the perfect wisdom of the Buddhas,” he suddenly had an awakening. As a result, he composed three gathas entitled, “Before Practicing Chan,” “While Practicing Chan,” and “After Practicing Chan and Awakening to the Way” to show his attainments. The state before practicing Chan was:

Viewed directly, a ridge; from the side, a peak,  
 Far, near, high, and low are all unique;  
 Not knowing the true face of Mt. Lu,  
 Only because one is on the mountain.

While practicing Chan, his state of mind was:

Misty rains of Mt. Lu, tides of Zhejiang,  
 Yet to arrive, thousands of regrets do not cease;

Even when one returns, there isn't even a thing,  
Misty rains of Mt. Lu, tides of Zhejiang.

After practicing Chan and awakening to the Way, his state of mind was:

The babbling creeks are the broad, long tongue;  
The scenic mountains are nothing but the pure body.  
Nightfall brings eighty-four thousand gathas,  
In days ahead, how to present them to others?

After this Chan awakening, Su Dongpo thought even more highly of his understanding of the Dharma. When he heard that Chan Master Chenghao of Yuquan Temple in Southern Jingzhou had an advanced Chan practice and that his sharp wit was difficult to reach, Su Dongpo was entirely unconvinced. Therefore, in civilian clothes, he sought an audience with the Chan Master, wanting to test Chan Master Chenghao's attainment. When they first met, Su Dongpo said, "I heard the Chan Master's attainment of Chan awakening is profound. May I ask, what is Chan awakening?"

Chan Master Chenghao did not answer and asked instead, "May I inquire after the honorable official's surname?"

Su Dongpo said, "My surname is Cheng, the 'cheng' that weighs how heavy all the elders of the world are!"

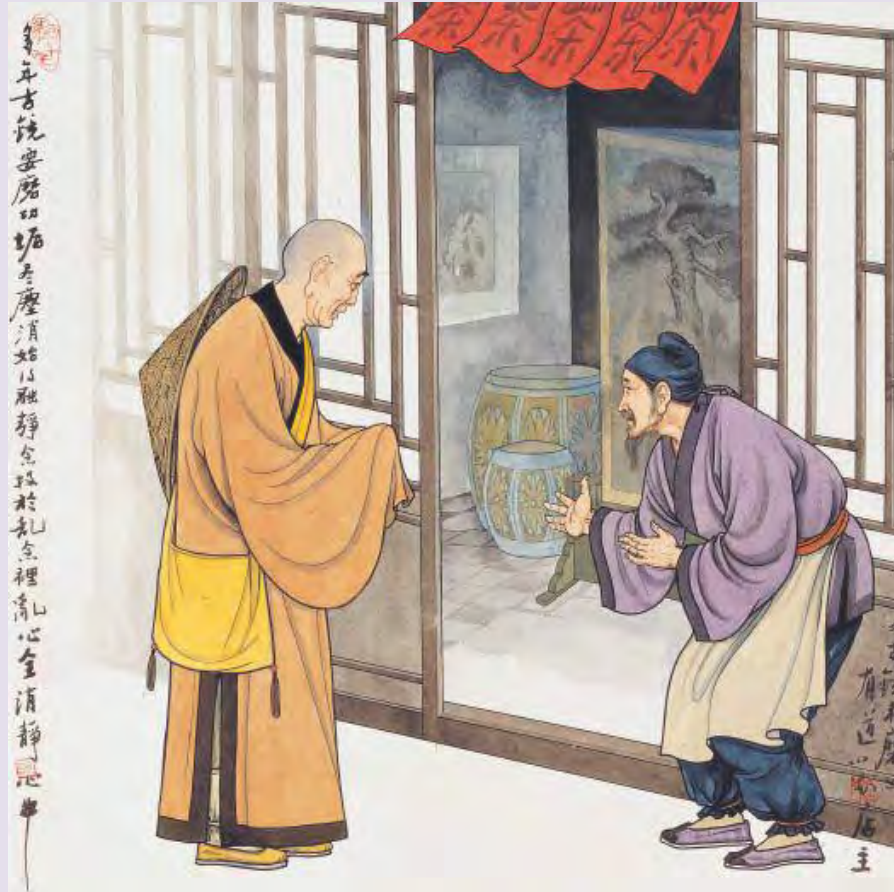
Chan Master Chenghao shouted loudly and said, "Please tell me: how heavy is this shout?"

Su Dongpo had nothing to counter with, so he bowed and withdrew.

*The three levels of Su Dongpo's Chan practice are exactly like the three stages of Chan practice described by Chan Master Qingyuan Xingsi. He said, "Before practicing Chan, we see mountain as mountain, we see water as water. While practicing Chan, we see mountain not as mountain, we see water not as water. After practicing Chan, we see mountain is still mountain, we see water is still water."*

*When Chan practitioners pass through these three critical junctures, even though they can awaken, it is by no means an attainment of cultivation. Awakening is understanding, and*

*cultivation belongs to attainment. Therefore, Chan practitioners begin to cultivate from awakening, and through cultivation achieve attainment. If those without attainment of cultivation were to come across a great Chan teacher like Chan Master Chenghao, and he shouted at them, they would be rendered wide-eyed and tongue-tied.*



### 53. ANTIQUE MIRROR NOT POLISHED

When Chan Master Youdao first began his travels to study Chan, he passed by a teahouse. Because he was thirsty, he was on his way in to have a cup of tea and rest a while. As soon as the shopkeeper saw that it was a wandering monk, he greeted Youdao warmly and asked, “Chan Master, you must be tired! Want some tea?”

Chan Master Youdao casually glanced at the tea shelves and nodded his head, without saying any other words.

The shopkeeper seemed to also be a skilled Chan practitioner. He cautiously asked, “Presumably, you are a Chan master with a

deeply profound practice. Chan Master, your humble servant would like to ask you a question. If you answer me, I will make an offering to you! How about it?"

Chan Master Youdao said, "Ask away!"

The shopkeeper asked, "When an antique mirror is not polished, how is it?"

Chan Master Youdao quickly answered, "It's pitch black."

The shopkeeper then asked, "After an antique mirror has already been polished, how is it?"

Chan Master Youdao replied, "It illuminates heaven and earth."

The shopkeeper took exception to this and said, "I'm sorry! Forgive me for not making an offering to you." So saying, he turned around and went back into the shop.

Chan Master Youdao was stunned. He thought, "I have practiced Chan for several decades, and now I don't even measure up to a shopkeeper! It is clear that his Chan practice is great."

Subsequently, he resolved to take painstaking efforts to retreat into deep practice in search of awakening.

Three years later, Chan Master Youdao appeared once more at the doorway of the teahouse. Yet again, the shopkeeper greeted him kindly, "Ha! I haven't seen you for three years! But I still want to ask you that same old question: 'When an antique mirror is not polished, how is it?'"

Without a second thought, Chan Master Youdao said, "It's not far from here to Hanyang."

The shopkeeper then asked, "After an antique mirror has already been polished, how is it?"

Chan Master Youdao answered, "Yingwu Islet is in front of Huanghe Pavilion."

After the shopkeeper heard this, he sincerely said, "Chan Master, please accept my offering!" Immediately, he turned around and cried out, "Attendant! Make tea! Make tea! Make good tea!"

*Was the antique mirror polished or not? Chan Master Youdao said that when it is not polished, it is pitch black; and when it is already polished, it illuminates heaven and earth. This antique mirror analogizes our intrinsic nature. Intrinsic nature is originally pure, without arising or ceasing, and shines brightly on its own. How is it possible to differentiate between not*



*polished and already polished? Intrinsic nature does not increase in the sacred, nor does it decrease in the ordinary. Therefore, when Chan Master Youdao could not recognize the intrinsic nature that is like the antique mirror, it is no wonder he could not get any tea. The second time, he answered that when an antique mirror is not polished, "It's not far from here to Hanyang," and when an antique mirror is already polished, "Yingwu Islet is in front of Huanghe Pavilion." This showed that he could recognize the intrinsic nature was right here and now. So, he had good tea to drink.*



#### 54. DADIAN AND HAN YU

Emperor Xianzong of the Tang Dynasty deeply venerated the Dharma, so he welcomed the relics of the Buddha into his palace to make offerings to the Buddha. One night, a bright light emanated from the palace. At the morning audience with the emperor, all of the officials offered their felicitations to the emperor.

Only Han Yu did not. Moreover, he presented, "A Memorial on the Buddha's Bones," which denounced the Buddha as a barbarian. This infuriated the emperor who had a sincere faith in Buddhism. Therefore, he was demoted and sent to Chaozhou to serve as a provincial governor.

At that time, Chaozhou was located in the wild region of the South and the culture had not yet developed. Chan Master Dadian, whose cultivation was extraordinary, was held in high esteem by the people. Han Yu had heard that this region had a great monk. One day, with the intention of asking a difficult question, he went to pay Chan Master Dadian a visit. At that moment, the Chan Master had just entered samadhi while in sitting meditation. It was not a good time to come forward and ask questions. Therefore, he waited for a very long time. The attendant could see Han Yu's impatience, so he stepped forward and struck the signal hand bell three times by the Chan Master's ear. He whispered to the Chan Master, "First use samadhi to move, later use wisdom to eradicate."

The attendant's meaning was to say that the Chan Master's samadhi had already moved Han Yu's arrogant heart; now, to use wisdom to eradicate his attachments. After Han Yu, who was nearby, heard the attendant's words, he immediately bowed and withdrew. He said, "Fortunately, I have received this message from the attendant monk."

This time Han Yu did not ask for instruction. After a short period of time, Han Yu still felt that he could not untangle the knot of doubt in his mind. He paid another visit to Chan Master Dadian and asked, "May I inquire, Venerable, how many springs and autumns have you seen?"

Picking up his prayer beads, the Chan Master replied, "Understand?"

Unable to untangle the meaning, Han Yu said, "I don't!"

"Day and night, one hundred and eight."

Han Yu still did not understand the meaning contained therein. The next day, he went again to seek instruction. Just as he walked up to the front gate, he saw a young novice monk. He went forward and asked, "How many springs and autumns has the Master seen?" The young novice monk remained silent and did not answer. Instead, he clicked his teeth three times. Han Yu felt like he had fallen into a dense fog. Once more, he went in to have

an audience with Chan Master Dadian and ask for instruction. The Chan Master also clicked his teeth three times. Only then did Han Yu, as though he had awakened, say, “Oh, so the Dharma does not have two kinds. It is all the same.”

*What is the meaning of this gongan? Han Yu asked, “How many springs and autumns have you seen?” It was based on his knowledge and experience, and he wanted to make a great calculation with regard to time. In fact, time turns in unending cycles, without beginning and without end. So, how can we talk about its length? In unlimited time and space, life transmigrates continuously. Clicking the teeth three times indicates that in endless life, we should not just show off our verbal skills. Aside from spoken and written words, we ought to truly experience and realize the Dharma, recognize our unlimited life, see our original face, and seek the eternal existence in the trichiliocosm.*



## 55. EXTINGUISH THE FIRE IN ONE'S MIND

There was a general who had spent many years fighting on the battlefield and had grown tired of war. He made a special trip to see Chan Master Dahui Zonggao to request to become a monk. He said to Zonggao, "Chan Master, I have already seen through this world. Please Chan Master, compassionately take me in to become a monk. Let me be your disciple!"

Zonggao said, "You have a family and you have very strong secular habits. You still cannot become a monk. Give it some time and we'll talk about it later."

The general replied, "Chan Master! I can let go of everything now. My wife, my children, my family are all not a problem. Please tonsure me immediately."

Zonggao responded, "Give it some time and we'll talk about it later."

The general could do nothing.

One day, he rose very early and went to the temple to pay homage to the Buddha. Chan Master Dahui Zonggao said as soon as he saw him, "General, why have you come here so early to pay respect to the Buddha?"

The general, who was learning how to use Chan gathas, said,

In order to extinguish the fire in the mind,  
Get up early to pay homage to the Buddhas.

The Chan Master jokingly also used a gatha to respond:

Getting up so early in the morning,  
Not afraid your wife is being unfaithful?

Hearing this, the general became extremely angry and cursed, "You old monster! Your words are too hurtful!"

Chan Master Dahui Zonggao laughed heartily and said,

With just a gentle fanning,  
The fire of your nature again burns.  
Such an irascible temperament,  
How can this be considered letting go?

*Let go! Let go! Just because you say you have let go does not mean you are able to let go: "When talking, it seems like we are enlightened; when facing conditions, delusions arise." Likewise, habits are not changed just because we say we are able change them: "The rivers and mountains are easy to change; habitual tendencies are difficult to get rid of." May I advise those who wish to study the Way and become monastics: Do not, because of a moment of impulse, become the laughingstock of others.*



## 56. HUNDRED YEARS, ONE DREAM

Chan Master Jinshan Tanying was a native of Zhejiang Province. His surname was Qiu and his given name was Dagan. At the age of thirteen, he went to Longxing Temple and became a monk. When he was eighteen, he traveled to the capital and lived in Commanding General Li Duanyuan's garden. One day, the Commanding General asked him, "May I inquire Chan Master, the hell that people often talk about, does it actually exist or not?"



Chan Master Tanying answered, "When the Buddhas and Tathagatas spoke the Dharma, they spoke of existence from nonexistence, like eyes seeing flowers in the sky. Does it exist or not? General, right now, you are in existence seeking non-existence. This is like trying to hold river water in your hands. While in this non-existence, manifesting existence is indeed laughable. If people see a prison before their eyes, why don't they see heaven in the mind? Joy and fear are in the mind, heaven and hell are just in a thought, and good and bad can both create conditions. General, just understand your mind and you will naturally have no delusion."

The Commanding General asked, "How is the mind realized?"

Tanying replied, "Don't think about good or evil."

The Commanding General then asked, "After not thinking, to where does the mind return?"

Tanying answered, "The mind returns nowhere. As the *Diamond Sutra* states, 'It should not abide, and then the mind will give rise.'"

The Commanding General asked, "When people die, where do they return to?"

Tanying said, "Not yet understanding life, how can you understand death?"

The Commanding General replied, "Regarding birth and life, I already understood."

Tanying said, "Please say a word about where life comes from."

At the moment the Commanding General was pondering this, Chan Master Tanying used his hands and pounded the General in the chest, saying, "What are you thinking here?"

The Commanding General answered, "I understand. I have only known to crave the journey of life, and was not aware I was wasting time."

Tanying said, "Hundred years, one dream."

Commanding General Li Duanyuan immediately awakened and recited a gatha, saying:

Thirty-eight years,  
Ignorant and in a haze.

Even if I have understanding,  
How is it different from ignorance?  
The Bian River flows smoothly,  
Its unchanging embankments are obscure.  
The army is returning,  
The arrow-like waves rush eastward.

*Where does life come from? Where does death go? These are questions that the average person often thinks about; quite a few people even investigate these questions. However, no one breaks through this mystery. Sakyamuni Buddha and the Chan masters through the ages have presented the whole picture, one that is also not easily understood by people. Life has the ignorance of being separate from one life to the next. The meaning is precisely that we change bodies and then do not know anything from the past. Therefore, from ancient times with regard to the "origin of life," many people have had widely diverse views with no agreement among them. In fact, the forms and appearances of life are myriad, but the principle of life is that everything is equal. When the meanings and principles of Buddhist dependent origination, emptiness, the Three Dharma Seals, karma, cause and effect, etc., are thoroughly understood, then questions like, "where life comes from" or "where death goes" can be known without asking.*



## 57. ASPECTS OF LIFE

At the first light of dawn, a layperson named Zhu Youfeng was cheerfully carrying a bouquet of fresh flowers and an offering of fruit. He was hurrying to take part in the morning chanting at Dafo Temple. Who would have guessed that just as he was stepping into the main shrine, a person would suddenly run out from the left and bump into Zhu Youfeng exactly at that moment, causing all the fruit he was holding to fall to the ground. Seeing the fruit all over the ground, Zhu Youfeng could not stand it and yelled, "Look! You're so careless. You've knocked over all of the fruit that I was going to offer to the Buddhas. How are you going to repay me?"

This person, named Li Nanshan, was very displeased and said, "What is knocked over is already knocked over. At most, saying 'I'm sorry' should be enough. Why do you need to be so ferocious?"

Zhu Youfeng was very angry and replied, "What kind of attitude is that? You are in the wrong, yet you blame others!"

It continued with them cursing each other. The noise of their

mutual recriminations rose incessantly.

Chan Master Guangyu happened to pass by at this time. He took both of them aside and asked them exactly what had transpired. He then instructed them, saying, "You shouldn't walk in a careless manner. However, being unwilling to accept another person's apology is also wrong. Both of your behaviors were very foolish. Being able to honestly recognize our mistakes and to accept other people's apologies is, in fact, the behavior of the wise." After Chan Master Guangyu spoke, he continued, saying, "Living in this world, we have too many aspects of life that we must harmonize. For example, in society, how do we maintain harmony with our relatives and our friends? In education, how do we communicate with our teachers? With regard to personal finance, how do we regulate our expenses according to our incomes? With regard to family, how do we nurture the love between husband, wife, and children? In terms of health, how do we keep the body healthy? Spiritually, how do we select a lifestyle for ourselves? When we are able to do this, only then will we not fail to live up to our precious life. Think about this: over a little thing, you ruin a devout state of mind so early in the morning. Is it worth it?"

Li Nanshan spoke first, "Chan Master, I was wrong. I was really reckless." As he was speaking, he turned towards Zhu Youfeng and said, "Please accept my most sincere apologies. I was too foolish!"

Also from the bottom of his heart, Zhu Youfeng said, "I, too, was wrong. I shouldn't have lost my temper over such a small thing. It was very childish!"

*The words of Chan Master Guangyu ultimately moved these two people who liked to fight and compete. Chan has high notes and also low notes.*



## 58. THE IMPERIAL MASTER AND THE EMPEROR

One day, Emperor Shunzhi of the Qing Dynasty invited Imperial Master Yulin to the palace, asking for instruction in the Dharma. Shunzhi asked, "In the *Surangama Sutra*, there is the so-called

'search for the mind in the seven locations,' asking where the mind is. Now, may I inquire, is the mind in the seven locations or not?"

Imperial Master Yulin replied, "Seeking the mind is impossible?"

Emperor Shunzhi then said, "The person who has awakened to the Way, does he still have joy, anger, sorrow, and happiness, or not?"

Imperial Master Yulin responded, "What is joy, anger, sorrow, and happiness?"

Emperor Shunzhi said, "The mountains, rivers, and this great



earth arise from deluded thoughts. If deluded thoughts cease,  
then  
do the mountains, rivers, and this great earth still exist or not?”  
Imperial Master Yulin said, “Like a person waking from a  
dream, do the things in the dream exist or not?”  
Emperor Shunzhi then said, “How do I practice this?”  
Imperial Master Yulin replied, “Act righteously, and let  
things take their course.”  
Emperor Shunzhi asked, “What is great?”  
Imperial Master Yulin replied, “The light spreads in four  
directions and reaches above and below.”  
Emperor Shunzhi said, “How do I contemplate the original  
face?”  
Imperial Master Yulin replied, “As the Sixth Patriarch said,  
‘Don’t think of good, don’t think of evil. At that moment, what is  
the original face?’”  
Afterwards, whenever Emperor Shunzhi met people, he would  
say, “Having a conversation with Imperial Master Yulin really  
makes me regret meeting him so late.”

*Shunzhi was an emperor whose capacity for the Dharma was  
great. From his poem, “In Praise of the Sangha,” we can know  
that his thinking was very much in accordance with the  
Dharma.*

*Before I was born, who was I?  
When I was born, who was I?  
When I grew into an adult, that is I;  
When I close my eyes, who am I?  
Not as good as not coming and not going,  
Happy when coming, sad when going.  
Sorrow, joy, separation, and reunion, many worries,  
Who knows when I will be at ease?  
Who knows when I will be at ease?*

*Emperor Shunzhi was the ruler of a country, yet he envied*

*the life of a monastic. He said,*

*Gold and jade are not precious,  
Only wearing the kasaya over the shoulder is difficult;  
One hundred years, thirty-six thousand days,  
Is not as good as a half a day of a monk's ease.  
The purple kasaya exchanged for the yellow imperial  
robe  
Only because that year's one erroneous thought;  
Originally, I was to be a monk in the West,  
Why was I born in this Imperial House?*

*One could well imagine his respect for Imperial Master Yulin.  
Imperial Master Yulin was an eminent monk of dignified  
bearing. Usually, he preferred silence and did not like to talk.  
Even when the emperor asked him about the Dharma, he was  
terse  
and to the point. Unwilling to say too much, he made people  
feel  
that a word of the Chan gate is not easy to seek.*



## 59. PICK UP A LITTLE MORE

Chan Master Dingzhou and a novice monk were in the courtyard doing walking meditation. Suddenly, a gust of wind blew and many leaves fell down from the trees. The Chan Master then bent over, picked up the leaves one by one, and put them in his pocket. The novice by his side said, "Chan Master, don't pick up anymore. We will sweep early tomorrow morning anyway." Chan Master Dingzhou took exception to this and said, "You shouldn't talk like that. Do you mean to say that sweeping will make it clean? With each leaf I pick up, it will make the ground a little bit cleaner!"

The novice monk said again, "Chan Master, there are so many fallen leaves. You pick them up now, but more will fall down afterwards. How will you ever finish picking them up?"

As Chan Master Dingzhou was picking them up, he said "The fallen leaves are not only on the ground; the fallen leaves are also on the mind-ground. When I pick up the fallen leaves from the ground of my mind, there will come a time when they are finally all picked up."

After hearing this, the novice monk finally understood what the Chan practitioner's life is about.

*During the Buddha's lifetime, he had a disciple named Suddhipamthaka who was very slow-witted. When he was taught a gatha, he could recite the first verse but would forget the next verse, or recite the next verse but forget the verse before. Having no choice, the Buddha asked him what he could do. He said he could sweep the floor. The Buddha then told him to recite the phrase "whisking dust; sweeping dirt" whenever he swept the ground. After reciting this for a long time, he thought: when it is dusty and dirty outside, one must use a broom to sweep it clean; when it is filthy in the mind, how do we sweep it clean? In this way, Suddhipamthaka gained wisdom.*

*Chan Master Dingzhou's picking up of the fallen leaves could be better said as picking up the mind's delusions and afflictions. All of the fallen leaves on this great earth—we need not pay attention to them. For each fallen leaf in the mind that we pick up, there is one less. Chan practitioners only need to settle the mind in the moment and then they immediately have everything in this great chiliocosm. Confucians believe in demanding a lot from oneself in everything. Chan practitioners require that when the mind is pure, the land will be pure. Therefore, every person should, at all times and in all places, remove the fallen leaves in their own minds.*



## 60. ONE SITTING, FORTY YEARS

Chan Master Foku Weize was a native of Changan during the Song Dynasty. After he became a monk at a young age, he practiced at Foku hut on Cuiping Rock on Mt. Tiantai in Zhejiang Province.

He used fallen leaves to patch the roof and form a grass hut. He took fresh water to moisten his throat. Each day, only at noon, he picked wild fruit from the mountain to fill his hungry belly. One day, a woodcutter passed by the hut and saw a practicing old monk. Out of curiosity, he came forward and asked, "How long have you lived here?"

Chan Master Foku replied, "About forty years have already passed."

The woodcutter inquisitively asked again, "Are you the only person practicing here?"

Chan Master Foku nodded, saying, "In dense woods, deep in the mountains, one person here is already considered too many. What need is there for more people?"



The woodcutter then asked, "Don't you have any friends?" Chan Master Foku clapped his hands making a sound, and many tigers and panthers came out from behind the hut. The woodcutter was completely startled. Chan Master Foku quickly told him not to be afraid. After he signaled to the tigers and panthers and they returned behind the hut, the Chan Master said, "My friends are many. The great earth, mountains, and rivers; the trees, flowers, and grass; the insects, snakes, and wild beasts are all my Dharma companions."

The woodcutter was extremely moved. He willingly took refuge and became a disciple. Foku, giving brief instruction to the woodcutter concerning the essence of the Dharma, said, "Today, you are an ordinary person, but you are not an ordinary person. Although not an ordinary person, you do not disturb worldly law." With these words, the woodcutter understood. From then on, numerous people admiring the Way came. On Cuiping Rock, where white clouds float in the sky, grass and trees welcome people, tigers come and go, deer pass by, birds fly, and insects chirp, they became the Foku branch of the Chan School.

*Using common sense to look at "one sitting, forty years," forty years is a very long time. However, to sages who have awakened to limitless time and entered "eternal life," and to Chan Master Weize who had already melted into and entered the great universe, this is only an instant. In the mind of Chan practitioners, there is actually no difference between an instant and forty years.*

*In a Chan practitioner's awakening to the Way, what he awakens to is that there is no difference in time and space, no differentiation between other and self, no distinction between movement and stillness, and no concept of sentient beings and Buddhas.*

*"Although you are an ordinary person, you are not the same as ordinary people." Because everyone has Buddha nature, and in truth there is no provisional naming of sentient beings and Buddhas, how can there be any difference between ordinary people and unordinary people? "Although not an ordinary person, you do not disturb worldly law." As Chan practitioners awaken to the Way, they do not destroy but establish another way, and they do not destroy myriad dharmas but instead have*

*already transcended these dharmas.*



## 61. A POEM

Chan Master Shuangxi Buna and Chan Master Qisong were good friends. Moreover, they both had already reached a level where they connected with true mind through Chan. One day, Chan Master Qisong playfully commemorated Chan Master Buna, who was still alive and well, with a poem, saying:

Succession of the patriarch should be in our generation,  
The conditions of birth follow a pattern;  
All his life, he was always with the Way,  
Knew he was ill, unwilling to seek treatment.  
To describe ancient forms, hard for the pen to express,  
This profound feeling, the world does not know;  
The compassionate clouds, where do they go?  
The solitary moon by itself is carefree.

After Chan Master Buna finished reading Chan Master Qisong's commemorative poem, he very happily picked up a brush and responded:

All my life, who else is in harmony with me  
All my life, who else is in harmony with me on the Way,  
But noble you know my innermost heart best;  
At first, I did not yet expect to part,  
But I fear hindering my fellow practitioner's poem.

After he finished writing, Chan Master Buna immediately tossed his brush aside, sat down, and died.

*Originally, Chan Master Buna had no intention of entering nirvana. However, because he cared for the reputation of his Dharma friend's poetry, he entered nirvana. The friendships of Chan masters, in which they willingly sacrifice their lives for each other, are indeed extremely rare.*

*Ancient people have died to return favors to their very close friends, but that was all done in order to pay a debt of gratitude or for other reasons. Furthermore, for the sake of his Dharma friend's playful words, Chan Master Buna immediately used death to protect his Dharma friend's view. The meaning in Chan Master Qisong's poem is about succeeding and shouldering the Dharma transmission of Chan Master Buna. We can also say it is just a joke, or say it is a poem, or true insight. Chan Master Buna, in order to give his approval, entered nirvana without the least bit of hesitation. People who do not understand even think that Chan Master Buna was driven to death by Chan Master Qisong. In fact, with regard to life and death, the Chan Master had already broken through. As long as he transmits to the right person, he can just pass away. It can be said, that this is being carefree and at ease. What could be more beautiful than this?*



## 62. HAPPINESS AND SUFFERING

Chan Master Tanzhao gave instruction to his disciples and devotees every day. He could not leave without saying, “Happy! Happy! Life is full of happiness!”

However, one time he fell ill. During his illness, he was constantly yelling, “Suffering! Suffering! So much suffering!”

The abbot heard this and came to reproach him, “Hey! For a monastic who is ill to always be complaining of ‘suffering, suffering’ does not look good.”

Tanzhao said, “Health is happiness, sickness is suffering.

This is natural. Why can’t we cry, ‘suffering’?”

The abbot said, “Remember the time you fell into the water and nearly drowned. Your face didn’t even change color. That kind of fearless manner—regarding death as returning—where is that heroic spirit now? You normally say, ‘happiness, happiness.’ Why is it when you get sick, you say ‘suffering, suffering’?”

Chan Master Tanzhao said to the abbot, “Come, come.

Come to the foot of my bed!”



The abbot went to the side of the bed. Chan Master Tanzhao asked him softly, “Abbot, you just said that I used to say ‘happiness, happiness!’ Now all I say is ‘suffering, suffering!’ Please tell me, is saying ‘happiness’ correct? Or, is saying ‘suffering’ correct?”

*Life has the two faces of suffering and happiness. When there is too much suffering, we should, of course, give rise to an inner happiness. When there is too much happiness, we should also understand the truth of suffering in life. Intense happiness will give rise to sorrow. Deep suffering causes life to lose its flavor. It is best to live a life of the Middle Way, not attached to suffering and not attached to happiness.*



### 63. NIAOKE AND BAI JUYI

One day, the literary giant Bai Juyi paid a visit to Chan Master Niao Ke Daolin. He saw the Chan Master sitting upright by



a magpie's nest, so he said, "Chan Master, living in a tree is too dangerous!"

The Chan Master replied, "Magistrate, it is *your* situation that is extremely dangerous!"

Bai Juyi heard this and, taking exception, said, "I am an important official in this imperial court. What danger is there?"

The Chan Master said, "The torch is handed from one to another, people follow their own inclinations without end. How can you say it's not dangerous?" The meaning is to say that in officialdom, there are rises and falls, and people scheming against one another. Danger is right before your eyes. Bai Juyi seemed to come to some sort of understanding. Changing the subject, he then asked, "What is the essential teaching of the Dharma?"

The Chan Master replied, "Commit no evil. Do good deeds!"

Hearing this, Bai Juyi thought the Chan Master would instruct him with some profound concept. Yet, they were just ordinary words. Feeling very disappointed, he said, "Even a three-year-old child knows this concept!"

The Chan Master said, "Although a three-year-old child can say it, an eighty-year-old man cannot do it."

*Although this "Gatha of the Seven Ancient Buddhas" looks trivial and ordinary, how many people are able to accomplish it? If everyone could refrain from evil, and moreover, actively do good, where would there still be evil in the human realm? How could society not be filled with love and joy? Since Bai Juyi listened to the Chan Master's words, he completely changed his egotistical and arrogant attitude.*



#### 64. POEMS AND GATHAS TO DEBATE THE WAY

When Su Dongpo was living at Donglin Temple on Mt. Lu, he composed a four-line verse. The poem said:

The babbling creeks are the broad, long tongue;  
 The scenic mountains are nothing but the pure body.  
 Nightfall brings eighty-four thousand gathas,  
 In days ahead, how to present them to others?

The first two lines of this poem, awe-inspiring and deep, are truly amazing.

One day, Chan Master Zhengwu went to have an audience with Chan Master Jingyuan. The two of them chatted into the night. Zhengwu then brought up Dongpo's "Donglin Gatha" and, praising it, said, "This is also a state that is not easy to reach!" Jingyuan did not agree and criticized, "This kind of statement still has not seen the path. How can it be said that the destination has been reached?"

Zhengwu said, "The babbling creeks are the broad, long

tongue. The scenic mountains are nothing but the pure body.' If that kind of state has not yet been reached, how can it have this message?"

Jingyuan said, "He's just a man outside the gate."

Zhengwu said, "Venerable, be compassionate! Can you point it out?"

Jingyuan said, "From now on, diligently contemplate and break through. Then you can know where your original destiny falls."

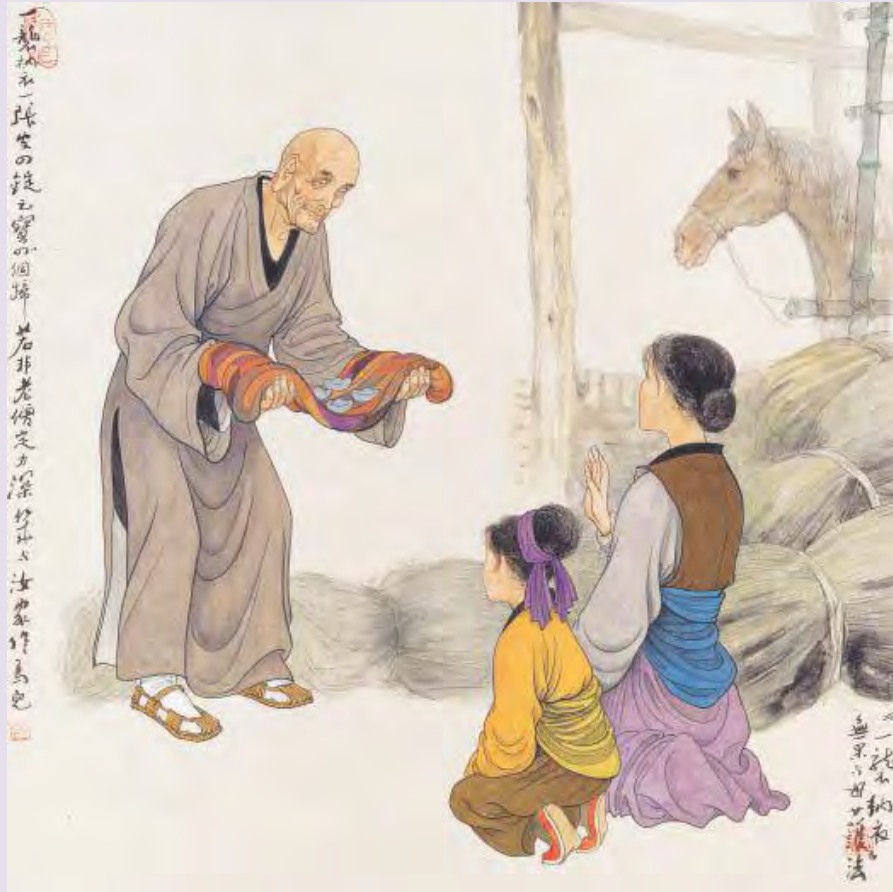
After Zhengwu heard this, he completely drew a blank. In deep contemplation the entire night, he could not fall asleep. Without him being aware of it, day had broken. Suddenly, hearing the sound of the bell, he came to a great awakening. The clouds of doubt having disappeared, he said:

Scholar Dongpo was too loquacious,  
In the barrier of sound and form, wishing to reveal the body.  
If the stream is sound, the mountain is form,  
No mountains, no water—isn't it very lamentable?

Taking this gatha, he ran to tell Chan Master Jingyuan.

Jingyuan said, "I told you, he's a man outside the gate!"

*Chan is not something that can be spoken of using language,  
and it is not something that can be written using words.  
Furthermore, it is not something that can be contemplated with  
thoughts. Only through awakening can we experience and realize  
Chan. During Chan Master Zhengwu's night of deep  
contemplation, the sound of the bell finally struck open the door  
of his mind. His state and Dongpo's state, then, are not the same.*



## 65. A MONASTIC ROBE

There was a Chan Master Wuguo who lived in seclusion in a deep valley wholeheartedly practicing Chan. For over twenty years, a mother and her daughter had supported him with offerings. Because he was still unable to clarify his mind, he was extremely afraid that his practice would be unworthy of the offerings made by devotees. Therefore, he wanted to leave the mountain to seek a teacher and inquire about the Way in order to completely clarify the great matter of life and death. The devout mother and her daughter requested that the Chan Master stay a few more days so they could make a monastic robe for him.

After mother and daughter returned home, they immediately set to work tailoring and sewing. With each stitch, they chanted Amitabha's name. When they finished, they also wrapped up four silver ingots shaped like horse hooves to give to Chan Master Wuguo for his traveling expenses. The Chan Master accepted the goodwill of mother and daughter and prepared to set out down the mountain the next day. That evening, he was still sitting in meditation and resting. Suddenly at midnight, a child dressed in

blue clothing and holding a flag followed by several people playing musical instruments and shouldering a very big lotus flower appeared before the Chan Master. The child said, "Chan Master, please ascend the lotus platform!"

The Chan Master pondered to himself, "I've practiced Chan  
The Chan Master pondered to himself, "I've practiced Chan samadhi, but I haven't practiced the Dharma method of the Pure Land School. Even for a practitioner of the Pure Land Dharma method, this state is also unattainable. I fear this is Mara." So, Chan Master Wuguo ignored him. The child urged him again and again not to miss this opportunity. Chan Master Wuguo then grabbed a signal hand bell and stuck it into the lotus platform. Not long after, the child and all the musicians playing their drums and trumpets departed.

Early next morning, just as the Chan Master was setting out, the mother and daughter came bearing a signal hand bell and asked Chan Master Wuguo, "Is this something the Chan Master lost? Last night, our family mare had a stillbirth. The groom used a knife to cut it open and saw this hand bell. We knew this belonged to the Chan Master, so we made a special trip to return it. We just don't know why it came from the horse's belly."

When Chan Master Wuguo heard this, he was drenched in sweat. Then, he composed a gatha:

A monastic robe, a piece of hide;  
Four silver ingots, four horse hooves.  
If not for this old monk's deep samadhi,  
Nearly became a young foal in your family.

After saying this, he gave the clothes and the silver ingots back to the mother and daughter, bid them farewell, and left!

*Buddhist cause and effect and karmic conditions really are unfathomable truths. Even if you are awakened to the Way, if you do not cultivate and attain it, the cycle of birth and death is still difficult to avoid. Looking at Chan Master Wuguo, how can we not be cautious?*





## 66. THE HEART OF CHAN

The great poet Bai Juyi once asked Chan Master Weikuan, “How can we cultivate body, speech, and mind individually?” Weikuan answered, “The one with supreme bodhi wears on the body the precepts, speaks from the mouth the Dharma, and practices in the mind Chan. The ways of application are three, but they are one. For example, the rivers Huai and Han have names based on their location. Although the names differ, the nature of the water is not different. The precepts are the Dharma, and the Dharma is not away from Chan. Unite body, speech, and mind to cultivate. Body, speech, and mind are all called the mind. Then why, among them, do we deludedly give rise to differentiation?”

Bai Juyi asked, “Since there is no differentiation, why do we cultivate the mind?”

Weikuan replied, “The mind originally has no flaws, so why do we need to cultivate? You should know, whether it is dirty or pure, all you need is to not give rise to thoughts.”

Bai Juyi responded, “Filth—we can wipe away, not giving rise to thoughts of it. Purity—can we not have thoughts about it?”

Weikuan said, "As in our eyes, things cannot remain; specks of gold, though precious, are still harmful in the eye. Black clouds cover the sky; white clouds, likewise, cover the sky."

Bai Juyi continued, "Without cultivation and without thoughts, how are we different from the ordinary person?"

Weikuan answered, "The ordinary people grow in ignorance; the sravaka and pratyeka-buddhas still have attachments. Staying away from these two diseases of ignorance and attachment is called true cultivation. The true practitioner must not be diligent and must not be neglectful. Those who are diligent are close to attachment; those who are neglectful fall into ignorance. This is the heart of Chan."

Bai Juyi had an awakening and finally became a true Buddhist practitioner.

*Everything in the mundane world has good and bad, large and small. For example, in giving charity, the more the charity, the greater the merit; the less the charity, the less the merit. Therefore, all things have differentiation. In the cultivation of the body, there is no killing, no stealing, and no sexual misconduct. In the cultivation of speech, there is no lying, no flattery, no double-tongued speech, and no harsh words. In the cultivation of the mind, there is no greed, no anger, and no wrong view. In the cultivation of body, speech, and mind, of course, each one is distinct. If we speak in terms of the true mind and intrinsic nature, they are originally pure and complete. Why then, do we need to cultivate and realize? How could there be diligence or neglect? Therefore, Chan Master Weikuan takes this as the heart of Chan.*



## 67. IS IT CROOKED? IS IT UPRIGHT?

While Chan Master Jianyuan Zhongxing was the attendant of Chan Master Daowu, he was once serving tea to him when Chan Master Daowu pointed to the teacup and said, “Is it crooked? Is it upright?”

Zhongxing moved closer to Chan Master Daowu and faced him without saying a word. Chan Master Daowu said, “What is crooked will always be crooked; what is upright will always be upright.”

Zhongxing shook his head and expressed his opinion, “I don’t think so.”

Daowu immediately asked, “Then, what is your view?”

Zhongxing snatched the teacup from Daowu’s hand and held it in his own, loudly retorting, “Is it crooked? Is it upright?”

Daowu applauded and laughed loudly, saying, “No wonder you’re my attendant.”

Zhongxing then bowed to Chan Master Daowu.

*The truth in Chan Master Daowu’s instruction, “Is it*

*upright? Is it crooked?" is that which we call, "When an evil person speaks the right teachings, the right teachings are also evil. When an upright person speaks the wrong teachings, the wrong teachings also become upright." Some people who speak daily of the Way, in fact, destroy people's faith. Some people who love to strike and like to scold can actually help people enter the Way. Great doctors, when treating illnesses, can turn arsenic and poison into good medicines. Therefore, we say, "What is evil will always be evil; what is upright will always be upright."*

*Chan Master Zhongxing believed that in the universe, "all dharmas arise due to conditions and all dharmas are extinguished due to conditions." When we can realize this, we will not attach to annihilation and eternity. When we come to this understanding, then everything is upright. If we are attached to whether the object in our hands has existence or is empty, then it is all evil. With this understanding, he turned the question on his teacher. Chan Master Daowu was gratified and praised him. Finally, the masters were harmonious in mind.*



## 68. FLY BEYOND BIRTH AND DEATH

There was a student monk named Daoxiu who although being skilled in Chan cultivation had never been able to awaken. He saw that of the fellow practitioners who had started practicing Chan and studying the Way later than him, quite a few were able to have some understanding of Chan. He thought about it and felt that he really had no qualifications for studying Chan—he was humorless and unclever—he had never been able to enter the Chan gate. He thought he might as well become a wandering ascetic monk. Therefore, Daoxiu packed his belongings of two-and-a-half catties, planning to go far away. Right before he left, he went to the Dharma Hall to bid farewell to Chan Master Guangyu. Daoxiu reported, “Teacher, your student does not live up to your compassion. It has already been ten years since I began studying under you, and I still don’t have any insight into Chan. I’m really not someone with the potential for studying Chan. Today, I take my leave of you. I’ll be traveling to other places.” Extremely surprised, Chan Master Guangyu asked, “Oh? Why are you leaving before you’ve had an awakening? Do you



mean to say that by going somewhere else, you can attain awakening?”

Daoxiu earnestly reported again, “Every day, aside from eating and sleeping, I diligently focus on the cultivation of the Way. I work so hard, but the causes and conditions are not right. On the contrary, I see my Dharma brothers, one by one, returning to the origin with the right conditions. Now, in the depths of my heart, there grows a feeling of exhaustion. I think I’m better off being a wandering ascetic monk!”

After listening to this, Chan Master Guangyu instructed, “‘Awakening’ is a kind of manifestation of inner original nature. There is absolutely no way to describe it and it cannot be transmitted to other people. Furthermore, it cannot be learned or hurried. Other people’s states are other people’s; you cultivate your Chan Way. These are two different things. Why are you mixing them up?”

Daoxiu said, “Teacher, you don’t understand! When I compare myself to my fellow practitioners, there is immediately the shame of being the small sparrow next to the Great Peng.”

Chan Master Guangyu, pretending as though he did not understand, asked, “How great is it? How small is it?”

Daoxiu said, “The Great Peng, with the spreading of its wings, can fly over hundreds of miles, yet I am confined to the area of a few feet on the grass.”

Chan Master Guangyu meaningfully asked, “The Great Peng, with the spreading of its wings, can fly over hundreds of miles, but has it already flown beyond birth and death?”

After hearing this, Chan Monk Daoxiu was silent and did not speak, as though he had an awakening.

*As the saying goes, “If people compare with others, they will be frustrated to death.” Comparing and haggling are sources of affliction. How can we awaken to the Way through Chan then? Sharp and quick, the Great Peng can travel thousands of miles with the spreading of its wings, but it cannot fly beyond the great ocean of birth and death. Comparatively speaking, between the small sparrow and the Great Peng, there is fast and slow, tardy and quick; but Chan must flow from the equanimous intrinsic nature. Therefore, once the Chan monk Daoxiu eliminated his comparing and haggling and returned to his equanimous intrinsic*

*nature, he was able to awaken.*



## 69. NOT PERMITTED TO BE A TEACHER

Chan Master Doushuai Congyue went to practice and study with the esoteric Chan Master Qingsu and was extremely respectful towards him. Once, because he was eating lychees, when he passed by Chan Master Qingsu's window, he very deferentially said, "Elder, this is fruit from my home province of Jiangxi. Please have some!"

Qingsu very joyfully accepted the lychees and said with a sigh, "Ever since my teacher passed away, I haven't had this fruit. It's been a long time."

Congyue asked, "Elder, which great master was your late teacher?"

Qingsu replied, "Chan Master Ciming. I served under him for thirteen years."

Extremely surprised, Chan Master Congyue said in

admiration, "Having endured thirteen years of serving under him, you must have attained his Way!" As saying this, he offered all the lychees in his hands to Elder Qingsu.

Qingsu then gratefully said, "Because my merit was lacking, my late teacher instructed that I was not permitted to transmit to other people. Now, seeing that you are so devout and on account of this connection of lychees, I will actually go against the instructions of my late master. Tell me what you have learned from your practice."

Chan Master Congyue related all that he had experienced.

Qingsu instructed him, saying, "The world has both Buddha and Mara. When, in the end, you let go, you must to be able to enter the Buddha's Way and not enter Mara's."

After Chan Master Congyue received his approval, Chan Master Qingsu cautioned, "Today, I've pointed it out for you, allowing you to attain great liberation. But you cannot say that you succeeded me! Zhenjing Kewen is your teacher."

*"To learn the Buddha Way, first make connections with others." There was a connection made through lychees; then he was able to awaken to the Way. "The Dharma is sought in respect." Through the respect Congyue had for his predecessors, he was able to attain the Way. People in ancient times never forgot the thoughtfulness of a meal. Like Chan Master Qingsu, for an offering of lychees, he was actually willing to point out the mind's eye. This is being grateful for having connections. "You cannot succeed me, but you can succeed Chan Master Zhenjing Kewen" demonstrates the support and trust between masters, and is also an instructive anecdote of the Chan School.*



## 70. I DON'T KNOW

During the Song Dynasty, there was a General Cao Han. After subduing bandits and rebels in the South, he passed by Yuantong Monastery on Mt. Lu. The monastics of the temple, because they knew that Cao Han's army was poorly disciplined, all fearfully scattered in the four directions to get away. Only the abbot, Chan Master Yuande, sat meditating in the Dharma Hall without moving. Cao Han called out to him, but the Chan Master ignored him, unwilling to even give him a glance. Cao Han's heroic pride suffered a blow and he very angrily said, "My army was passing through this place and only wanted to stay overnight at your temple to allow the soldiers to rest a while. Why haven't you offered even a word of welcome? How dare you be so unreasonable! Don't you know that standing before you is a general who kills without batting an eye?"

After the Chan Master heard this, he calmly opened his eyes and responded, "A soldier standing before the Buddha roaring with rage. This is so disrespectful. Aren't you afraid of karmic retribution?"

Cao Han roared even louder, "What karmic retribution!  
Aren't you afraid to die?"

Chan Master Yuande also raised his voice, saying, "Don't  
you know that sitting before you is a Chan monk who isn't afraid  
to die?"

Cao Han was really astonished at the Chan Master's courage.  
At the same time, he was also brought into submission by the  
Chan Master's samadhi. He asked, "Such a large monastery, yet  
only you remain. Where are the others?"

Chan Master Yuande said, "You just have to strike the drum.  
They will hear the sound and return."

Cao Han then forcefully beat the drum. He beat it for a long  
time, but still, no one appeared. Displeased, Cao Han said, "I've  
already beaten the drum. Why hasn't anyone returned yet?"

Chan Master Yuande calmly said, "That's because, when you  
beat the drum, your murderous aura was too strong. Please recite  
'Namo Sakyamuni Buddha' once, and then beat it one time."

Therefore, Cao Han recited the Buddha's name and beat the  
drum, beat the drum and recited the Buddha's name. Before long,  
the monks of the monastery who were hiding all came running  
back. At this time, Cao Han very respectfully joined palms and  
asked, "May I inquire as to the Chan Master's Dharma name?"

The Chan Master serenely replied, "I am Yuande."

Cao Han was completely in awe. Immediately falling to his  
knees, he implored, "So all along it was the virtuous and noble  
Chan Master Yuande! Chan Master, please instruct me: how can I  
be victorious in battle?"

Chan Master Yuande coolly answered, "I don't know."

*Since ancient times, whenever society has experienced war  
Since ancient times, whenever society has experienced war  
there were always some great sages who protected the temples,  
willing to live or die with them. Those like Chan Master Yuande  
were people of courage, compassion, and wisdom. Not fleeing  
from disasters of military action is courage, telling people to  
recite the Buddha's name is compassion, and answering  
according to conditions is wisdom. In particular, one who  
answers the question of how to achieve victory in battle with "I  
don't know" truly is a great sage with wisdom, compassion, and  
courage. Is this not the function of the Chan mind?*





## 71. THE WHOLE BODY IS THE EYE

One time, Chan Master Daowu asked Yunyan,  
“Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva has a thousand hands and a thousand  
eyes. May I ask you, which eye is the true eye?”

Yunyan replied, “It’s like when you’re sleeping at night and  
the pillow falls onto the ground. Without opening your eyes, your  
hand reaches to the floor for it and immediately picks it up. Then  
you go back to sleep. Let me ask you: which eye did you use to  
pick it up?”

After Chan Master Daowu heard this, he said, “Oh! Dharma  
brother, now I understand.”

“What do you understand?”

“All over the body is the eye.”

Chan Master Yunyan smiled and said, “You only understand  
eighty percent.”

Confused, Daowu asked, “Then, what should I say?”

“The whole body is the eye.”

*“All over the body is the eye”—this is recognizing through discriminating consciousness. “The whole body is the eye”—this is revealing non-discriminating wisdom from the nature of the mind. We have a true mind in which the entire body is the eye, so why not use it to completely contemplate and illuminate everything?*



## 72. CUTTING OFF EARS TO SAVE THE PHEASANT

Chan Master Zhishun of the Tang Dynasty had always traveled far and wide to practice Chan. One day, while sitting in meditation in a mountain forest, he suddenly saw a hunter shoot a pheasant. The wounded pheasant fled to where the Chan Master was seated. The Chan Master used the sleeves of his robe to conceal this little creature that had narrowly escaped danger. Shortly afterwards, the hunter ran up to the Chan Master and demanded the pheasant, “Please give me back that pheasant I

shot!”

The Chan Master, with patience and infinite compassion, explained to the hunter, “It is also a living being. Spare it!”

“You should know, that pheasant could be a meal for me!”

The hunter continued to pester the Chan Master. There was nothing the Chan Master could do, so he immediately picked up the knife he used for self-defense when traveling, cut off his own ears, gave them to the greedy hunter, and said, “These two ears, are they enough to make up for your pheasant? You can take them to make your meal.”

The hunter was really shocked and finally realized that hunting to kill is the height of cruelty.

*For the sake of saving and protecting living beings, one does not hesitate to sacrifice one's own body. The virtue of “For the sake of helping sentient beings attain liberation from suffering, do not seek tranquility and happiness for oneself” is precisely the concrete manifestation of the Chan Master's compassion. Chan practitioners do not avoid society nor do they distance themselves from people. The eager actions of Chan practitioners in forsaking self to save others can be seen in Chan Master Zhishun's cutting off his ears to save the pheasant.*



### 73. SALTY AND PLAIN HAVE FLAVOR

An artist who became a Buddhist, Master Hongyi combined Buddhist practice and the artistic life, which allowed us to more clearly see his state of life. One day, the renowned educator, Mr. Xia Mianzun, came to pay him a visit. When they were eating, Mr. Xia saw him eating only one dish of pickled vegetables and could not help but say, “You don’t think those pickled vegetables are too salty?”

Master Hongyi answered, “Salty has its own flavor!”

Awhile later, after Master Hongyi had finished eating, he held a cup of boiled water in his hands. Furrowing his brow, Mr. Xia said, “No tea leaves? How can you drink that plain water every day?”

Master Hongyi then smiled and said, “Although boiled water is plain, plain also has its own flavor.”

*Master Hongyi’s “Salty has its own flavor, plain has its own flavor” is a saying that is very rich in the flavor of the Dharma and Chan. Master Hongyi applied the Dharma to his daily life, so*



*there was no place in his life that did not have flavor. A towel that had been used for three years and was already torn—he would say that it could still be used. Staying at an inn with bedbugs crawling here and there—the guests complained, but he would say that there were only a few. It can be said that he truly understood the life of “feeling at ease under all conditions.”*



#### 74. TRUE AND FALSE—DELUDED WORDS

Chan Master Daoguang once asked Chan Master Dazhu Huihai, “Chan Master, usually, when you are diligently practicing, which mind do you use to cultivate the Way?”

Dazhu answered, “This old monk has no mind to use, no Way to cultivate.”

Daoguang said, “Since there is no mind to use and no Way to cultivate, why do you gather a crowd every day, encouraging people to practice Chan and cultivate the Way?”

Dazhu then said, “This old monk has no roof tiles above and



no ground to stand on below. How can there be a place for gathering people?”

Daoguang responded, “In fact, you gather people every day to discuss the Way. Is this not teaching the Dharma to liberate sentient beings?”

Dazhu said, “Please don’t wrong me. I don’t even know how to speak. How can I discuss the Way? I don’t even see a single person. How can you say that I liberate sentient beings?”

Daoguang answered, “Chan Master, you speak deluded words.”

Dazhu said, “This old monk doesn’t even have a tongue. How can I say deluded words?”

Daoguang replied, “Is it possible that the physical world, the sentient world, the existence of you and me, and the reality of practicing Chan and teaching the Dharma are all false?”

Dazhu said, “They’re all true!”

Daoguang asked, “Since they are true, why must you negate them all?”

Dazhu replied, “What is false must be negated; what is true must also be negated!”

Finally, with these words, Daoguang had a great awakening.

*To speak of the truth, sometimes we recognize it from affirmation. However, other times, we can recognize it from negation. Like the Heart Sutra says, “Form is emptiness, emptiness is form. Sensation, perception, mental formation, and consciousness are also like this.” This is recognizing human life and the world from affirmation. The Heart Sutra also says, “No eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, mind; no form, sound, smell, taste, touch, and dharmas.” This is recognizing human life and the world from negation. Chan Master Dazhu Huihai’s famous statement of negating everything is not deluded speech because only by negating everything can you affirm everything.*



## 75. NOT CHANGING RESPONDS TO MYRIAD CHANGES

Chan Master Daoshu built a temple by a Daoist shrine. The Daoist priests could not stand this Buddhist temple near their shrine. Therefore, every day, they conjured a number of demons and ghosts to harass the monastics in the temple, wanting to frighten them away. Today, they would summon wind and invoke rain. Tomorrow, the wind would whip up and lightning would flash. This actually caused quite a few young novice monks to be scared away. However, Chan Master Daoshu lived there for more than ten years. Finally, the Daoist priests exhausted the tricks that they conjured up, but Chan Master Daoshu still would not leave. Without any choice, the Daoist priests could only give up their Daoist shrine and move elsewhere.

Afterwards, some people asked Chan Master Daoshu, “The Daoists are skilled in the magic arts! How were you able to prevail over them?”

The Chan Master replied, “I had nothing that could surpass them. But if I’m forced to speak, only with the word ‘not’ could I

prevail over them.”

“‘Not?’ How could that surpass them?”

The Chan Master said, “They have the magic arts. To ‘have’ is to have limits, to have an end, to have measurements, to have boundaries. Yet, I do not have the magic arts. ‘Not’ is not having limits, not having an end, not having measurements, and not having boundaries. The relationship between ‘not’ and ‘have’ is that no change responds to myriad changes. My ‘not changing’ of course, prevails over their ‘changing’.”