

The Wind of Compassion

Dashi Fu Xi

Translation by White Lotus

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Forward

This project began as an investigation into early Zen history. In this book, we explore one of the “three great masters of the Liang Dynasty”, known in the Blue Cliff Record as Mahasattva Fu. I was initially surprised to find a collection of texts attributed to Fu, much of which has never been translated into English. As I examined the history and composition of these texts, I found myself confronted with a number of questions.

One question stands out: Why are these texts not more widely known and studied by Western readers? These works had already been in circulation and studied well before Yuanwu Keqin compiled and commented on Xuedou Chongxian’s koan collection in 1125, over 500 years later. And yet, just a generation after Yuanwu, his student Dahui Zonggao famously burned the Blue Cliff Record, arguing that students had become too dependent on words rather than direct realization.

Looking back at Zen history presents challenges. We see only fragments of the past, shaped by historical filters, later interpretations, and cultural shifts. When we attach assumptions or idealized projections to historical figures, we risk distortion, misrepresentation, and even cultural misappropriation.

In 860 CE, an exchange between Dongshan Liangjie and a monk illustrates this sort of conflict:

A monk asked, “Abbot, when you were with Yunyan, what instructions did he give you?”
Dongshan replied, “Although I was in his community, he neither directed nor instructed me.”
The monk asked, “Then why do you make offerings to him?”
Dongshan said, “I revere my late master not for his virtue or learning, but because he did not break the secret to me.”
The monk pressed, “Do you agree with all of his teachings?”
Dongshan answered, “I accept half and reject half.”
The monk asked, “Why not accept the whole?”
Dongshan replied, “If I did, I would be unworthy of my late master.”

This sentiment is echoed by Fayan Wenyi (885–958):

“If you just stick to your teacher’s school and memorize slogans, this is not enlightenment; it is intellectual knowledge. This is why it is said, ‘When your perception only equals that of your teacher, you lessen the teacher’s wisdom by half. Only when your perception surpasses the teacher’s can you truly express their teaching.’”

Such insights warn against rigidly clinging to past masters as fixed ideals. If we idolize them as flawless, we limit our own growth. In reality, each generation builds upon the realizations of those before them. The value of studying the past is not in blindly imitating or preserving it, but in examining it critically, discerning what remains relevant, and allowing space for innovation.

Looking back at the earliest Zen records provides a window into the tradition's evolution. Instead of expecting fully developed systems that endured unchanged, we find fluid, developing ideas shaped by their time.

By the Liang Dynasty (502–557 CE), Buddhism had already left a deep imprint on Chinese culture. But this period also marked a shift; China was no longer simply receiving Buddhism, it was transforming it. Fu Dashi represents this fusion of traditions. He is said to have worn a patched robe, a crown on his head, and straw sandals, and he went to court.

The emperor asked, "Are you a monk?"

Fu Dashi pointed to his crown.

The emperor asked, "Are you a Taoist?"

Fu Dashi pointed to his sandals.

The emperor asked, "Are you a layman (Confucian)?"

Fu Dashi pointed to his patched robe.

Hopefully this work inspires others to dig into these text and uncover more about their history, and how they helped shape the Zen we know today.

Introduction

In the first case of the Blue Cliff record titled, "The Highest Meaning of the Holy Truths" we read about Bodhidharma's meeting with Emperor Wu:

Emperor Wu of Liang asked the great master Bodhidharma,
"What is the highest meaning of the holy truths?"
Bodhidharma said, "Empty, without holiness."
The Emperor said, "Who is facing me?"
Bodhidharma replied, "I don't know."

The Emperor did not understand. After this Bodhidharma crossed the Yangtze River and came to the kingdom of Wei. Later the Emperor brought this up to Master Chih and asked him about it.

Master Chih asked, "Does your majesty know who this man is?"
The Emperor said, "I don't know."
Master Chih said,
"He is the Mahasattva Avalokitesvara, transmitting the Buddha Mind Seal."

Case 67 of the Blue Cliff record titled, "Mahasattva Fu Expounds the Scripture", records another encounter with Emperor Wu and Master Chih:

When the Mahasattva Fu was going to go into the city of Chin Ling to sell fish, at that time the emperor Wu happened to request Master Chih to expound the Diamond Cutter Scripture.

Chih said, "This poor wayfarer cannot expound it, but in the market place there is a Mahasattva Fu who is able to expound the scripture."

The emperor issued an imperial order to summon him to the inner palace. Once Mahasattva Fu had arrived, he mounted the lecturing seat, shook the desk once, and then got down off the seat. At that moment, if (Wu) had pushed it over for him, he would have avoided a mess; instead he was asked by Master Chih,

"Does Your Majesty understand?"
The emperor said, "I do not understand."
Master Chih said, "The Mahasattva has expounded the scripture thoroughly."

So who are these three mentioned in these cases? Most are familiar with Bodhidharma, but what about Master Chih and Mahasattva Fu? Some might be surprised to find that along with Bodhidharma, Master Chih and Mahasattva Fu were considered the “three great masters of the Liang Dynasty.”

Master Chih (418-514) is also known as, Baozhi or Zhigong. “During the reign of Emperor Wu of Liang, he was the imperial tutor and was highly respected.” Some claim that “mind is buddha” was a well known expression at the time of Bodhidharma, and that it was inspired by Master Baozhi's poem titled, “Ten Praises of the Mahāyāna · No. 4” and passed on to Bodhidharma, it reads:

I tell you directly, all sentient beings;
Neither existence nor nonexistence, that is the Way.

Neither existence nor nonexistence is nondual,
So why speak of emptiness in contrast to form?

"Existence" and "nonexistence" are names born of deluded minds,
Break them both, and neither remains.

These two names arise from your clinging thoughts,
Yet without attachment, there is only true suchness.

If you cling to thoughts and seek the Buddha,
It is like casting a net on a mountain to catch fish.

Wasting effort in vain, of no benefit,
How much effort has been wasted in delusion?

Not understanding that **mind itself is Buddha**,
Is truly like riding a donkey in search of a donkey.

Neither hating nor loving all things;
This is what must be freed from afflictions.

If you must remove them, then remove the self,
For without the self, there is neither Buddha nor cause.

When neither Buddha nor cause can be grasped,
Then naturally, there is no Dharma and no person.

Though this book is mainly focused on Mahasattva Fu, it is worth noting that more research should be done about Master Baozhi and his works brought to English readers.

Mahasattva Fu (497-569) is known by a few names, Fu Dashi, Fu, Xi, Xuanfeng, Shanhui, Yuxing, Shuanglin, Dongyang, and Layman Wushang. Fu Like Vimalakirti, Fu was a layman rather than a monastic. As such he is considered to be the founder of Vimalakirti Zen in China. While some text reference him as master, he was called Dashi, which translates to Great Sage Fu. Xuanfeng translates to “Mysterious Wind” and Shanhui translates to “Compassionate Wisdom”, from which this book gets its name, “The Wind of Compassion”.

Additional to being mentioned in case 67 of the Blue Cliff record, Mahasattva Fu is mentioned throughout the record, Empty Valley Collection: Case 40; Book of Serenity: Case 58, and 74; Measuring Tap: Case 1 which partially quotes Fu's poem “Mind King”; and so on. In Case 96 of the Blue Cliff Record, a few verses from the poem “The Two Odes” written by Fu are also mentioned, which reads:

Empty handed, holding a hoe,
Walking, riding a water buffalo,
A man is crossing over a bridge;
The bridge, not the water, flows.

Included in Thomas Cleary and J.C. Cleary's translation of the BCR is a brief bio on Fu. While it does differ in some ways from other records, I have included it nonetheless here.

“MAHASATTVA FU (497-569)

Mahasattva Fu, also called Shan Hui, was a layman and a small farmer; in his middle twenties he retired to a mountain with his wife and two children, where he worked during the day and practiced the Way at night. In the course of time he gave up all of his possessions three times, sold his wife and children, and hired himself out as a laborer, spending the proceeds to feed the poor and hungry. Throughout his life he continued to work, assisted by his family (who, out of respect for the Mahasattva, were not actually enslaved by their purchasers) and disciples; he fasted and gave the food saved thereby to the needy. The time during which he lived was especially bitter for great masses of peasants, and Mahasattva Fu is exemplary for his continued generosity in almsgiving, not only of Dharma, but also of material goods. He went into the capital of Liang several times to preach, hoping to spread the Dharma more widely than was possible from his mountain abode. The following is a summary of three levels of goodness, to which Fu enjoined Emperor Wu of Liang in his first letter to the monarch:

The highest good has an empty heart as its basis,
and non-attachment as its source; abolishment of
formality is the cause, and nirvana is the result.
The middling good has government of oneself as its basis,
and government of the nation as its source;
the fruits experienced by gods and humans
will be peace and happiness.
The least good is to protect and nourish living beings,
to overcome cruelty and abolish murder,
and to have all the farmers receive free food six times a month.

Mahasattva Fu was thought to be a manifestation of Maitreya, the future Buddha.”

About the Text

The Fu Dashi Collection, or Shanhui Dashi Yulu, comprises over 50 documents attributed to Fu Dashi and his historical record. This collection was originally compiled by Lou Ying between 618 and 907 CE during the Tang Dynasty. However, in 1143 CE, during the Southern Song Dynasty, Lou Zhao, the Pacification Commissioner of the Eastern Circuit of Liangzhe, was tasked with revising and condensing the text, resulting in the version we have today.

In addition to this core collection, the text "Liang Dynasty Layman Fu's Verses on the Diamond Sutra" is included. While sources suggest Fu composed over 300 poems, I have only been able to locate those included in this book. To the best of my knowledge, this represents the first full compilation of Fu Dashi's works translated for English readers.

Throughout this work Fu Dashi is referred to by different names. Great Sage Fu , Fu Dashi, and Shanhui being the most common.

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Reflections on the Difficult Road

Preface

The nature of mind is empty and still, vast as the Dharma realm. It follows suchness beyond all forms, neither created nor conditioned. Serene and ever-present, yet dwelling nowhere, the flow of Dharma fills the world, yet true reality does not change. The wondrous path returns to emptiness, yet pervades all existence. The Dharma King governs this truth, proclaiming its adamant strength. It has been said that to reveal its form is impossible, for it cannot be captured by words. Though it encompasses all things, things do not encompass it. Its nature is not bound by liberation; it was never entangled by the ten fetters. Since causes never arise, it is called wondrous. Words cannot reach it, thus it is called natural. It is ever in harmony with the world, yet unstained by worldly laws. The mundane is its very substance, yet it is never bound by the mundane.

Thus, it is utterly vast and beyond conception, its name being an empty designation of openness. The mind has no fixed form, yet it manifests appearances. Though forms arise, they bear no true substance. It scatters and gathers without direction, neither coming nor going. It contracts without being confined, expands without becoming vast. It is not a thing, yet it has sound. It has great sound, yet is faint in resonance. Its nature is tranquil, empty, and vast, neither one nor two. It shines broadly and clearly, simply illuminating itself, self-illuminating. Though it has never been, its entire substance is present before us. Though present, it is difficult to practice and emulate. Finer than a hair, yet not subtle, it pervades the three thousand worlds without becoming vast. Its principle is not fixed; there is no hearing, no listening. It is absent and yet aglow. Life and death are at ease, not dependent on nurture or growth. The seeds of all beings are contained in this; this is the foundation of the Dharma.

When one awakens to it, it is called Nirvana, yet those who do not understand call it thought and memory. This, then, is the truth, without doubt. It can be gentle, it can be strong. When viewed broadly, the world cannot contain it. When thought ceases, the whole body is unified. It is the color of colorless, calm and still, profound and vast. To stop it is to be the body of the infinite and boundless. To combine it, it is neither singular nor dual. When it arises, it pervades all countries, without delay or haste, yet it contains everything.

It is neither ordinary nor sacred, neither wisdom nor ignorance. It is the only quality of an unattached sage. United with this empty essence, those who realize it are freed from confusion, and those who illuminate it become clear from obscurity. Serene and still, like a deep pool, neither increasing nor decreasing, the four births and three realms, upon hearing, all return to emptiness. It is subtle, profound, and solitary, difficult to see and difficult to understand. If one sets a name or form for it, it neither conforms nor departs. It is neither cessation nor permanence, yet both ends meet in it. Neither ignorance nor light, neither wisdom nor ignorance. This is beyond the reach of worldly intellect. It is the deep contemplation of the wisdom of no-birth.

Thus, one realizes the empty mind, which is eternal and undying. Seeing yet not seeing, neither attached nor dependent. There are ninety-six kinds of external paths in the world, but they cannot compare to this. Only the supreme Dharma of the Buddha is the true and solid foundation. Though I have heard but a glimpse of it, I cannot remain silent. Embracing my ignorance and exhausting my wisdom, I offer these clumsy words. Though I do not grasp the subtle meaning, the words point to a great truth. Ultimately, it returns to the natural way. May the wise and upright see this and not scorn it.

Clarifying the Difference Between Cessation and Permanence

Reflection One:

Do you not see that the mind itself is neither cessation nor permanence? It pervades all directions, yet does not enter any particular direction. It is not dependent on past or future moments. It is neither round nor short, neither long nor brief. It is serene, neither born nor extinguished, neither white nor black, neither green nor yellow.

Though it contemplates and understands all phenomena, in truth, it does not dwell in the center of thought. Beings enter it, yet there is nowhere to enter. Though it encounters the six senses, it is unaffected. The wise clearly and fully understand this. Therefore, it is called the King of the Dharma. One who realizes this knows the Dharma of no knowledge. Hence, wisdom is like diamond-like strength. It does not rely on external conditions to support the inner realm. The practices of precepts, concentration, and wisdom are self-protecting. Firmly settled, one transcends the summit of the three samadhis. The delusions of conceptual thinking and confusion are forever dispelled. Awakening to all afflictions, one perceives them as they are. This is called the place of the path, where the teachings are continuously expounded for all beings. Such profound meaning has never yet been fully expressed.

The journey is difficult, the path is subtle and extremely difficult to walk. If one uses ignorance to illuminate the knowing of the Dharma, one realizes the primordial nature of non-birth directly.

Clarifying True Illumination and Non-illumination

Reflection Two:

Do you not see that true illumination is clear, while the nature of non-illumination is beyond form? It penetrates through all, broad and open, without being limited by any boundary. Resting in ignorance, one knows illumination. Through understanding, the ignorance of illumination is realized. One's mind is eternally freed from all actions, and thus one practices the path of non-action. The mind is neither mind nor one; it is neither one nor mind, and from it, actions do not arise.

Consciousness of the mind is the non-born Dharma. It is not that the born Dharma can give rise to the non-born. If one understands the nature of all conditions, they do not arise. Following the mind's confusion, one wanders freely. When the empty mind is understood, there is no obstruction. Words and concepts in the world do not need to be contested. If one continues to struggle with words, it is the blindness of attachment and ignorance. Therefore, the sutra says that to enjoy true understanding and insight is to go beyond the five aggregates. If one can hold the wisdom mind and remain grounded, they will naturally attain the true path, calm and unshaken. The true nature is upright, and the mind is peaceful, with no division of right and wrong. In this way, uprightness leads others to the truth.

The journey is difficult; the path is difficult, often dwelling in the five aggregates. Nirvana is vast and empty, not a state of mere quietude. Even with birth and death, one remains clear and at ease.

Clarifying the True Nature of the Mind and Its Real Aspects

Reflection Three:

Do you not see that the aspect of the mind is subtle, finely detailed, and extraordinarily refined? It is neither created, nor conditioned, nor a thing of name and form. Though it is serene, it does not have form. Whether ordinary or saintly, it is the essence of one's own spirit. This spirit has no shape, yet it always responds. Although it constantly responds, it truly has no form. The nature of the mind neither comes nor goes. The flow of causes and thoughts is ever-changing, yet there is no stopping. The true realization of this is the true, constant awakening.

In the Deer Park Sutra, to guide beings and correct false thoughts and erroneous views, the Buddha teaches that one can know the peace of cessation and attain tranquility. He expounds on the nature of Bodhi and the various practices. These two teachings are akin to sound and voice. Understanding sound and voice, one perceives the places that are not places. The three poisons of greed, hatred, and ignorance are neither diminished nor fulfilled. One also understands that the five aggregates are all empty and still. Right wisdom, free from birth, governs the six senses. From here, the six senses' disturbances are extinguished.

This is the true realization of Nirvana. The path is difficult; the way is one of no return. Attachment and hatred do not exist within, without, or in between.

Clarifying the Nature of the Formless and Emptiness Merged

Reflection Four:

Do you not see that within the ultimate Dharma, there is no finality? Illusion and confusion are the essence of Bodhi. If the mind distinguishes the Dharma of Bodhi, then it remains in confusion. If one understands that this confusion has no distinction, the confusion and the discrimination themselves are Bodhi. The discriminating understanding of Bodhi is neither one nor different. It is always the same, without conflict. Resting in the nature of emptiness, the true nature is also empty. Emptiness itself is not void, nor is it obstructed. The same nature of great compassion encompasses all beings. Therefore, we know that the true Dharma does not deviate from confusion. Only confusion, in this state, has no essence. It also cannot be considered equal or unequal. If one abandons worldly entanglements, there is no Dharma left. It is like a pure lotus blooming from muddy water. The Tathāgata's Dharma body has no separate place; it universally transforms the three realms of suffering. The three realms of suffering do not truly exist; who can perceive the path of their subtle nature?

The journey is difficult; the path itself is Nirvana. Both the inner and outer body and mind are empty and serene. Where can confusion and attachment find their peace?

Clarifying that the Ordinary and the Holy are Neither One Nor Two

Reflection Five:

Do you not see that afflictions, in their vastness, are neither one nor the same? Though they are neither one nor many, if one can truly perceive their root, this is the true body of Vairocana. Entering a tiny speck of dust, there is no obstruction. The nature of non-obstruction is serene and pervades the entire Saha world.

The paths of the ordinary and the holy are not two separate places. Birth, death, and nirvana always coexist. Though we may forcefully establish names and titles, it is only the attachment and ignorance of the true Buddha. Prajñā, deep as the empty space, is wisdom without being wisdom. It uses the mindless intention to subdue all demons. I, with sincere heart, learn this and briefly express it in this song.

The path is difficult; the way is difficult, and the nature of the mind is indeed vast and wide. Desire and craving are inherently at rest and extinguished. The wise can rest here and remain at peace.

Clarifying that the Nature of the Mind is Free from Contamination

Reflection Six:

Do you not see the wise seek the mind, nor the Buddha. The extinction of all phenomena is precisely the cessation of attachment and desire. Attachment and desire arise from the mind. I also discipline the mind in order not to have a mind that is attached. If one seeks the mind, it cannot be attained. Naturally, there is no place for attachment and desire to arise. Attachment and desire neither arise nor cease. Delusion is neither shallow nor deep. It is also not to be sought after by desire. To seek or not seek is elusive and difficult to find. The three poisons are constantly present in the nature of beings. They are always present like an unshakable forest. All actions driven by desire are seen as acts of the Buddha. There are no three poisons that can invade from all sides. If one seeks liberation, they will again fall into attachment. Differentiation of liberation and attachment only leads to further confusion. The Buddhas skillfully handle the three poisons, yet beings in delusion cannot bear them. I too diligently work on the nature of the three poisons, yet I do not wish to seek the Buddha's mind.

The path is difficult; the way is difficult, for in the mind there is originally nothing. That which is without form is pure Bodhi. In the mind without sight, the Buddha is always seen.

Clarifying that Wisdom is Without Contention

Reflection Seven:

Do you not see that the true source of Wisdom is always pure? The root of birth and death is originally empty and subtle. This very birth and death is true Wisdom. To seek it outside of this is to contradict itself. If the mind discriminates between birth and death, all the poisons of suffering relentlessly follow. If you approach this as an act of achievement, it will be distorted and cannot return to the truth. This is merely a false concept of emptiness and speech.

Both purity and defilement do not depend on one another. The mind, when it abandons attachment to birth and death, is not seeking nirvana. Nirvana, without mind, is not pursued. Nirvana, without mind, is precisely birth and death. Birth and death, without mind, is the brilliance of Wisdom. Wisdom illuminates the mind without requiring any effort or application. Without illumination, without use, it is beyond the scope of words. It also does not wish for any views to arise. This is the Dharma King, the supreme physician, who skillfully applies the medicine of no-mind. The ailments of the three realms can all be cured.

The path is difficult; the way is difficult, for when you let go, you let go again. Understanding this, the nature of existence is originally empty. Without mind, it is still the great Mahāyāna.

Clarifying that the Ultimate State Cannot Be Attained

Reflection Eight:

Do you not see that within the ultimate state, there is no foundational essence? There is no foundational truth, and no one truly knows this realm. If a person does not know, they cannot realize this state. It is pure, subtle, and does not appear extraordinary. Knowledge and ignorance are inherently the same. Suffering and joy are equal in the great compassion. Beings in the three realms are lost in delusion. In truth, it is all without action. There is also no such thing as a law of inaction. Forcing the mind to act is exhausting and painful. This exhaustion and pain are empty, like the sound of fire. Birth and death do not remain, nor do they separate.

One who understands this mind has no obstruction. Birth and death, as illusions, cannot bind it. This one mind contains all. It encompasses the eighty-four thousand precepts and rules but does not fall into the realm of ordinary laws. It traverses perilous paths and remains unscathed. In all phenomena, there is no true law. What then is the rush of worldly people striving for?

The path is difficult; the way is difficult, for in the mind, there is nothing to grasp. In the past, it was said that the Buddhas are distant, but now we know that desire and aversion are nirvana.

Clarifying that Afflictions are Not to Be Cut Off

Reflection Nine:

Do you not see that Manjushri's wondrous wisdom is not distant? The three obstacles and three poisons are the same as the three empties. The five aspects of the Dharma body are entangled by the five aggregates. The six entrances lead to ignorance, which in turn leads to the six powers. The four inversions and the four fruits are never separate. The eight wrongs and eight corrects ultimately share the same essence. The seven factors of enlightenment have no distinction. The seven consciousnesses wander and unite with the true teaching. All afflictions are empty and still.

The Dharma treasury of the Buddhas resides in the heart. Always, the patience with the Dharma follows and pursues, yet it cannot ascend without effort. Where do the Buddhas, the Tathāgatas, reside? They are all present within the attachments of greed, desire, and love. Now, I encourage you to cut off greed, desire, and love. However, this is only for the purpose of guiding the ignorant. The true nature of desire is originally pure and clean. The false words and empty names are also empty.

The path is difficult; the way is difficult, for in the mind, it is not truly the mind. I offer this to those who truly practice without thought. Be careful not to differentiate or destroy attachment and desire.

Clarifying Nirvana, No-Mind, and Sustained Action

Reflection Ten:

Do you not see that within the nature of cessation, there is no true extinction? In the true realization, there is no awareness of knowing. Furthermore, there is no awareness of ignorance either. It is pure, empty, and serene, beyond any concepts of direction or rules. The nature of the Dharma is inherent and not caused by external factors. Imagining and delusion are contrary to this nature and lead to inaction. Even if it drifts and flows throughout the three realms, in the mind, it does not move. There is no coming, no going, and no dwelling. Those who understand this non-dwelling are never diminished. The Buddhas, the great heroes of the world, are not to be revered as supreme. The three poisons and the four inversions are also not to be degraded. However, when seeking through the mind, one gains nothing. In the mind without conditions, the conditions themselves are transcended. If you wish to swiftly attain the supreme path, ignorance, and the three poisons are capable of being the cause. The three poisons give rise to the three liberations. The seven consciousnesses, in turn, give rise to the seven factors of awakening. The inverted mind of coming and going has no substance. The coming and going are neither urgent nor delayed. Recognizing the afflictions, one observes the external conditions, but it is necessary to discipline the mind and push forward. The mind inherently has no root, so how could it have a foundation? The six senses and five desires cannot bind it.

The path is difficult; the way is difficult, subtle, and rare. In the past, there was diligent effort and courage in progressing, but without realizing that effort, when forced, opposes the principle of non-action.

Clarifying that the Dharma Body Functions with Freedom Reflection Eleven:

Do you not see that the Great Sage, observing the body, recognizes the Dharma within it? The body is the pure Dharma body of the Tathāgata. Empty space moves back and forth with great speed. It transcends and is free, not dependent on others. It enters and exits through the pores without obstruction. Though it encounters the dust of desire, it is not stained by it. In all places, ordinary beings and saints alike are seen, yet beyond this, there is no true way to seek the path. Establishing all phenomena yet without clinging to any, this is the true suchness, the supreme truth. It has existed for countless eons, not created, nor new. The great self is achieved, yet there is no self. The great person is complete, yet there is no individual. The sacred body is beyond ignorance and cannot be described. For the sake of convenience, it is called the mind and spirit. This mind is the true, constant Dharma, and it is also the precious essence of Nirvana. I wish that all students realize this insight, each guarding their own gates and prohibiting delusion.

The path is difficult; the way is difficult, for the name may differ, but the principles are the same. If one understands the truth of non-birth and non-death, they will eliminate the clouds of birth and death.

Clarifying the Diamond-like Liberation Reflection Twelve:

Do you not see that the language of the Vajra is not the truth? All phenomena, though vast and numerous, are ultimately one and the same. This emptiness, beyond action, is the mother of all Buddhas. It is the true suchness, the supreme jewel. The worldly people do not know how to seek this treasure. They are poor and lost, bound in the six realms. They do not engage with the Dharma body within, but instead, they bow toward external images. At first glance, they may appear diligent, but upon closer inspection, they remain coarse and unrefined. They use coarse hearts to express themselves in words, not understanding the true source, and thus remain ignorant. Driven by emotions and thoughts, they discriminate and divide. The five aggregates and six senses compete to destroy. They are unwilling to seek the supreme path, only knowing the empty, illusory pursuit of fame and reputation. Though their mouths may sing praises, their actions still give rise to evil. Empty words of truth ultimately become mere illusion. I now reverse this illusion and make it real, but do not cling to reality, entering into the state beyond all dualities.

The path is difficult; the way is difficult, for the entire world is steeped in illusion. The ten fetters and the five aggregates are without wisdom. The foolish person, within this, creates obstacles for themselves.

Clarifying that Tranquility is Without Illumination and Without Attainment

Reflection Thirteen:

Do you not see that all phenomena are merely fabricated through empty conceptualization? Tranquility and stillness are without a gate, and this is the path of the Dharma. All phenomena are centered around the mind as their foundation. Now, I cannot return to the source of the mind. Having explored the source of the mind, I still cannot find it. How could one know that all phenomena have no root? Using this rootless mind to illuminate the realms, it clearly illuminates, yet the illumination still remains confused. This very confused mind then illuminates itself. The true illumination, in essence, has never existed. The illumination and the realm are entirely distinct.

Therefore, the wise cannot discuss it. The worldly person, lost and frantic, insists on discrimination, seeing through nothing but chaos and disturbance of the spirit. If one can illuminate with wisdom, there is no distinction. If one distinguishes through intellect, the wisdom itself becomes confused again. All phenomena arise naturally; no one creates them. Tranquility is neither static nor disturbed. Therefore, we know that sentient beings' deluded thoughts are what make them confused. But still, sentient beings are the supreme beings.

The path is difficult; the way is difficult, for one discards ignorance only to fall back into it. I can subdue flying birds and running beasts, but this thief of the mind is the hardest to tame.

Clarifying the Three Empties and the Absence of Intrinsic Being

Reflection Fourteen:

Do you not see that the minds of all Buddhas and saints are without obstruction? In order to guide beings, the Dharma is explained through the teaching of the three "non-s" (three negations). Though these three negations are taught, they are ultimately not something that can be grasped or articulated. The mind does not rest in any of the myriad realms. Even if it is deluded and engages in the five heinous acts, whatever actions are taken, they all return to the same truth. Holding onto simplicity, clearing the mind, and dwelling in thoughtlessness, one does not discriminate or reach towards cessation.

Therefore, the mind is at ease and does not choose a particular place. One realizes that the true and the mundane are not fundamentally different. By ceasing all thoughts, the mind becomes empty, yet does not abandon activity. Names, principles, speech, and actions do not rely on one another. The mind does not waver with the six senses. Acting in accordance with the way, without doing, it follows the flow of emptiness. There is no coming or going; it remains undisturbed. The mind and spirit, when exhausted, are still not empty. It is not affected by the body and follows whatever form arises. It does not sever attachment, yet it is not bound by it. To say there is no difference is to tie oneself. To assert that its essence is different only harms the essence.

It is like a dream or an illusion, with no inherent reality. Originally, there is no existence, so what is there to eliminate?

The path is difficult; the way is difficult, and suddenly difficult to manage. Ordinary people mistakenly perceive differences. In reality, the true mind remains undivided, with no distinction.

Clarifying that Emptiness and Existence Do Not Contradict Reflection Fifteen:

Do you not see that wrong views are neither at the edge nor apart from the edge? Delusion and discrimination are also not caused by conditions. The mind is not the mind, and thought is not thought. It comes and goes constantly, but in reality, there is no movement. It is like a Vajra, impossible to break. The Buddhas use this to create the indestructible. The world praises Nirvana as the ultimate truth, but I say that the deepest mystery is birth and death. This is the ultimate forbearance above non-birth. It is also the Mahā (great) unobstructed dhyana. The true practitioners observe this with their minds. They are not swayed by the eight winds. The celestial music is free and unperturbed, with no attachment. How could small pleasures like wealth and beauty bind them? Whether encountering joy or suffering, their hearts remain unchanged. Forever free from attachment, they forget all sorrow and pain. The empty heart has no self or other. It drifts according to nature, as if in a dream. The true illumination of the eternal law knows no fixed nature. To know the Dharma's essence, which has no inherent nature, is to be wise.

The path is difficult; the way is difficult, for it is neither empty nor existent. Both existence and emptiness must be transcended together. The transcendence of both is not to be grasped, nor is it to be received.

Clarifying the Resentment of Delusion Reflection Sixteen:

Do you not see that the Great Way is serene and ungraspable, beyond conceptualization? It pervades all phenomena, and yet all of them are profound. Everything is tranquil, without arising or cessation. Delusion and discrimination arise from the mind. The wise seek the mind, but there is no place to find it. In a state of ignorance, the forms and appearances are detached from craving and attachment. Clear and distinct, where is there to be seen? It is like the sick eye that mistakes the empty needle for something real. If the body recognizes the deluded thoughts, it is not led astray by the suffering of illusion. All phenomena in the world are like the mirage of the sun's rays. Practitioners should be cautious not to give rise to resentment or hatred. Always return to the empty mind, and reflect inwardly. The supreme Buddha path can also be followed in this way.

The path is difficult; the way is difficult, subtle, and truly without equal. If one realizes the emptiness of the six senses, which are not truly existent, all delusions and obstacles will naturally dissolve.

Clarifying the Equal Function of the Dharma Nature

Reflection Seventeen:

Do you not see that the Dharma nature is beyond knowing and cannot be expressed? Both conditioned and unconditioned are equally empty and pervading. Although they seem to differ in their various manifestations, when traced to their source, they are all the same. There is also no such thing as sameness that can be identified with the Dharma. It is not the case that emptiness holds emptiness. If you wish to understand this wondrous and subtle path, simply explore the five aggregates, which are like a bundle of illusion. In reality, there is neither coming nor going. It is not contained within the six senses. This is the true Dharma realm beyond any origin. Serene and constant, it has no beginning or end.

The path is difficult; the way is difficult, for the suffering of joy and sorrow is never-ending. Time passes in the West, the land of limitless life. Or, perhaps, it manifests in the East through manifestation.

Clarifying the Inconceivable Buddha Mother

Reflection Eighteen:

Do you not see that desire, greed, and attachment are the Buddha Mothers? The Buddhas, the World-Honored Ones, are children of desire. Since the beginning, Bodhi has been my craftsman. Now, I am made the master craftsman for all beings. In the past, I sought the Buddha externally in a thousand ways, but the Buddha was always within my clothes—only now do I know. The infinite delusions of the heart are the very path. The three poisons and four inversions are inconceivable. Illusory, they practice compassion, alleviating suffering. But they do not know that suffering is compassion. Anger and ignorance are the most subtle and hidden. Even the wise cannot fathom them. In the past, I diligently sought knowledge and understanding, but I did not know that knowledge and perception themselves are without true knowing. The four realms and three paths of existence are all empty. The three barriers and three freedoms are inseparable.

The path is difficult; the way is difficult, for there is no duality, and all is forgotten. Understanding that afflictions are not born from thoughts is precisely where the Tathāgata sits in the Dharma seat.

Clarifying the Non-Awareness of Cultivation

Reflection Nineteen:

Do you not see that the true heart of the Buddha's children is without attachment? Because they see that the mind is not the mind, they are not troubled. They know that the mind is not the mind, and thought is not thought. The eight winds of fortune and misfortune do not harm them, nor do they harbor sorrow. They move with the wind, east and west, with nothing to call their own. Free and unbound, they wander, not tied to any vessel. Even when they seem to dwell somewhere, it is not a true dwelling.

They travel throughout the ten directions without ever being caught or confined. When there is no "I," there is no attachment to self. They are at ease, adapting to the flow, whether rising or falling. The illusions of the world have no inherent reality. In this, what do I seek? Only to use a mind that is not a mind and to awaken to a state beyond awakening. Also, to engage in the right practice without the need for practice. If one does not understand this, they should not be called a monk. They are just slaves to their ignorant minds, bound by attachment and lack of freedom. This only increases their suffering and anguish, trapped in the endless cycle of the three realms. Birth and death are connected, infinitely so. The cycle of suffering never ends.

The path is difficult; the way is difficult, for there is no passing through thoughts. The thought of no-thought is the true thought. The true thought is not truth and leads to further flame.

Clarifying the Subtlety of Goodness

Reflection Twenty:

Do you not see that supreme Bodhi is closest at hand? The four elements and five aggregates are profoundly deep. In truth, they are pure and difficult to comprehend. If one does not realize the true nature of the mind, it is suddenly lost in confusion. In the unified nature, there is no substance. Therefore, it is called the essential principle of all phenomena. Within it, there is neither falsehood nor truth. It operates through non-action, which is subtly wondrous. When seeking its nature, one should be silent. For the sake of beings, names and titles are established. But if you understand the name and title, they are no longer names. Understanding beings, one understands the Buddha's teachings. Realizing that true awakening is without cause, one attains a state of no cause and no result. The wise, through overcoming desire, achieve non-birth. Ignorance has no coming or going, and remains undisturbed. The holy fruits are not distinct from the ordinary mind. Distinguishing between the holy and the ordinary mind is itself an inversion. If one has no aspirations or practices, they will surely guide the world.

The path is difficult; the way is difficult, for it is neither impure nor pure. Right and wrong both dissolve, and in the end, all is preserved.

The Ease of the Road

One:

Buddha and emptiness are of one essence; emptiness and Buddha have always been the same. Everything encountered is just so, arising from the self-nature of no-mind.

The path is easy; the way is easy, requiring no practice.
With neither existence nor nonexistence, the mind is forever at rest.
This alone is non-birth.

Two:

Sentient beings are the ancestors of the Buddhas; the Buddha is the elder of all beings. The Three Jewels are never separate, and Bodhi is shared by all.

The path is easy; the way is easy, for there is truly nothing to do.
One upholds the scriptures without moving the mouth,
And sits in dhyana while lying down all day.

Three:

There is no birth and no place; no place is precisely no birth.
If one seeks the place of no birth, that very seeking gives birth to no birth.

The path is easy; the way is easy, wide and level.
With no-mind, there is true liberation,
And self-nature moves freely in all directions.

Four:

Bodhi has no fixed place; no place is precisely Bodhi.
If one seeks a place for Bodhi, they will remain deluded for lifetimes upon lifetimes.

The path is easy; the way is easy, for it is not false.
Good and evil are without distinction,
This alone is true suchness.

Five:

Both existence and non-existence are liberation; all burdens rest in no-birth.
Bodhi itself is inversion, and birth and death are the most refined truth.

The path is easy; the way is easy, let no one doubt.
If one understands these words,
There is no need for a teacher to cultivate the Way.

Six:

The eastern mountains float upon the waters; the western mountains walk yet do not remain. The Northern Dipper descends upon the human world, this is truly the place of liberation.

The path is easy; the way is easy, yet people do not recognize it.
At midnight, the sun shines bright,
But failing to awaken, one remains truly lost.

Seven:

The strong wind does not move the tree; the drum is struck, yet no sound is heard. When the sun rises, the tree has no shadow. The ox walks on water.

The path is easy; the way is truly pitiable.
To cultivate the Way is to understand this meaning:
Stretch out your legs and sleep in peace.

Eight:

The Buddha's heart and sentient beings, are the three (truths) that never change. Emptiness and truth are united, and in non-action, the distinction between self and other fades away.

The path is easy; the way is truly difficult to measure.
I send a message to those walking the path:
The great way truly requires effort.

Nine:

The way of humans is difficult to travel, but my way is easy to walk.
I entered the mountains for twelve years, stretching out my legs to sleep.

The path is easy; the way is easy, so do not overthink it.
In an instant, the mind is non-dual;
The entire day is like paradise.

Ten:

Mount Meru is like a mustard seed; the mustard seed is like Mount Meru.
The mountain and sea are like a flat plain; burning ice to boil tea.

The path is easy; the way is truly mysterious and silent.
The Bodhi mind is within,
Yet the world is unaware.

Eleven:

Existence and non-existence, coming and going, the mind is forever at rest.
Inside, outside, and in between, the mind is absent. If you seek the true Buddha and
Tathāgata, just look at the stone ox giving birth to a calf.

The path is easy; the way is easy, act quickly.
There is no need to study much or to listen to many teachings.
Silence is the true path.

Twelve:

Non-use is non-action. Non-action is no-mind.
In the place of no-seeing and no-mind, willow blossoms sink to the bottom of the water.

The path is easy; the way is truly without attainment.
A thousand theories and discussions
Are not as good as a moment of silence.

Thirteen:

No feelings is the true path. Wood and stone are true suchness.
When realized, it pervades all realms. If not realized, one remains forever distant.

The path is easy; the way is truly joyful.
In an instant, one attains right awakening.
There is no need to follow the three teachings.

Fourteen:

No affairs is truly no affairs. No affairs are known by few.
Non-action has no place or form. No place is non-action.

The path is easy; the way is easy, let no one be alarmed.
There are no affairs of non-action.
Emptiness and existence are the names of non-action.

Fifteen:

No self, no others—this is true renunciation. Why need one shave their head and wear the
robe? To understand true freedom and liberation, just look at the water buffalo giving birth to
ivory.

The path is easy; the way is easy, listen carefully.
There is no awareness, no Bodhi.
There is neither purity nor impurity.

The Four Appearances

Appearance of Arising

Consciousness clings to drifting bubbles and rises.
Birth comes from desire and attachment.
Once, I grew into adulthood,
And today, I am once again an infant.

Star-like eyes follow the world's turning,
Red lips open toward the breast.
Because of delusion about the true Dharma nature,
One again falls into the cycle of rebirth.

Appearance of Old Age

Looking into the mirror, my appearance has changed.
Climbing the steps, my strength has faded.
Alas! Now I have grown old,
Even my bows and prostrations are lacking.

My body is like a tree on the edge of a cliff,
My mind is like a turtle remembering the waters.
Yet I still cling to worldly attachments,
Unwilling to learn the path of non-action.

Appearance of Illness

Suddenly, I am struck by a grave illness,
And find myself confined as a bedridden man.
My wife and children sit in silent sorrow,
Even friends grow weary of visiting.

Pain spreads through a thousand veins,
My groans reach four neighboring homes.
Unaware of the dangers ahead,
I still indulge in craving and aversion.

Appearance of Death

The spirit departs from the road of life,
The wandering soul enters the gates of death.
I have only heard of countless going,
Yet not a single one returning.

The prized horse stands neighing in vain,
The courtyard flowers will never again be plucked.
Seek now the supreme path,
And you may be spared in all directions, from the mountain of suffering.

Craving, Aversion, and Delusion

Do not crave.

Look at the swimming fish, playing in the emerald pond—
It is only because they love the bait beneath the hook
That they take the line into their mouths.

Do not give in to aversion.

For aversion invites the causes of hell.
Instead, use the power of dhyana stillness to tame the winds and fire,
And you will manifest the pure, radiant Vajra body.

Do not be deluded.

For delusion allows the six thieves of ignorance to deceive you.
The evil karma of body and mind is self-created,
And the foolish ones unknowingly wear the skins of beasts.

The Two Odes

Ode One:

With empty hands, I take up the plow;
Walking on foot, I ride the water buffalo.
The buffalo crosses the bridge,
The bridge flows, but the water does not.

Ode Two:

There is a thing that existed before heaven and earth,
Formless by nature, ever silent and still.
It governs all appearances,
Yet does not wither with the changing seasons.

Returning to the Source

Return to the Source; birth and death are equal to nirvana.
Because the mind clings to inequality, the nature of Dharma appears to have high and low.

Return to the Source; speaking of it is easy, but moving the mind is difficult.
Prajñā has no form or appearance, how then can it be observed through teachings?

Return to the Source; seeking prajñā is simple.
Just quiet the mind of right and wrong, and naturally, great wisdom will arise.

Return to the Source; in all places, one may dwell in peace.
Nirvana and birth-and-death are the same, afflictions are none other than Bodhi.

Return to the Source; rely on insight, do not follow emotions.
The nature of Dharma neither increases nor decreases, false words only speak of gain and loss.

Return to the Source; why search any further?
If you wish for true liberation, simply turn inward and observe the mind.

Return to the Source; the nature of mind is beyond thought.
A small will cannot contain great non-action; a mustard seed holds Mount Sumeru.

Return to the Source; liberation has no boundaries.
Harmonizing with the world, yet untouched by it, like empty space, untainted by the dust of the world.

Return to the Source; why seek it step by step?
The nature of Dharma has no before or after, in a single thought, the entire truth is cultivated.

Return to the Source; the nature of mind neither sinks nor floats.
Dwell in the samādhi of the king, where all practices are gathered and fulfilled.

Return to the Source; birth and death are entangled illusions.
Mistakenly grasping emptiness as real, the six senses remain clouded in delusion.

Return to the Source; the wine of prajñā is clear and pure.
It cures the disease of afflictions, drink it yourself and offer it to all beings.

The Floating Bubbles Song

Do you not see how the sudden rain flows across the courtyard?
On the water, countless bubbles arise and dissipate.
One drop forms, and another breaks.
How many times do they vanish, and how many times do they float again?

Floating bubbles gather and scatter endlessly.
They vary in size and shape, yet their appearance is similar.
At times, they suddenly appear, named floating bubbles.
Once dissolved, they return to the original water.

Floating bubbles have existence and non-existence by their own nature.
Images of emptiness and images of form are all called illusory.
In the end, they are all like mirages and shadows.
The foolish call them half of a pearl.

At this moment, I reflect on the humble lay practitioner:
One glimpse of floating bubbles and one can awaken to life and death.
The vast human world is ultimately all illusion.
For a moment, let us use the metaphor of floating bubbles to compare.

Each thought in the human realm is full of rise and fall.
The passing water flows eastward, with no end in sight.
I send this message to the world's wealthy and powerful:
How many moments are left as we watch the passing of time?

Being Alone

Alone in the Mountain.

In a thatched hut made of grass, I find peace.
Bears playfully tease people,
While flying birds come together to feed.

Living Alone.

What is the meaning of this hard work?
My heart aspires to seek its true nature,
And my will aligns with true suchness.

Sleeping Alone.

In silence, I ponder the profound mysteries.
Sleeping, I do not cling to the worldly or the boundless.

Sitting Alone.

In stillness, I reflect and observe the non-self.
I adjust my body and mind,
And compassion becomes the bodhisattva.

Handling Alone.

My original vow is in accord with all that is.
The Way is revealed in the sutras,
Breaking through the ignorance that rules.

Acting Alone.

I see form as though blind,
Moving lightly with others, like transformation,
Not yet disturbed by the movement of life.

Playing Alone.

I ask myself, what is there in my heart?
If I see no marks in my heart,
I quickly sever it and return to the wisdom of prajñā.

Moving Forward Alone.

Wherever I touch, all things follow the illusion of conditions.
The illusionary thoughts within my mind rush forward to seek,
But this rushing forward is not truly going anywhere.

Returning Alone.

Climbing the mountain, crossing the ridge, where do I depend?
When I reach the place of dependence, there is no fixed truth.
Carefully observing this situation, what should I do?

Doing Alone.

I ask myself, what do I cling to in my heart?
Pushing and examining the four elements, I find no birth.
With thousands of details and countless entanglements, how can they bind me?

Speaking Alone.

I ask myself, what do I grasp in my heart?
After seeing clearly, all speech is empty,
Who controls the throat, lips, and tongue?

Feeling Alone.

In reality, it is beyond sound and name,
The three views and one mind are free from all things.
The thorns and bushes of the forest are all self-leveling.

Beauty Alone.

Far from the morning market,
I pursue the original vow to prove no-birth.
Without reaching no-birth, I will never cease.

Excellence Alone.

The taste of Zen is like breakfast without excess,
I discard this notion, as it is to be given appropriately,
Using the five aggregates as my home.

Joy Alone.

I wish to seek no learning.
Quickly sever the ropes of the three realms,
And escape from the evil plow of samsara.

Good Alone.

I decisively seek the bodhisattva path,
All my actions are for the benefit of beings.
I have not yet obtained the treasure of nirvana.

Observing Alone.

Try to examine worldly conditions,
Grasping at this impermanent realm.
One principle turns inward and is observed in the heart.

Wondering Alone.

This is truly the practice of non-action.
Reflecting deeply, I direct my thoughts
Toward the pool of nirvana.

Sufficiently Alone.

My wish is without limit,
The words of resentment and affection are the true, round Dharma of the universe.
Thus, I can embody the transformation of all beings.

Resting Alone.

My mind is stored within,
Making me a good friend, the jewel in the robe.
After countless lifetimes, my root matures and ripens.

The Watches

At that time, the Great Sage and his disciples, day and night, they thought deeply and observed the practitioners: Birth without birth, death without death. They ceased to cling to conditions and entered into the Dharma realm. This is the true liberation. Thus, the Great Sage composed five verses, saying:

At the first watch,

I raise the incense in the Buddha's altar,
And reverently bow to the unsurpassed one.
My mind, mindlessly free, is already gone.

At the second watch,

I sit cross-legged in silent dhyana,
I pass beyond self and other,
True suchness is one and not two.

At the third watch,

I observe the Dharma, is it empty or not?
There is no arising, no birth or death,
Its nature is one, true suchness.

At the fourth watch,

I observe the conditions of the Dharma, are they with or without conditions?
True suchness is beyond the four statements,
Hundreds of wrongs no longer trouble me.

At the fifth watch,

I bow in reverence to suchness,
Returning to the refuge of the non-new, non-old.
It is neither real nor empty.

Encouragement and Advice

Holding the precepts is like the sun in the sky,
It can illuminate and guide through the dark night.
It reveals the treasures within the home,
And also opens the precious gems on the forehead.

It directly transcends the three realms of existence,
And reaches the path to ultimate freedom.
It brings together the concepts of equality and inequality,
And realizes the ultimate truth beyond attachment.

Breaking the precepts is like a boat sinking,
Drowning in the vast, boundless ocean.
In moments of great desperation, one may call out to the Buddha,
But one's willpower remains unchanged.

Life is like a candle in the wind,
Quickly extinguished, unable to wait.
When the body dies, the sins linger,
Pulling one toward the gate of hell.

All the suffering eventually arrives,
All pain pierces the soul.
Alone, one suffers the burning and torment,
A state so intense that words fail to express it.

The cultivation of emptiness severing the three realms,
Persistence becomes the king of healing.

Together, we promote the teachings of harmonious control,
Like sweet rain falling without restraint,
Moistening and nourishing all beings.
Wisdom blossoms, filling the air with fragrance,
And all meet in the assembly of the Three Bodhisattvas,
Realizing the truth of the ultimate nature.

Transcending not Departing

Abandon the world and return to the original source.
Leave behind distinctions and the names of appearances.
Rest the mind in a state of non-dual perception.
The essence is one, transcending all else.

Nature is without opposition or separation.
The mind, not departing, returns to its true place.
Free and unbound, it dwells in the quiet, empty garden.
Content in the realm of peace, one forgets all reliance.

Mind King

Gazing across the four great seas,
Observing the fivefold mountain of aggregates,
This is the path where the Tathāgata walks,
His numinous wisdom is deeply serene.

The jeweled palace glows with radiant pearls,
Lotus thrones shimmer with pristine jade.
The Mind King illuminates the Dharma,
Spreading the lotus of prajñā.

The pure land is sown with bodhi seeds,
How could it not be the Heaven of Heavens?
Contemplating this very body,
The Mind King is prajñā's emptiness.

The dwelling of sagely wisdom,
A path not shared with common minds.
Entering and leaving, there is no door,
Seek its traces, yet none can be found.

The great essence is vast and boundless,
Yet the small mind holds not even a speck of dust.
To reach the other shore,
Unfurl the sail of wisdom high.

With the pure, luminous pearl of discipline,
Adorn the Buddha's sacred seat.
Let the body take the form of the Tathāgata,
And the mind be crowned as the King of Prajñā.

May one swiftly ascend the lotus throne,
The mouth radiating perfect light,
Shining upon boundless realms,
Becoming a bridge for all beings.

Unseal the great treasury of Vinaya,
Let the fragrance of precepts and samādhi spread.
Penetrate the wisdom of no-birth,
And see—who comes and goes within emptiness?

Forever transcend the prison of the three realms,
Remain unstained by the wombs of the four māras.
Play freely upon lotus blossoms,
Rest peacefully upon the Dharma's pure terrace.

Both gods and humans gaze in reverence,
In the unseen, the void resounds with praise.
For those with karmic affinity, the vast teaching unfolds,
The wondrous gate of prajñā swings open.

Night after night, embrace the Buddha in sleep,
Morning after morning, rise together again.
Walking, standing, always side by side,
Sitting, reclining, ever dwelling together.

Never apart, even by a hair's breadth,
Like a body and its shadow.
If you wish to know where Buddha dwells,
Listen—this very voice is He.

Stillness is the root of the Dharma King,
Movement is the sprout of the Dharma King.
Nirvāṇa is never far,
The eternal abiding is not remote.

Turning the mind is the pure land,
At that moment, afflictions dissolve.
To cross the vast sea of suffering,
Diligently build the bridge of the six perfections.

Certainly, enlightenment will be realized,
Just as the tides surely return.
The hidden treasure is never apart from you,
The luminous pearl lies within your very body.

Simply seek it within your own mind,
Do not search far away in the empty sky.
All beings share the same true nature,
In myriad forms, the essence remains one.

For those who understand this Dharma,
Why toil in vain searching for another?
The four births share a single body,
The six paths all return to the same source.

Ignorance itself is Buddha,
Afflictions need not be cast away.

Ten Instructions

First Instruction: Focus your mind and always recite pāramitā, diligently cultivate the six perfections and strive toward bodhi; naturally, you will be free from the five defilements and the three lower realms.

Second Instruction: Do not seek profit in this fleeting world. Even if you obtain it, it will only last for a short while; before long, you will return to the wilderness of death.

Third Instruction: The human body is difficult to obtain, so one must feel deep reverence. Day and night, in six periods, always recite the Buddha's name, diligently cultivate the Three Jewels, and seek refuge in the monastery.

Fourth Instruction: Strive to do good and cultivate virtue, do not say that youth and beauty will last; you do not know where your path will lead.

Fifth Instruction: Reflect on the true suffering of hell. Though now you may enjoy wealth and display your splendor, before long, you will return to the earth.

Sixth Instruction: Above all, do not eat the flesh of living beings. If they are not bodhisattvas in transformation, then they are surely your relatives from past lives.

Seventh Instruction: In all things, be honest and sincere. A fickle person who changes morning and night is untrustworthy, and such a way of life will never bring peace.

Eighth Instruction: Those who eat meat are truly like rākṣasas. If in this life you kill another being, in the next life you will be killed in return.

Ninth Instruction: Heaven and hell are clearly real. Do not offer meat and wine to monks; for five hundred lifetimes, you will be born without hands or feet.

Tenth Instruction: I urge you to practice diligently without delay. When your life suddenly ends and you descend into the underworld, your parents, wife, and children will weep in vain.

Six Sections on Frequent Discussions

Section One: Sighing for the Return of the Pearl, Which Has Yet to Be Obtained

Carrying clarity, this day arrives,
Feeling the response in the bright sun.
Thoughts and reflections are deeply rooted,
The yearning for the child is truly hard to bear.
In the morning, memories bring attachment,
In the evening, longing stirs the heart with sorrow.
If only I could wait beneath the spiritual tree,
Hoping for liberation, never to be forgotten.
The bitter sight of loneliness and weariness,
All wish to follow in unison, sounding the bell.
Together they fly beneath the white sun,
Breathing out purple clouds of light.
The divine dragon appears on both sides,
Scattering flowers, releasing fragrance.
A gentle, joyful realm,
Ascending to the golden hall.

Section Two: Sighing for the Breaking of the High and the Completion of Past Aspirations

Have I strayed far from the heavenly palace?
The thought of suffering momentarily traps me here.
Spreading gold to embrace,
The black cloth binds me in knowledge.
Only looking up, following good deeds,
Forgetting weariness in the lead.
We both ascend to the realm of the eight positions,
Enjoying the jewel lotus pond.
The golden body is fully formed,
The wondrous fruit brings together all the marvels.

Section Three: Encouraging the Practice of the Supreme Path

Change from the dark robes to bright attire,
Purify the body and attain golden virtue.
From practicing the supreme path,
A natural joy will be complete.
Wipe the shining pearl clean,
Its light will spread and illuminate all.

Section Four: Sighing at How People Do Not Tire of Suffering and Are Bound by Their Own Beliefs

Willing to enter the chariot of seven jewels,
Rather than return to the realm of hell.
The mountain of knives already wounds the body,
The sword tree is where one should be.
Month after month, the sickness is unbearable,
Year after year, there is no respite.
Flowing through the three realms,
The precious jade face is destroyed.
Do not follow my teachings,
For at that time, the immortal steps are obstructed.

Section Five: Encouraging the Virtuous and Wise to Turn from Suffering and Embrace Joy

I wish you to follow the path of goodness,
Your name and worth will be shown.
The heavens will bow in floral offerings,
And the flying Brahman will come to welcome you.
Together, ascend the precious treasure hall,
Where everywhere is light.
Live together in the realm of eternal joy,
Rejoicing in the realization of no birth.

Section Six: Encouraging Fellow Travelers to Reach the True Path, Untying the Bonds of Cause and Effect

Only wish to follow the true path,
Contemplating deeply, eliminating all connections.
Exhausting all entanglements, transcending the realm of emptiness,
Wandering freely, without fear, in the heavenly realms.

Mind King Inscription

Introduction by Jess Row

This text appears to be misattributed to Fu Dashi, though its history is important as it relates to Fu and the schools of Zen, so I included it for that reason. One thing to note however, is that it does seem to in some ways parallel Fu's poem, "Mind King". Perhaps this inscription was inspired or influenced by his work.

Introduction to Mind Inscription and Mind-King Inscription

by Jess Row

"Many Zen practitioners and students are familiar with the poem Xinxin ming, usually translated as "Faith in Mind" or "Trust in Mind." The two poems .., the Xin ming and Xinwang ming, were published together with the Xinxin ming in an appendix to the Jingde chuangdeng lu, the "Jingde Transmission of the Lamp," the most famous and widely accepted traditional Chinese record of the early transmission of Zen.

There are a few interesting characteristics that stand out when we look at these three poems together. Even though they are attributed to legendary figures in early Zen history who lived in different places and times, they share a consistent focus on the term mind (xin 心, sometimes also translated as "heart/mind") and a particular argument about the importance of mind—so much so that they appear to have been written in dialogue with one another. Their titles seem to make them naturally appear as part of a series. (The word ming literally means "inscription," as an engraving on stone, or figuratively something that should be preserved in one's heart/mind).

The compilers of the Jingde text obviously thought they belonged together. And, arguably, they seem to make one interconnected statement about the purpose of Zen practice. The reason, many modern scholars suggest, is that these three inscriptions are likely not poems written over several centuries in different locations, but rather the products of one, much later, school of Zen—that is, they were not written in the sixth or seventh century but most likely in the late ninth century, during the same period of doctrinal dispute and schism that produced the division between the Northern and Southern schools (that is, the schools traditionally associated with Shenxiu and Huineng, the supposedly rival dharma heirs of Hongren, the fifth patriarch).

After they were written, for reasons no one knows, they were misattributed backward in time to other, more famous teachers, about whom little was actually known. The Xin ming was said to be the work of Niutou Farong (594–657), the Xinwang ming was ascribed to a great Buddhist layman and saint, Mahasattva Fu (497–569) and the Xinxin ming was ascribed to Sengcan (Sengt'san), the third patriarch of Zen (d. 606)

The school that most scholars now believe produced these poems is the Ox-Head (Niutou) school of Zen, which is named for a mountain that still exists today within the city limits of Nanjing in southern China. The Ox-Head school played a pivotal but short-lived role in the history of Zen during the Tang dynasty.

Although almost nothing about its origins is reliably known, the official transmission story of the school states that the founder, Niutou Farong, received transmission from the fourth patriarch, Daoxin. Several generations later, during the time of the schism between the Northern and Southern schools—which fought over the transmission of the fifth patriarch—the Ox-Head school existed, at least to some degree, as a “third way,” or neutral arbiter between the two, because it claimed an earlier origin point. One Ox-Head teacher is quoted as saying, 'I do not accept either the Northern or Southern schools. The mind is my school.'

The Ox-Head school had a brief period of prominence and political favor, but in the tenth century (the beginning of the so-called “Golden Age” of Chinese Zen, during which the most famous Zen masters lived) it lost popularity and gradually died out. However, its ecumenical and broad-minded tradition and the texts it produced (most of which are now lost) were enormously influential on the development of later Chinese Zen. Beginning in the middle of the twentieth century, Japanese scholars of Zen, including D. T. Suzuki and Yanagida Seizan, began bringing to light documents associated with the Ox-Head school that were discovered in the Dunhuang library—a trove of ancient Chinese manuscripts discovered by European explorers in the far west of China in the early twentieth century.

These Ox-Head texts from Dunhuang included two prose works, the Wuxin lun (Discourse on No Mind) and Jueguan lun (Discourse on Cutting Off Perceptions) that had been lost for nearly a millenium. By comparing the textual similarities between these prose texts, the three mind inscriptions and the Platform Sutra, attributed to Huineng, and by tracing references to these texts in other sources, Yanagida Seizan and other scholars concluded that all of these works were likely composed by unknown writers in the OxHead school toward the end of the ninth century. The Ox-Head school, it is now widely believed, originally composed these texts as an attempt to synthesize the views of the Northern and Southern schools and prevent a permanent schism in Zen.”

The Xinwang Ming

The Mind-King Inscription

The profound mystery is beyond measure,
Formless and without appearance, yet of great power.
It can extinguish a thousand calamities,
And bring about ten thousand virtues.
Though its essence is empty,
It upholds the laws of Dharma.
Observe it, and it has no form;
Call upon it, and it has a voice.

A great general of the Dharma,
Transmitting the precepts and the scriptures.
Like the taste of salt in water,
Or clarity hidden within appearance;
Its existence is certain,
Yet its form remains unseen.
The King of Mind is the same,
Dwelling within the body,

Moving in and out through the gates of the senses,
Responding to conditions as they arise.
Unhindered and free,
Its actions all come to fruition.
Understanding the fundamental awareness of mind,
One sees the Buddha.
Mind is Buddha,
Buddha is mind.

Moment by moment,
The Buddha-mind recalls the Buddha.
If one seeks swift realization,
Discipline the mind with self-restraint.
A pure discipline leads to a pure mind,
And mind itself is Buddha.
Beyond this King of Mind,
There is no other Buddha.

If you wish to attain Buddhahood,
Do not cling to a single thing.
Though the nature of mind is empty,
Craving and aversion have real effects.
Enter this Dharma gate,
And in true stillness, become Buddha.
Arriving at the other shore,
One attains perfect wisdom.

Seekers of the Way,
Contemplate your own mind.
Know that Buddha is within,
Do not search outside.
This very mind is Buddha,
Buddha is none other than mind.
When mind is illuminated, Buddha is known;
When awareness is clear, the mind is realized.

Apart from mind, there is no Buddha;
Apart from Buddha, there is no mind.
Beyond Buddha, nothing can be fathomed,
Nothing can be grasped.
Clinging to emptiness, stagnating in stillness,
One drifts in delusion.
The Buddhas and Bodhisattvas
Do not settle for such a state.

The great sages who illuminate the mind
Awaken to this profound truth.
The nature of body and mind is wondrous,
And its function never changes.
Thus, the wise let go and abide in freedom.
Do not say the King of Mind is empty and without substance,
For it directs the body,
Leading it to good or evil.

Neither existent nor non-existent,
Sometimes hidden, sometimes revealed.
Though the nature of mind is empty,
It can manifest as either the ordinary or the holy.
Thus, take heed,
Guard yourself with care.
A single instant of action
Can determine endless wandering or liberation.

A mind of pure wisdom
Is like gold in the world.
The treasury of prajñā
Is entirely within body and mind.
The Dharma treasure of non-action
Is neither shallow nor deep.
The Buddhas and Bodhisattvas
Have all realized this original mind.

Those with the right conditions will encounter it,
Beyond past, present, or future.

Diamond Sutra by Mahasattva Fu

Liangchao Fu Dashi Song Jingang Jing

(Mahasattva Fu's Verses on the Diamond Sutra from the Liang Dynasty)

Preface to Mahasattva Fu's Verses on the Diamond Sutra from the Liang Dynasty

The Song of the Diamond Sutra was composed by Mahasattva Fu during the Liang Dynasty. At the beginning of Emperor Wu's reign, he invited Master Zhigong to lecture on the sutra. Zhigong replied, "There is already Mahasattva Fu, who understands and explains it well." The emperor asked, "Where is this person now?" Zhigong answered, "He is at the fish market." At that time, Mahasattva Fu was immediately summoned to the palace.

The emperor asked, "I wish to invite you to lecture on the Diamond Sutra. What kind of high seat do you require?" Fu replied, "There is no need for a high seat, just a simple cypress board will do." Once Fu obtained the board, he immediately sang forty-nine verses of the sutra and then left.

Zhigong asked Emperor Wu, "Do you recognize this person?" The emperor replied, "I do not." Zhigong then told the emperor, "This is an incarnation of Maitreya Bodhisattva, who has come to assist in spreading the Dharma." Upon hearing this, the emperor was greatly astonished and deeply revered him. As a result, this hymn was inscribed and placed in the four-story pavilion of a temple in Jingzhou, where it remains to this day.

The Diamond Sutra is a profound gateway to the sacred teachings, difficult to fathom. All Buddhas arise from it. Though its words are meticulously studied and vast in scope, its essence is hard to grasp. Yet, compassionate hymns bring it vividly before us, allowing practitioners to ascend the vajra treasure mountain without taking a single step. Those who truly believe are freed from birth and death, crossing over to the other shore of Nirvana.

Its text is extensive and boundless, comprising forty-nine sections. It is said that the radiance of wisdom illuminates the pure lands of the Tathagatas, and the meditative blade in hand cuts through the demons of birth and death. Since both self and dharma are abandoned together, how liberating this truth is! What more could be added to it?

One wise person, whose name remains unknown, contributed five additional verses in support. As the pavilion was later consumed by fire, fearing that the text would be lost, virtuous individuals at the site sought to preserve and verify the original inscription.

If someone recites the Diamond Prajñā Pāramitā Sūtra, they must first sincerely recite the mantra for purifying verbal karma. Then, they should invoke the names of the Eight Vajras and Four Bodhisattvas, who will always provide protection wherever they are.

The mantra for purifying verbal karma:

Om Xiu Li Xiu Li Mo He Xiu Li Xiu Xiu Li Sha Po He

(Om, cultivating virtue, practicing goodness, embracing great compassion, manifesting wisdom, so it be.”

The True Mantra for the Universal Offering of the Bodhisattva of Emptiness (Kong Bodhisattva)

Om, E E Nang San Po Ba Fu Wa Yue Luo Hu

How does one attain longevity, the indestructible body of Vajra? By what causes and conditions does one gain great strength and firmness? How, through this scripture, does one ultimately reach the other shore? May the Buddha open the subtle nectar, and widely expound it to all sentient beings.

Vow of Aspiration

I bow to the Three Jewels of the world,
To the immeasurable Buddhas of the ten directions.
I now make a great vow,
To uphold and recite the Diamond Sutra.
I repay the four great kindnesses above,
And relieve the suffering of beings in the three realms below.
May all who hear or come across this vow
Generate the Bodhi mind.
May I, with this body, be reborn in the Pure Land,
And be born together with all beings in that land of supreme bliss.
I respectfully invite the eight great Bodhisattvas to protect and guide me.

First, I respectfully invite the Blue Vajra to remove disasters.
Second, I respectfully invite the Vajra to dispel poison.
Third, I respectfully invite the Yellow Vajra to grant wishes.
Fourth, I respectfully invite the White Pure Water Vajra.
Fifth, I respectfully invite the Red Voice Vajra.
Sixth, I respectfully invite the Vajra to eliminate disasters with determination.
Seventh, I respectfully invite the Purple Sage Vajra.
Eighth, I respectfully invite the Great God Vajra.

First, I respectfully invite the Vajra of the Bound Bodhisattva.
Second, I respectfully invite the Vajra of the Binding Bodhisattva.
Third, I respectfully invite the Vajra of Loving Bodhisattva.
Fourth, I respectfully invite the Vajra of the Bodhisattva of Speech.

The Diamond Sutra of Prajñā Pāramitā

The First Section: The Causes and Conditions of the Dharma Assembly

The Tathāgata, upon entering Nirvana, said:

Between the Sala Trees

Ananda, transcending the ocean of sorrow,

In grief and mourning, unable to advance.

The Upāsaka, in the beginning, asks,

"What words should we set at the beginning of the Sutra?"

Thus the Buddha's teachings are established,

Transmitted through the ages, past and present.

Thus I have heard. At one time, the Buddha was in the country of Shravasti, in the Jeta Grove, the garden of Anathapindika, accompanied by a great assembly of 1,250 monks. At that time, the World-Honored One, when it was time for food, donned his robe, took his bowl, and entered the great city of Shravasti to beg for alms. After collecting alms throughout the city, he returned to his place. Having finished his meal, he gathered his robe and bowl, washed his feet, and seated himself.

The Second Section: The Request of Shanxian

At that time, Elder Shravasti, the venerable Supati, arose from his seat and, bowing his right shoulder and kneeling on his right knee, joined his palms in reverence and respectfully addressed the Buddha. He said, "It is rare, World-Honored One! The Tathagata wonderfully protects and cares for all Bodhisattvas, and excellently entrusts them. World-Honored One, how should good men and women, who have awakened the Bodhicitta and wish to cultivate the way to Anuttara Samyaksambodhi, dwell? How should they subdue their hearts?"

The Buddha said, "Excellent, excellent, Shravasti. Just as you have said, the Tathagata wonderfully protects and cares for all Bodhisattvas and excellently entrusts them. Now, pay close attention, I will explain to you: those good men and good women, who have awakened the Bodhicitta and wish to cultivate the way to Anuttara Samyaksambodhi, should dwell in this manner and subdue their hearts in this way."

Shravasti replied, "Yes, World-Honored One, we would like to hear more."

The Third Section: The True Teaching of the Mahayana

The Buddha said to Shravasti: "Bodhisattvas and Mahasattvas should subdue their hearts in this way. All beings, whether born from eggs, wombs, moisture, or transformation; whether they have form or are formless; whether they have perception or lack perception; whether they are neither perceiving nor non-perceiving; I cause them to enter the state of nirvana without remainder, and thereby extinguish them. In this way, countless, innumerable, boundless beings are extinguished. In truth, no beings are actually extinguished. Why is this? Shravasti, if a Bodhisattva holds the notion of self, person, being, or lifespan, then they are not a Bodhisattva."

Maitreya's Verse:

In the beginning, from emptiness, a question was asked.
The One Who Has Gone (Tathagata) responds appropriately.
First, he answers, "How should one dwell?"
Then he teaches, "This is how to cultivate."
Whether born from the womb, from eggs, from moisture, or through transformation,
All are gathered with compassion and wisdom.
If one arises with the view of beings,
They still cling to appearances and pursue attachment.

The Fourth Section: The Practice of Non-attachment in Action

Again, Sutra Master Shubuti, the practice of the Dharma should be without attachment. When engaging in acts of generosity, it is said that one should not be attached to giving based on form, sound, smell, taste, touch, or even the law.
Sutras say, the Bodhisattva should practice generosity without attachment to any form. Why is this so?
If the Bodhisattva does not cling to any form in their giving, the merit and virtue they accumulate is beyond measure and cannot be fathomed.

The Practice of Generosity (Dānapāramitā)**Maitreya's Poem Says:**

The path of giving leads to six practices,
These six practices are the foundation of the threefold giving.
Providing for life and fearlessness,
Without interference from sound or form.
Do not establish dualities,
And do not rely on extremes.
To seek the place of non-birth,
Turn away from external conditions and observe within.

Sila Paramita (The Perfection of Morality)**Maitreya's Poem Says:**

Through Sila, purity is attained,
An outcome of countless eons of cause.
False thoughts are like vengeful thieves,
Craving and attachment are as consuming as the noon sun.
In desire, yet free from desire,
Dwelling in dust without being stained by it.
Holding on to the land of purity,
One will surely realize the body of the Dharma King.

Kshanti Paramita (The Perfection of Patience)**Maitreya's Poem Says:**

The patient mind is like a dream,
The realm of insult as sharp as a tortoise's hair.
Always able to practice this view,
In the face of difficulty, it becomes unshakable.
Neither is there this nor that,
Neither low nor high,
To destroy the thieves of greed and anger,
One must wield the sword of wisdom.

Viriya Paramita (The Perfection of Effort)**Maitreya's Poem Says:**

The practice of effort brings the name of brilliance,
A worthy path for the light of wisdom to shine.
Both wisdoms are expelled from the heart,
The three realms are removed from the mind.
Ignorance is destroyed in each thought,
High and low are distinctions based on attachment.
To observe the mind as not intervening,
This alone brings one to the realm of non-action.

Chana Paramita (The Perfection of Meditation)**Maitreya's Poem Says:**

The chana river flows clean with the waves,
The still waters follow the waves to purity.
The clear mind brings forth the nature of awakening,
The cessation of thoughts destroys delusion.
All conceptual distinctions are empty,
Names are established only through convention.
When one realizes dependent origination,
There is no separate and complete form.

Prajna Paramita (The Perfection of Wisdom)

Maitreya's Poem Says:

The lamp of wisdom shines like the bright sun,
The aggregates and realms are like a dry city.
Brightness comes, and darkness instantly departs,
No time is left for delay.
Deluded thoughts have yet to be destroyed,
Thus, I still see the form of a person.
The wondrous wisdom shines like a round light,
It only attains the name of emptiness.
Through three great eons of effort,
The complete cultivation of all virtues.
Upon awakening to the absence of self,
One continuously follows the noble path.
Through the two emptinesses, one gradually realizes,
And the samadhi wanders freely.
Creating a dwelling place of joy,
Constant bliss follows the cessation of worry.

Sutra Translation:

Sutra of the Diamond (Jingang Jing) - Part:Sakyamuni Buddha said to Shubhuti:

"Do you think that the vast space in the East can be measured or comprehended?"

"No, World-Honored One."

"Do you think that the vast space in the South, West, North, the four directions, and above and below can be measured or comprehended?"

"No, World-Honored One."

"Shubhuti, just as the vast space cannot be comprehended or measured, so too, the merits and virtues of a Bodhisattva who gives without attachment to form or perception are immeasurable. Therefore, Shubhuti, a Bodhisattva should act according to the teaching and practice as instructed."

Maitreya's Song Says:

If we speak of giving without attachment to form,
The merits are extremely difficult to measure.
Through compassion, one helps the poor and needy,
The rewards of this do not need to be hoped for.
Ordinary beings have poor conduct,
At first, I will just briefly praise it.
To know the true nature of giving,
It is like the vast emptiness that pervades all directions.

The Fifth Section: Right Understanding of True Perception

Shubuti: "What do you think, can one see the Tathagata (Thus Come One) through physical form?"

The Buddha said: "No, Shubuti. One cannot see the Tathagata through physical form. Why? Because the form spoken of by the Tathagata is not actually form."

The Buddha continued: "All forms are illusory. If one sees forms as not being forms, then one can truly see the Tathagata."

Maitreya's Song Says:

The Tathagata raises the body as form,
To align with worldly perception.
For fear that people might fixate on attachment,
It is a provisional name that is set.
The thirty-two marks and the eighty signs
Are all but empty sounds.
The body is not the true essence of realization,
It is the formlessness that represents the true form.

The Sixth Section: Hard to Find True Faith

Shubuti said to the Buddha: "World-Honored One, will there be any sentient beings in the future, after hearing these teachings, who will truly believe in them and take them to heart?"

The Buddha replied: "Do not speak in this way, Shubuti. After the Tathagata's passing, in the five hundred years that follow, there will be those who observe the precepts and cultivate virtue. Such beings will be able to generate true faith and regard these teachings as the truth."

Maitreya's Verse:

The cause is deep, and so is the fruit;
The principle is subtle and profound, hard to fathom.
In the future, during the final age of the Dharma,
There will be great concern that the Dharma will sink.
When emptiness is born, feelings have not yet reached,
And hearing the teachings, one may fear it is difficult to bear.

If one can truly believe in this Dharma,
It is certain to awaken the heart of the enlightened.

"Know that this person does not plant good roots in just one Buddha, two Buddhas, or three, four, or five Buddhas, but has already planted good roots with countless thousands of Buddhas. Upon hearing these verses, even a single thought of pure faith arises in them. Shubuti, the Tathāgata fully knows and sees these beings, who attain such immeasurable merit and virtue."

Maitreya's Verse:

When the root of faith gives rise to a single thought,
All Buddhas are fully aware.
The cause of birth lies in this moment,
The fruit will be realized in the future.
The sutras of the Three Ages span many kalpas,
The practice of the Six Perfections brings long-lasting peace.
Nourished, it becomes the seed of non-defilement,
Thus it is called the inconceivable.

“Why is that? These beings no longer have the self, person, sentient being, or lifespan characteristics. They are also free from the characteristics of dharma or non-dharma. Why is that? These beings, if the mind clings to characteristics, then they become attached to the self, the person, the sentient being, and the lifespan. If they cling to the characteristics of dharma, they become attached to the self, the person, the sentient being, and the lifespan. Why is that? If they cling to the characteristics of non-dharma, they still become attached to the self, the person, the sentient being, and the lifespan.”

Maitreya's Verse:

The self is empty, and dharma is also empty; the two aspects are originally the same.
The deluded distinctions are all empty, and the dependent arising is obstructed and disconnected.
The perfect realization speaks of the ocean of consciousness,
where transmigration flows like a drifting reed.
To understand the endurance of non-birth,
one must sever the traces of actions beyond the heart.

Therefore, one should not grasp the dharma, nor should one grasp the non-dharma.

Maitreya's Verse:

Existence arises with a name, it is a false designation;
Formlessness is the true name, with no shape to bear.
There is no distinction between existence and non-existence;
Neither has the form of being nor non-being.
Both existence and non-existence have no inherent nature;
The arising of existence and non-existence is a delusion of the mind.
Like the echo in a valley,
Do not cling to the sound of existence and non-existence.

For this reason, the Buddha frequently tells you, monks, to understand that my teaching is like a raft. Even the dharma should be abandoned, so how much more should the non-dharma be?

Maitreya's Verse:

To cross the river, one must use a raft,
But once on the shore, a boat is no longer needed.
For those who know the selflessness of both person and dharma,
Realizing the truth, what need is there for the trap of method?
In the middle of the stream, still being drowned,
Who can discuss the matter of being on either shore?
Existence and non-existence are like taking one,
And thus the mind field is polluted.

The Seventh Section: No Attainment, No Teaching

Shubuti, what do you think? Has the Tathagata attained Anuttara Samyaksambodhi? Does the Tathagata teach any doctrine?

Shubuti replied, "As I understand the meaning of the Buddha's words, there is no fixed teaching called Anuttara Samyaksambodhi. Nor is there any fixed doctrine that the Tathagata can teach. Why? Because all the teachings of the Tathagata are beyond grasping and beyond speech. They are neither true nor false."

Maitreya's Verse:

Enlightenment is beyond words and speech,
From the very beginning, there is no attainment by anyone.
One must rely on the principle of the two emptinesses,
To realize the body of the Dharma King.
All thoughts are illusions,
Only when one has no attachment, can one be truly enlightened.
If one realizes that there is no 'non-dharma,'
Then one can freely transcend the six realms.

Therefore, all sages and saints, though they follow the path of non-action, still manifest differences.

Maitreya's Verse:

Human and dharma both grasped as names,
When realized, both are non-action, no claims.
Bodhisattvas attain equal insight and grace,
While Sravakas are freed from one but not the place.
Obstacles of ignorance and affliction unfold,
In emptiness, no support to hold.
Always practicing this contemplative view,
One gains the holy certainty, steadfast and true.

The Eighth Section: Born from the Dharma

Shubuti, what do you think? If a person were to fill the three thousand great thousand worlds with the seven treasures and offer them, would the merit they gain be great?

Shubuti replied, “It would be vast, World-Honored One. Why? Because such merit is not the essence of merit. Therefore, the Tathāgata says the merit is great.”

“If someone holds and recites this sutra, even just four lines of verse, and teaches it to others, their merit surpasses the one who offered the treasures. Why? Because all the Buddhas and their realization of unsurpassed, complete, and perfect enlightenment have arisen from this sutra. Shubuti, what is called the Buddha-dharma is not the Buddha-dharma.”

Maitreya’s Verse:

Precious treasures fill the three thousand realms,
Carried forth, they form a field for merit’s helm.
Only creating the karma of the defiled,
Never departing from beings’ lives, beguiled.
Holding the sutra, grasping four lines true,
Creating a good connection with the saints anew.
To enter the ocean of non-action so vast,
One must sail on the boat of wisdom, steadfast.

The Ninth Section: All Things Are Without Form

Shubuti, what do you think? Can a stream-enterer (Sotāpanna) think, “I have attained the fruit of stream-entry”?

Shubuti replied, “No, World-Honored One. Why? Because a stream-enterer is called one who has entered the stream, but there is no actual entering. They do not enter form, sound, smell, taste, touch, or phenomena. This is called a stream-enterer.”

Shubuti, what do you think? Can a once-returner (Sakadāgāmī) think, “I have attained the fruit of once-returning”?

Shubuti replied, “No, World-Honored One. Why? Because a once-returner is called one who has a single return, but in reality, there is no actual return. This is called a once-returner.”

Shubuti, what do you think? Can a non-returner (Anāgāmī) think, “I have attained the fruit of non-returning”?

Shubuti replied, “No, World-Honored One. Why? Because a non-returner is called one who does not return, but in reality, there is no actual return. This is called a non-returner.”

Maitreya's Verse:

Abandoning the mundane, one first reaches the saint,
 Gradually the afflictions grow lighter, faint.
 Cutting off the grasp of self and others,
 Beginning to enter the state of non-action, like no others.
 Bound by dust and the view of the self,
 Now one knows they are not what they once felt.
 After seven returns among humans and gods,
 The path leads to stillness, not knowing where it will stop.

Shubuti, what do you think? Can an Arahant think, "I have attained the path of Arahantship"?

Shubuti replied, "No, World-Honored One. Why? Because in reality, there is no such thing as the law called Arahant. World-Honored One, if an Arahant were to think, 'I have attained the path of Arahant,' they would then cling to the notions of 'I,' 'person,' 'being,' and 'life.' World-Honored One, the Buddha says that the one who attains the path of non-contentious meditation is the greatest among humans. This first step, free from desires, is the Arahant. I do not think, 'I have attained the path of Arahantship.' Therefore, the Buddha does not say that Shubuti is the practitioner of the Arahanta path, because Shubuti actually has no path to follow, yet he is named the practitioner of the Arahanta path."

Maitreya's Verse:

No birth, thus no extinction,
 No self, and no person in reflection.
 Forever removing the obstacles of affliction,
 Leaving behind the body, free from its restriction.
 When the object ceases, the mind also fades,
 No more arising of greed or hate in shades.
 No sorrow remains, only wisdom's light,
 Karma dissolves, embracing the truth's might.

The Tenth Section: The Adornment of the Pure Land

The Buddha said to Shubuti, "What do you think? When the Tathagata was once in the presence of the Buddha Rajanirmanabha, did he gain anything in the Dharma?"

Shubuti replied, "World-Honored One, when the Tathagata was with Buddha Rajanirmanabha, he truly did not gain anything in the Dharma."

Maitreya's Verse:

In the past, called Compassionate Wisdom,
 Today known as the Capable One.
 Look at conditions—those are illusions,
 The essence of consciousness is not true in conclusions.
 The nature of Dharma is not cause and effect,
 It follows the principle, not from the intellect.
 To claim the Rajanirmanabha's teaching is attained,
 How could one know it was from the old body, unfeigned?

“Shubuti, what do you think? Do Bodhisattvas adorn the Buddha's land?”

Shubuti replied, "No, World-Honored One. Why? Because adorning the Buddha's land is not truly adorning. That is what is called adorning.”

“Therefore, Shubuti, all Bodhisattvas should give rise to a pure heart in this way. They should not attach their hearts to form. They should not attach their hearts to sound, smell, taste, touch, or phenomena. They should give rise to their hearts without dwelling anywhere.”

Maitreya’s Verse:

Sweep away the mind and intent,
This is the cause of the pure land’s event.
No matter if through merit or wisdom’s span,
First, one must depart from greed and anger’s plan.
Adorning is beyond the capability of self,
No self, no person, no false wealth.
Cutting off both permanence and stain,
Freed from the dust, one’s essence remains.

“Shubuti, for example, if a person’s body were like Mount Sumeru, the King of Mountains, what do you think? Is that body large?”

Shubuti replied, “It is indeed large, World-Honored One. Why? Because the Buddha says that it is not the body that is called the great body.”

Maitreya’s Verse:

Mount Sumeru is high and vast,
It is used as a metaphor for the body of the Dharma King.
Surrounded by the seven treasures in harmony,
The six perfections closely follow in unity.
The four colors form the mountain’s shape,
Compassion and wisdom are the causes of Buddhahood’s fate.
Though form exists, it is never truly great,
Only the formless is real, it is the ultimate state.

The Eleventh Section: The Superiority of Non-Action in Merit

Shubuti, the number of grains of sand in the Ganges River—what do you think? Are the sands of the Ganges many?

Shubuti replied, “Indeed, they are many, World-Honored One. But the rivers of the Ganges themselves are still more numerous, how much more the sands!”

Shubuti, I now truly tell you, if a good man or a good woman were to fill three thousand great thousand worlds with the seven treasures and offer them as a gift, would the merit gained be great?

Shubuti replied, “Indeed, it would be vast, World-Honored One.”

The Buddha said to Shubuti, “If a good man or a good woman were to hold and recite even just four lines of verse from this sutra, and teach it to others, their merit would surpass the merit from the earlier offering.”

The Twelfth Section: The Respect for the True Teachings

Furthermore, Shubuti, if someone speaks this sutra, even just four lines of verse, know that all beings in this world—whether gods, humans, or Asuras—should honor it as they would a Buddha’s stupa or temple. How much more so should someone who can receive, hold, and recite it!

Shubuti, you should know that such a person accomplishes the highest and most rare path. Wherever this sutra is found, it is as if a Buddha is present, and there, the disciples should show the utmost respect.

Maitreya’s Verse:

Countless sands used as a measure,
Divided into six kinds, in vast treasure.
Holding the sutra, even four lines,
The seven treasures could never compare or shine.
Wherever the Dharma path journeys through,
It is honored by Asuras and gods too.
This sutra is called the supreme and the best,
Its respect and reverence like that for the Buddha’s crest.

The Thirteenth Section: The Proper Way to Receive and Hold the Dharma

At that time, Shubuti said to the Buddha, “World-Honored One, what name should we give this sutra? How should we receive and hold it?”

The Buddha said to Shubuti, “This sutra is called the Vajra Prajnaparamita (Diamond Perfection of Wisdom). You should receive and hold it by this name. Why? Because, Shubuti, when the Buddha speaks of Prajnaparamita, it is not truly Prajnaparamita.”

Shubuti, what do you think? Does the Tathagata speak of the Dharma?

Shubuti replied, “World-Honored One, the Tathagata speaks of no Dharma.”

Maitreya’s Verse:

In the name, there is no inherent meaning,
In the meaning, the name does not cling.
The Vajra symbolizes true wisdom,
Able to break the evil, firm and unyielding.
If one reaches the shore of wisdom,
Entering truth, emerging from confusion's fog.
The wise are awakened within their hearts,
The ignorant seek external sound and art.

Shubuti, what do you think? The number of particles of dust in the three thousand great thousand worlds—are they many?

Shubuti replied, “Indeed, they are vast, World-Honored One.”

The Buddha said, “Shubuti, all these particles of dust, the Tathagata says, are not truly particles of dust. This is called particles of dust. The Tathagata says the world is not the world. This is called the world.”

Maitreya’s Verse:

Dust accumulates to form the world,
The boundary is broken into countless grains.
The boundary symbolizes the fruits of humans and gods,
Dust serves as the cause of worldly attachment.
The cause of dust is not real,
The boundary and fruit are not truly so.
Knowing that the fruits and causes are illusions,
One becomes free and independent in their nature.

Shubuti, what do you think? Can the Tathagata be seen through the thirty-two marks?

Shubuti replied, “No, World-Honored One. The Tathagata cannot be seen through the thirty-two marks. Why? Because the Tathagata says that the thirty-two marks are not marks. This is called the thirty-two marks.”

Shubuti, if a good man or a good woman were to offer their life, as many as the sands of the Ganges, for the sake of giving, would their merit be great?

Maitreya’s Verse:

Offering one's life as many as the sands,
The deeds of humans and gods grow deep.
Having covered the mark of Buddhahood,
It can obstruct the heart of Nirvana.
Monkeys reaching for the moon in the water,
A plantain picking a flower with a needle.
The river of love floats and drowns again,
The sea of suffering rises and sinks again.

If someone, in this sutra, holds even just four lines of verse and teaches them to others, their merit would be vast.

Maitreya's Verse:

Holding the four lines of the sutra,
One should not part from them.
The ignorant see them as illusions,
The wise see them as the only truth.
The nature of Dharma has no before or after,
There is no middle, nor is it something new.
The aggregates are empty, with no inherent law,
How can one see a person where none is to be found?

The Fourteenth Section: The Departure from Form and the Attainment of Nirvana

At that time, Shubuti heard the deep meaning and the profound purpose of this sutra. He wept with tears, filled with sorrow, and said to the Buddha, "It is truly rare, World-Honored One. The Buddha speaks such a profound sutra. Since ancient times, the wisdom eye I have attained has never heard of such a sutra."

Maitreya's Verse:

Hearing the sutra and deeply understanding its meaning,
My heart fills with both joy and sorrow.
In the past, I removed the afflictions,
Now I can transcend all that I have known.
Having resolved all in the past,
I complete the realization in this moment.
With the wisdom from past lives, unhindered,
I now encourage others to hold the Dharma.

World-Honored One, if someone hears this sutra and their faith becomes pure, they will realize the true nature. Know that this person achieves the highest and most rare merit. World-Honored One, this true nature is not a form. Therefore, the Tathagata speaks of it as the true nature.

Maitreya's Verse:

There has never been a mind without an object,
Nor has there ever been an object without a mind.
When the object is forgotten, the mind naturally ceases,
When the mind ceases, there is no object for the mind to grasp.
The sutra speaks of the true nature,
The words are exquisite, the meaning profound.
Only the Buddha knows the truth of it,
How can small saints bear such a burden?

The Buddha said, "Now that I have heard this sutra, understanding and receiving it is not difficult. However, if, in the future, after five hundred years, there are beings who hear this sutra, and have faith, understanding, and are able to hold it, such a person will be the most rare and extraordinary. Why? Because this person transcends the concepts of 'I,' 'person,' 'being,' and 'life.' Why? Because the concept of 'I' is actually not a concept. The same applies to the concepts of 'person,' 'being,' and 'life.' Why? Because when one transcends all forms, one is called a Buddha."

Maitreya's Verse:

Emptiness arises, hearing the marvelous truth,
Like a weed growing in hemp's embrace.
All who follow this path with faith,
Like a lotus emerging from the fire's trace.
Fear not that life may sever the vision,
For the great sage has already opened the way.
If one can depart from all forms,
They will surely enter the home of the Dharma King.

The Buddha said to Shubuti, "Yes, yes. If someone hears this sutra and is not startled, frightened, or afraid, know that such a person is extremely rare."

Maitreya's Verse:

If one can awaken their mind,
They should understand both extremes.
Nirvana has no form,
Bodhi is free from attachment's bonds.
Neither the vehicle nor the driver,
Both person and dharma are abandoned.
To reach the true nature,
One must recognize the original source.

Why? Because, Shubuti, the Tathagata says the first perfection of wisdom (prajnaparamita) is not truly the first perfection of wisdom. This is called the first perfection of wisdom.

Maitreya's Verse:

Prajna means the far shore,
In it, there are ten different names.
High and low are recognized through delusion,
Step by step, they lead to confusion.
Searching for water within flames,
Seeking sound in the emptiness.
How can the truth be gained or lost?
Only now is the circle complete.

The Buddha said to Shubuti, "The perfection of patience is not truly the perfection of patience. Why? Because, Shubuti, in the past, when I was King Śākyamuni, and I had my body cut and torn apart, at that time, there was no self, no person, no being, and no life. Why? Because when I endured the dismemberment in past lives, if I had clung to any sense of self, person, being, or life, I would have felt anger."

Shubuti, I also recall the past, when for five hundred lifetimes, I was the ascetic known for patience. In those lives, there was no self, no person, no being, and no life.

Maitreya's Verse:

Violence only arises from the absence of the Way,
At that time, he was known as King Śākyamuni.
While hunting with the king in the wild,
The ascetic endured great injury.
Having passed through five hundred lives,
Enduring in patience through countless times,
By the power of the ascetic's endurance,
Now I have realized the eternal truth.

The Buddha said to Shubuti, "Therefore, a Bodhisattva should abandon all forms and give rise to the mind of unsurpassed, complete, and perfect enlightenment. They should not dwell in form to give rise to their mind, nor in sound, smell, taste, touch, or phenomena. They should give rise to a mind that does not dwell anywhere. If the mind dwells anywhere, it is not truly dwelling. Therefore, the Buddha says that the Bodhisattva's mind should not dwell in the giving of offerings through form. Shubuti, the Bodhisattva should give offerings for the benefit of all beings in this way."

Maitreya's Verse:

The Bodhisattva holds deep wisdom,
At all times, filled with compassion's rhythm.
Throwing oneself into the path of sorrow,
To save others, regardless of tomorrow.
Offering one's flesh to the hungry eagle,
To ease the pain of the tiger's struggle.
Diligently practicing for three great eons,
Never once weary, their compassion never gone.
If one can walk the same path,
They too will become masters of the heavenly craft.

The Buddha said, "All forms are not truly forms. Likewise, all beings are not truly beings. Shubuti, the Tathagata is a speaker of true words, a speaker of reality, a speaker who does not lie, and a speaker who does not speak in a different way."

Maitreya's Verse:

Beings and aggregates are named differently,
But their essence remains the same, not distinct.
When the mind sees through illusion,
It no longer sees a self, nor holds confusion.
True words are never false,
Real speech is not empty, nor without cause.
From beginning to end, unchanged and clear,
The nature of all is as it has always been here.

The Buddha said to Shubuti, “The Dharma that the Tathagata has attained is neither real nor empty. Shubuti, if a Bodhisattva’s mind dwells in the Dharma and gives offerings, it is like a person entering darkness, unable to see anything. But if a Bodhisattva’s mind does not dwell in the Dharma and gives offerings, it is like a person with eyes who, when the sunlight shines, can see all kinds of colors. Shubuti, in the future, if there are good men and good women who can receive, hold, and recite this sutra, the Tathagata, with his wisdom, will know and see these people. They will all accomplish immeasurable, boundless merits.”

Maitreya’s Verse:

Realizing emptiness becomes reality,
Clinging to self only leads to illusion.
Neither empty nor existent,
Who has, and who has not, in this confusion?
For illness, one should administer medicine,
Without illness, the medicine is cast aside.
Follow the principle of the two emptinesses,
Freed from attachments, entering the state without residue.

The Fifteenth Section: The Merits of Holding the Sutra

The Buddha said to Shubuti, “If there are good men and good women, who, on the first day, give offerings by dedicating their bodies, as many as the sands of the Ganges, then again, on the middle day, give offerings by dedicating their bodies, as many as the sands of the Ganges, and once more, on the last day, give offerings by dedicating their bodies, as many as the sands of the Ganges—if they do this for countless, immeasurable eons, offering their bodies—if someone hears this sutra, with unwavering faith, their merit surpasses that of the one who offered their body. How much more so if they write, hold, recite, or explain it to others!”

Maitreya’s Verse:

Beings and their lives are but transient names,
Built upon aggregates, illusions that remain.
Like the hair of a turtle, which does not grow,
Like the horns of a rabbit, they have no form to show.
Offering one’s life stems from mistaken views,
A gift of life comes from confusion’s hues.
In truth, wisdom far surpasses the merit of deeds,
For holding the sutra fulfills all true needs.

The Buddha said to Shubuti, “In brief, this sutra has inconceivable, immeasurable, and boundless merits. The Tathagata speaks it for the sake of those who wish to enter the Mahayana, for those who aspire to the supreme vehicle. If someone is able to receive, hold, recite, and widely explain this sutra to others, the Tathagata knows and sees that person. They will all achieve immeasurable, inconceivable, boundless, and undefinable merit. Such people are bearing the burden of the Tathagata’s unsurpassed, complete, and perfect enlightenment. Why? Shubuti, if someone prefers the small dharma, clinging to the concepts of self, person, being, and life, they cannot hear, receive, or explain this sutra. Shubuti, wherever this sutra is found, it should be honored by all beings—gods, humans, and Asuras—by offering respect as one would to a stupa. They should honor it with reverence, circling it with respect, and offering flowers and incense at that place.”

Maitreya's Verse:

All actions depend on others' nature,
Cultivating the forest of merit's pure feature.
Never seeking the peace of isolation,
Only striving to benefit all with compassion's foundation.
In the vastness of compassion, it stretches wide,
With wisdom deep, to turn the tide.
Benefit others while benefiting yourself,
For small saints cannot bear such a task themselves.

The Sixteenth Section: The Purification of Karma and Obstacles

The Buddha said to Shubuti, "Moreover, if a good man or good woman receives, holds, and recites this sutra, and if others treat them with contempt, this person's past karmic offenses that would have led them to the evil paths will be extinguished. Because of being disrespected in this life, the karmic offenses from previous lives will be eradicated, and they will attain unsurpassed, complete, and perfect enlightenment. Shubuti, I recall that in the past, countless eons ago, during the time of Buddha of the Light of the Lamps, I had the fortune to meet and serve eighty-four thousand million billion Buddhas, all of whom I honored and served without any lapse. If in the future, in the latter age, someone receives, holds, and recites this sutra, the merit they attain will far surpass the merit of all the Buddhas I have honored, yet even the merit of one percent of that is beyond calculation or description, exceeding the limit of any analogy. Shubuti, if there are good men and good women in the future who receive, hold, and recite this sutra, and if I were to explain the merit they will gain, it is so vast that if someone hears it, their heart might become disturbed and filled with doubt and disbelief. Shubuti, you should know that the meaning of this sutra is inconceivable, and its results are beyond comprehension."

Maitreya's Verse:

Past lives carry karmic obstacles,
Today, holding the sutra clears the path.
Though once despised by others,
The weight will be lifted, and honor restored.
If one understands dependent origination,
They can remove all deluded views.
Always abiding in wisdom's sight,
What doubt remains to hinder the ultimate light?

The Seventeenth Section: The Ultimate Truth of No-Self

At that time, Shubuti said to the Buddha, "World-Honored One, if a good man or a good woman gives rise to the mind of unsurpassed, complete, and perfect enlightenment, how should they dwell and how should they subdue their mind?"

The Buddha said to Shubuti, "Good men and good women who give rise to the mind of unsurpassed, complete, and perfect enlightenment should generate the following mind: 'I will save all beings.' After saving all beings, there is not one being that is actually saved. Why? Because if a Bodhisattva holds onto the concepts of self, person, being, and life, they are not a Bodhisattva. Why? Shubuti, in reality, there is no law by which one gives rise to the mind of unsurpassed, complete, and perfect enlightenment."

Maitreya's Verse:

Emptiness arises, and the question deepens,
No mind is truly separate from the self.
To awaken to Buddhahood, one must understand the present cause,
For the act of compassion may seem like an illusion, but wisdom's true word brings clarity.
To save beings, one must momentarily assume an "I,"
But in realizing the truth, no one remains to save.

Shubuti, what do you think? Did the Tathagata attain unsurpassed, complete, and perfect enlightenment at the time of Buddha of the Light of the Lamps?

Shubuti replied, "No, World-Honored One. As I understand the Buddha's teachings, the Tathagata did not attain unsurpassed, complete, and perfect enlightenment at the time of Buddha of the Light of the Lamps."

The Buddha said, "Yes, yes. Shubuti, in reality, there is no law by which the Tathagata attained unsurpassed, complete, and perfect enlightenment. Shubuti, if there were such a law by which the Tathagata attained unsurpassed, complete, and perfect enlightenment, then the Buddha of the Light of the Lamps would not have prophesied that I would attain Buddhahood and be called Śākyamuni. Why? Because, Shubuti, the Tathagata is the embodiment of all dharmas as they are. If anyone were to say that the Tathagata attained unsurpassed, complete, and perfect enlightenment, Shubuti, that would be incorrect. In fact, there is no law by which the Buddha attained unsurpassed, complete, and perfect enlightenment."

Shubuti, the unsurpassed, complete, and perfect enlightenment that the Tathagata attained contains neither reality nor emptiness. Therefore, the Tathagata says that all dharmas are the Buddha's teachings. Shubuti, when I say all dharmas, they are not truly all dharmas. That is why they are called all dharmas.

Shubuti, for example, the human body grows and becomes large.

Shubuti replied, "World-Honored One, when the Buddha speaks of the human body growing large, it is not truly large. This is called a large body."

Shubuti, the Bodhisattva is also like this. If the Bodhisattva says, "I will save and liberate countless beings," they are no longer called a Bodhisattva. Why? Shubuti, in reality, there is no law called the Bodhisattva. Therefore, the Buddha says that all dharmas have no self, no person, no being, and no life.

Shubuti, if a Bodhisattva thinks, "I will adorn the Buddha's land," they are no longer called a Bodhisattva. Why? Because the Tathagata says that adorning the Buddha's land is not truly adorning. That is why it is called adorning.

Shubuti, if a Bodhisattva understands the dharma of no-self, the Tathagata truly calls them a Bodhisattva.

Maitreya's Verse:

People and dharma are mutually dependent,
Both originally are as they are.
The emptiness of dharma and the illusion of people,
The emptiness of people also dispels the dharma.
Both people and dharma are ultimately real,
The prophecy received is not without merit.
All things are like an illusion,
Who can truly claim existence or non-existence?

The Eighteenth Section: The Unified Vision of All

Shubuti, what do you think? Does the Tathagata have physical eyes?

Shubuti replied, "Yes, World-Honored One, the Tathagata has physical eyes."

Shubuti, what do you think? Does the Tathagata have heavenly eyes?

Shubuti replied, "Yes, World-Honored One, the Tathagata has heavenly eyes."

Shubuti, what do you think? Does the Tathagata have wisdom eyes?

Shubuti replied, "Yes, World-Honored One, the Tathagata has wisdom eyes."

Shubuti, what do you think? Does the Tathagata have dharma eyes?

Shubuti replied, "Yes, World-Honored One, the Tathagata has dharma eyes."

Shubuti, what do you think? Does the Tathagata have Buddha eyes?

Shubuti replied, "Yes, World-Honored One, the Tathagata has Buddha eyes."

Maitreya's Verse:

The heavenly eye sees without obstruction,
The physical eye is obstructed, yet not obstructing.
The dharma eye only observes the mundane,
The wisdom eye directly perceives emptiness.
The Buddha's eye is like the light of a thousand days,
Illuminating different forms, yet all is the same.
In the perfectly clear and bright Dharma realm,
There is no place it does not include or embrace.

Shubuti, what do you think? The number of grains of sand in the Ganges River—does the Buddha say these are sand?

Shubuti replied, "Yes, World-Honored One, the Tathagata says these are sand."

Shubuti, what do you think? If there are as many Ganges Rivers as there are grains of sand in the Ganges River, and each of these Ganges Rivers contains as many grains of sand as the first, would the number of grains of sand in all these Ganges Rivers be vast?

Shubuti replied, “Yes, World-Honored One, it would be immeasurable.”

The Buddha said, “Shubuti, in your country and all the worlds, the Tathagata knows the number and types of minds of all beings. Why? Because the Tathagata says that all minds are not truly minds. This is called the mind. Why? Shubuti, the past mind cannot be grasped, the present mind cannot be grasped, and the future mind cannot be grasped.”

Maitreya’s Verse:

Dependent on others, a single thought arises,
All are illusions in their actions.
Thus, they divide into sixty-two,
And nine hundred confused, twisted lines.
The past has ceased, but not ceased,
The future neither arises nor remains.
Always observing this,
Truth and illusion become calm and balanced.

The Nineteenth Section: The Transformation of the Dharma Realm

Shubuti, what do you think? If someone were to fill three thousand great thousand worlds with the seven treasures and offer them, would the merit gained by this person be vast?

Shubuti replied, “Yes, World-Honored One, this person would gain great merit from this cause.”

The Buddha said, “Shubuti, if merit were something substantial, the Tathagata would not say that great merit is gained. Since merit is without substance, the Tathagata says that great merit is gained.”

The Twentieth Section: Departing from Form and Appearance

Shubuti, what do you think? Can the Buddha be seen in a complete physical form?

Shubuti replied, “No, World-Honored One. The Tathagata should not be seen in a complete physical form.”

The Buddha said, “Yes, yes. Shubuti, if the Tathagata were seen in a complete physical form, that would not truly be a complete physical form. That is called a complete physical form.”

Shubuti, what do you think? Can the Tathagata be seen in the full range of all marks?

Shubuti replied, “No, World-Honored One. The Tathagata should not be seen in the full range of all marks.”

The Buddha said, "Yes, yes. Shubuti, when the Tathagata speaks of all marks being complete, this is not truly completeness. That is called all marks being complete."

Maitreya's Verse:

Eighty features follow the shape,
The thirty-two marks, a perfect state.
Appearing in countless forms,
In essence, there is no difference, no norms.
Both person and dharma are abandoned,
Form and mind are cast aside, and even-handed.
Thus, one attains Buddhahood,
Through the departure from all marks, as it should.

The Twenty-First Section: The Unspeakable Dharma

Shubuti, do not think that the Tathagata has the thought, "I will speak of the Dharma." Do not think like this. Why? Because if someone says that the Tathagata has something to say, they are slandering the Buddha. They cannot understand what I have said. Shubuti, the one who speaks the Dharma has no law to speak. This is called speaking the Dharma.

At that time, Shubuti, with his wisdom, said to the Buddha, "World-Honored One, in the future, will there be beings who, upon hearing this Dharma, will develop faith?"

The Buddha replied, "Shubuti, those are neither beings nor non-beings. Why? Shubuti, when I say 'beings,' I do not mean beings. This is called beings."

The Twenty-Second Section: The Inability to Obtain a Law

Shubuti said to the Buddha, "World-Honored One, does the Buddha attain unsurpassed, complete, and perfect enlightenment through having obtained something?"

The Buddha replied, "Yes, yes. Shubuti, when I attain unsurpassed, complete, and perfect enlightenment, I do not possess even the slightest thing to obtain. This is called unsurpassed, complete, and perfect enlightenment."

The Twenty-Third Section: Pure Heart in the Practice of Virtue

Furthermore, Shubuti, this Dharma is equal and has no high or low. This is called unsurpassed, complete, and perfect enlightenment. By having no self, no person, no being, and no life, one practices all virtuous deeds and attains unsurpassed, complete, and perfect enlightenment. Shubuti, what is called virtuous deeds, the Tathagata says, is not truly virtuous deeds. This is called virtuous deeds.

Maitreya's Verse:

Water and land are the same in truth,
Flying through the air, their essence is one.
In the Dharma, there is no distinction,
In principle, there is no closeness or distance.
The separation of self and other is abandoned,
The attachment to high and low is removed.
By understanding this equality,
All enter the state without remainder.

The Twenty-Fourth Section: The Boundless Merit of Wisdom and Virtue

Shubuti, if a person were to offer the seven treasures as many as the grains of sand in three thousand great thousand worlds, would their merit be great?

The Buddha said, “Shubuti, if a person were to offer these treasures, their merit would still not compare to even one percent of the merit gained by someone who receives, holds, and recites this Prajnaparamita Sutra, or even just four lines of verse from it, and teaches it to others. The merit of the person who does so surpasses that of the one offering the treasures, by a hundred thousand million billion times, far beyond any form of calculation, analogy, or comparison.”

Maitreya’s Verse:

Offering treasures as numerous as the sands,
Only creates the cause of worldly attachment.
It does not compare to the view of no-self,
Which truly recognizes the illusion and realizes the truth.
To attain the patience of non-birth,
One must rely on the cessation of greed and hatred.
When person and dharma are known to be without self,
One is free, transcending the six senses.

The Twenty-Fifth Section: Transformation with No Attachment

Shubuti, what do you think? Do not think that the Tathagata has the thought, "I will save beings."

Shubuti, do not think like this. Why? Because, in reality, there are no beings that the Tathagata saves. If there were beings that the Tathagata saves, then the Tathagata would have a self, a person, a being, and a life. Shubuti, when the Tathagata says, "I have a self," this is not truly having a self. Ordinary people mistakenly perceive a self.

Shubuti, ordinary people, as the Tathagata says, are not truly ordinary people. This is called ordinary people.

The Twenty-Sixth Section: The Dharma Body Is Beyond Form

Shubuti, what do you think? Can the Tathagata be observed through the thirty-two marks?

Shubuti replied, “Yes, World-Honored One, the Tathagata can be observed through the thirty-two marks.”

The Buddha said, “Shubuti, if the Tathagata is seen through the thirty-two marks, then the wheel-turning king would be seen as the Tathagata.”

Shubuti said to the Buddha, “World-Honored One, as I understand the Buddha's teaching, the Tathagata should not be seen through the thirty-two marks.”

At that time, the Buddha spoke this verse:

“If one sees me through form,
Or seeks me through sound and voice,
That person is on the wrong path,
And cannot truly see the Tathagata.”

Maitreya’s Verse:

Nirvana contains the four virtues,
Only I can realize the true, eternal nature.
Equal to the eightfold freedom,
Only I am the most vast and transcendent.
Not through form, not through sound,
How can the mind’s perception measure?
When observed with the ordinary eye, it cannot be seen,
But through understanding the principle, its true nature is revealed.

The Twenty-Seventh Section: No Destruction, No Extinction

Shubuti, if you think that the Tathagata, because of having complete marks, attains supreme, perfect, and complete enlightenment, do not think like this. Shubuti, do not think that the Tathagata attains supreme, perfect, and complete enlightenment because of having complete marks. Shubuti, if you think that one who gives rise to the mind of supreme, perfect, and complete enlightenment, while thinking of all things as having the characteristic of destruction or extinction, do not think like this. Why? One who gives rise to the mind of supreme, perfect, and complete enlightenment does not see things as having the characteristic of destruction or extinction.

The Twenty-Eighth Section: Not Accepting, Not Clinging

Shubuti, if a Bodhisattva were to give offerings as many as the sands of the Ganges River with the seven treasures, and if another person knows that all things are without a self, and attains the patience of non-anger, this Bodhisattva’s merit surpasses the merit of the one who gave offerings. Shubuti, this is because Bodhisattvas do not cling to merit. Shubuti said to the Buddha, “World-Honored One, how can Bodhisattvas not cling to merit?”

The Buddha said, “Shubuti, the Bodhisattva’s merit should not be clung to. That is why it is said that they do not cling to merit.”

The Twenty-Ninth Section: Proper Conduct and Stillness

Shubuti, if someone says, “The Tathagata comes, goes, sits, and lies down,” this person does not understand what I have said. Why? Because the Tathagata does not come from anywhere, nor does He go anywhere; that is why He is called the Tathagata.

The Thirtieth Section: The Unity of All Forms

Shubuti, if a good man or a good woman were to reduce three thousand great thousand worlds into fine dust particles, what do you think? Would the number of these dust particles be vast?

Shubuti replied, “Yes, World-Honored One, the number would be immeasurable.”

The Buddha said, "Shubuti, if these dust particles were truly real, the Buddha would not speak of them as dust particles. Why? Because when the Buddha speaks of dust particles, they are not truly dust particles. This is called dust particles."

Shubuti, when the Tathagata speaks of three thousand great thousand worlds, these are not truly worlds. This is called worlds. Why? If the worlds were truly real, they would be a collection of forms. When the Tathagata speaks of a collection of forms, this is not truly a collection of forms. This is called a collection of forms. Shubuti, a collection of forms is beyond words, but ordinary beings cling to the concept of it.

Maitreya's Verse:

The realms and dusts are not truly different,
The law of cause and effect follows the same pattern.
Neither cause nor effect,
Who comes after and who comes before?
In phenomena, there is the unity of all forms,
In principle, both are discarded.
To reach the path of non-birth,
One must understand the original source.

The Thirty-First Section: Knowledge and Perception Are Not Born

Shubuti, if someone says, "The Buddha says, 'I see, others see, beings see, life sees,'" what do you think? Does this person understand what I am saying?

Shubuti replied, "No, World-Honored One, this person does not understand the meaning of what the Tathagata has said. Why? Because when the Tathagata says, 'I see, others see, beings see, life sees,' this is not truly seeing. This is called 'seeing.'"

Shubuti, when one gives rise to the mind of supreme, perfect, and complete enlightenment, one should understand, see, and believe that all things are not to be grasped as forms. Shubuti, what is called a "form" in the Dharma, the Tathagata says, is not truly a form. This is called a "form."

The Thirty-Second Section: The Transformation Is Not the True State

Shubuti, if someone were to offer as many treasures as the sands of a countless number of worlds, and if a good man or a good woman were to give rise to the Bodhisattva's mind, and hold this sutra, even just four lines of verse, and teach it to others, the merit gained would surpass that of the one who offered treasures. How do they teach it to others? They do so without grasping any forms, just as one is unmoved by appearances. Why? All conditioned phenomena are like dreams, illusions, bubbles, and shadows. They are like dew and lightning. One should contemplate them in this way.

Maitreya's Verse:

Like stars, lamps, and illusions,
All are metaphors for impermanence.
The leaking consciousness creates cause and effect,
Who can say that it lasts forever?
Fragile and precarious, like bubbles and dew,
Like the shadow of clouds, the flash of lightning.
Though passed through eighty thousand eons,
In the end, it all fades into emptiness.

After the Buddha spoke this sutra, Shubuti, the elder, and all the monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen, as well as all beings in the worlds—gods, humans, and Asuras—heard the Buddha's words and were filled with great joy, accepting, believing, and practicing them.

The Vajra Prajnaparamita Sutra**Verse on Conceptualization:**

False conceptualization leads to attachment,
Like a deluded rope mistaken for a snake.
Doubt in the heart gives birth to dark spirits,
Eyes afflicted by disease see illusory flowers.
Although the objects seem identical,
Three people perceive them differently.
This name is ultimately not true,
Like a cart pulled by a white ox.

Verse on Dependent Origination:

Dependent origination is not self-established,
It must rely on conditions to arise.
The tree that casts no shadow at noon,
The lamp that only illuminates when placed in a room.
Names arise through mutual actions,
Countless images form from minute causes.
If one realizes the true emptiness of forms,
They transcend the realm of sentient beings.

Verse on Perfection and Completion:

When forms fade, names are also relinquished,
The mind merges with the object, and the object ceases to exist.
No coming or going, no seeing or not seeing,
Speech and silence are without boundaries.
Knowing the principle of perfect completion,
The body is one with the nature of the Dharma.
Realizing truth, they return to the mundane,
Not abandoning, but also serving as a bridge.

Great Body Mantra:

Namo Bhagavate Vairochana Buddha,
Tadyatha Om Vajra Sattva,
Siddhaya Om Vishuddha Siddhi
Om Shanti Shanti, Svaha.

Mantra of the Mind:

Namo Bhagavate Prajnaparamita,
Tadyatha Om Mani Padme Hum,
Buddham Saranam Gacchami
Om Hum Vajra Bhaya Svaha.

A Monk Asked

A monk asked, "Why does the great sage not leave the home life (become a monastic)?"

The answer was, "I dare not remain at home, nor do I dare to leave home."

At that time, the Eastern Minister Hou led the discussion with two verses, briefly explaining the key principles:

"Free from attachment as if neither here nor there,
Bound yet peaceful, like a still image.
Thus, one realizes the threefold enlightenment.
Equanimous and supreme,

The nature of the dharma is neither dual nor singular.
Always at odds, never yet distinct.
Sinking and floating, following or not,
Swaying and resting, yet never truly resting."

Preface to the Record of the Great Sage Compassionate Wisdom Shanhui (Fu Dashi)

Written by Lou Ying

A disciple of the Bodhisattva Precepts and Scholar of the Imperial College

The Buddhas and Bodhisattvas manifest the Three Bodies and travel through the ten directions of the world, promoting the six paramitas to guide beings in the five paths. The nature of sentient beings is clouded by wrong views and delusions. They speak of actions they intend to take, but their actions contradict their words, with their nature at odds with the truth. Though they wish to diligently seek the profound mysteries, their wisdom cannot comprehend them, and their insight cannot illuminate them. What they have is merely names and forms, which serve only as coverings and entanglements. They then fall into conflict with the demonic forces, subject to the control of external paths. They are trapped in the realms of the six senses and the three worlds, unable to break free. They become surrounded and trapped by the forces of illusion.

Alas! The sages, therefore, establish vast networks and use the great expedient teachings. Sometimes they serve as teachers of those capable of benevolence and compassion, and sometimes as disciples. They may secretly practice the Bodhisattva path while demonstrating the teachings of the Śrāvakas.

Thus, the pure land becomes the battlefield. Keeping the precepts is the defense, the Vajra is the blade, skillful means are the spies, the assembly is the soldiers, and the teaching of the Dharma is the command. Together with countless troops, they break the demonic city. All the demons within the city are subdued, and countless beings joyously develop the Bodhi mind. Since the Nirvana of the Twin Trees, the wheel of the Dharma has paused, and the sun of wisdom has hidden its light. The beings in the six realms have become more entrenched.

Therefore, I, the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, pity them in this way. Thus, we use the power of our spiritual strength, manifesting countless bodies to unlock their locked gates and show them the essential meeting. Hence, it is said in the world that the Great Sage Fu of the Twin Trees is the manifestation of Maitreya. This is clear. Otherwise, how could there be wisdom naturally and without a teacher, surpassing ordinary beings? How could there be boundless eloquence, profound understanding of the sutras, and always protecting the true Dharma, awakening the deaf and blind sentient beings, as stated in the sutra? Vimalakīrti's keeping of the precepts and purity is to restrain all harmful actions, guiding beings to the righteous path.

At that time, Emperor Wu of Liang, with the nobility of an emperor, diligently revered the Buddha's treasure. As a result, extraordinary individuals appeared in the world, supporting the proper teachings, just as in the time of the Great Sage Fu.

In the order of Bhikkhus, there were wise ones: Toudu, Hui Ji, Hui He, Pu Jian, and Pu Cheng. Among the lay practitioners, there were Fu Pumin, Xu Puxi, Pan Pucheng, and Chang the lay practitioner. All were accomplished in the six paramitas and the four stages. They maintained pure hearts and conducted themselves with purity. They were diligent in keeping the precepts, releasing life, eating simple foods, healing the sick, alleviating suffering, and extending love to all beings.

They built stupas and temples, revered and adorned statues, and were earnest in their service to the Buddha. They composed verses and teachings, expounded sutras, and shared their vast knowledge. All of these were individuals beyond ordinary comprehension, performing deeds beyond ordinary understanding. They alternated between inner and outer practice, using their efforts to transform beings difficult to believe and difficult to teach, with the goal of helping them ascend to the supreme path and to see the future Buddha.

Ying had long been entangled in worldly matters, with a lingering cloud over him. The long night had not yet dawned, and he regretted that, under the sun and moon, he could not directly receive guidance and illumination. Still, he wished to be born in the Tusita Heaven and to later attend the assembly at Longhua. Therefore, he contemplated the person by felling trees, heard the sound of the bells, and feared that the fragrant dust might disperse and leave no trace in the future. Thus, he sought out the elder, compiled these teachings, and arranged them into eight volumes to be passed on to future generations.

Record of the Great Sage Compassionate Wisdom Shanhui (Fu Dashi) Part 1

The Great Sage's surname was Fu. His given name was Xi. His courtesy name was Xuanfeng. He was from Jiting Village, Wushang County, Dongyang Prefecture. Wushang is now Yiwu County. His father's name was Xuanzi. His courtesy name was Guangai. His mother's surname was Wang. His family had been farmers for generations. He was born on the eighth day of the fifth month in the fourth year of the Jianwu era, Dingchou year. His nature was calm, peaceful, and harmonious, with no attachments. In his youth, he did not study. At that time, he fished with the villagers. Whenever he caught fish, he would place them in a bamboo basket and sink it into deep water, while saying a blessing:

“Those who wish to leave may leave.
Those who wish to stay may stay.”

The people at the time thought him foolish. In the eleventh year of the Tianjian era of the Liang dynasty, at the age of sixteen, he married a woman of the Liu family, named Miao Guang. He had two sons, named Pu Jian and Pu Cheng.

In the first year of the Putong era, at the age of twenty-four, he went upstream to catch fish at the Jiting Pond. He encountered a monk from the Hu people, known as Song Tuo.

The monk said to the Great Sage Fu,
“I once made a vow with you before the Buddha Vipassī to save sentient beings.
Now you are enjoying all the blessings in the Tusita Heaven. When will you return?”

The Great Sage Fu just stared at him. The monk said,
“You should look at your reflection in the water.”
The Great Sage Fu followed his advice and saw a brilliant light and a precious halo.
He immediately realized the cause of his previous vow and said,
“The smelting furnace produces many dull irons,
and the skilled doctor serves the sick. It is urgent to save sentient beings.
How could there be time to think of the pleasures of the heavenly palace?”

With this, he abandoned his fishing gear and returned home. He then asked about a place to cultivate the Way. The ascetic pointed to the two twin trees at the foot of Song Mountain and said,

"This place will do." Today this is known as Shuanglin Temple.

The Great Sage Fu built a hut there and called himself "The Great Sage of Compassionate Wisdom, the Future Liberated One beneath the Twin Trees."

He planted vegetables and fruit, worked as a laborer, and, together with his wife Miao Guang, worked during the day and returned home at night, expounding the Buddha's teachings. He practiced asceticism for seven years.

One day, while peacefully sitting, he saw Śākyamuni, Kasyapa, and Dīpaṅkara—the three Buddhas—coming from the east, radiating light like the sun. He then saw golden light descending from the heavens and gathering upon his body. From that moment, his body constantly emitted a wondrous fragrance. He often heard a voice from the sky singing,

“The day of awakening is near.”

At that time, the Great Sage Fu sat in the place of practice. Soon after, the four assemblies gathered regularly, offering greetings and performing rites. The district governor, Wang Xiu, considered this to be delusion and falsehood, and imprisoned him for several weeks. The Great Sage Fu only abstained from food and drink, which caused even greater astonishment among the people. He was eventually released. The Great Sage Fu returned to the mountain and increased his diligence. Day by day, more people from near and far came wishing to become his disciples.

Every morning, when the bell rang, a celestial being would descend from the sky, rejoicing in following the Way. He once told his disciples,

“I have attained the Shurangama Samadhi.”

He also said,

“I have attained the wisdom of the unconditioned.”

His disciples unanimously replied,

“The Shurangama Samadhi can only be attained by Bodhisattvas dwelling on the tenth ground.”

Therefore, it is known that the Great Sage Fu is a Bodhisattva dwelling on the tenth ground, manifesting in ordinary form.

The Great Sage Fu wished to guide the many beings. First, he transformed his wife and children, encouraging them to develop the mind of the Way. He then abandoned his fields and home, invited the four assemblies to set up a grand assembly, and recited a verse, saying:

“Let go of attachments and makes the mind like the sky,
Fully share resources for the betterment of the assembly,
Aspire to save all sentient beings, and soar together beyond the three realms,
Take refuge with the Great Sage, and aspire to bless universe with radiance.”

That year, there was famine and scarcity. After the assembly, there was no food stored in the house. The villagers, Fu Fang, Fu Ziliang, and others, went into the mountains to offer alms. The Great Sage Fu instructed his wife and children to sell themselves in order to support the assembly. Miao Guang accepted the command and said,

“I only wish for all sentient beings to attain liberation through this.”

In the second year of the Dàtōng era, in the third month, the villagers Fu Chongchang and Fu Sengju's mother used fifty thousand coins to purchase them. Upon receiving the money, the Great Sage Fu immediately organized a grand assembly and made a vow:

“Disciple (Great Sage Fu of Compassionate Wisdom) Shanhui bows to the World-Honored Śākyamuni, all Buddhas of the ten directions and three periods, and to the Three Jewels, who are eternally present throughout all space and the Dharma realm. Today, I give up and sell my wife and children, to universally alleviate the suffering of beings in the three realms, to eliminate disasters and gather blessings, to remove sins and impurities, and to jointly realize Buddhahood.”

The Great Sage Fu had a servant who ran away and became a thief. At that time, the villagers Fu Fang and Fu Yan sold all their property to make offerings. The Great Sage Fu then used his own resources to rescue the runaway servant and provide him with a place to rest and support. After seven weeks, Miao Guang spun thread and worked for wages, without rest. Fu Fang also pledged his wife and children, and obtained rice to make offerings. The Great Sage Fu then distributed the offerings to those practicing the Way.

From that point on, spiritual manifestations increased. Some people spoke ill of him, and the Great Sage Fu responded with even greater compassion. One day, he went to his uncle's house and introduced himself, saying,

"I am Maitreya, and have come to transform you."
His uncle greeted him with respect, and then bowed.

Moreover, he wished to go to see his ancestor, Elder Fu. At first, Elder Fu did not believe. Miao Guang advised him, saying, '

"They say you have lost your mind. How could an uncle offer a gesture of respect? Be cautious and do not go."

The Great Sage Fu immediately touched his chest, creating a golden light and emitting heavenly fragrance to show Miao Guang. Miao Guang still urged,

"Do not go."

The Great Sage Fu nevertheless went to Elder Fu's place and requested that he perform the proper rites. Elder Fu stubbornly refused. The Great Sage Fu returned, and Miao Guang asked,

"Did Elder Fu offer the rites?"
The answer was, "Although he did not perform them now, tomorrow he will surely take each step and offer respect."

That night, Elder Fu dreamt that eight people came to welcome the Great Sage Fu. Elder Fu followed them and asked,

"Who are you?"
One of them rebuked him, saying, "You are arrogant and did not heed the holy teachings. What are you asking now?"

Suddenly, he saw the Great Sage Fu in a golden form, wondrous and unique, soaring through the air. Elder Fu tried to follow, but he only saw a stone wall stretching across the sky. The Great Sage Fu and his followers passed through effortlessly, and Elder Fu could not move forward. When he awoke, he was filled with sorrow and regret. The next morning, he went into the mountains and, as he approached, he smelled an extraordinary fragrance. When he saw the Great Sage Fu from a distance, he came weeping and bowing in reverence. He wished to become a disciple. The Great Sage Fu said,

"I have come from Tusita Heaven to meet you."

Elder Fu then took refuge, and his three karmic actions became pure and clear.

At that time, the monk Huijì arrived at Shuanglin. The Great Sage Fu taught him about the supreme Bodhi. Huijì wished to become a disciple. Initially, the Great Sage Fu had a dream in which a five-colored circular light appeared from the left side of his neck. His body rose into the empty space and descended to the southeastern peak of the mountain where he resided. Upon awakening, Huijì arrived, and he stayed on the mountain.

Afterwards, Huijì traveled and taught everywhere he went. He often said that the Great Sage Fu was the manifestation of Maitreya. The Great Sage Fu, in his teachings and deeds, would request the Buddha to stop his light. His two eyes constantly emitted golden light. He told the assembly,

“If one does not encounter the teacher of the unborn, one will never attain the Way.
I am the one who has attained the unborn.
I once hid this matter, but now I will no longer conceal it and will show it to all of you.”

When the disciples bowed, the Great Sage Fu said to them,
“Do not bow to me; only bow in the palace within. That Buddha shares my likeness.”

He also said,
“In a dream, I remembered my past teacher, whose name was
The Venerable Good Light (Shànmíng Shìzūn).”

Someone asked, “Was the Venerable Good Light your teacher when you attained the Way or when you first aspired to it?”

He replied, “He was not my teacher when I first aspired to the Way.
When that Buddha appeared in the world, I was a king and made offerings to him.
That Buddha lived for eighty thousand years.
When I become a Buddha, my lifespan will also be the same.
I remembered my teacher’s name in a dream, and with great sorrow,
I thought of him. One night, I wept with tears.”

He also said, “I had a dream in which Śākyamuni placed His hand upon mine.
I asked, What is this sign?
He replied, This is my heart in harmony with the World-Honored One's heart.”

In the third year of the Dàtōng era, the Great Sage Fu and his disciples were residing about ten miles from the front of the Yellow Cloud (Yúnhuáng) Mountain. They began excavating land to create a monastic dwelling. They planted hemp, beans, taro, vegetables, and so on. When the autumn harvest came, suddenly a merchant from the village named Jǔ Tánjīng came to dispute the land. The Great Sage Fu immediately gave it to him.

The Great Sage Fu resided at Song Mountain and Yellow Cloud Mountain, both surrounded by dense forests. Within the forest lived many fierce beasts, and the people often feared them. However, the Great Sage Fu would always feed them with leftover food. Since then, they remained hidden.

In the sixth year of the Dàtōng era, the Great Sage Fu said,

“The Twin Forest (Shuanglin) is in a remote place,
and the teachings have not spread widely.
I wish to go to the capital to see the emperor and promote the correct teachings.”

On the eighteenth day of the first month, he sent his disciple, Fu Yán, with a letter to Emperor Wu of the Liang Dynasty, which read:

“Under the twin trees of Shuanglin,
the future liberating Great Sage of Compassionate Wisdom,
the Bodhisattva of Saving the World,
writes to the country’s ruler, the Buddha of Saving the World.
The Great Sage Fu now wishes to outline the superior, middle, and inferior paths
of goodness. May you be able to accept and uphold them.

The superior path is based on an empty heart,
with non-attachment as the foundation,
without form as the cause,
and Nirvana as the fruit.
The middle path is based on self-cultivation,
with the governance of the nation as the principle,
bringing peace and happiness to both the heavens and humans.
The inferior path is to protect and nourish sentient beings,
to overcome cruelty and avoid killing,
and to encourage the people to observe the six purifications.

Now, the Great Sage Fu vows to continue the correct teachings
and universally guide sentient beings.”

Fu Yán delivered the letter to the capital and went to the Grand Commandery to see He Chang. He Chang read the letter and said,

“The national teacher Zhizhe has yet to write a formal petition,
how is it that the Great Sage Fu, a citizen of the country, dares to present such a letter?”

Fu Yán replied,
“I recently arrived from the East, and I feared there was no one to deliver this letter,
so I made a vow in my heart and burned my hand on the side of the imperial road,
hoping it would reach the emperor.”

Upon hearing this, He Chang immediately took the letter to the Tongtai Temple to see Master Hao and discussed submitting it to the emperor. A royal decree was then issued to Fu Yán to come to the palace.

The Great Sage Fu arrived at Jiang Mountain on the nineteenth of the twelfth month. On the eighth day of the leap month, at the hour of the Dragon, he reached the palace.

When Emperor Wu first heard of the Great Sage Fu's supernatural abilities, he ordered the gatekeeper to lock all the gates in advance. The Great Sage Fu, already knowing this, prepared a large wooden mallet in advance and knocked on one of the gates. All the gates immediately opened, and he walked straight into the Hall of Good Words. He bowed, but no one responded. He went directly to the offering platform in the western section of the palace, where only the Crown Prince Zhao Ming, the enlightened Master Zhizhe, and the Great Sage Fu sat. The emperor asked the Great Sage Fu,

“Who is your teacher?”

The Great Sage Fu replied, “I have no teacher, for there is no one to teach me. There is no work to do, and no one to follow.”

After the meal, he returned to Zhong Mountain at Dinglin Temple. A royal decree was issued to supply his needs. From then on, renowned monks from across the land gathered here, and the place was often blessed with sweet dew.

In the first year of the Dàtóng era, during the first month, the emperor visited Huálín Garden at Chóngyún Hall and invited the four assemblies to attend. He personally lectured on the Three Wisdoms and the Prajñā Sutra. At that time, high-ranking officials and nobles were seated in rows, their ceremonial robes filling the hall. By imperial decree, a special seat was arranged for the Great Sage Fu, attended by four attendants.

At that moment, Liu Zhongji arrived in haste and asked the Great Sage,
"Why do you neither serve the Son of Heaven nor befriend the feudal lords?"

The Great Sage Fu replied,
"In true reverence, there is no reverence by nature.
In the absence of reverence, there is no irreverence in the mind."

As the assembly gathered and the emperor ascended the hall, all present stood—except for the Great Sage Fu. Liu Zhongji again questioned him about this.

The Great Sage Fu replied,
"If the ground of Dharma were to move, all dharmas would be unstable."

At that time, the nobles and officials made offerings and invited the assembly to recite scriptures. Only the Great Sage Fu remained silent. Someone asked him why.

He replied, "Both speech and silence are Buddha's work."

The crown prince sent someone to ask,
"Why do you not engage in discussion?"

The Great Sage Fu replied,
"You should understand that what is spoken is neither long nor short,
neither broad nor narrow, neither with limits nor without limits.
It is the true and proper principle, so what more is there to say?"

After the assembly dispersed, the emperor bestowed upon him a water and fire pearl, more than an inch in diameter, perfectly round and brilliantly clear. Since Great Sage Fu resided in the mountains, where water and fire were difficult to obtain, the emperor gifted him this pearl so he could draw water and fire from the sun and moon.

At that time, nobles and dignitaries visited Great Sage Fu and saw him sitting in a slanted posture. They asked,

"Why do you not sit upright?"

He replied,
"A righteous person has no fixed nature of righteousness,
and a crooked person has no crooked mind."

One day, the emperor invited Great Sage Fu to Shouguang Hall to expound the Dharma. He remained there until nightfall before departing.

In the fourth month, he returned to Yúnhuáng Mountain. On the second day of the ninth month, he again sent Fu Yán with a letter to the emperor, which read:

"Under the twin trees of Shuanglin,
the future liberating Great Sage of Compassionate Wisdom,
the Bodhisattva of Saving the World, writes to the country's ruler,
the Buddha of Saving the World. Now there is a wish-fulfilling jewel,
pure and liberating, illuminating and penetrating the ten directions.
Its light and color are subtle and mysterious, beyond conceptualization.
It is to be given to the ruler. If the ruler is able to accept it,
he will swiftly attain Buddhahood."

The emperor issued a decree, saying,
"If you wish to offer it, that would be most welcome."

In the fifth year of the Dàtóng era, he entered the capital once more. As he passed by Zhong Mountain, he wrote a memorial to the emperor, saying,

"Does the emperor have a mind and wish to distinguish?
Does the Great Sage have a principle and wish to discuss?"

The emperor replied,
"Both with mind and without mind, all enter into the true nature.
The true nature is beyond speech and thought,
there is neither distinction nor discussion."

On the sixteenth day of the third month, the emperor and the Great Sage discussed the true reality in the Shouguang Hall.

The Great Sage said, "Rest without ceasing."

The emperor replied, "If there is rest without ceasing,
then it must have form, and thus, it is dull."

The Great Sage said, "All phenomena neither exist nor do not exist."

The emperor replied, "I respectfully accept your instruction."

The Great Sage continued,
"All forms and images ultimately return to emptiness.
Just as the rivers cannot surpass the great ocean,
all things do not transcend the true nature.
The Tathāgata, within the three realms and the ninety-six paths,
transcends them all, seeing all beings as if they were his own self,
or as if they were infants.
The world cannot find peace without the Way, nor joy without the principle."

The emperor fell silent. The Great Sage then withdrew.

On the eighteenth day, the Great Sage composed a verse to present to the emperor. The verse answered the meaning of “rest without ceasing,” and its words were as follows:

"If rest leads to extinction,
Seeing suffering cut off from arising,
As one approaches Nirvana,
Then there is an 'I' and 'me.'

There is no equality,
Nor understanding of great compassion.
Without great compassion,
There is still negligence.

The practice of study is without attachment,
Not directed toward Nirvana,
If one strives for Nirvana,
The way is obstructed by Siddhartha.

For those with form,
To guide them toward Nirvana,
Rest without ceasing,
Simply cease from grasping.

If there is no cessation by nature,
No cessation, no arising,
Now there is no extinction,
Not striving for Nirvana.

Not attached to the world,
Named great compassion,
No 'I' or 'me,'
Nor 'that' or 'this.'

Permeating all forms,
Without the nature of form,
Named non-negligence,
Why not negligence?

All sentient beings,
Like infants or the self,
Always wishing for benefit and peace,
How can they attain peace?

There is no past,
No present,
No future,
The three periods are pure,
Benefiting all beings,
Together in liberation.

Also observing the One Vehicle,
Entering all vehicles,
Observing all vehicles,
Returning to the One Vehicle,

Also observing the practice,
Countless paths,
Universally aiding sentient beings,
Without taking 'I,'
Neither bound nor freed,
To the end of the future,
This is called perseverance."

In the sixth year of the Dàtóng era, the Great Sage Fu bid farewell to the emperor and returned east. A few months later, having completed his duties, he came back to the capital and stopped at Jiang Mountain. He sent Fu Yán with a letter to the emperor, which read:

"Under the twin trees of Shuanglin,
the future liberating Great Sage of Compassionate Wisdom,
the Bodhisattva of Saving the World,
writes to the country's ruler, the Buddha of Saving the World.

The emperor's nature is in harmony with the right path, walking the path of truth.
The Great Sage, in his pursuit of Bodhi, remains elevated;
the emperor, in his pursuit of Bodhi, remains humble.

Through the interdependent causes and conditions,
the Buddha's work is completed.
Now, I have come to universally encourage everyone to practice the right path."

At that time, He Chang sent someone outside, but this letter had not yet been delivered. At that time, a monk asked,

"Great Sage, is today great, or is the day after great?"

The Great Sage replied,
"It may be small today, and great the day after;
or it may be great today, and small the day after.
Why is this? In the realm of cultivating the holy path,
the fruit of practice is connected to the ordinary causes.
One constantly walks without leaving footprints,
and constantly ferries beings without limitation."

At that time, the emperor instructed the establishment of a temple between the twin trees, which was named Shuanglin. In front of the temple stood these two trees, with roots that were planted differently, but their branches and leaves were intertwined. From the trees, auspicious energy emanated through the wood, and above them were twin phoenixes, singing and perching, soaring and flying.

The Great Sage then had a Buddha hall built. In front of the hall stood a white poplar tree, with branches and leaves that were exceptionally beautiful. When one walked beneath it, heavenly music could often be heard, and sweet dew would fall. The Great Sage ordered the tree to be cut down and made into a statue for the hall. Before long, a carpenter arrived and, at the base of the tree, constructed a nine-tiered brick stupa. It remains there to this day.

The Great Sage personally wrote out the sutras and vinayas, more than a thousand volumes. He dedicated them to the Buddha, vowing that sentient beings would be liberated from suffering. The Great Sage visited the capital three times, and the number of laypeople and monks he guided cannot be counted.

In the seventh year of the Dàtóng era, he said to his disciples,

"Among the thousand Buddhas of the present kalpa, I am but one.
If you wish to be born in the presence of the thousand Buddhas,
you will surely see me."

A disciple asked,
"If someone is deeply obstructed, does the Great Sage know in advance?"

The Great Sage replied,
"Is there anything that a future Buddha does not know?
When I sit in the Dharma hall, and a person is a messenger of Mara,
creating obstacles for me.
I take this as a Dharma gateway.
You should simply observe how I endure this disturbance without giving rise to anger.
How is it that when faced with even the slightest obstruction,
you immediately wish to divide heaven and earth as if they were utterly separate?
I guide all beings equally, without distinction."

The Great Sage Fu also said,
"I am a messenger of the Tathāgata, coming from thusness itself."

A disciple asked,
"Master, if this is so, why do you not possess the six supernatural abilities?"

The Great Sage Fu replied,
"Even śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas have the six supernatural abilities.
Look at the causes and conditions of my actions—how could I not have them?
I simply manifest as an ordinary being."

One day, he addressed the assembly again, saying,

"When the time comes for me to leave this body,
Sōng the ascetic will temporarily pass through the Trāyastriṃśa Heaven
and before long return to Tuṣita Heaven.
If you wish to be born there, you will surely see me."

In the eighth year of the Dàtóng era, the Great Sage Fu made a vow to uphold the supreme fast and composed a vow text, which read:

"I, the disciple (Great Sage Fu of Compassionate Wisdom) Shanhui, now make this declaration before Śākyamuni, the World-Honored One, before all Buddhas of the ten directions and the three times, and before the Three Jewels, which pervade all of space and the Dharma realm and abide eternally.

Reflecting upon myself, in this life,
I have nothing to freely give to aid and relieve suffering beings.
Therefore, from this day forward,
I vow to uphold the supreme fast for three years.
Each year, on the sixth month and designated days,
I will abstain from food and drink.
By enduring the suffering of hunger and thirst,
I take upon myself the burden of all sentient beings' karmic offenses,
shortening the duration of their suffering and hastening their liberation.

The provisions I do not consume will be widely given as offerings.
May all sentient beings, life after life,
be abundant in both material wealth and the Dharma, never lacking.
May they forever be free from attachment and craving,
refrain from the three unwholesome actions,
attain the great power of total retention (dharani),
subdue all demonic forces, and realize the unsurpassed path."

In the tenth year of the Dàtóng era, the Great Sage Fu entrusted the Buddha images and scriptures to the virtuous assembly. He also relinquished all his houses, land, and material possessions, giving them away entirely. He established a retreat and organized a grand Dharma assembly, making a formal declaration before all Buddhas:

"I offer this to all sentient beings across the ten directions and the three times, to all those in the six realms and four modes of birth, treating enemies and friends equally.
I make offerings to the Three Jewels and to all sentient beings, dedicating it all as a Buddhist practice.

To all beings in this world and in the boundless realms,
if they have created countless immeasurable offenses through body, speech, or mind,
they will fall into the great hells. Some, due to karmic retribution,
will be reborn as animals and suffer greatly.
Others will be born into the human world, facing poverty, low status, blindness,
deafness, muteness, or physical deformities.
Some will endure chains, exile, imprisonment, and countless hardships.
Some will never see the Buddha, never hear the Dharma,
and never encounter the Sangha.

They do not hear the Dharma, do not see the Sangha,
and do not encounter wise teachers.
Without the causes for liberation, how can they be freed?
Thus, through this offering, I sincerely entreat the World-Honored One,
by his compassionate power, to eliminate their suffering,
allowing them to swiftly attain liberation, encounter wise teachers,
hear the Dharma, awaken to the path, and give rise to the bodhi mind”.

The Great Sage Fu relinquished all his family’s wealth, homes, and possessions, leaving himself with no place to take shelter. He built a grass hut as a retreat, while Miao Guang also built her own hut. They wore garments of woven grass, lived on the fruits of the trees, and labored diligently day and night, barely sustaining themselves.

Before long, a band of robbers arrived, brandishing blades and driving them back. The Great Sage Fu showed no sign of fear and calmly said,

"If you seek wealth, take whatever you wish—why be angry?"

The thieves departed, leaving the house empty. Yet, there remained over two hundred hu of rice. He then reflected,

"Because of this body, people generate endless karma and offenses.
After death, they are bound to fall into hell and suffer immense torment."

Thus, he donated one hundred hu of rice and organized a great offering on behalf of the bandits, making offerings to the Three Jewels as an act of repentance for their misdeeds.

A small pond in front of the retreat had dried up on its own. The Great Sage Fu gathered all the trapped fish and insects and released them into the great river. For those that had perished, he buried them at the foot of the mountain. Even the oxen and dogs that had died were also given proper burials.

He deeply contemplated the endless suffering of these beings in the cycle of birth and death, bound to the realms of misery with no foreseeable liberation.

He also donated two hundred hu of rice, setting up an offering for the fish, dogs, and other beings, making offerings to the Three Jewels. He then prayed to the Holy Ones. Thus, he composed a verse:

"Of old, the sage sacrificed his head and limbs,
The prince saved the tiger's life.
The compassionate one pushed the kingdom aside to flee,
Enduring patience, bearing enmity and kin.

Since, I have heard of this compassion,
I revere and long for the cause of bodhi.
I dedicate my wealth to save oxen and dogs,
I sacrifice my life to rescue fish.

May I be a companion in everlasting joy,
Together crossing the river to Nirvana,
No separation between the mundane and the holy,
All equally attaining the truth of no truth."

In the second year of the Tàiqīng era, in the second month, the Great Sage Fu again relinquished his fields and property. On the fifteenth day, he organized an assembly, making offerings to all Buddhas of the ten directions and the universal Buddha realms, to all beings in the six realms and four modes of birth, treating enemies and friends equally. He made offerings to the Three Jewels, and with the Buddhas abiding in the world, he universally sought to liberate all sentient beings. He then composed a verse:

"I dedicate my wealth to make wholesome offerings,
I take refuge in the King of Heaven, the highest of the heavens,
I humbly pray for his light to shine and be still.
May his grace flow throughout the great thousand realms.

May all beings in the Three Realms attain liberation,
May all in the six paths transcend to the physical world.
May the universal assembly embody formlessness,
All equally realizing the connection of no connection."

The verse continues:

"Hidden on the cliff, I cultivate the right path,
Resting here for over thirty years.
Deeply humbled by my mountain and forest friends,
I take refuge in the King of the Great Void.

I organize assemblies to proclaim the sutras and offer repentance,
Sweeping the dust and ruins for others.
I universally wish for beings to be free from all impurities,
With minds as pure and equal as the lotus.

All are in harmony with the principle of the Three Empties,
Together realizing the oneness of suchness."

The Great Sage Fu also desired to uphold the supreme fast and burn his body as a lamp, offering this as a universal offering to the Three Jewels. On the fifteenth day of the third month, he said to the assembly:

"I once heard of the Moonlight Great Sage,
who, in his vow to help and relieve the poor,
renounced his life and wealth.
He saved the destitute, without attachment to life or material wealth.
As the scriptures have taught, this person will not long delay in attaining Buddhahood.
Therefore, I do not measure myself by ordinary standards.
I revere the the path of the sages and,
thus, I have made a vow to renounce my life, body, and wealth,
to universally offer them to all Buddhas.
I carefully uphold the supreme fast and seek nirvana through this act.
I firmly resolve to burn my body, offering it as a great light to illuminate all,
as a lamp for the Three Jewels.

I now announce this on the eighth day of the month:
Do not harbor any worry or distress.
Things are born and die, matters succeed or fail,
and all worldly attachments and affections inevitably part.
Now, I relinquish this impure and defiled body and
will attain the immaculate Dharma body of no birth.
I only wish for my disciples to not harbor sorrow or attachment.
May we, life after life, never be separated,
always remaining as companions on the path.
Together, we will go to gather firewood on the peak of Shuanglin Mountain,
and through this cause and condition, in the future world,
I shall engage in Buddhist deeds and universally guide all beings toward liberation."

On the eighth day of the fourth month, disciples Liu Jianyi, Fan Nantuo, and nineteen others each requested to take the place of their master in upholding the supreme fast and offering their bodies in fire as an offering to the Three Jewels.

Additionally, the disciple Zhu Jiangu burned a finger as a lamp, while Chen Chao offered his body for sale. Yao Puxun, Zhi Lang, and others labored for wages, using their earnings to make offerings to their master.

"May all beings, in relinquishing and receiving bodies,
always encounter the Buddhas, hear the Dharma,
awaken to the path, and together realize non-arising."

On the ninth day of the same month, disciples Liu Hemu and Zhou Jiangu each burned a finger as a lamp. Disciple Lou Baoyin pierced his heart, while Ge Xuangao cut off both his left and right ears.

The monk Bodhi and the laywoman Luo Miaode each cut off their left ear. The monk Zhi Lang, Zhi Pin, and twenty-two others cut off their right ear.

They made a vow, saying:

"We, the disciples Bodhi and others,
humbly appeal to Śākyamuni, the World-Honored One,
to all Buddhas of the ten directions and three times, and to the Three Jewels,
ever-abiding throughout empty space and the Dharma realm.

We bow in reverence to our master,
who has vowed to uphold the sacred teaching
and universally deliver all beings.
He renounces body, life, and wealth,
burning his body as a lamp,
making a universal offering to all Buddhas.

Thus, we solemnly cut off our ears and pierce our hearts in devotion.
With our blood, we sprinkle the earth, offering ourselves in place of our master. We
make a universal offering to all Buddhas.

We have heard that the Great Awakened One,
the Compassionate Father, nurtures all sentient beings with mercy,
grieving for the suffering of all living things.
With great compassion, he has cultivated and rescued all who possess awareness,
moving through countless eons of dust-like kalpas.
When he prepared to enter nirvana, the heavens implored him to remain,
and so he stayed as numerous as the sands of the Ganges,
rejoicing in both the ordinary and the sacred.

Thus, we humbly witness that our master,
along with over twenty members of the monastery,
intends to adorn the Buddha's pure land,
sounding the thunderous Dharma and beating the fearless drum,
spreading boundless benefit.
By renouncing the self and offering the body,
he has fulfilled supreme compassion,
an inconceivable path beyond ordinary understanding.

We do not consider ourselves free of faults
or untouched by past transgressions;
our defilements and sins are deep.
And so, we solemnly cut off our ears and burn our fingers, earnestly entreating.
Just as a destitute child, lost and orphaned, grieves for a missing father,
how much more so for one who, still within the womb,
has lost its mother, doomed to fall into darkness and sink into the abyss,
never seeing the sun of wisdom.

Now, the Dharma-image age declines,
the light of wisdom fades, and countless beings are adrift,
drowning in the river of desire.
This is deeply sorrowful and profoundly tragic.

We humbly pray that our master restrain his power and remain,
That he stay in the world for a long time,
That he turn his gaze toward all sentient beings.
With compassion, may you extend your care to all beings in the six realms,
sheltering orphans and the destitute, bringing benefit and peace to the poor
and elderly, so that all who are lost in delusion may attain awakening,
together realizing non-arising and returning to nirvana's stillness.

We humbly pray that, in great compassion,
you may lower your gaze upon us and accept our plea”.

Next, the monk Fa Tuo, Fa Jian, and fifteen others each vowed to uphold the supreme fast for three days, hoping to keep their master in the world to propagate the true teaching.

Additionally, monk Pu Ji, lay disciples Fu Chang, Fu Yuan, and forty-two others knelt before the Great Sage Fu, bowing in deep reverence.

“We have heard that when the Buddha's sun first began to shine,
he pondered for twenty-one days, considering that sentient beings have dull faculties,
are attached to pleasures, and are blind in delusion.
Would he then not teach the Dharma and swiftly enter nirvana?
At that moment, Śakra and Brahmā entreated him,
and so he turned the wheel of the Dharma,
causing the Dharma rain to fall continually for countless years,
bringing boundless benefit.

You, our master, in accord with your original vows,
have transcended all limitations, sitting steadfast beneath the Twin Trees,
never shunning toil and hardship,
striving to broadly propagate the Dharma and spread the true path.

How, then, could you suddenly set a date for your cremation?

A child losing its mother is not even an adequate comparison.
A ship sinking in the ocean is not even a true measure of suffering.

You are the eye of the world, yet the moon of wisdom is fading.
You are the guiding light of Maitreya, yet the sun of wisdom has yet to fully shine.

In this long night of darkness, we are in desperate need of a guiding lamp.

Thus, we have resolved to pierce our hearts and shed our blood upon the earth,
We implore you to remain, to fulfill your lifespan in the human realm."

In the third year of Taiqing, as the reign of the Liang dynasty was nearing its end, calamities and disasters arose in quick succession. The Great Sage Fu's hometown was struck by disaster. All of his wealth and possessions were distributed to the hungry and poor. He encouraged his disciples to gather wild vegetables and cook porridge. Each person shared their food to help the local community.

In the first and second years of the Da Bao era, the Great Sage Fu again instructed his disciples to cook porridge, following the practice established during the Taiqing years. In that spring, the village had no plowing oxen. The Great Sage Fu then sent his disciples to plant crops themselves, using oxen to help others plow the fields and meet their needs. As for his own land, he only plowed half of the fields.

On the sixteenth day of the first month in the first year of Chengsheng, the Great Sage Fu once again gave away his farmland, household possessions, oxen, and storehouses, dedicating them to the establishment of a Dharma assembly. From then on, every year on the tenth day of the first month, he donated two thousand bushels of rice to host a Dharma assembly.

He then recited a verse:

“Pouring forth my resources for all beings,
Offering in reverence to the Lord of Heaven.
I earnestly pray for the sweet dew’s rain,
To flow and spread boundlessly.

May all in the six realms be nourished,
And the four modes of birth alike.
A universal gathering where the unreal is truly unreal,
Together realizing the unshakable that has no firmness.”

On the twentieth day of the fourth month in the first year of Shaotai, the Great Sage Fu addressed the assembly, saying:

"I have heard that the Great Awakened World-Honored One,
throughout countless eons, renounced his head, eyes,
and treasures to bring benefit and peace to all beings in the six realms.
I have also heard the scriptures say that when the Buddha’s teachings
are about to decline, great disasters will first gather like clouds;
people will suffer hardship, and many will perish.
Then will come a great flood, just as we now witness,
and more calamities will follow in succession.

Who is willing to universally dedicate themselves to all sentient beings,
sparing neither body nor life, upholding the supreme fast,
and burning their body to attain nirvana?
By offering this body as a lamp,
may it serve as a universal offering to the Three Jewels,
imploing the Buddha to remain in the world and to deliver all beings."

On the twenty-fifth day of the sixth month, the disciple Fan Nantuo upheld the supreme fast and, upon the peak of Shuanglin Mountain, burned his body and entered nirvana.

On the fifteenth day of the ninth month, the monk Fa Kuang burned his body and entered nirvana at the foot of Tiantai Mountain in Shifeng County.

On the first day of the third month in the first year of Taiping, the laywoman Zi Yan self-immolated atop Shuanglin Mountain, attaining nirvana through fire.

On the eighteenth day of the second month in the first year of Chen's Yongding era, the Great Sage Fu addressed the assembly, saying:

"Now, the world is plagued with unceasing disasters,
and the suffering of the people is severe.
Who among you is willing to undertake ascetic practice
and burn a finger as an offering?
May it serve as a universal offering to the Three Jewels,
imploing the Buddha to remain in the world and deliver all beings."

At that time, the monks Hui Hai, Bodhi, and Fa Jie, along with the lay disciple Pu Cheng and eight others, solemnly followed his command. The monk Fa Ru and the lay disciple Bao Yue pierced their bodies and suspended lamps from them.

The Great Sage Fu then said,
"Who among you is willing to cut off an ear and let the blood flow, mix it with incense,
and sprinkle it upon the ground as a universal offering to the Three Jewels?"

At that time, twelve monks, including Zhi Yun, ten novice monks, including Hui Pu, as well as Pu Zhi, Hui Ju, and twenty-three others, and seventeen young boys, including Shan Jue, making a total of sixty-two people, solemnly followed his command. They cut off their ears, let their blood flow, mixed it with incense, and sprinkled it upon the ground.

The Great Sage Fu then said,
"Who is willing to uphold the supreme fast,
abstaining from food, to pray for the Buddha to remain in the world?"

At that time, twenty-six monks, including Tan Zhan, nine novice nuns, including Hui Jian, ten laywomen, including Ping Deng and Fa Zhen, and Daoist priests Chen Lingcheng and Xu Yin, making a total of forty-nine people, took up the supreme fast in dedication.

The Great Sage Fu then addressed the assembly:

"My companions in delivering sentient beings are nearly all gone.
Only Pan and Xu have not yet revealed their names.
My disciple Fu Pumin is none other than Manjushri.
The monk Hui He, who understands my teachings, is also a sage,
though his spiritual attainment is not yet high.
The reverend Hui Ji is Avalokiteśvara, who has taken the form of my disciple,
and the layman Chang is Ānanda.

In this world, Chang's appearance and conduct seem ordinary and unremarkable,
causing people to look down upon him.
I warn you, my disciples, do not belittle Layman Chang.
When the time comes for him to give up his life,
he will do so effortlessly, without any pain or distress.
His complexion will be radiant, far surpassing that of ordinary people.
Only after his passing will I reveal that he is Ānanda."

One day, a monk came to visit the Great Sage Fu and said,

"I have heard that you practice the Bodhisattva path.
A true Bodhisattva gives their head when asked for a head,
their eyes when asked for eyes, and does not hesitate to give away
their kingdom, wife, or children.
Now, I have come to ask you for the incense burner in your hand.
If you give it to me, you are truly a Bodhisattva. If you refuse, then you are not."

The Great Sage Fu replied,

"To give or not to give—neither defines a Bodhisattva."

The monk forcibly took the incense burner and left. After about ten days, he returned and asked,

"Someone forcibly took your incense burner; what do you think about it?"

The Great Sage Fu said,

"To receive it is as if it had always been there.
To lose it is as if it had never existed.
My only wish is that you hold the burner, burn incense,
make offerings to the Buddhas, and, life after life,
advance on the path to enlightenment,
always as a good friend to others."

The monk, filled with shame, returned the incense burner.

Previously, four monks, including Seng Shuo, traveled from An District to Shuanglin. Arrogant and full of pride, they refused to pay respects. Suddenly, they saw the Great Sage Fu's body towering over ten feet tall, radiating a golden light that dazzled their eyes. Overcome with awe, they prostrated themselves and asked to become his disciples.

Later, they followed him to the capital and resided at Dinglin Temple at the foot of Jiang Mountain.

One day, they saw a white light appear before the Great Sage Fu's seat. Mistaking it for a piece of white silk, one of them reached out to grab it, but the light returned to the Great Sage Fu, vanishing before their eyes.

The Great Sage Fu said,

"If you ever see such things again, do not try to grasp them."

At that time, in Dinglin Temple, the grass and trees were frequently covered in sweet dew. Swarms of insects gathered to feed on it, attracting large crowds of people. However, this led to many creatures being trampled and harmed.

The Great Sage Fu considered relocating to another place, but that very night, the dew ceased and the insects departed, so he decided to remain.

Soon after, he returned to Yunhuang.

In the first year of Tianjia, the disciple Hui Rong and others wished to establish a Longhua Assembly.

The Great Sage Fu said,

"You should instead hold a 'Prayer for the Buddha to Remain and Shine His Light' assembly. Longhua is my affair. If you follow my words, you will surely see Longhua."

He further said,

"I awakened to the path forty kalpas ago, while Śākyamuni, the World-Honored One, was only just beginning to give rise to bodhicitta. It is because he was able to renounce his body and undertake ascetic practice that he attained Buddhahood before me."

In the second year of Tianjia, while the Great Sage Fu was practicing the path in the mountains, he frequently saw the Seven Buddhas before him, with Vimalakīrti following behind.

He said to his disciples,

"Among the Seven Buddhas, only Śākyamuni frequently speaks with me; the others do not."

This happened repeatedly, so one day a disciple asked,

"Why do the other Buddhas not speak?"

The Great Sage Fu replied,

"Śākyamuni is the one currently overseeing this world, and I am to continue his work. That is why the World-Honored One frequently speaks with me."

Another disciple asked,

"Why do you not see Buddhas from other worlds but only these Seven Buddhas?"

The Great Sage Fu answered,

"Though the Seven Buddhas have long since passed from this world, they continue to oversee this realm together."

A disciple then asked,

"Can you perceive the thoughts in people's hearts?"

The Great Sage Fu replied,

"No. I always abide in the profound truth of non-arising, progressing beyond what I had before."

The disciple then asked,

"The scriptures say, 'One who attains non-retrogression remains forever in tranquility.' How, then, can you say you have lost the knowledge of past lives?"

The Great Sage Fu responded,

"I now appear as an ordinary person, and in this form, things rise and fall. Yet, within that arising and ceasing, nothing is ever truly lost. At present, it is not fully manifested, but when I sit beneath the Bodhi tree, it will be complete."

He then added,

"When my disciples travel far away, I know when they will return.
This is only a small insight into past lives."

At that time, a Dharma teacher named Hui Fa wished to test the Great Sage Fu. He gathered over eighty people and suddenly arrived, demanding food.

The Great Sage Fu's usual meal was only enough to feed four people, and Miao Guang became anxious.

However, the Great Sage Fu personally distributed the rice, and the entire group was fully satisfied.

On the twelfth day of the first month in the fourth year of Tianjia, the Great Sage Fu once again donated five hundred bushels of rice and thirty bolts of silk to establish a Dharma assembly. He then recited a verse:

I have heard that the Buddha's teachings are nearing extinction,
A sorrowful fear, truly unbearable.
Countless disasters arise in turmoil,
And all sentient beings suffer great harm.

How is it that beings must endure such suffering?
With deep compassion, my heart is overcome with urgency.
Thus, together with my wife and children, I renounce my lands and possessions,
My body, life, wealth, and remaining provisions.

For the ten directions, I establish three great assemblies,
Burning fragrant powders and incense.
Billowing clouds of wondrous colors rise,
Offered to the Three Jewels in radiant fragrance.

I make this offering to the Compassionate Father of humans and devas,
And sincerely entreat the King of the Tamer of Minds.
May he take pity on all beings,
Remain in the world, and shine his compassionate light.

Illuminate the six realms and the four forms of birth,
So all may awaken, steadfast as vajra.
May divine powers ever increase in boundless freedom,
And courageous strength rescue those in distress.

Cleanse the world of calamity, defilement, and evil,
Bringing peace and purity, like the Western Land.
Golden ponds and jade lakes arise,
Precious flowers and jeweled trees ring in harmony.

May all beings be free of lack and suffering,
Honored, prosperous, and blessed with long life.
Attaining the effortless way of the eight paths,
Transcending duality, abiding forever in nirvana.

On the seventeenth day of the first month in the fifth year of Tianjia (the year Jiashen), a Dharma feast was held.

By the eighth day of the second month, the Lotus Sutra had been recited twenty-one times.

Additionally, ten jeweled Buddha statues were cast in Kuaiji, and a great open assembly (Wuzhe Dharma Assembly) was held.

On the ninth day of that month, another ceremony to dispel calamities and ensure unobstructed blessings was conducted.

On the tenth day, a full recitation of the Nirvana Sutra was performed, and a long-life lamp was lit.

In the five years that followed, a total of six such assemblies were held, each following the same offerings and rituals as before.

The ascetic Song Tou Tuo entered nirvana, and the Great Sage Fu knew of it in his heart.

He gathered his disciples and said,

"Master Song has already returned to the Tusita Heaven and is awaiting me. Those who accompanied me in delivering sentient beings have all departed. I will not remain in this world for much longer."

He then composed twelve verses titled "Returning to the Source."

As the time of his nirvana approached, there were signs and omens.

Previously, at both Shuanglin and Yunhuang, auspicious pear trees had grown in front of the retreat halls, and sweet dew continuously appeared on their branches throughout all four seasons.

But suddenly, the trees withered and turned yellow, gradually drying up and dying.

Then, in the first year of Dajian (the year Jichou), in the summer, on the first day of the fourth month (Bingshen day), the Great Sage Fu fell ill.

He called his sons, the two Dharma Masters Pu Jian and Pu Cheng, and said,

"I came from the Fourth Heaven for the sake of delivering sentient beings. You must carefully guard the Three Karmic Actions, diligently cultivate the Six Perfections, and practice repentance to avoid falling into the Three Wretched Destinies."

The two masters then asked,

"If you do not remain in the world and the assembly disperses, what if the Buddha Hall remains unfinished?"

The Great Sage Fu replied,

"After I depart from this world, I may reveal my form once more."

On the twenty-fourth day (Yimao day), the Great Sage Fu entered nirvana at the age of seventy-three.

His body showed no signs of decay, and on the third day after his passing, his entire body became warm again, and his features remained pure and dignified.

After seven days, his body remained soft and supple, and his hands remained flexible.

At that time, Chen Zhongqi, the county magistrate of Wushang County, came seeking incense and fire as a token of spiritual connection.

The incense flame was passed among the four assemblies in succession.

When it reached the Great Sage Fu, he turned his hand over and received the incense in reverse.

The monk Fa Xuan and others said,

"We are truly fortunate to witness the Bodhisattva manifesting the sign of returning to the source.

His hand receiving the incense signifies that his presence remains unchanged, leaving behind a lingering fragrance of the sacred teaching for future generations to know."

Previously, before his passing, the Great Sage Fu had told his disciples,

"After I enter nirvana, do not move my resting bed. After seven days, the reverend Fa Meng will come, bringing a woven image of Maitreya Buddha to be placed upon my bed as a sign of my form."

On the seventh day, as foretold, Fa Meng indeed arrived, carrying a woven image of Maitreya Buddha along with a small bronze bell, which he placed on the Great Sage Fu's bed.

At that moment, Fa Meng bowed, shedding tears. Moments later, he suddenly vanished.

When the Great Sage Fu first fell ill, his disciples, fearing his passing, asked,

"If the inevitable comes to pass, where should your sacred remains be placed?"

The Great Sage Fu replied,

"Take my body to the summit of Shuanglin Mountain and cremate it according to the Dharma. Then, divide my śarīra (relics) into two parts. One portion shall be enshrined in a stupa at the mountain's peak. The other portion of my śarīra (relics) shall be enshrined in a stupa atop my burial mound. In both stupas, a Maitreya Buddha image is to be placed as a symbol of my form.

The disciples then asked,

"If your final wishes cannot be fulfilled
and a traditional burial according to worldly customs must be performed,
how should your body be placed?"

The Great Sage Fu replied,

"If my wish cannot be granted,
then there is no need for a coffin or burial materials.
Simply stack bricks to form a platform,
place my body upon it, and surround it with a three-foot folding screen.
Cover it with a crimson canopy, and that will suffice."

He further instructed his disciple Xu Pubo and others,

"After I am gone, if you still remember me,
you should bring back the remains of the Reverend Huiji to the mountain
and conduct a Buddhist ceremony together."

However, the disciples ultimately did not follow the Great Sage Fu's original instructions.

Instead, they held a formal Han-style burial and also retrieved the body of Reverend Huiji, burying him beside the Great Sage Fu at the edge of Song Mountain on Qianyin Islet, placing their tombs side by side.

On the nineteenth day of the ninth month in the fourth year of Dajian, the monks Fa Xuan, Bodhi, Zhi Zan, and others petitioned Emperor Xuan of Chen on behalf of Shuanglin Temple, requesting the erection of steles for the Great Sage Fu, Dharma Master Huiji, and Huihe Śramaṇa.

In response, an imperial edict was issued, appointing:

Xu Ling, the Palace Attendant, Minister of the Left, Director of Grand Compositions,
and Marquess of Jianchang from Donghai,
to compose the stele inscription for the Great Sage Fu.

Zhou Hongzheng, the Minister of the Left, Director of the Imperial Academy,
and Grand Justice of Yuzhou from Runan,
to compose the stele inscription for Huihe Śramaṇa.

During his lifetime, the Great Sage Fu saw that the sutras were vast and numerous, and that people often could not read them all.

Thus, he constructed a large revolving sutra repository in the mountains, built with a single central pillar and eight sides, filled with scriptures. The structure could rotate freely without obstruction, and it was called the Wheel of Dharma Repository (Lun Zang).

He also made a vow, saying:

"Whoever steps through the gates of my repository shall never lose their human form in future lives."

To encourage people, he further declared:

"Those who aspire to bodhi and exert themselves with sincerity and devotion; if they turn the Wheel of Dharma Repository without counting the number of rotations; their merit will be no different from those who recite and uphold the sutras. Whatever they sincerely wish for, they will receive great benefit."

Today, in all the revolving sutra repositories built across the land, the tradition of placing an image of the Great Sage Fu originated from this very place.

In the mountains, there was an ancient pine tree where the Great Sage Fu once made a vow to deliver all beings, using an axe as his witness. To this day, the marks of the axe remain on the tree.

The leftover rice he once fed to a tiger, which he threw into the forest, transformed into stones, appearing in mixed shades of blue and white. These stones could be strung into prayer beads and were called "Drinking Stones."

Such spiritual marvels—how could they be grasped by mere thought?

Record of the Great Sage Compassionate Wisdom Shanhui (Fu Dashi) Part 2

In the fifth year of the reign of Emperor Taijian (of the Chen Dynasty), Bodhi and others presented a memorial to Emperor Xuan, requesting that the Emperor appoint them as the protective lay supporters (dānapāla) for the temple. The Emperor responded with approval. Bodhi and others then sent another letter to the court officials and nobility, stating:

"Respectfully, during the time of our late master, he frequently visited Emperor Wu of the Liang Dynasty to expound the correct path of Dharma. He encountered many obstacles and troubles, yet always sought the assistance of the court officials as protective lay supporters. We, his disciples, now follow his teachings and continue his compassionate intention. We humbly request that you become the protective supporters of the temple, as we continue to uphold his legacy. We wish to receive your favor and approval."

As a result, many individuals from the court, ranging from high officials to common folk, formally requested to be appointed as protective lay supporters.

In the first year of the Zhenming era, the eldest son of the great master, Master Pujian, burned his body in self-immolation to achieve Nirvana.

In the fifteenth year of the Kaihuang era under Emperor Wen of the Sui Dynasty, on the fifteenth day of the second month, Emperor Wen sent a letter to his disciple, the monk Huize, and others, stating:

"His Majesty, the Emperor, inquires with respect to Master Huize, saying: 'The great compassion of the Tathagata reaches out to all beings, rescuing them and guiding them across the ocean of suffering. I, the Emperor, govern the world and strive to revive the Dharma teachings, ensuring the Three Jewels are honored and that all sentient beings are blessed. You, as disciples, should follow the true path, spread the sacred teachings, and diligently cultivate virtuous conduct. Your efforts should not go unrewarded. As autumn has already come, the weather has turned cold, and your actions are in harmony with the season. I am now sending an emissary to express my intentions to you.'"

In the eighteenth year of the Kaihuang era, the Emperor again sent a letter, saying:

"I have received the Mandate of Heaven, entrusted with the care of the people. I revere and uphold the Three Jewels, deeply committed to their protection and support, wishing that all sentient beings across the ten directions may receive this merit and attain benevolence and longevity together."

"You have taken refuge in the Pure Land, dedicated yourselves to the Dharma, and widely proclaimed the sacred teachings for the benefit of all beings. I am also aware that you have been diligently cultivating merit on behalf of the nation, tirelessly practicing the path. This must have been a great effort of the heart. Your dedication to compassion, sincere ascetic practice, and vast deliverance of sentient beings greatly comforts me. Since your work benefits many, do not shy away from toil."

On the fifteenth day of the first month in the first year of the Renshou era, the Emperor again wrote:

"I revere the sacred teachings and have revived the Three Jewels, wishing that all beings may receive the power of blessings.

Master, you have renounced the dust of the mundane world, devoted yourself to the Dharma, and wholeheartedly engaged in recitation and teaching, spreading the profound scriptures with sincerity and accordance with the Dharma. This deeply aligns with my aspirations. Since you bring benefit to all beings, you should not weary from your efforts."

In the first year of the Daye era, Emperor Yang wrote:

"I have respectfully inherited the precious mandate and govern all directions, striving to expand virtue and spread its influence both near and far.

Moreover, in the past, when I resided as a prince and governed Jiangdu, I ruled over this land for many years. Thinking of those times fills my heart with remembrance and emotions beyond the ordinary. Now, as I tour and observe the customs of the people, I have arrived at the region of Huaihai. Though the mountains and rivers are not distant, I can only gaze upon them with longing.

The weather is slightly cold, and I hope your health remains well. You have long and diligently cultivated pure practices, which serve as a great bridge of guidance for all. Since your heart is set on benefiting others, do not consider it a hardship."

Afterward, monastic disciples continued to serve as abbots, and from the imperial court to regional and local officials, many provided their protection and support.

Although much time has passed, some relics of the great sage remain to this day. Among them are Jiting Pond and Luyu Pool, a Buddha Hall, and a nine-story brick pagoda. There is also a woven Maitreya image by the master Faming, as well as a small bronze bell.

Other preserved items include:

The large bed where the great sage rested,

A woven mat,

A wooden canopy,

A wooden pillow,

An ivory stupa and two ivory Bodhisattva statues,

A white stone statue,

Two ceramic statues,

A ceramic inkstone,

A ceramic brush holder,

A ceramic water vessel,

A pair of wooden mallets for striking the "Heaven's Gate" drum,

A water-fire pearl from Emperor Wu,

A fly whisk,

An incense case,

Two sun-blocking fans,

Two Bodhisattva paintings by Zhang Sengyao,

A unique bed from the Western Regions, gifted as tribute.

As for the various buildings, gardens, and ponds that existed during the great sage's time, they are too numerous and detailed to fully record here.

The great sage's writings were never intended as mere words but were meant to express the profound and wondrous truth. He hoped that through them, students could recognize the gateway to bodhi. When teaching the Dharma to sentient beings, he rarely spoke more than a few sentences, and each listener understood according to their own nature and capacity.

◦ ◦ ◦

At first, the great sage often taught his disciples the Mahayana path and never expressed weariness. One day, the monk Zhiyun respectfully asked him, "Master, you have often spoken of the Six Perfections (pāramitās) and the Four Immeasurables. How exactly should we understand 'perfection' and 'immeasurable'?"

The great sage replied:

"Though one practices generosity, one does not ultimately abide in joyful renunciation.

Though one practices discipline, one does not ultimately abide in restraint.

Though one practices patience, one does not ultimately abide in absence of anger.

Though one practices diligence, one does not ultimately abide in self-sacrifice for the Dharma.

Though one practices meditative concentration, one does not ultimately abide in unshakability.

Though one practices wisdom, one does not ultimately abide in emptiness as mere understanding.

Though one practices non-attachment to forms, one does not ultimately abide in absolute stillness.

Though one practices non-dual liberation, one does not ultimately abide in the idea of non-attainment.

Though one practices non-arising, one does not ultimately abide in the concept of birthlessness.

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This is the Mahā-prajñāpāramitā, the perfection of wisdom in its sixfold path.

Though one practices loving-kindness, one does not ultimately abide in constant remembrance.

Though one practices compassion, one does not ultimately abide in bearing suffering and rescuing others.

Though one practices sympathetic joy, one does not ultimately abide in rejoicing only in the right Dharma.

Though one practices equanimity, one does not ultimately abide in detachment from all things.

These four minds transcend all forms and distinctions, treating both enemy and friend alike, extending their benefits infinitely into the future. This is the Four Immeasurables."

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The great sage then expounded a small portion of the Mahā Perfect Dharma Forbearance and its boundless virtues to clarify these principles:

"One who can uphold the Mahā Perfect Dharma Forbearance becomes like a wish-fulfilling jewel, illuminating all ten directions.

Like a cintāmaṇi gem, fulfilling all practices and vows.

Like empty space, unstained by appearances.

Like a bird flying in the sky, leaving no traces behind.

They will quickly attain the supreme path, realizing the Buddha of Buddhas.

They will continue the lineage of all Buddhas, universally delivering sentient beings.

They will become the great elixir, curing the illness of birth and death.

They will have no place to depend on, swiftly realizing the nameless truth.

They will propagate the threefold enlightenment, bringing peace without bounds.

They will vanquish all defilements, swiftly realizing the unconditioned.

They will be like the great sun and moon, illuminating all worlds.

They will bring everlasting peace to themselves and others.

They will swiftly attain the immovable ground, abiding in stillness without limit.

They will become a king among sages, their name known throughout all worlds.

They will become the treasury of the Dharma, inexhaustible in daily use.

They will swiftly attain the Mahayana path, carrying boundless beings across."

o o o

The great sage then expounded a brief section of the Dhāraṇī Samādhi in verse.
“This Dharma is the illumination within all Dharmas,
Like the stars, sun, and moon.
This Dharma is the lamp among all Dharmas,
Able to dispel boundless darkness.
This Dharma is the ground within all Dharmas,
Bearing and supporting all throughout the ten directions.
This Dharma is the mother within all Dharmas,
Giving birth to the seeds of all Buddhas.”

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At that time, the great sage saw that, although sentient beings possessed physical eyes, they could not perceive the causes of karma, merit, and wrongdoing. Therefore, he taught his disciples about the three kinds of blindness, saying:

The blindness of anger
The blindness of greed and stinginess
The blindness of arrogance and jealousy
The blindness of anger leads one to fall into hell. After emerging, one is reborn as a poisonous snake, despised and killed upon sight. If you give rise to anger, whom does it truly harm—yourself or others? If you do not give rise to anger, you will attain the eternal bliss of Nirvana. Yet, by succumbing to anger, you plunge yourself into the three lower realms, suffering immense torment and losing the chance to experience the great joy of Nirvana. Is this not the greatest blindness?

The blindness of greed and stinginess causes one to fall into the great hells. Upon emerging, one is reborn as a hungry ghost, tormented by endless craving. If you give rise to greed and stinginess, whom does it truly harm—yourself or others? If you abandon greed, you will attain the supreme joy of Nirvana. Yet, by clinging to greed, you cast yourself into the three lower realms, enduring immense suffering and forfeiting the bliss of Nirvana. Is this not the greatest blindness?

The blindness of arrogance and jealousy leads one first to the great hells. Upon emerging, one is reborn as a maggot in a dung pit, or as a pig or dog, living in lowly and wretched conditions. If you give rise to arrogance and jealousy, whom does it truly harm—yourself or others? If you let go of arrogance, you will attain the supreme joy of Nirvana. Yet, by clinging to arrogance and jealousy, you cast yourself into the three lower realms, suffering immense torment and losing the chance to experience the bliss of Nirvana. Is this not the greatest blindness?

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The great sage constantly urged and admonished people to follow a vegetarian diet. In his teachings, he explained:

"Just as I do not wish others to harm me, I should not harm others. Just as I do not wish others to kill me, I should not kill others. If I do not kill them, they will not kill me—this is the right principle of the world. If you uphold the precept of non-killing, this is the way it should be. What more need you seek from the Buddha?"

If one violates the precept of non-killing, they will fall into the forest of swords and the boiling cauldrons of the infernal realms, suffering in hell.

The precept of not stealing means: Just as I do not wish others to rob me, I should not rob others. If I do not steal from them, they will not steal from me—this is the right principle of the world. You should uphold the precept of non-stealing in this way. What more need you seek from the Buddha?"

If one violates the precept of non-stealing, after death they will suffer grievous punishments in hell. Upon emerging, they will fall into the realm of hungry ghosts, and later be reborn as oxen and horses, endlessly repaying their debts by having their flesh cut from them. For hundreds, thousands, and millions of kalpas, there will be no respite."

◦ ◦ ◦

A disciple asked, "In the invocations to the Buddhas, we always mention Śākyamuni and the Buddhas of the ten directions, yet Maitreya is never specifically named. Why is that?"

The great sage replied, "All Buddhas of the ten directions share one Dharma body. Why must each be named individually?"

He then gave an analogy:

"In the past, someone prepared excellent food to offer to the noble sangha. At that time, one of the enlightened monks transformed into the appearance of an ordinary monk and came to receive the offering. The host, upon seeing him, scolded him, saying, 'I intended to make offerings to a noble monk. How dare you, a mere ordinary monk, accept my food?'"

Yet, that very monk was in fact an enlightened one—the host simply did not recognize him."

◦ ◦ ◦

The great sage often spent time in quiet contemplation and once said to his disciples:

"When I first began practicing the path, I built a small grass hut in front of the temple and also tended a melon patch. The interior and exterior were carefully plastered with clay. One day, a guest arrived and sat inside with me for a conversation. As we were speaking, I suddenly saw a Buddha.

His body was sixteen feet tall, radiating a golden light, descending from the heavens, facing east as he arrived. His brilliance filled the sky, turning everything into a golden hue. At that moment, I could no longer see the hut or its four walls—it was as if I were seated in empty space.

When the Buddha reached the ground, I immediately prostrated before him, and he also bowed in return. However, I alone could see him; the guest remained unaware."

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He also said:

"When I entered the mountains to cultivate the path, I constantly pondered:
'How did the Buddhas of the past deliver sentient beings?
What Dharma should I study to attain this path?'

Lacking sufficient resources, I worked the fields, toiling with a plow. At night, I returned to the mountains, spending the entire night contemplating the methods of delivering beings. Yet my heart remained clouded and uncertain.

In anguish, I cried out loud, tears streaming down my face, as I thought of the immense suffering in the hell realms.

For days and nights, I remained in this state until, suddenly, my understanding opened, and I realized my origin. Only then did I comprehend why the Buddhas do not eliminate hell. There is a profound reason—if hell were removed, no one would cultivate goodness.

Thus, I understood that good and evil uphold one another, forming the foundation upon which the world is established.

It is like a wise king ruling his kingdom—he establishes laws and regulations. If someone commits a crime, they receive punishment according to their offense. Minor offenses result in whipping; severe ones in execution.

Yet, within the world, etiquette and music are practiced, righteousness and benevolence are upheld. Without the authority of a ruler to enforce laws, robbery and vengeance would run rampant without end."

o o o

Later, the great sage spoke to his disciples in a moment of ease, saying:

"When I first awakened to the path, I attained a small portion of the knowledge of past lives. I recognized my original source and knew that I had come from the heavens—my former body had once dwelled in that celestial realm."

o o o

He also said:

"When I was in the mountains striking the wooden chime and offering prostrations six times a day, there were always beings from the fourfold assembly in the sky bowing alongside me."

o o o

A disciple asked, "The Six Chapters mention that the heavens are close—what heaven is this?"

The great sage replied, "It is not the ultimate or supreme heaven; it is merely the fourth heaven of the desire realm."

The disciple then asked, "When one attains the knowledge of past lives, does one see past and future events as clearly as the eye sees objects in the present?"

The great sage answered, "No. I have only attained a small portion of the knowledge of past lives. For now, I remain an ordinary being and do not yet possess complete spiritual abilities. Only when I sit in the seat of enlightenment will all such abilities be fully realized."

Another disciple asked, "If one has partial knowledge of past lives, how does one perceive such things?"

The great sage answered, "I only know them in my heart—I do not actually see them. For example, when I sent my disciple Fu Huang to deliver a letter to the ruler, I already knew that a great virtuous monk would arrive and serve as his guide."

o o o

In the early days of the great sage's life, he often taught his disciples about the non-action path and the dependent arising of all things. He said:

"The non-action path is beyond words and speech. What does it mean to be beyond words? It means the speaker does not demonstrate, the listener does not hear, and the learner does not attain.

What does it mean to say 'without demonstration,' 'without hearing,' and 'without attainment'?"

The great sage answered: "The speaker has no fixed form, thus there is no demonstration. The listener has no reception, thus there is no hearing. The learner has no grasping, thus there is no attainment."

Why? Because the Dharma has no form. It is beyond shapes and appearances. The Dharma has no reception, for there is no grasping or rejecting. The Dharma has no action, for there are no traces left behind. The Dharma has no name, for it is beyond differentiation.

Thus, the true practitioner of the path is one who follows the non-action truth. The truth of non-action is the path of the untainted, the path without leakage. What is meant by 'untainted'? It refers to severing attachment, ultimately free of defilement. It is not swayed by the bonds of desire, nor does it fall into the three realms of existence. It is not pulled by the bonds of greed, hatred, and delusion, nor does it descend into the three lower realms, where beings suffer in the hells. This is called the untainted path.

The untainted path is the path of stillness, of non-action, steadfast and ever-present.

What is meant by 'ever-present'? Although in the world, things change and time moves on, this presence remains unchanging. The path of constant presence is the path of the saints.

What is the saintly path? The saint is one who is upright. If we talk about uprightness, it means one is unmoved. If we talk about being unmoved, it means one is in stillness. If we talk about stillness, it means one is in balance. If we talk about balance, it means one is harmonious. If we talk about harmony, it means one is a monk.

A monk has three meanings:

The mind does not create actions.

The mouth does not speak inappropriately.

The body does not engage in wrongful deeds. This is what is called a monk.

A monk can also be called a Dharma teacher. A Dharma teacher has three meanings:

They embody the principle of 'thusness' (tathatā), with a unified and formless nature.

They can expound the right teachings and clearly explain the truth of non-duality.

They are skillful in using expedient means to guide sentient beings, all leading back to the same source. This is called a Dharma teacher."

A disciple asked, "Why is it that the non-dual Dharma is the truth, yet expedient means are necessary?"

The great sage replied: "Sentient beings have deep-seated habits and attachments. They are strongly attached to all things and cannot easily abandon them. Therefore, expedient means are required. Gradually, as attachments are lessened, one is able to realize the truth. When the entanglements are exhausted, one can awaken to the path and truly understand the supreme Dharma. In that moment, the truth is non-dual.

This is why the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, out of great compassion and pity, open the door of expedient means. They constantly encourage beings to leave the home life. There are two kinds of monasticism:

Physical renunciation – this refers to shaving one's head and removing the hair, aligning with the Dharma body.

Mental renunciation – this refers to relinquishing all attachments to the various entanglements of worldly existence.

If we consider the matter from the perspective of this world, physical renunciation is superior. Why? Because one is not influenced by worldly concerns, and is free from any attachments, living independently and with ease.

However, from the perspective of the ultimate truth, there is no difference between the two."

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Again, there is the renunciation of worldly attachments. The renunciation of worldly attachments means renouncing the following:

The attachment to greed and stinginess.

The attachment to anger and hatred.

The attachment to pride, jealousy, and arrogance.

The attachment to stealing and dishonesty.

The attachment to harmful speech, lying, and slander.

The attachment to resentment, envy, and competition.

The attachment to worldly pleasures, such as desires for sensory enjoyment.

The attachment to self-interest, the ego, and selfishness.

The attachment to misguided views and false teachings.

The attachment to desire for power, status, and wealth.

These are the worldly attachments that one should renounce. The consequences of remaining attached to these things are great. They lead to immense suffering, like being bound by enemies with weapons, trapped in the snares of hunger, and enduring endless tortures from various afflictions and passions. These are the "masters" that bind us and control our actions, leading to harm and suffering.

What are these "masters" like?

Greed is a master, binding us to desires.

Hatred is a master, leading us to harm others.

Pride is a master, causing us to look down on others.

Jealousy is a master, creating divisions.

Selfishness is a master, making us disregard others' needs.

Dishonesty is a master, causing us to deceive.

Lust and craving are masters, leading us into the endless cycle of rebirths and suffering.

These "masters" are the ones who direct our actions, leading us to harm ourselves and others. They are akin to captors, holding us in chains, causing us to suffer in various forms, whether it be physical or mental. Even the world itself, with its attachments and desires, acts as a form of captivity.

This is why one must renounce these attachments, just as one would leave a house full of harmful influences.

The renunciation of the true Dharma is the renunciation of higher principles such as:

The Eightfold Path (right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration).

The Ten Powers of the Buddha.

The Four Fearlessnesses (fearless of presenting the truth, fearless of failure, fearless in teaching, fearless of the world).

The Eighteen Uncommon Dharmas.

The Five Eyes (the physical eye, the divine eye, the wisdom eye, the law eye, and the Buddha eye).

The Six Psychic Powers.

The Three Knowledges (the knowledge of past lives, the knowledge of the death and rebirth of others, and the knowledge of the destruction of defilements).

The knowledge of the hearts of others.

The knowledge of the emptiness of all things.

The great compassion and great wisdom.

The equality of all beings.

The knowledge of the Buddha's teachings.

The knowledge of the Buddhist community (Sangha).

This is called the renunciation of the true Dharma.

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A disciple asked, "Since there is renunciation of the worldly life, is there also the practice of entering the worldly life?" The great sage briefly explained the concept of "entering the world," saying:

"There are several ways to enter:

Entering the realm of complete stillness,

Entering the realm of great movement,

Entering the realm of manifesting a physical body,

Entering the realm of non-attachment.

If one enters in such a manner, this is the Mahayana path. Why? Because if one tries to prevent birth by denying birth, this person moves away from the true nature of birth. If one tries to prevent death by denying death, this person moves away from the true nature of death. Therefore, the scripture says:

'Birth and death are the same as Nirvana—because there is no regression and no birth.'

Why is there no regression and no birth? It is because the path has no origin to come from.

Why does it have no origin? Because there is no place it is headed toward.

Why does it have no destination? Because it transcends the three times (past, present, and future).

Why does it transcend the three times? Because it follows the true nature of all phenomena.

Why does it follow the true nature of all phenomena? Because it is for the purpose of guiding and liberating all sentient beings, leading them equally toward Nirvana.

Thus, even after attaining Buddhahood and turning the Dharma wheel, one does not abandon the path to Buddhahood. Why? Because the initial vow has not been abandoned."

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A disciple asked, "What does it mean that 'there is no origin to come from'?"

The great sage replied, "It means that one does not rely on any of the actions or phenomena."

The disciple then asked, "What does it mean that 'there is no destination to go to'?"

The great sage replied, "It means that one does not cling to anything in the realm of phenomena."

The disciple further inquired, "What does it mean to 'transcend past existence'?"

The great sage replied, "It means not to dwell on past traces, to be free of names and distinctions."

The disciple continued, "What does it mean to 'transcend present existence'?"

The great sage replied, "It means that the present mind is not tainted by the duality of existence and non-existence."

The disciple asked, "What does it mean to 'transcend future existence'?"

The great sage replied, "It means not to grasp onto the future, for one has realized the truth of non-action."

The disciple then asked, "What does it mean to 'transcend the three times (past, present, and future)'?"

The great sage replied, "It means to exhaust all conditioned phenomena, having nothing to attain, and to follow the true nature of all things, dwelling in non-attachment."

The disciple asked, "What does it mean to dwell in non-attachment?"

The great sage replied, "It means to cultivate boundless compassion and great mercy, for the purpose of teaching and liberating all beings, leading them equally to Nirvana."

The disciple asked, "What does it mean to achieve supreme, perfect, and complete enlightenment (the supreme, perfect, and complete enlightenment)?"

The great sage replied, "It means to transcend all conditioned phenomena and to realize the peaceful non-action of the unconditioned."

The disciple asked, "Why does one not attain supreme, perfect, and complete enlightenment?"

The great sage replied, "It is because one does not dwell in the peace of Nirvana, for the sake of all phenomena."

The disciple asked, "What does it mean to attain 'no attainment'?"

The great sage replied, "It means one does not grasp the duality of existence and non-existence, for one dwells in emptiness, without attachment."

o o o

A disciple asked, "As mentioned above, when one severs attachments and is ultimately free from defilement, not being bound by the forces of delusion, this is liberation. So why is there the need to practice meditation, counting breaths, or focusing the mind on the breath?"

The great sage replied: "Meditation and counting breaths are the initial practices for entering the path. This is especially important because sentient beings have strong habitual tendencies and deep attachment to the five desires. Their afflictions are intense, and their minds are unsettled. Therefore, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas use expedient means to guide beings. They advise focusing on the breath to calm the mind, prevent worldly distractions, and avoid coarse, harmful thoughts.

Through this practice, one begins to reflect on the suffering of the body, which leads to a natural aversion to birth and death. Diligent practice over time gradually quiets the attachments and softens the mind. As a result, one is able to sever the attachments of greed, hatred, and other defilements, as well as all conditioned actions.

When all actions are extinguished, the mind aligns with the true nature of things and realizes the quiet, unconditioned state. This is called attaining the Way. However, if a person practices meditation and counting breaths but does not sever actions such as anger and other defilements, they will not attain the Way. Why is this the case? The Way is an unconditioned path, while actions are conditioned causes. To practice conditioned actions while hoping for an unconditioned result is a difficult contradiction."

o o o

The great sage also spoke of the three vehicles and the practices of external paths and demonic actions:

First, the Śrāvakayāna (Voice Hearer Vehicle):

This path is not capable of widely benefiting others. It focuses only on observing the suffering of the body, cultivating a sense of aversion to birth and death, severing all attachments to conditioned phenomena, and attaining peace and the realization of the ultimate truth. This is the Śrāvakayāna path, which leads to the understanding of Nirvana through personal liberation.

Second, the Pratyekabuddhayāna (Solitary Realizer Vehicle):

This path involves a similar aversion to birth and death, severing all attachments to conditioned phenomena, and practicing the four virtues and six perfections. The practitioner aims to benefit all beings, while seeking personal enlightenment, attaining the thirty-two marks and eighty excellent characteristics of a Buddha. This is the Pratyekabuddhayāna path.

Third, the Mahāyāna (Great Vehicle):

This path involves extinguishing all attachments to conditioned phenomena and practicing the four virtues and six perfections. It focuses on the broad welfare of all beings, viewing enemies and friends equally. The practitioner dedicates their efforts to the attainment of Buddhahood for the benefit of others. They do not seek personal Buddhahood alone, but instead practice all Dharma while remaining free from attachment to any phenomena. Therefore, the Mahāyāna is neither worldly nor unworldly, neither Nirvana nor not Nirvana, neither bound nor liberated. It is eternally the father and mother of the three realms, benefitting all beings throughout the future. This is the Great Vehicle.

What is the practice of the external paths?

The external paths involve cultivating actions with defilement, seeking to rise above the lower realms and ascend to higher states. Practitioners of these paths engage in ascetic practices and good deeds, aiming for freedom and eternal enjoyment of the unconditioned bliss. This is the practice of the external paths.

◦ ◦ ◦

A disciple asked, "Since all things are born and eventually die, and all achievements have their failures, how can one set the mind on the path and remain in a state of unchanging bliss? What constitutes the actions of the demons?"

The great sage replied: "All conditioned actions are the work of the demons. What are conditioned actions?"

The action of stinginess is one such action.

The action of greed is another.

The action of violence and killing is another.

The action of devouring sentient beings is another.

The action of stealing is another.

The action of anger is another.

The action of envy is another.

The action of harming others for self-interest is another.

The action of mockery is another.

The action of indulgence in songs and dances is another.

The action of idle speech and falsehood is another.

The action of harsh speech and slander is another.

The action of jealousy and hatred towards others' talents is another.

The action of love and hate is another.

The action of self and other distinctions is another.

The action of competing for superiority is another.

The action of abusing others is another.

The action of violence or fighting is another.
The action of pride is another.
The action of self-centeredness is another.
The action of lack of compassion or filial piety is another.
The action of shamelessness is another.
The action of betrayal of kindness and breaking of oaths is another.
The action of lack of humility or respect is another.
The action of slander and gossip is another.
The action of destroying the reputation of others is another.
The action of wrong views, contrary to the Dharma is another.
The action of disrespect is another.
The attachment to beautiful forms through the eyes is another.
The attachment to illicit sounds through the ears is another.
The attachment to illegal smells through the nose is another.
The attachment to illicit tastes through the tongue is another.
The attachment to fine sensations through the body is another.
The attachment to evil conditions through the mind is another.

All conditioned actions, whether good or bad, are the work of the demons. These actions lead to the cycle of birth and death, with no rest. They remain in the dark house, in an eternal long night, with no light. Therefore, one must urgently distance themselves from such actions."

◦ ◦ ◦

A disciple asked, "What is meant by 'Māra' (the demon)?"

The great sage replied: "Māra represents evil or demonic. When the mind clings to external things, this is demonic (evil). When the mind clings to internal things, this is demonic. When the mind clings to the middle ground, this is demonic as well. If the mind does not cling or move, then it remains still. When the mind is still, it is in the right state."

◦ ◦ ◦

A disciple asked, "Why do people continuously cycle through birth and death, with no rest?"

The great sage replied: "The cycle of birth and death does not arise from something external. It is entirely caused by one's own actions—through the body, speech, and mind. Therefore, one must control the senses and prevent them from wandering.

Someone may argue, "What does death matter? What is known after death?" The great sage responded: "Death and life are not fundamentally different. Why? Because the body is made up of the four elements, and the consciousness or mind (which is the perceiving aspect) joins with the body. The awareness of cold, heat, pain, and pleasure—all of these are known by the consciousness, not by the four elements themselves. If it were not so, why does the body, after the consciousness has departed, not know pleasure or pain? Therefore, it is clear that death and life are not different. It is the consciousness that experiences suffering and joy."

"Today, if one cannot endure the pain of hunger, thirst, cold, heat, burning, or the agony of being cut or roasted, how could they bear such suffering in hell? If one refuses to cultivate the mind toward goodness, recklessly killing beings and committing evil deeds, then after death, they will fall into the three lower realms—into the hells, where they will suffer in torments such as the mountain of knives, trees of swords, boiling pots, iron pillars, and iron beds, being sawed and ground, being immersed in the hell of boiling excrement in the river, in the Avīci hell, and in various other unbearable torments. How could one endure such suffering?"

The sage then quoted the Five Sufferings from the Taoist tradition:

Born in the suffering realm of the gods,
Transformed in the five paths of the wheel,
Long trapped in the dark night of separation,
Enduring eons without light,
In the mountain of knives and trees of swords,
With poison blades clashing fiercely,
Above, those who tread on frost,
Never finding rest or peace,
Hungry, consuming iron pellets and burning charcoal,
Thirsty, drinking the essence of molten fire,
Wandering in the three lower realms,
Unable to comprehend form and name,
Wishing for one's child without knowing their fate,
Alas, how sorrowful it is to wound my heart.

◦ ◦ ◦

Someone asked, "Why do people in the world who study the Way not all follow a vegetarian diet? Why does the great sage alone insist on a vegetarian diet?"

The great sage replied: "What is the meaning of the sacred path? The sacred path is one of righteousness.

The first is the righteousness of principles.
The second is the righteousness of the world.

Those who study the Way should cultivate the righteousness of principles. The righteousness of principles means that the mind is neither attached to the inside, nor to the outside, nor to the middle. One's mind is clear and still, like empty space. If the mind becomes greedy for worldly pleasures and tastes that are not in accordance with the principles of the Way, how can that be considered righteous?

Secondly, those who study the Way should cultivate the righteousness of the world. The righteousness of the world means being noble without oppressing the humble, wealthy without oppressing the poor, wise without despising the ignorant, and strong without bullying the weak. Therefore, without righteousness, there is no speech; without the Way, there is no action. If one seeks to harm others for personal gain, how can that be considered righteous?

Moreover, all animals, no matter the species, are created through the actions of sinful beings. These beings have no power or strength to protect themselves. To satisfy one's craving for taste by causing harm to animals is to act against compassion, against reason, and to contribute to the root cause of the karma that leads to birth and death.

Why do all people undergo the cycle of birth and death and suffer without rest? It is because they do not follow the principles of the Way, and instead oppress each other, causing one another harm. This leads to the cycle of the three lower realms, where they experience immense suffering.

Therefore, holding to a diet of vegetables and refraining from killing is a practice of compassion and righteousness, and it aligns with the true principles of the Way."

◦ ◦ ◦

Someone asked, "If one follows a vegetarian diet for a long time, it may lead to illness. What should be done about this?"

The great sage replied: "Why do people get sick? It is simply the result of past actions in previous lives, when one created numerous wrongdoings, which have led to the present illness and suffering. If one continues to create wrongdoings now, it will lead to future suffering and illness.

It is like someone who, in the past, used iron needles to prick their body. This year, they experience pain from those pricks. Because of this pain, they then prick their body again. Will this bring healing? Of course not. They should avoid pricking themselves again. Only then will the pain begin to subside.

What does it mean to avoid pricking again? It means to acknowledge the wrongs you have already committed, take refuge in the Three Jewels, and sincerely repent. As for the wrongs you have not yet committed, make a vow not to commit them. This is the way to avoid suffering and find peace in all future lives, free from future afflictions."

◦ ◦ ◦

Someone asked, "What about seeking wealth through improper means to offer to the Three Jewels? What should be done about this?"

The great sage replied: "I have heard from the scriptures that 'unlawful wealth does not make an offering to the Buddha. Such offerings should not be honored.' From this, it is clear that the Buddha does not permit one to harm beings in order to seek personal gain, and thus it is wrong to seek profit in an improper manner to offer to the Three Jewels."

◦ ◦ ◦

Someone said, "It is not the act of killing that we practice, but we always eat the meat of animals that have already died. What is your view on this?"

The great sage replied: "If one eats, killing does not stop. If one refrains from eating, killing also ceases. If the eater refrains, killing itself will stop."

◦ ◦ ◦

Someone asked, "I engage in many evil deeds, but I am able to read and recite many sutras. The sutras say that reading and reciting even one verse can eliminate countless heavy sins and increase boundless merits. How should this be understood?"

The great sage replied: "This is an act of compassion and expedient means used by Buddhas and Bodhisattvas to guide beings. It is a preliminary step to encourage practice. The decisive result comes later. If sentient beings read the sutras and their hearts awaken to the Way, distancing themselves from evil and transforming their minds to goodness, then indeed, even one sentence or one verse can eliminate boundless heavy sins and increase boundless merits.

However, if someone reads and recites many sutras but their mind does not abandon evil, they will not eliminate sins or generate merits. Why do I say this? I have heard the story of two virtuous monks who read and recited the twelve divisions of the sutras, benefiting others as if water flowed freely. Yet, because their minds did not cease evil, they fell into the Avīci hell after death. From this, it is clear that simply reading many sutras without purging evil from the mind will not lead to the elimination of sins or the generation of merits."

◦ ◦ ◦

Someone asked, "In the world, there are people who frequently recite the sutras and rules, who know what is right and wrong, who know what constitutes sin and what does not, who know what actions are offenses and which are not. They are also able to maintain proper conduct and external decorum, but their inner hearts do not cease from evil actions. How is this to be understood? Can they achieve liberation from suffering?"

The great sage replied: "If a person knows in their heart the causes and effects, the conditions of suffering and joy, but on the outside they maintain proper conduct and decorum, yet they do not practice self-compassion, it is like carrying five hundred iron weights hidden in their clothing. What do you think? Would this person be free from suffering and pain? If a person, even though they can maintain external decorum, does not eradicate the evil actions in their heart, it is the same situation. In the future, they will be caught by their enemies and bound in the dark prison of suffering, enduring endless pain. How could one bear such suffering?"

I urge all those with compassion and virtue to encourage each other, focus the mind, and sever the attachment to all actions. When the mind is free of defilements, and when one achieves stillness and quietude, one will meet the true nature of things and will be liberated from all suffering, ultimately attaining the unchanging joy of the Way. Therefore, the sutra says: "The path to extinguishing suffering is the true path, and there is no other path."

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The great sage said: "If a person is suffering from the disease of the six desires and seeks a teacher to receive the precepts, but after receiving the precepts, they do not observe them, will they recover from their illness?"

The great sage replied: "It is like someone who is suffering from a severe illness and seeks a skilled doctor and good medicine. The patient reads the prescription but does not take the medicine. What do you think? Will the illness be cured? The same applies to those who receive the precepts but do not keep them. If one does not eliminate the cause of the six desires, they will later inevitably fall into the sixty kinds of afflictions. These sixty afflictions will bind them and lead them through the cycle of birth and death, causing countless acts of violence and harm to their body."

o o o

Someone asked, "Where do these sixty kinds of afflictions (called 'chandālas') arise from?"

The great sage replied: "If one is attached to form, this leads to the arising of the six consciousnesses: feeling, perception, volition, and consciousness. If one is attached to sound, this also leads to the six consciousnesses. Similarly, attachment to smell, taste, touch, and mental phenomena all arise from the six consciousnesses: feeling, perception, volition, and consciousness. If there is attachment to worldly phenomena, this results in the same six consciousnesses. In total, if there is attachment to form, sound, smell, taste, touch, or mental phenomena, each of these attachments forms one unit. Combining these five attachments creates thirty 'chandālas' or afflictions.

If there is attachment to transcendental forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touch, or mental phenomena, this results in the same six consciousnesses. Again, when these attachments combine, they form thirty more 'chandālas' or afflictions. Therefore, in total, there are sixty kinds of afflictions.

What is meant by attachment to transcendental taste or touch? It means attachment to the desire for Nirvana, or the love of Dharma. These sixty afflictions should be avoided. A wise person should observe and carefully contemplate, ensuring that the mind does not become attached to the outside, the inside, or the middle. It should be like empty space, with no place of attachment. Only then will one be liberated from the suffering of birth and death and attain true Nirvana and eternal joy."

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Someone asked, "It is often said that performing good deeds leads to joy. Why is it that some people who practice good deeds end up poor and suffering?"

The great sage replied: "Many of these individuals are great bodhisattvas practicing compassion, widely helping others. They take on the suffering of others, enduring hardships with increasing resilience. They are not attached to worldly pleasures but are diligent in repentance. Their only wish is to give up their body to make offerings, and through this, to evoke the presence of the Buddhas.

Why is this so? It is because these bodhisattvas are acting for the benefit of beings who have just begun to develop their mind toward the Way. Their faith has not yet been firmly established, and they frequently encounter obstacles and hardships. Out of compassion, these bodhisattvas manifest these difficulties to help others strengthen their resolve and keep their path toward the Buddha's teachings unwavering. This is why the sutra speaks of repenting for past sins, not focusing on past liberation.

In essence, they bear their own suffering with compassion for the suffering of others."

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Someone asked, "It is often said that evil actions lead to suffering. Why is it that some people are born into wealth and ease, with prosperous families and descendants, even though they act wickedly?"

The great sage replied: "Those who gain wealth and status do not acquire it in just one lifetime. It is the result of their past lives, where they practiced generosity and performed good deeds. The reward for these actions manifests in this life as wealth, comfort, and happiness. Even though they may be wicked in this life, they do not immediately experience suffering.

It is like someone who has killed a hundred people. These hundred people harbor deep resentment and constantly wish to take revenge. However, the person is protected by a thousand others, and thus cannot be harmed. If one day, a thousand people leave, the hundred people could then kill the person, causing immeasurable suffering. The point is that the effects of past actions (whether good or bad) manifest in different ways and at different times."

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Someone asked, "Animals also have affection for their families. How does this compare to humans?"

The great sage replied: "Although animals differ in form and body, when it comes to attachment to life and fear of death, their feelings are the same as humans'. They too exhibit attachment and affection, not differing from humans. Now, people claim to have the wisdom to see the paths of birth, death, suffering, and joy, yet they create the causes of the five pains and five burnings. For endless eons and long nights, they endure suffering without rest, unaware of the way to truly escape it. Can such beings truly be called wise?"

o o o

The great sage also said to the people: "Why do people constantly suffer from the five pains and five burnings? It is because they themselves create the causes of these sufferings. It is like someone having five hundred iron spikes pierced into their body, experiencing pain day and night, unbearable and unendurable. Now, if we wish to remove these spikes and bring comfort and peace to the body and mind, without further suffering, what do you think? Do you wish to remove them gradually or all at once?"

What is meant by gradual removal? Some people take refuge in the Buddha, reciting the Three Refuges, and keep the non-killing precept, observing the six precepts on the full moon and new moon, eating only vegetables on those days. This is like removing one hundred spikes. Some people observe the Five Precepts of the Buddha, keeping the six precepts each month, eating only vegetables on those days. This is like removing two hundred spikes. Some people observe the Ten Good Precepts of the Buddha, keeping the six precepts each month, and three long fasts per year, eating only vegetables on those days. This is like removing three hundred spikes. Some people uphold the Sravaka Precepts of the Buddha, avoiding all evil actions and performing all good deeds, eating only vegetables, practicing the Way at all six times of the day. This is like removing four hundred spikes. Some people uphold the Bodhisattva Precepts of the Buddha, avoiding all evil actions, performing all good deeds, eating only vegetables, practicing the Way at all six times of the day, protecting the Dharma, not hesitating to give their life for it, promoting the holy teachings, and spreading the salvation of all beings. This is like removing five hundred spikes. This is what is meant by removing all at once.

Now, why do you, the virtuous ones, continue to indulge your hearts in evil deeds, leading to death and rebirth in the Three Lower Realms, suffering endlessly? If you can control your mind and practice good, at the end of your life, you will be reborn in the heavens, in a palace made of seven precious gems, with a beautiful appearance, distinguished and exceptional, with wealth and honor, free and at ease. Whatever you wish, your thoughts will manifest. You will have four cities with silver pools, treasure trees in gardens, and fragrant breezes. Gold branches and jade leaves will play heavenly music, bringing joy to the heart, and you will enjoy eternal happiness."

The verse:

"Tame the mind, and make it a cart,
To carry one to Brahmā's realm.
In Brahmā's palaces,
All shine with their own light.
Like the spring moon's radiance,
Pleasing to the heart,
Those who delight in this radiance,
Will forever be free from the dust of suffering."

The Biography of Fu Dashi

The Biography of the Great Sage of Compassionate Wisdom

The Great Sage of Compassionate Wisdom was a native of Yiwu County, Wuzhou. On the eighth day of the fifth month in the fourth year of the Jianwu era of the Qi dynasty (丁丑, 497 CE), he was born in Shuanglin Village to the family of Fu Xuanci. His original name was Xi. At the age of sixteen, he married Lady Liu, named Miaoguang, and had two sons, Pujian and Pucheng.

At twenty-four, while fishing with villagers at Ji Pavilion in Pulu, he caught something in his net, yet he submerged the basket in the water, saying, “That which leaves, let it go; that which stays, let it remain.” People considered him foolish.

At that time, a monk from India named Sengsong, a head-mendicant, approached him and said, “You and I once made vows before Vipashyin Buddha. Now, your robes and alms bowl await in the Tusita Palace. When will you return to claim them?”

The monk instructed him to gaze into the water, where he saw a radiant aura and a jeweled canopy. The Great Sage smiled and replied, “The forge abounds with crude iron, and the physician’s door is always crowded with the ill. Saving sentient beings is urgent—why long for that bliss?”

Sengsong pointed to the peak of Song Mountain and said, “This would be a suitable place for you to dwell.” The Great Sage settled there, cultivating the land with his own hands. When thieves stole beans, wheat, melons, and fruits from his fields, he simply handed them baskets and let them take more. By day, he labored; by night, he practiced the path.

One night, he beheld Shakyamuni, Golden Grain, and Dipankara—three Buddhas—radiating light that enveloped his body. He then declared, “I have attained the Śūraṅgama Samādhi.”

In the second year of Tianjia (561 CE), he beheld the Seven Buddhas following him: Shakyamuni leading ahead and Vimalakirti accompanying him from behind. Only the World-Honored One frequently turned to speak with him. He understood this as a sign of his future position as a successor.

Atop his mountain, golden clouds coiled like a canopy, leading it to be named Yunhuang (Yellow Cloud) Mountain.

Emperor Wu of Liang invited him to give a discourse on the Diamond Sutra. As soon as the Great Sage ascended the seat, he struck the lectern with a ruler and immediately stepped down. The emperor was astonished.

Master Zhigong asked, “Does Your Majesty understand?”

The emperor replied, “I do not.”

Zhigong said, “The Great Sage has finished expounding the sutra.”

On another day, as the Great Sage was in the midst of a discourse, the emperor arrived. The entire assembly rose to their feet—except for the Great Sage, who remained seated and motionless.

A court attendant reported, “His Majesty is present—why do you not rise?”

The Great Sage replied, “If the ground of the Dharma were to shift, all would be unstable.”

One day, the Great Sage donned a patched robe, a crown on his head, and straw sandals, and he went to court.

The emperor asked, “Are you a monk?”

The Great Sage pointed to his crown.

The emperor asked, “Are you a Daoist?”

The Great Sage pointed to his sandals.

The emperor asked, “Are you a layman?”

The Great Sage pointed to his patched robe.

(The remainder of this biography contains identical copies of poems already translated in this book)

The Engraved Record of Master Fu

Since ancient times, many wise and virtuous individuals have been beings of the Bodhisattva realm, compassionate towards all sentient beings. Thus, they have ridden upon the great power of their vows, descending into the human world to demonstrate and promote the Dharma. Without defilement, they manifest in the image of noble elders, or, in a more auspicious form, as scholars in the Confucian tradition. These deeds are certainly verifiable.

The Great Sage Shanhui, born as a true child of compassion, is positioned to assist in the Bodhisattva path. His influence reaches beyond the vast forests, and he manifests his various forms in the realm of the human world. His transformative powers are boundless, not subject to the ordinary limitations of the world. The ancient praise says, "The Way surpasses Confucian teachings and integrates Buddhist practices, uniting the three schools into one family. Forget the heavenly path and sit idly in the Dual Forest awaiting the Lotus of the Dharma." His deeds are recorded in the text.

When I was a young student, I once visited [a place] and listened to the collective teachings of the Four Schools. Among them, I came across the records of this text, particularly the one detailing the transmission of Master Hui Yue from the Liang Dynasty. I then realized that such a book existed. Though it was far from reach, I eventually obtained a version from a distant source. Sadly, the book was damaged, and many words were obscured. I worried about it deeply. Recently, however, I found another copy and, after comparing the two versions, the meaning became clearer. I added the national language to aid comprehension and decided to have it printed and circulated. Still, I regret that some words remain lost or unclear in certain places. I hope that future readers will be able to fill in the missing parts with a good version.

In the seventh year of the Yuanlu period, on the eighth day of the twelfth month, the inheritor of the lineage, Bhikkhu Bo Ying Tai, wrote this at the Da Ying Chan Monastery.

Dashi Fu Inscription

The Bodhisattva Precepts disciple, attending the Minister of the Interior and the Left Minister of the Secretariat, overseeing the Grand Writings, Marquis of the Kingdom of Jianchang, Duke of Donghai, Xu Ling, respectfully commissioned by Imperial Decree

The truly virtuous person has no self. They humble themselves and follow the teachings. The sage has no name. Their public actions conceal their traces. Therefore, Vimalakīrti took on the appearance of a layman, and Manjushri sometimes appeared as a Confucian scholar. He traveled to offer sacrifices at the River, and was known as a lay practitioner, while being an accomplished practitioner of the dharma. The great teachings mention that when the Dharma wheel turns, the words of the great scriptures are passed on, upholding the esteemed position. Thus, their spiritual powers and transformations are beyond imagination.

The Venerable Master, named Fu, from the county of Wushang in Dongyang, was a person of this county. In the past, Yanxi's Yun De and Weipu's Chengxiang were both blessed by Heaven. Their birth brought great auspicious signs, and their careers were full of success. They were recognized for their deeds and gained a great reputation, known in the region. Their family remained prosperous, and they contributed to the flourishing of the West Jin dynasty. He was born into a good family, entrusted with divine tasks.

As for his previous life and actions, or the causes behind them, his children, Chang and Yun, have recorded the family's genealogy. It is said that he was a Bodhisattva of the higher realm, sent by the Buddha, the true son of Shakyamuni, and this is the title of Maitreya. Even though the teachings of the Huāyán school were spread across three meetings, the path of Huāyán was not yet established. In a thousand-foot cliff, the transformation of the mountains and rivers was still distant. Yet, through manifestation in this world, he guided sentient beings. Every manifestation has its own origin, and the responses are not fixed.

According to the "Water Sutra," Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva has five hundred bodies in this world of Jambudvīpa, appearing in the form of ordinary beings to teach and save sentient beings. Similarly, Maitreya Bodhisattva also has five hundred bodies in Jambudvīpa, showing various forms to benefit all beings. Thus, his true nature and his transformations are hard to detail.

He is highly respected, and his filial piety is exemplary. His actions are rooted in respect and ritual, with his words based on loyalty and trustworthiness. He carried himself with dignity, a clear and noble presence, and exerted influence on his family and friends, harmonizing and resolving disputes. His reputation for virtue spread far and wide.

In his career, his integrity shone brightly, his conduct guided by the principle of reverence. Even in the governance of the people, he acted as an example of nobility and righteousness, worthy of high esteem. In the same year, he withdrew into seclusion once again, retreating to the Song Mountain's Shuanglin Temple. He renounced affection and attachments, not mingling with the court of the Liang dynasty. He bade farewell to his elderly relatives, as if parting forever like Su Xian did.

He focused on self-cultivation in the remote valleys, abstaining from grains and eating only simple meals, living a pure life.

The governor, Wang Xiu, thought this behavior to be deceptive, so he sent a local assistant to keep watch over him. For nearly ten days, he was without food. Eventually, the people from both the local area and beyond were ashamed and came to rely on him, seeking refuge in the mountains. They followed his path, embracing his spiritual presence.

He also recorded his thoughts, saying: "The seven Buddhas and the ten directions all manifested. The Buddha pressed his head in blessing, offering deep teachings. When the bell rang at the correct time in the temple, the sound echoed with the Dharma, and deities and immortals from the emptiness of space came to practice the Way together. What the ordinary people saw was like a clenched fist within which there was strange fragrance. His chest often displayed golden light."

At this time, a monk from Xinan County, Monk Shu, along with other monks, came from afar to observe his transformation. As they were preparing to respectfully greet him, they suddenly saw the great teacher's body appear over ten feet tall. They were shocked and humbled, and immediately approached to bow in reverence. After completing their salutations, they saw him as he usually appeared. Other monks, including Zhi Xie and the laywoman Qian Manyuan, were amazed by his unusual demeanor. Some saw his feet grow two feet long, with fingers measuring more than five inches, and his eyes shining brightly. His pupils radiated a golden glow, resembling coins in their brilliance. It was like seeing the majestic stature of the ancient sages, a figure who mirrored the footsteps of those divine figures.

His spiritual feats were well beyond the ordinary. His legs, much like those of a heavenly being, were as majestic as those described in ancient texts. His stature appeared to match the steps of the great sages of old. He then returned to his hometown, where he spread teachings and enlightened his family and friends. Everyone understood the importance of returning to the source and practicing the path of the Buddha. He even shaved his hair in public as an act of giving, and generously distributed his wealth, working together with others to cultivate pure merit.

The great teacher's resting place was in the serene Zen meditation retreat, alone in the high mountains. He planted a tall, beautiful tree in front of his dwelling, which came to be known as the "Tree of the Pound." The tree grew beside the cliff, like two locust trees growing near each other, offering shade and shelter, its roots intertwined. The tree stood strong and straight, unaffected by age or seasons, enduring both frost and snow, remaining green and vibrant in all seasons.

Faith can solidify all things, much like the Sala tree, which, having been guarded by the divine dragon, is now regarded as a symbol of transformation. At the foot of the mountain, below the ridges, the monastery was established, with high branches, which led to its naming as Shuanglin Temple. The great teacher also returned to his homeland, engaging in trade and commerce with his family, preparing for support and protection. He wrote and transcribed the sacred teachings, sometimes drawing circles in the sand, which all manifested into round fruits. Even a mustard seed monastery was humble but without doubt or flaw. He then constructed a nine-story brick pagoda, standing firm in form, with devout worship performed at all times, circled and revered with a sense of dedication.

He also spread the teachings of the Great Vehicle, the wisdom of the Dharma, and the sacred treasures of healing. He blessed the mountains and valleys with his words, wishing to spread the teachings across Dragon Village. His teachings brought enlightenment, and his work circulated widely. Later, he created five volumes of scriptures, over a thousand scrolls in total. He sold them with his children and honored the teachings with utmost sincerity, living a humble life, much like a person content with the modest things of life, offering teachings to lead others to enlightenment.

Regarding his profound spiritual insight, his empty mind and virtuous deeds were manifest in his actions, much like a chicken that hatches from an egg or a snake that strikes. No matter the disturbance, he remained undisturbed in deep meditation. His disciples respected him deeply, and his fellow scholars spoke highly of him. His compassion reached all beings, and his wisdom was impartial, transcending any political or sectarian divisions.

In the first year of the Great Unity, one hundred people, including the esteemed Fu Putong, came to the local magistrate, Fan Xu, and recommended him for his good deeds. Again, in the fourth year of Great Unity, three hundred people from the local elite, led by Fu Dexuan, came to the magistrate, Xiao Xu, to praise his virtues and deeds. Though they came from different backgrounds, their faith and support were unwavering. Yet, in this age, the common folk were often disillusioned and could not truly discern true wisdom. They eagerly sought quick fame, but in the end, their efforts resulted in disappointment and failure.

The founder of the Liang dynasty, Emperor Wu, revered and upheld the three treasures of the Buddha, expanding the influence of the Dharma and benefiting all living beings. His achievements were unparalleled, and his spiritual wisdom and grace were regarded as exemplary. He brought peace to his realm, much like the serenity of Chen Fan's quiet study.

Still harboring the heart of the world, Yi Yin plowed the fields himself, contemplating the path of the holy king. How much more so for me, with the wisdom of the sun and bright torch, like the wind's chariot, which can carry the weary boat to the other shore. Surely, I should illuminate and establish the right path for the ruler of the people.

Thus, on the 28th day of the first month in the 6th year of Great Unity, I sent my disciple Fu Putong to the capital to deliver a letter to the Emperor. The letter reads:

"Under the tree of Shuanglin, the future deliverer, the wise and compassionate Great Sage, the Bodhisattva who saves the world, humbly writes to the Lord of the Kingdom, requesting that the teachings on the Three Types of Goodness—Upper, Middle, and Lower—be accepted. The highest goodness is based on an empty heart, free from attachment, rooted in non-attachment, with delusions as the cause and Nirvana as the fruit. The middle goodness focuses on governing the body and mind, using that foundation to govern the country, leading to the peaceful happiness of both the heavens and the people. The lowest goodness is to protect and nourish all living beings, surpassing cruelty and killing, and to encourage the people to follow the six vegetarian days of fasting.

As the ruler of the Four Seas and all nations, living in the position of a king, it is essential to always maintain a proper, respectful attitude. At this time, the national teacher, the wise Dharma master, and the monks with good reputations spoke humbly and respectfully. Many scholars were skeptical of the writings of distant monks. The document was written in a modest, respectful tone, resembling the letter of the Duke of Yu. The great sage was not yet an elder, nor had he reached the status of a monk, but his teachings traveled far and wide.

Fu Putong arrived in the capital and presented the letter to the magistrate, He Chang, who had already made great vows. He swore on the royal road, burning his left hand as a gesture of sincerity. Through this, the request for recognition would surely be heard. He Chang submitted the letter to the monk Hao, the abbot of Tongtai Temple. The monk and the community of monks were well known, and upon seeing the letter, they rejoiced and encouraged him to present it formally."

The Emperor's heart was filled with joy. He quickly sent for the sage to come and meet him at the imperial residence. They discussed the scriptures together. The sage then settled near the North Gate in front of Tongtai Temple, close to the Southern Palace. He was invited to reside in seclusion, with provisions provided for his stay. Later, he moved to the foot of Zhong Mountain to settle at Dinglin Temple, where he spent his time exploring the caves and leaning against trees, meditating, and walking in peaceful contemplation. Famous monks and disciples from all over the capital gathered around him. They all presented their letters and robes, seeking guidance on Chan meditation. He lived in the shade of a tall pine tree, lying on a flat stone. Throughout his time there, the air was always filled with the sweet fragrance of dew, and for sixty days, it was said that the weather was blessed with heavenly wine rain. Was this not a sign of divine or celestial influence, a manifestation of auspicious signs?

The Emperor, at the Cloud Hall in Huā Lín Garden, personally opened the teaching on the Three Wisdoms and the Prajñā Sūtra. His inquiries delved deeply into the true essence of the teachings. The imperial hall, a place of the highest distinction, was surrounded by hundreds of dragons and elephants, with ministers, nobles, and officials in attendance. The Emperor commanded that the Great Master be given a special seat, opposite the imperial canopy, and four attendants were dispatched to receive the Master's words.

At the time, officials from the inner palace and court were present. Even Du Yu returned to court, and the imperial guards were near. The customary ceremonies were observed, and all officials were seated according to rank. Because the Great Master was a man of profound wisdom and great virtue, special honors were accorded to him. When the royal carriage ascended to the hall, it stopped before the steps. The Master sat calmly without rising, and the imperial officials asked him why he remained seated. The Master replied, "If the Dharma is disturbed, all dharmas will be unsettled. If I rise to answer, it would be a dissonance."

The Emperor, upon hearing this, was moved and recalled the teachings of ancient sages, comparing the Master to the great ones of the past. He then invited the Master to the Shouguang Hall to give a private lecture. There, the Master spoke on the profound teachings with words clear and profound, and his speech resonated like the harmonious sound of a stringed instrument. The meaning of his words was like the fragrant flowers, both elegant and deep, and they were akin to the wisdom of the Buddha.

The Emperor, having listened, deeply felt the wisdom of the Master and remarked that it was not just a simple lecture; it was a profound realization that could not be compared to the teachings found in the White Tiger Hall or the Golden Horse Gate. The Master foresaw the future and lamented the suffering of all beings, vowing to continue his work of rescuing them from their suffering. He vowed to close his breath and dedicate his food as offerings, not for the sake of fragrance but for the joy of meditation.

As a result, many of his disciples, including the laymen Xu Puba, Pan Pucheng, and others, sought to dedicate their lives in sacrifice, following the Master's example. Some even engaged in acts of self-mortification, such as burning their limbs or cutting their ears, as acts of devotion to their teacher. The Master continued to teach and guide them, fostering their spiritual growth in accordance with the profound teachings. These acts were inscribed on a memorial stone, recording the names and deeds of those who followed the Master's instructions.

The two great virtues that are honored are life. The beings of the six realms are solely governed by destiny. Though they are like dreams and illusions, they all eventually dissolve. It is love that causes delusion and passion, and only desire endures. Without skillful means or the enlightened wisdom of compassion, it is impossible to achieve rare and extraordinary deeds. How could one, for example, sacrifice one's body to serve spirits, hear half a verse of the Nirvana Sutra, sell marrow to offer to the heavens, and perform offerings to the Prajñā? If one is willing to sever the body and offer to the spirits, hearing half a verse of Nirvana is certainly a worthy act.

In his early years, the Great Master did not attend secular schools. With great virtue, he grasped the sacred texts on his own. He meditated in tranquility, reciting verses and discussing the Sutras. His learning was so vast that the oceans of knowledge seemed insufficient to contain it. He explained the teachings of the Vimalakīrti Sūtra and the Mahāyāna Sūtras, which were received and practiced by his disciple, the bhikshu Zhì Càn. Having completed his work of teaching and guiding, the Master passed into Nirvana in the first year of the Taiji period. His final moments were tranquil, and he lay peacefully in his bed. His appearance was calm, with no signs of discomfort or illness.

The local magistrate, Chen Zhōngqí, went to pay his respects, and even after his passing, his body remained radiant. His disciples, filled with sorrow, followed his last instructions, which were to preserve his body in accordance with the traditional rites of the Sangha. A stupa was erected over his tomb, one with a statue of Maitreya in his honor. His disciples deeply mourned his passing and followed his last instructions carefully.

They honored his legacy, inscribed on the steles, which conveyed the righteous virtues and wisdom of the Master, and the inscription read:

“His virtue was steadfast and pure, his wisdom vast, and his teachings profound. He is the guide to the path of liberation.”

Great is the authority and influence,
Tiring is the journey through time.
At times appearing as a merchant,
At times as a national teacher.
Humble, like a skillful craftsman,
Bowing, as a wise physician.
Ah, the great sage!
Such things are difficult to fathom.

The future will see liberation,
Continuing the legacy of the Buddha.
The mysterious path remains secret,
The right moment has not yet come.
Not descending to the rooster's nest,
Rather opening the wolf's trace.
Relocating to the northern lands,
Settling at Eastern Mountain.

Noble lineage of the Southern Hills,
Rooted in the lan stone of the clan.
The origin cannot be fathomed,
Only its traces can be observed.
Far is the realm of lotus,
The heart is clear, the world is vast.
Clearly revealing the depths of suffering,
The mirror of emptiness is beyond measure.

Drawing from the three realms,
Moving through the six powers.
Starting with hidden seclusion,
Resting in the forest grove.
Living on what is gathered,
Fasting as the wind blows,
Revering the precious stupa,
Seeking refuge in the sacred image.

Not like the heavenly sage,
Personally present in the abode,
The light of wisdom ever shines,
The lamp of compassion so bright.
Buddha and Brahma,
Morning and evening, coming and going,
Acting with diligence in the Dharma,
Speaking of wisdom with clarity.

Excellence in virtue,
Expanding far-reaching winds,
Coming with noble presence,
Respectfully receiving the bright light.
Unseen words of logic,
Deep in speech, without birth,
Striking the bell, like an argument,
Beating the drum, humbling the brave.

Delighting in heavenly discussions,
Who can compare to the capital?
Suddenly revealing the immortal hand,
Marking the divine foot.
The appearance is radiant as sandalwood,
The fragrance surpasses betel.
I have boundaries,
According to circumstances, moving and still.

Swearing to destroy the body's fortress,
Opening the prison of the heart,
Suddenly appearing like bubbles,
Gone like wind and candles.
Door students calling,
Taking the master as one's parent,
Rather burning the ungraspable,
Not lighting incense on wood.

Gathering in caves for burial,
Piling the tomb for cover,
Mount Meru rises from the sea,
Turning into ashes, scattering dust.
The Pure Land is unbroken,
The spiritual presence is truly itself,
When will the stupa rise?
When shall the whole body be seen again?

On the 5th of July in the 7th year of the Taijian era (with the heavenly year of Gui Si),
This was constructed at the White Mountain of the capital.

The Record of the Pearl Left Behind

In Zhejiang, the East Division, under the jurisdiction of the Governor General of Military Affairs in the Yuezhou region, the official title being Zhengyi Daifu Shi Chi Jie (the Acting Official with Full Authority), and the title of Shou Yuezhou (Governor of Yuezhou), was a man named Yuan Zhi. His title was given by the imperial court with purple gold fish bag as a gift, and he presented the record.

From the Liang Dynasty to the Chen Dynasty, the place was called Wuzhou, originally known as Yiwuxian in the East, later renamed Dongyang Wushang District. The people of the district were led by Fu Xi, also known by the name Xuánfēng, who was the son-in-law of Liu Jianguo. He married Liu Yuanguang and they had two sons. At the age of twenty-four, he was still working as a fisherman when he met the strange monk, Song, who said, "You are the transformation of Maitreya. Why do you continue to fish?"

Following this advice, he looked into the water and saw a round light with a strange appearance. The Westerners' concept of Buddha originated in such strange events. One day, he entered Song Mountain, sitting beneath two great trees. He proclaimed himself as the future Buddha to be liberated beneath the twin trees of the forest. After some time, he sold his wife and children in order to offer donations for the monastic life. Many from distant and near places came to follow him.

During the reign of the Liang Emperor Da Tong, he received a letter from Emperor Wu, summoning him to the capital. Hearing of his strange and miraculous deeds, the Emperor ordered the local officials to bring Fu Xi to the capital. Upon his arrival, he had a large wooden club with him, which no one was able to interpret. When he arrived and knocked on the gate, all the gates opened without hesitation.

The Emperor was astonished. On another day, he sat on a Dharma platform. When the Emperor arrived, Fu Xi did not rise to greet him. Despite not knowing how to read, Fu Xi's speeches and debates were extraordinary and remarkable.

The Emperor once presented a large pearl, capable of emitting water and fire, akin to the sun and moon. At the beginning of the Chen Taijian era, Fu Xi passed away at the Shuanglin Temple, which was located at the foot of two great trees under which he used to sit, hence the temple's name. Fu Xi was known for many miraculous and extraordinary occurrences, much like the "inconceivable" phenomena mentioned in Buddhist scriptures. His biography was recorded in full by the former advanced scholar, Lou Ying, in seven volumes. Additionally, the court official Xu Ling wrote inscriptions on the temple stele.

After Fu Xi's death, his disciples, including Bodhi, requested many royal officials and high-ranking ministers to act as protectors of the Dharma. When Chen Houzhu became the emperor, he also honored their requests. Among those who helped were Marshal Hou An, and later, Lu Xi of the Tang Dynasty, making a total of one hundred seventy-five individuals. Each of them wrote their names and pledged their support with sincerity.

During the Baoli era, I arrived in Yuewu, where I was appointed as the governor. While there, I inquired about the true accounts of Fu Xi's life from the monks of the Shuanglin Temple. They handed over the royal edicts and the thirteen scrolls of the stelae, along with the water-fire pearl, the door-knocking club, and the Buddha statue made from woven fabric. A great flood suddenly arrived with these items.

I returned the pearl, the club, and the Buddha statue, keeping the writings of the two emperors, along with the names of Marshal Hou An and the others. I carefully stored them, intending to preserve and share them with those who appreciate ancient history. This will also serve as a lasting tribute to the legacy of Fu Xi. As for the items abandoned and left in the desolate mountain, they were not worth preserving. There is no concession in the principle of truth; I have taken these items and offered them as gifts. I will inscribe the account on the temple stone, corresponding to their rightful place. The most significant of these is the return of the pearl, and so I named it "The Record of the Returned Pearl."

The 20th of October, Year Two.

In the third year of Kaicheng, December, the esteemed Dharma teacher Huiyuan of Qingcen and Yongqing sent the items back for safekeeping.

Notice by Lou Zhao

In the year of Renxu, during the Shaoxing era, at the Baolin Temple, the Great Master Dingguang, Yuan Zhan, carried the work written by the Tang scholar Lou Ying.

The "Record of the Compassionate Wisdom Great Sage" was presented to me. I, with great care, read through it. However, I found the language verbose and somewhat crude, which would not be sufficient for widespread circulation. Furthermore, as time has passed, some parts may have become outdated. Therefore, I decided to revise it. The text has been corrected and compiled into four volumes. It fully covers the life and teachings of the Great Sage, including his praises and hymns. Additionally, some of the like-minded individuals of the time have added their thoughts at the end.

This work was completed in the 13th year of Shaoxing, in the third month, on the full moon.

Written by Lou Zhao, the Zizheng Dian Scholar, Left Chancellor, and Director of the Shaoxing Military Affairs, who was also appointed as the East Zhejiang Region Peacekeeping Commissioner.

Notice of Longjin Revisions

In the past, the Great Master Dingguang Yuan Zhan was in charge of Baolin Temple. He presented the Record of the Compassionate Wisdom Great Sage, written by the Tang country scholar Lou Ying, in eight volumes, to the East Zhejiang Peacekeeping Commissioner, Lou Gong Zhao. Lou Gong found the text verbose and its language crude, and noted that the years had brought some errors. He then condensed it into four volumes. The record covers the entire journey of the Great Sage, from beginning to end, and includes the praises and hymns he composed. This was done in the spring of the 13th year of Shaoxing, in the third month.

Now, the abbot of Baolin Temple, Buddha Day Master, Jing Kai, presented this text to me. I still lament that the edited version was incomplete. I wished to re-edit it, but due to illness, I have been unable to do so. Meanwhile, the scholar Longjin, known as the Recluse of Longjin, also felt that Lou Ying's writing was too verbose and did not sufficiently clarify deep, difficult concepts. Therefore, Longjin revised and refined the work, further writing out the meanings more clearly.

Li Zhongding, a scholar from Liangxi, read this revised version and was pleased. He composed a verse to praise Longjin and Lou Gong. The work was well-received by people of the time, even though not everyone had the chance to see it.

I have thus recorded this event at the end of the volume and entrusted it to the lucky visit of Buddha Day to further investigate the original of Longjin's work and make copies. While I have not been able to make further revisions as I had hoped, I am not deeply regretful.

Zhizhe Dashi

Zhizhe Dashi, whose family name was Lou, was given the personal name Lingcan and the courtesy name Desu. He was from Zhushan in Wushang County. When he was born, his skin was bright and radiant, unlike that of an ordinary infant, so he was named accordingly. His eighth-generation ancestor, Jun, served in the state of Wu, rising to the position of a scattering cavalry attendant. He was the younger brother of Xuanzhi, a distinguished official. Jun's son, Zhi, was a general known for his military prowess, and Zhi's son, Yin, served as a magistrate of Kang Le. From Yin, a lineage of officials continued, and the family was renowned for its virtuous reputation.

At the beginning of his life, the mother of Zhizhe, Lady Liu, had a dream in which a tall figure held a golden statue and instructed her to swallow it. She also saw purple light enter the house, encircling her body several times, which made her feel heavy. Shortly afterward, she became pregnant and gave birth to Zhizhe. On the day he was born, the room was filled with light, and a divine fragrance filled the air. At six years old, Zhizhe's wisdom began to show. While playing with other children, he would often build high seats with bricks or create sand sculptures of Buddha towers.

There was a fruit orchard to the south of their home, and when the fruit ripened, the children would come and fight over it. Zhizhe, however, would divide his share among the other children. His uncle, who was fond of hunting, would bring home animals and butcher them. The children would gather to watch, but Zhizhe never did. When asked why, he replied, "The deer in the grass each seek their own survival, but my uncle chases and kills them. It pains my heart to see this." His family then offered him some of the meat, but Zhizhe refused to eat it, saying, "Though it is not killed by my uncle, the suffering is the same, whether on land or in water." His family, touched by his words, stopped forcing him to eat.

Zhizhe's mother, Lady Liu, was also moved by his actions and did not eat either. Zhizhe was deeply compassionate toward all living beings. He always mourned the death of silkworms, symbolizing the endless cycle of life and death, so he vowed not to wear silk throughout his life. His family had long followed the way of Tao, and when Zhizhe was young, he suddenly told his parents, "I wish to serve the Buddha." His parents, surprised, asked him, "Your family has followed the Tao for generations. How do you alone know of the Buddha?" Zhizhe replied, "My heart knows this to be true."

At eight years old, he encountered a wandering monk passing by their door asking for a drink. Zhizhe, happy to serve, gave him the drink and wanted to ask about the Dharma. But before he could, the monk raised his hand and pointed to the East, saying, "In the area of Shan, there is the Buddha's Dharma." Zhizhe was curious, but before he could ask further, the monk was gone. He then asked his parents, "Where is Shan?" He described the monk, and his family was astonished. They searched for the monk, but he was nowhere to be found. They told Zhizhe, "Shan is over two hundred miles away, and there are many places of Buddha's teachings." Zhizhe asked his parents for permission to go, but they did not allow it since he was still young. When he turned twelve, they agreed.

Once Zhizhe reached Shan, he traveled to various temples, staying for a year without returning home. His family supported his pursuit of the Dharma and no longer forbade him. Zhizhe then delved into the scriptures and teachings of Buddhism. His understanding grew, and both laypeople and monks alike showed him respect, calling him "the lay practitioner." He composed a verse:

"Young and wise in the principles of the Tao, the lay practitioner Lou,
Stayed in Shan for six years, and at seventeen, he decided to become a monk."

He returned home to bid farewell to his family and friends and to persuade his uncle, who was still deeply involved in hunting, to abandon it. His uncle pretended to agree but did not truly accept. That night, Zhizhe's uncle had a dream in which a red-clad messenger appeared with several strongmen, each holding a spear. The messenger said, "You must not harm living beings. The Bodhisattva has advised you. Why do you refuse?" The messenger then raised his weapon as if to strike. The uncle awoke in fear, feeling a sense of great unease. In the morning, he hurried to see Zhizhe and asked him to destroy his hunting equipment. Zhizhe was pleased and took his uncle to the place where he hunted. This area was called Jiao Tian, and there were more than ten deer on the mountain. As they walked through the green grass, Zhizhe stopped, clapped his hands, and said, "May you live long in the deep mountains and open wilderness, without further hunting." The deer then hesitated, wandering around as though reluctant to leave. The power of Zhizhe's virtue was evident in how it moved the animals.

Zhizhe returned to Shan. In the fourth year of Taishi, he went to the Dongshan Temple in Shangyu, shaved his head, and formally entered the monastic life, receiving the Dharma name Huiyue. He was a disciple of Bhikkhu Hui Jing, a monk from Wuxing, Yuhang, whose original surname was Shao. Hui Jing was a disciple of Master Ye of Nanjing's South Lin Temple. Hui Jing had clear and profound knowledge, and was a renowned monk during the Song Dynasty, known for writing the Ming Yuan Fo Xing Lun (Treatise on the Origin of Buddha Nature). He was highly respected in the world. Hui Jing took Master Huiyue back to Tianzhu Temple in Shanyin, and later they both lived together at the Brahma Meditation Temple. They then moved to Xitai Temple, where they taught the Dharma, studied scriptures, and marveled at the mountains and waters. Wherever they went, they would gather wild fruits and prepare them for medicinal use. Hui Jing highly praised Master Huiyue, saying, "It's not just my voice and teachings that will endure, but your contributions to the flourishing of Buddhism—who else but you?"

After Hui Jing entered nirvana, Master Huiyue returned to Tianzhu, continuing his studies of the Lotus Sutra and other profound teachings, exploring their deep meanings. During the reign of King Wenxuan of Qi, the king, hearing of Master Huiyue's virtuous reputation, deeply respected him. Some monks, including Bhikkhu Zhixiu, also shared the same high esteem and gathered with the king, who treated Master Huiyue with special honor, which made some monks uneasy. The king remarked, "This venerable one is not just a monk of the present, but a leader of the entire Buddhist community." The monks, seeing the king's high regard, relented.

At that time, Zhou Yong, the governor of Shan State, was a scholar who deeply admired Buddhism and revered Master Huiyue's virtue. The master also respected Zhou's deep commitment to a life of retreat. Eventually, Master Huiyue left Shan and met with Zhou, establishing a deep mutual respect. When Zhou left his post, Master Huiyue accompanied him to the capital city of Cao Tang Temple, where he was invited to give lectures on the Pure Name Sutra and the Victory Jewel Sutra. Later, when Zhou fell ill, he was bedridden, and Master Huiyue visited him. Zhou, while asleep, had a dream in which a Bodhisattva appeared. Upon awakening, he sent for Master Huiyue, and after receiving his presence, his health gradually improved. This event caused great admiration, and the family respected the master as a living miracle.

Afterward, Zhou was appointed Minister of the Imperial Household. He issued a decree to have Master Huiyue reside at the provincial temple. During this time, Wang Jian, the Left Chancellor, also admired Buddhism. After Zhou passed away, he continued to honor Master Huiyue's presence at the provincial temple. Later, Wang Jian was appointed governor of Danyang, and Master Huiyue moved to the county seat. He taught the Lotus Sutra and Great Perfection in the highest regard. When people asked the master why, despite his high position, he accepted such invitations, Master Huiyue replied, "I, a poor monk, gladly accept, as this brings joy, without concern for worldly matters."

Zhou Yong, upon hearing this, remarked, "The master's presence is where the Dharma resides, bringing benefits to all beings. His influence extends across the world. He is as crucial as a ruler who guides all within his realm. The king's respect for him comes from his ability to teach and transform the world, and that is why he rejoices." Master Huiyue's heart was dedicated to the bodhisattva path, and he did not value worldly status or seek recognition from the court.

In Qi, there was a man named Lou Youyu, a relative of the master, who was renowned for his Confucian scholarship. Although advanced in age, he always rose to show respect when he met the master. When asked about the master, Youyu would reply, "This person is a Bodhisattva incarnate, a teacher for all the world. How could I, an old man, compare?" People often laughed, calling the master a Bodhisattva, following Youyu's words. However, Wang Jian and Zhou Yong believed Youyu's words to be true.

After Wang Jian passed away, the master returned to his cottage. Zhou Yong, at the time the Prince's servant, was a close friend of Wu Xing's Shen Yue, who also frequented the East Palace. It was here that Yue first met the master. They frequently lamented together, saying that even Dao An and Hui Yuan could not be compared to him. Yue often said to the master, "I admire you deeply. My respect is truly sincere, but the master's humility is beyond what disciples can achieve. This humility is praiseworthy. Please, never forget it." The master replied, "I, a poor monk, simply follow the rules of fasting, bow to the Buddha, and do what I can. How could anything be difficult? In the past, the two kings, Zhu Wang and the officials, always provided for me. If you hold such a position, you would be able to ask for anything, and I would certainly comply." Yue replied, "If the master speaks this way, it seems that there is no fate for me in this lifetime."

Initially, after the master's parents passed away, their graves had not been properly maintained, and the master planned to return east to reburied them. In the first year of Longchang, he began his preparations and set off. At the same time, Shen Yue was appointed the governor of Dongyang. Hearing of the master's plans, he accompanied him by boat. Upon arriving in the region, they made the funeral arrangements with great respect, and the tomb was completed. The master then traveled to Mount Jinhua, where he resided at the Red Pine Pavilion, gathering herbs and medicines. At that time, there was a Taoist, Ding Dejing, who had retreated to this mountain. He was troubled by mountain spirits. Later, while intoxicated, Dejing fell asleep, and a venomous snake bit his foot, killing him. The mountain, though inhabited by Taoists, was troubled by spirits and snakes, and no one could remain there. The county magistrate, Xu Bochao, hearing of this, remarked that the harm was caused by Taoists not cultivating properly. He decided to investigate and, with Yue, asked the master to move to the mountain and purify the place. The master accepted, and they moved to the mountain.

After residing there for a while, the master was resting one day when he suddenly saw two young women dressed in blue, with graceful features, singing as they held hands and emerged from the water. The master, slowly rising, began to sit upright and prepare for meditation. The master then spoke to them, saying, "You two spirits have been harassing here for a long time, but this place is now under my jurisdiction. How dare you come here?" He then taught them the Dharma, and the women accepted, bowed, and departed. From that point on, no more strange or disturbing phenomena occurred in the temple.

The master stayed in the temple for over a year, refraining from eating grains and only consuming mulberry seeds. When Shen Yue was replaced, he followed him out of the city and returned to his cottage at the Grass Hall Temple. In the first year of Tianjian, when Yue was appointed to the post of Minister of the Imperial Secretariat, he issued an imperial decree requesting that the master reside in the capital. Yue then respectfully greeted the master, saying, "The words of the Grass Hall have now come true." The master smiled and replied, "As Zichan once said, 'Excessive speech may be trusted.'"

Yue responded, "I never expected this honor to come to me. This blessing was beyond my expectations. Could this not be the work of the Buddha?" His respect and devotion grew stronger. Yue was later appointed as the Minister of the Imperial Secretariat, and the master continued to stay at the capital, dedicating himself to teaching the Dharma.

One day, two white bats appeared above the east gate of Grass Hall Temple, with beautiful fur. The monks said to one another, "These are the medicinal creatures that immortals often use. We have never seen them before. Surely this is a good omen for the master." They caught the bats and presented them to the master. After looking at them carefully for a long time, the master said, "I have been taking herbs and plant roots for decades and have never felt the need for such creatures. Now, for the sake of longevity, if I were to consume these creatures, it would be a violation of the compassionate heart towards sentient beings. Even if I could prolong my life, I will not harm them for my own benefit." He then released the bats back into the wild.

Soon after, two heads appeared beneath the beams of the master's room. The master chanted a mantra and sent them away, as he had done with the bats. After that, they were never seen again.

Later, when Yue became the governor of Danyang, he invited the master to stay in the province to receive offerings. Yue visited the master one day, feeling uneasy. Looking up at the roof, he said, "In the past, when King and Duke Chu were offering to the master, they were both governors of the capital. Now, as a disciple, I have been able to continue their legacy. Will the master still accept my invitation to stay in this house?" The master stared at him for a long time before answering, "The benefactor's past lives accumulated merit, and now he is reaping the reward. As for me, though I have not yet attained Nirvana in this world, I am still serving the needs of sentient beings. The time for my proper enlightenment has not yet arrived. Another opportunity will come, and it may not be in this place."

Yue replied, "Will I ever be able to see the master again?" The master responded, "Not at this time." Yue, pointing to his guest, Sheng Feng, said, "He will take care of things in my absence."

At a young age, he did not see the master. When asked about it, he answered, "I have not seen him." He did not seem happy and left. In that year, Yue passed away, and the master returned to stay at the Grass Hall Temple. In the following year, Sheng Feng passed away. Sheng Feng was a man from Nandong, who practiced the Way diligently and had many profound experiences. He was known to Shen Yue. When he fell ill, his disciples offered him medicine, but he replied, "Why take this? Master Yue has already said it was ineffective. I will not recover." A few days later, he passed away. In the 11th year of the Tianjian era, Emperor Wu invited the master for a meeting and honored him greatly. The master always attended the ritual and lectures in the back hall. The Emperor often discussed the Dharma with him, engaging in pure and profound conversations. These discussions were frequent, both day and night, and the Emperor showed great admiration and trust in the master, unmatched by others.

The Emperor planned to receive the Bodhisattva precepts and chose to follow the teachings of the master, investigating the precepts and observing their practice. At that time, the great monks from all directions gathered. The master's teachings were widely accepted. On the 29th of February in the 18th year, the Emperor issued an imperial decree that the master would receive the Bodhisattva precepts on the 8th of April. A grand event was arranged at the residence of Lady Du to set up a ceremony where monks and nuns would gather to offer food to thousands of monks in the Huaguang Hall. The offerings also included prayers for the Emperor, the Earth, the state, and various deities, alongside a charitable ceremony to release animals and help the poor. On that day, an imperial decree was issued at 4 AM, and the Emperor entered through the south gate to the meeting hall, where the ceremony began. The Emperor declared:

"The Brahma Net Sutra says that those who sit on the throne of an emperor should first receive the Bodhisattva precepts. Therefore, as the emperor, possessing wealth and power over the four seas, I should cultivate my own conduct and mind, and promote good governance. While I sit and reflect, I deeply contemplate my path. I vow to take the Bodhisattva precepts, for without a compassionate heart and the practice of equality, how can I observe sentient beings as my children? Thus, I take these precepts with the intention to share this joy with all beings, and for the benefit of the entire world."

On this day, the master received the Bodhisattva precepts in the Dharma Hall, performing the Eight Precepts ritual and holding a grand assembly. Over 100,000 people, both the court and the commoners, gathered for the ceremony. The offerings, incense, flowers, and music were magnificent, marking a ceremony like none before. The Emperor wished the master to show a divine appearance before receiving the precepts. He then summoned the Four-word Teacher. At that moment, more than a thousand monks gathered, but none could lead the ceremony, so they all turned to the master. The master composed a poem and said, "I hope the Emperor becomes a Buddha."

In the afternoon, as the Emperor was about to receive the precepts, he bowed to the master and asked, "Master, please keep this secret from others." At that moment, the master joined his palms and entered a bathing vessel. After a while, he transformed into a five-colored cloud and emerged. While in the vessel, he sat in the lotus position, and in an instant, his form returned to its original state. He then addressed the Emperor, saying, "I, the poor monk, transformed into the vessel. Please keep this secret from others." The master then taught the Emperor and gave him the precepts in front of the Buddha in the Dharma Hall. The Emperor received the blessings of the Field of Merit and the robe of virtue.

The master, after receiving the precepts, sat facing the Buddha to receive them. Once the precepts were completed, the Emperor personally performed the disciple's rite. The Emperor addressed the master as "Zhashi" (a title of respect), while referring to him as "Zhizhe" (the wise one) in his conversations with his officials. On another occasion, when the master entered the inner hall, a lacquered bed was placed at the eastern side. The master approached the bed and stood, but the Emperor first made a respectful bow before sitting down together with the master.

Afterward, the Crown Prince, noblemen, and all subjects in the country showed utmost respect to the master. The queens and concubines of the six palaces also studied under him. Monks from the capital, along with civilians and officials, received the precepts, and a total of 48,000 people were recorded as having been liberated by the Dharma.

At the time of the master's first ordination, a crow flew up the stairs, unafraid, and after the ordination, it departed. Two peacocks also attempted to ascend the stairs but were unable to fly. They walked up to the ordination platform, bowing their necks as if to listen to the Dharma. The Emperor remarked, "These birds must wish to attain liberation and will now receive another fruit." Several days later, both peacocks died at the same time.

At the beginning, a filial official in the county, Lou Dao, who was the master's clan uncle, was over 80 years old during the reign of Emperor Qianming. He recalled, "When I was young, I always accompanied the master's great-grandfather to rest by his tomb. I once heard a tomb guide say that later generations of this family would have a great ascetic who would attain the Way and become a teacher to the king. At that time, I doubted such a possibility, as our descendants were mainly fond of hunting." Thirty years later, the master was born, and his extraordinary birth became a confirmation of the earlier prophecy. As the master grew, his wisdom was clear, and even in writing, he reached high standards.

He often consulted with King Xiangdong and had a good relationship with Fan Ben. When Fan Ben passed away, the master went to his funeral and composed a poem to express his sorrow.

The master wrote a poem expressing his deep sorrow:

"I have shed a few tears, not falling for over ten years. Today, I shed them for you, mixed with the autumn wind before me."

This poem spread throughout the world and became highly esteemed. Later, the master diligently studied the scriptures and deeply realized the truth of non-birth. The worldly expressions seemed insignificant to him and were not worth engaging with.

In the fourth year of the Da Tong era, the master dreamed of his old residence, with its vermilion gates and white walls. Upon waking, he resolved to convert the place into a temple and requested permission to build it. He named it "Ben Sheng Si" (Temple of Original Birth), as it was where he was born. Additionally, he ordered that the area around his home, Zhushan, be renamed "Zhizhe Li" (Wise Man's Village).

In the autumn of the first year of Da Tong, in the eighth month, the master sensed that his time was nearing. He had someone cut down the branches of a tree at the temple gate, saying, "The palanquin will arrive soon; these branches are in the way." On the sixth of the following month, he fell ill and lay on his right side facing north. He told his disciples, "I dreamt of the four great assemblies of flags and flowers coming to greet me. I ascended into the air and left. The blessings here will soon end."

By the sixteenth of the month, he commanded his attendant, Xu Yan, to inquire about his condition. The master said, "I will leave tonight." In the early morning, there was a sweet fragrance filling the room. The master told his disciples, "Life is bound by the natural laws. You must keep your hearts steady with wisdom, and not be distracted by wandering thoughts." After finishing these words, he passed away at the age of 84.

On that day, the emperor and his ministers came to attend the funeral. Before his illness, the master had dreamt of an old man with disheveled hair and holding a staff. He told someone, "You see this, but do not move the hinge today." The monks discussed where to bury him and decided on the eastern cliff of the temple. On the 29th of the month, he was buried on Du Long Mountain, next to the tomb of the Bodhisattva Bao Zhi. This confirmed that the old man seen in his dream was indeed the master, Zhi Gong.

When the master was near death, his usual mount, a blue ox, suddenly let out a great roar. His tears flowed without cease, and he refused to drink or graze. Day and night, he cried. At the time of his passing, the ox roared again as it had before. When the burial took place, the procession was accompanied by constant weeping and cries. On the day the tomb was built, two white swans appeared and flew around, crying and circling the area. They appeared tame and friendly, like domestic fowl. After three days, they disappeared.

In the third year of the Da Tong era, the emperor commanded that a ritual be held to summon the soul, using dragon and tiger bricks placed in front of the Temple of Original Birth. A memorial was erected at the temple, and the Minister of the National University, Xiao Ziyun, composed the inscription. Another memorial was erected at the Caotang Temple, with a piece written by the Minister of Finance, Wang Jun.

Master Huiji

Huiji's secular surname was Wang, and his given name was Shezhi. He was from the Great Kuai Village in the Right Township of Fuchun, Wu Commandery. His family was originally poor and lowly, and he often had to hold onto the image of an outcast. At that time, he was subjected to local government labor, and fearing prosecution, he hid himself in Mount Tiantai. There, he shaved his hair and became a monk, practicing asceticism and diligently studying the Buddha's teachings. Fleeing from the officials, he did not stay in one place for long. He heard about a great master from Dongyang who deeply understood the Mahāyāna, so he set out one night to go to Shuanglin. Not knowing the specific location, he followed his intuition and traveled on, closing his eyes as he reached every crossroad and walking according to his heart. Finally, he found the direct road to the great master.

Before this, the great master had said, "I have given up my wealth and treasures to hold a Dharma assembly for the suffering beings of the Three Realms." Later, feeling a little uneasy, the great master dreamed one night of the Buddha Śākyamuni, who comforted him, saying, "Do not worry; I will send a monk to assist you." That same night, in his dream, a little boy was born in his mouth and lay on his lap, looking up at his face. The master asked the child, "Do you know me?" The child answered, "Why would I not know you? I am Maitreya Buddha." The child then fell to the ground and immediately transformed into a great monk.

Three days after awakening, the master arrived, and the great master explained the Dharma, leading him to an immediate awakening. At that time, Emperor Wu of the Liang Dynasty had invited talented individuals from all over, and many came. However, the great master of Shuanglin had not yet been invited. Calmly, the great master said to the monk, "If you can cultivate the perfect, unblemished path, you will be able to go to the country and sacrifice your head as a sign of liberation."

The monk then took refuge with the great master, becoming a disciple committed to ascetic practices. He developed a bodhicitta and worked to spread the right Dharma, not caring for his body or life. He later sought to visit the country and publicly express the great master's vows to liberate beings. The monk arrived at the capital, presented himself, and was reprimanded but avoided punishment. Afterward, he went to the palace gate, beat the drum, and began explaining his mission. He was fined and assigned to teach for a year, during which he built several brick stupas. His perseverance and efforts were praised, and he was granted a release to return to the mountain.

The common people believed that the great master was a layperson, yet he had many monastic disciples, causing some confusion and doubts. Among them, some spread slander and criticism. The monk, therefore, discussed with a lay disciple named Pu Min, and together, they made a vow before the Three Jewels. They swore that if the great master's Dharma was not widely spread, they would each continue their ascetic practices to promote the true teachings.

Pu Min, in deep sincerity, cut off his nose and burned his fingers as offerings to the Buddha. He continued his work of promoting the Dharma and later went to the local official, Xiao Xu, to further spread the teachings. Pu Min said, "I am truly devoted to the Dharma," and when asked why he showed such actions, he demonstrated his resolve by cutting off an ear as a symbolic expression of his dedication. Xiao Xu and his companions praised his courage and determination.

The great master had often said of the monk Huiji, "He is Avalokiteśvara," and of Pu Min, "He is Mañjuśrī." As their actions showed, these acts of bodily harm were not done for vanity, but to demonstrate their unyielding commitment to the Dharma. From this point on, the monk continued his practices of generosity and spreading the teachings, releasing life, relieving suffering, and treating illness.

The master traveled across counties and regions, performing acts of mercy such as releasing life, relieving suffering, and treating illnesses. He never complained about the hardships, and he sang of limitless joy. He recited a verse, saying:

"The great sage, coming from Tusita, travels and shakes the nations. From the lotus flower, the ground is born. Special permission to welcome Maitreya. The first light of wisdom appears. The boundless world stirs. Heaven and Earth turn, merging into a single pore."

At that time, many people on Earth sang this verse, but many did not understand its meaning. Some who understood the essence of the verse said that the great master, being Maitreya Buddha's emanation, was also Avalokiteśvara manifesting in this world. The scriptures say that when Maitreya descends, flowers rain down from the sky, and when Avalokiteśvara reaches enlightenment, he becomes the Universal Light Tathāgata. The verse speaks of the shaking of the nations, which refers to the time when Maitreya descends. The turning of Heaven and Earth refers to the manifestation of Avalokiteśvara's transforming power.

The master often visited the Longhua Temple in Kuaiji. One day, he met a lame man leaning on two sticks, saying, "I have been ill for forty years. Please cure me." The master replied, "Simply focus your mind on me." The lame man followed his advice. After a short while, the master told him to put down one of his sticks, and the man did so. Then the master told him to put down the other stick, and the man followed. The man immediately stood and walked away, no longer lame.

The master also encountered an elderly, deaf man in the market, who said, "I have been deaf for several years, and no doctor can cure me." The master again said, "Focus your mind on me." After the man concentrated, the master instructed someone to call his name, and the man could hear after the third call. He was fully cured and left.

In Taima County, a Taoist named Jing had a heart ailment, and another monk had been suffering from leprosy for a long time. Both came to seek a cure. The master instructed them both to focus their minds on him. Soon after, they were both healed.

In Xin'an County, a female monk with long-term epilepsy came seeking treatment. The master again instructed her to focus her mind on him, and she too was cured.

The master never used medicine or herbs for healing; he simply asked people to focus their minds on him. He would also ask them to make offerings of money and material goods. Once they did so, their ailments would be cured in due course. There were many such cases, too numerous to recount.

Later, those who were healed would return to express their gratitude. The master would receive their offerings and then give them back to those who were still in need. He would often meet beggars on the road, and when he saw them wearing tattered clothes, he would immediately take off his own and give them to the beggars, putting on their ragged clothes in exchange.

He was also very fond of releasing life. Whenever he saw people using nets or traps to catch creatures, he would immediately buy and burn the tools, or if he saw animals being sold, regardless of their value, he would throw them into the water and tell the sellers to take them back.

Once, in Fengjiang Village of Changshan County, while walking with some fishermen, he saw a basket of fish. The fishermen refused to release the fish, and when they took the basket and bathed it in the river, the master took the basket and threw it into the river. The fishermen became very angry and beat him mercilessly. The master took the blame for what happened.

On another occasion, in the Eastern Yang market, the master saw fish for sale and wished to buy them for release. A person was arguing with him over the purchase to use the fish for food. Unable to purchase the fish, the master told the person, "Eating fish that has been released may cause stomach pain." The person didn't believe him and ate the fish, but soon after, he and his family suffered from stomach pains.

As his condition worsened, the person who had previously disregarded the master's warning regretted his actions. He sought the master's forgiveness and went to his home. After a short while, he was healed.

Later, in Kuaiji Market, the master saw two boats carrying living creatures for sale. He immediately bought them all and released them into the water. He told the seller, "This is the money for releasing life, and it should not be taken in excess." The master continued his practice of releasing life until his death. He would often encounter heavy rain and snow on the roads, yet his clothes never became wet, and the fragrance around him was even stronger than usual. The master dedicated himself to ascetic practices, enduring hardship and difficulty without ever tiring. He burned his two fingers, using them as a torch to offer to the Three Jewels. Later, he burned six fingers as offerings to the Buddhas.

He traveled to Zhexi, where he encountered four boats of fish. He urgently sought to purchase them for release, but could not find any. He then made an agreement to take the fish from Qianbai Mountain. Along the way, he continued to release life. As his clothing and supplies dwindled, on the 13th of the month, he entered the Ling Mountain Nun's Temple in the upper pastoral village of Qian, where he burned two more fingers. Once those fingers were gone, he proceeded to burn both arms as offerings.

Soon after, a person came, desperately asking for the blood from the master's burned arms to treat an illness. The master, pleased to help, willingly offered his arm, drawing blood to give to the person. That day, he also healed old sores on his body, and a great light radiated from him. As the burning of his arms reached completion, he passed away that night. It was the 21st day of the first month in the fourth year of the Tai Tong era, and he was 47 years old. The monks buried him in the Yin Zhu area of Qian.

Before his death, the master had told his disciples, "Seven days after I pass, I will show a miraculous sign." When the time came, a grand assembly was held, with both monastics and laypeople in attendance. At dawn, a divine light of five colors appeared, circling the pillars of the temple, and it lingered for a long time. Inside the temple, a great light shone continuously for a day and a night. All the people who witnessed this were moved and inspired, and they all made a vow to attain Buddhahood.

Master Huihe

Master Huihe's secular surname was Ma. He was from the Maoling region in Fufeng. His ancestors were members of the prominent and noble class, and during the Yongjia period of the Jin Dynasty, they followed the Five Kings south to Lanling, where their descendants settled.

When Master Huihe was just a few years old, his family was not present, and he was alone in his private room. Suddenly, he saw a golden figure with whom he played. After that, the golden figure continued to accompany him as he traveled. By the time he was ten, the figure was always with him as he moved about. At the age of twenty, he took the monastic vows at Jing'ai Temple. There, he delved into the profound and subtle teachings of the sutras and vinayas, thoroughly studying every aspect.

At that time, there was a monk named Master Yun, whose teachings were broad and comprehensive. He was revered by both monks and laypeople. Upon meeting Master Huihe, Yun praised him highly and often invited him to teach. Within less than ten days, Master Huihe had thoroughly understood the profound meaning of the sutras. Master Yun admitted that he could not compare to him. By the age of thirty, Master Huihe had already understood the secret teachings of all the Buddhas, and he was able to expound the Dharma without difficulty.

At that time, there was also a monk named Master Yin, who was known for his high reputation and who attracted followers from all directions. Master Huihe sold his body to provide support and humbly sought his guidance. Master Yin said, "If you can, in the wilderness or in villages, chant the name of the Samādhi and recite the Shurangama Sutra, the benefits will be profound, and it will lead to the practice of the community." Master Huihe followed this advice. After his teachings, he would often go to crossroads and loudly chant these words. Some unruly disciples would insult or beat him, but the master remained calm and composed.

When Master Yin was about to pass away, Master Huihe inquired about his successor. Master Yin replied, "You should rely on Master Fu of Dongyang. He possesses inherent wisdom and deeply understands the Mahāyāna teachings. He is a suitable teacher to follow." At that time, Master Fu was residing in the capital city, living in Jiang Mountain and teaching Emperor Wu of Liang about the proper teachings of the Dharma.

Master Huihe visited Master Fu and requested to become his disciple. Initially, he stayed at the residence of the layman Yan Shaxi in Kuaiji. Yan said, "I am a lazy person, how can I meet Master Huihe?" So, he dressed in fine clothes, bathed to purify himself, and then invited the master in. They spent some time together before Master Huihe continued his journey to Dongyang.

At the time of his arrival, the local layman Pumin heard that Master Huihe was coming, and he went to the county office to tell the governor. Pumin said, "Master Huihe has taken an oath to become a disciple of Master Fu, and now he is coming to offer his support." The governor, hearing this, ridiculed Pumin for his pride, saying that even the Crown Prince had asked Master Huihe to visit, but Master Huihe was still unwilling.

However, after eleven days, Master Huihe arrived, and the governor, feeling greatly ashamed, immediately went to meet him.

Upon meeting, Master Fu rejoiced and praised Master Huihe. He explained the unsurpassed path to enlightenment, and Master Huihe, deeply moved, took refuge in the Dharma, accepting the hardships of practice. In the first year of the Da Tong era, Master Huihe instructed his disciple, Master Faquan, to urgently procure cooking utensils, dried food, and other travel supplies. At the time, no one understood the reason. By the following November, the fake Northern Qi King Gao Yang sent envoys to invite Master Huihe. He departed, and it became clear that the supplies were indeed for his journey.

When Master Huihe arrived in Ye County, he was warmly received, and after several months of offerings, he fell ill. Gao Yang personally came to check on him and provided medical care. Master Huihe passed away in the capital city at the Dingguo Temple, at the age of sixty.

Before his illness, the master gave his final instructions to Zhizhan and others, saying, "I am only concerned that after my death, people will bury me in the ground." Zhizhan replied, "If you are not buried in the ground, then what should be done?" The master said, "I wish to be left in an open field, where my body can be consumed by animals. Those who eat it should be moved to cultivate the bodhicitta. As the juices from my body fall to the ground, they will nourish the grass and trees in the ten directions, turning them into medicinal plants that can heal the suffering of all beings. The bones will be scattered by the wind, and each tiny speck of dust will land at the feet of a Buddha, transforming into wish-fulfilling jewels for offerings. Afterwards, rain will fall in all ten directions, providing nourishment and sustenance for all beings."

After the master's passing, Zhizhan shared these instructions with the assembly, but the people did not follow them and proceeded to bury the master instead.

Life and Achievements of the Master

From a young age, the master diligently practiced the Buddhist teachings. He was skilled in the eight divisions of monks and had deep knowledge of the Buddhist threefold training in morality, meditation, and wisdom. He also studied and reviewed all kinds of writings and thoroughly examined Qin inscriptions. He had broad knowledge and was instrumental in spreading the teachings.

The master expounded the Mahāyāna teachings 120 times and recited the Mahāparinirvāṇa Sutra 50 times, as well as the Shurangama Sutra over 40 times. He also recited and explained the meaning of the Mahāyāna teachings in 69 different sections in Guangling, and his students compiled the teachings into eighteen volumes, with an additional volume on doctrinal teachings and a preface, totaling 20 volumes. His commentary on the Lotus Sutra was preserved in ten volumes and passed down to future generations.

Dream of a Devotee

In the early days, a monk named Su of the Chengcheng Temple dreamed of someone holding a large bundle of scriptures, saying, "This is the good record of Master Huihe." He asked, "Do I have such a thing?" The reply was, "Yes," and a small scroll was presented, which was the record. The next day, the master explained that this dream symbolized the connection of his incense offering and vows with the teachings.

The Master's Humility and Practices

The master was naturally humble and respectful. He never accepted people's prostrations, but when they did bow, he would respond accordingly. He would explain the teachings to others, and when he received offerings, he would first dedicate them to the Buddha, and then use them to support monastic gatherings. Whenever he saw an image of the Buddha, he would rise and not sit, showing great reverence. When others took vows, he would encourage them to renew their vows before the Buddha, saying, "Those who take these vows are Buddhas."

The master's character was also frugal. He did not use expensive bedding, only straw and hemp, which were enough to withstand the cold wind. On one occasion, someone made a statue of the master and placed it in the stupa. The master immediately ordered the statue to be broken, demonstrating his deep humility.

Dharma, Master of the Mountain Peak

The master's name was Dharma. His origin is unknown. He resided in a rock valley forty miles north of the Shuanglin Monastery, nestled among the forests. The area was abundant with fragrant maple trees, so he was known as Master of Fragrant Mountain. He had lived there for a long time, and no one knew of him. Later, a woodcutter encountered him. The master appeared very gaunt and emaciated, but his spirit was bright and energetic, sitting alone under a large tree. The woodcutter approached him and spoke with him, finding great joy in their conversation. The master said to him, "This place is suitable for building a temple, but alas, I have little strength to make it happen on my own." The woodcutter then invited the master to leave the mountain and go to a layperson's home for sustenance. The master agreed, saying, "I will go, but only if the house does not cultivate the Five Pungent Plants." The woodcutter thought for a moment and remembered a house where this was not the case. He took the master to that house, and the people of the town took turns providing for him. They then worked together to mark the site with four stakes and declared, "This is a suitable place for a temple."

Later, while traveling south to Songqiao Mountain, the master met Liang Changshi, Lóu Yǎn. Yǎn was a man of discernment who noticed the unusual appearance of the master and recognized him as someone extraordinary. He conversed with him and was deeply pleased. The master said, "I am a poor monk from a foreign land, an ascetic who has come here. I have a deep connection with the layman here from the past. Now, I wish to spread the Dharma and save all beings." So, they agreed to meet the following year in August under the pine trees at the master's residence. At that time, Buddhism was still in a weak state, and Yǎn was unsure if the master was the person he expected. He doubted whether he might be a saint. When they met, Yǎn went to great lengths to clear a path for twenty miles to reach the master. Upon arriving, he found the master dressed in simple, worn robes, sitting cross-legged. The master joyfully said to him, "The path to Bodhi is vast and beneficial. Together with the layman, we must build the Three Jewels and rid the world of the Six Defilements. If we fail to grasp the right Dharma, we may lose the opportunity to be reborn as humans. It is as rare as a blind turtle finding a hole in a drifting log. How can we wait for it to happen again?" Upon hearing this, Yǎn and his companions resolved to follow the path and promote the true Dharma.

The master surveyed the land and saw a thousand peaks standing out, surrounded on all sides. He named this place Dragon's Armpit because it was a land bordered on four sides, with four directions marked by stakes. They then built a monastery, calling it Fragrant Mountain Monastery. Beside it, they constructed a small granary that could hold only about one measure of rice. Its condition was very humble and modest. The master ordered that one measure of rice be purchased to fill it, and this rice was used daily to feed the monks and to offer to the poor and needy. As the rice neared its end, people would come to replenish it, and it was never empty. People referred to it as the Always Full Granary. Later, some people complained that the granary was too small, so it was expanded and decorated. However, after the expansion, it remained empty for an entire year, with no rice offered. The granary still exists to this day.

At the time, many villagers and townspeople who were devout donated rice fields to support travelers and students of the Dharma. Later, a band of mountain bandits came, armed with weapons, intending to rob. The master remained calmly seated in his room, showing no fear. The bandits were unable to enter, and they shouted insults, demanding that the monks come out. The master calmly spoke from his room, saying, "My appearance is unpleasant. I am not worthy of meeting the laypeople." After a moment, the bandits found they were unable to move or stir, as if bound by invisible ropes. Their spirits were scattered, and they fell to the ground in confusion. The bandits were struck with fear and apologized for their actions. After a long while, they recovered. The villagers, seeing the bandits as great pests, tied them up and sent them to the district. They asked for the master's help, and he simply replied, "Do not worry too much. They will resolve it on their own." On the eighth day of the fourth month, the bandits were indeed pardoned.

At that time, the monastery was engaged in building a spiritual shrine and hosting a Dharmacakra ceremony. Thousands of laypeople and monks came together to raise a large pole to the shrine. But suddenly, the rope snapped, causing everyone to fall. They did not know what to do. The master then thought to himself, "What kind of demonic influence is at play here?" He took a silver bowl from his room, filled it with water, and circled the shrine with it. He then entered a state of deep sorrow and cried. After a short while, he performed a prayer, then stood up and smiled. He then took the bowl and walked around the shrine once more, and miraculously, the shrine stood firm without needing anyone's help.

At that time, there was a monk named Hui Kai, who temporarily left for home. His mother secretly cooked a chicken for him. Hui Kai thought no one knew, and so he ate it privately with his mother. When he returned to the mountain in the morning, the master, knowing this in his mind, reprimanded him.

Later, a person in the market sold vegetables and fruits as offerings for the monks. When the shopkeeper was not around, the person took a small amount of ginger and kept it for offering. During the mealtime, when the monks were seated and the offerings were being served, the master received all the offerings except for the ginger. He said, "You were not permitted to take it, so why did you steal it?" The shopkeeper was embarrassed and quickly apologized.

On May 3 of the first year of the reign of Emperor Wudi, the county magistrate, Xiao Zimu, went to the temple to pay his respects to the master. He passed through a village and accepted food and wine from the villagers, becoming drunk and full before entering the temple. The master closed his room and did not come out, only sending a message saying, "The magistrate should return quickly." Magistrate Xiao, irritated, was about to set fire to the temple in anger, but he could not bring himself to do it. He tried to advance but could not. After some time, he reluctantly returned to the county. The next day, a layperson who supported the temple asked the master, "Why did the magistrate come to pay his respects yesterday, and why did you not go out?" The master answered, "It was just a playful exchange. I did not come out because of this. The magistrate had the intention of setting fire to the temple but could not. He did not proceed, and that is why I did not go out." This was conveyed to Magistrate Xiao by a court official, Lou Yan, who was deeply afraid and hurried to the temple to humbly apologize and seek repentance. The master then gave a teaching on the Bodhi path. Magistrate Xiao was pleased and left.

The master, on the 14th of the third month of that year, went to a nearby village to attend a meal gathering. He refused to return to the mountain. The people persistently begged him, but he swore not to go back north. He then said, "I came here by chance and will leave when my time is up." At this, the villagers and others wept with sorrow. That day, the master left for the south. As he looked at the southern mountain, he saw purple clouds hovering over it. He joyfully exclaimed, "This place is suitable for building a temple." He continued on his way and reached Yu Mountain, where the river was overflowing. The boatman refused to take him across. The master then spread out his umbrella on the water, held a metal fish bell, and crossed the river by cutting the current. He reached the lower part of the Qi Ting Pond. There, he encountered a great teacher, Yishui, who was fishing. He recognized the signs of a spiritual path and shared with him the way of cultivation, before continuing his journey.

When the master arrived at Laishan, the place where the purple clouds had appeared, he stopped and built a small temple on the peak, which became known as Laishan Temple. The master often said to people, "The king of Laishan will not last long, but the king of Fragrant Mountain will last long." The temple from then on received many donations and was well-endowed. Monks and lay followers continuously came to the temple, and it provided for them for many years.

The place was situated by the forested ridge, and at times, there were ghostly presences. The inhabitants were unsettled, and eventually, it became abandoned. Later, the village elders moved the temple's plaque to a flat plain about ten miles to the north, where it found peace and stability. Fragrant Mountain, however, was well-balanced in wealth, and it has remained the same to this day.

The master then planted many fruit trees in the southern mountain of the temple. Every morning and evening, he would personally walk the grounds. On the path, he encountered a great teacher and was very pleased. He then rubbed the great teacher's head and said, "I think I must soon head west and will not witness the flourishing of the Bodhisattva path." They each returned to their respective places.

After a few days at the temple, the master decided to leave the iron fish bell behind. The iron fish bell is shaped like a fish and is made of iron. It is still struck at the temple at dawn and dusk to this day. The master then traveled west to the boundary of Jinhua County, where he reached the southern foot of the mountain and said, "This too is a good place to establish a temple." He then struck the ground with his staff and said, "This is a good place to dig a well." He eventually established Dragon Coil Temple there, where he struck the ground again and dug a well. The well, though not very deep, never dried up, even in the scorching heat.

The master then continued west to Longqiu's boundary and saw the unique and beautiful shape of the southern mountain's cliffs. He again said, "This is also a suitable place for a temple." He settled there and established a retreat, later naming it Longqiu Cliff Temple. After the temple was built, the master continued west to the entrance of Wanshan Mountain. There, he found the mountain's winding shape ideal for a temple and intended to establish a retreat. But suddenly, three laymen came to him and pointed out a location for him. The three of them then made a vow to provide the food and materials necessary for the temple's construction. The master asked them where they lived, and they replied, "Not far, not near. We are the local landowners." They each gave their surnames: Chen, Zhao, and Su, but did not share their personal names.

When the retreat was completed, it was named Liuliu Temple. The three men then parted ways, and no one knew where they went.

The master continued his journey west to Mengdu Mountain. The area was known for its white deer and the sound of bells and gongs. He chose to build another retreat there and named it Three Treasures Temple. Initially, the master began his work at Fragrant Mountain Temple, and by this point, he had established seven temples in total. These temples were all built in scenic locations and received offerings from both black and white believers, and this continues to this day.

After completing his work at Three Treasures Temple, the master returned to Longqiu Cliff Temple. When it was time for his passing, the great teacher, knowing his own heart, said to his disciples, "Master Song has already returned to the capital and is awaiting me in the heavenly palace. I have now crossed over all beings, and my time is complete."

About White Lotus

InfinityOracle is the username I chose for reddit, and simply means infinity is the oracle. Akin to the statements: “All phenomena are Nirvana” or “all phenomena are but a single phenomena”. On Discord I started going by the name White Lotus, based on an image I used for my profile picture. It was from reddit and Discord that my interest in Zen deepened and I started the journey that led to the creation of this book. It is offered to the community free for the purpose of study and discussion. We know so little about this text and its history, bringing it forward will hopefully draw attention to the Fu Dashi and with it more insights and knowledge to share about his history. No doubt this copy should be considered tentative, and I encourage others to take up the task to improve upon it. Thank you to everyone who has been a part of this project, and thank you for reading.

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