

The Dharma Banners Series 5

【法幢集5】習禪三部曲之二
A Trilogy of Ch'an—Part 2

佛 性 三 參

Three Contemplations Toward **BUDDHA NATURE**

Lectures On Buddhism for English Meditation Class
at Chuang Yen Monastery, N.Y.
(紐約莊嚴寺英語禪坐班講錄 Á)

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毘盧出版社 敬印
Vairocana Publishing Co., Ltd.

Three Contemplations Toward Buddha Nature

First edition

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Printed in Taiwan, R.O.C.

Distributing Centers:

Mahā-vairocana Temple

Vairocana Publishing Co., Ltd.

15, Alley 6, Lane 4, Fu-Hsing Rd., Taipei, Taiwan 116, R.O.C.

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ISBN 957-9373-13-2

CONTENTS

Contemplation I: (第一參)

BODHIDHARMA' S KONG-AN (達摩祖師的公案)

Chapter 1: The Mind is Nowhere to be Found	
(覓心了不可得)	2
(A) A Brief Introduction to Kong-An	2
(B) Master Huei-ko	6
(C) Chopping off an Arm for the Dharma.....	8
(D) The Kong-An <i>Per se</i> :	
The Mind is Nowhere to be Found	10
(E) To Contemplate on the Kong-An	11
Chapter 2: The Patriarch's Quatrain (Gāthā) for	
Advanced Practice (達摩傳心偈)	15
Verse 1. "Cease all the external Quests"	17
Verse 2. "And sooth the Mind of its Gasps"	22

2 TABLE OF CONTENTS

Verse 3. “Uphold your Mind like a Wall”25

Verse 4. “So as to embark on the
Bodhi Route”28

【 QUESTION and RESPONSE 】28

**Chapter 3: Bodhidharma’s Skin, Flesh, Bones,
and Marrow** (達摩皮、達摩肉、達摩骨、
達摩髓)34

(1) The Skin Kong-An37

(2) The Flesh Kong-An39

(3) The Bones Kong-An41

(4) The Marrow Kong-An42

【 QUESTION and RESPONSE 】45

Contemplation II: (第二參)

THE CONTEMPLATION ON “HUA-TO” (參話頭)

Chapter 4: Who is Saying ‘Namo Amito-Fo’?
(念佛是誰?)48

(A) What is a Hua-To?48

(B) Where does the voice come from?48

(C) Who is chanting ‘Namo Amito-Fo’?50

(D) To contemplate on the Hua-To about
Amitabha Buddha53

【QUESTION and RESPONSE】

1. The Sword of Wisdom58

2. Soul, Cognizances, and Buddha Nature...58

3. What is reincarnated?63

4. Ālaya does not disappear upon death64

5. The Buddha Nature is real65

6. The Middle Route67

Chapter 5: Who is Saying ‘Namo Amito-Fo’?

(Contd.) (念佛是誰?——續)70

【QUESTION and RESPONSE】72

Contemplation III: (第三參)

THE ŚŪRĀṄGAMA ENQUIRIES (七處徵心)

Chapter 6: An Overall View of The Śūraṅgama

Sūtra (楞嚴經要義)78

1. The Māras of Vexation (Kleśa)87

4 TABLE OF CONTENTS

(1) Attachment (love).....	88
(2) Aversion (hate)	88
(3) Ignorance	88
(4) Arrogance (or Pride)	88
(5) Doubt (Disbelief)	88
A. Doubt about oneself	89
B. Doubt about the Dharma.....	89
C. Doubt about the Gurus	90
a) Doubt about our “Root Guru” —the Buddha	90
b) Doubt about the Holy Saṃgha	90
c) Doubt about the Master who is instructing you—Personal Guru ..	91
D. Doubt about the Tathāgata Nature or Buddha Nature	91
(6) Evil Views (Incorrect Concepts)	91
1) <i>Lateral Views</i>	92
(a) The View of Constancy	92
(b) The View of Nihilism (The Views of Nothingness)	94
2) <i>Vicious Views</i>	95
3) <i>The View of Corporeality</i>	96
4) <i>Views of False Precepts</i>	97
2. The Māra of “The Five Aggregates”	98
3. The Māra of Death	98
4. The Celestial Māra.....	102

Chapter 7: The Seven Propositions to Locate the	
Mind (七處徵心)	110
【The INQUIRY】	
Where is the Mind?	120
【PROPOSITION 1】	
The Mind is in the body	121
【PROPOSITION 2】	
The Mind is outside of the body	124
【PROPOSITION 3】	
The Mind lies in between— within the Visual Organ	125
【PROPOSITION 4】	
The Mind is on the Threshold	127
【PROPOSITION 5】	
The Mind arises at the Redezvous of Senses and Dusts	130
【PROPOSITION 6】	
The Mind is in the Middle	133
【PROPOSITION 7】	
The Mind is Nowhere	136
Chapter 8: The Epilogue (尾聲)	143
1. The Mind of Normalcy and Unfluctuation is the Tao	143
2. The Middle Route	145
3. About “Auras”	148

APPENDIX

About the Author	150
Donors for Publishing the Five Books	153

CONTEMPLATION
I:
BODHIDHARMA' S KONG-AN
(第一參：達摩祖師的公案)

Chapter 1:

The Mind is Nowhere to be Found

(覓心了不可得)

(A) A Brief Introduction to Kong-An

In Today's teaching, please bear with me to digress a little bit from what I scheduled last week. Instead of continuing with the "Six Wonderful Dharma Gates," I wish to relate a "Kong-An" to you. (By the way, it is "Kong-An," not "Ko-An"; "Ko-An" [コウアン] is the Japanese pronunciation for the two original Chinese characters of "公案" [Kong-An].)

Before relating the Kong-An, however, I would like to tell you that in my own practicing of the Dharma I have found a very important principle, that is, Flexibility. It means that every-thing in our practice must be flexible, so that you should adapt yourself, including your speech, your body, and your mind

to the surroundings, to other people, and to the affair that you are engaged in. You would not force anything to happen simply because you have some convictions or intentions made beforehand. We are liable to make a decision and stick to it strongly, which, generally speaking, is good, but it would not be always so, if taken too far. Therefore, in practicing the Dharma, we would definitely need iron-willed resoluteness, especially about Precepts, of course, but on the other hand, we also need to learn to be flexible “*at the same time*, without violating Precepts.” Flexibility in this way is very significant and helpful, but is certainly very difficult to master in the right way; in reality, we would need to rely on Prajñā (Wisdom) in order to fulfil this practice.

If we look around ourselves, we can see quite a few people practicing the Dharma with a dogged mind. That way, instead of making the Dharma lively and full of spirit, they tend to stifle, or petrify the Dharma. That is not only unfruitful for them, but also harmful to the Dharma. At least, it is going to deter enlightenment; in terms of Kong-An, it will eventually “murder the Buddha”!

Now let us turn to a very wonderful and eventful Kong-An. The term “Kong-An” in Chinese means “A Public Case,” and it also carries with it a connotation of “an unsolvable case.” Usually it involves a tale or a true but fantastic short story, which

relates the events in which certain Patriarchs, or great Ch'an Masters, acquired Enlightenment under their own masters. A Kong-An thus relates the dialogues and situations that came to pass between the great disciple and his great master. Since the case has been recorded in words and "open to the public," it has come to be called a Kong-An, ("a Public Case"). However, a Kong-An, at its birth, concerned nobody else but the teacher and the disciple in question, recounting only the inalienable one-to-one teaching-learning experience, which was never intended for anyone else—in other words, it is quite "personal," to the extent that it is actually perfectly "private" in essence. Therefore, it would be more appropriate to call a Kong-An "a Private Case" rather than a public one. But through the irony of history and literature, a private case fit for a personal journal has turned out to be a most public one in name and in fact, though not in its very essence. It is now open to the public and available for anyone to learn lessons from it. Nevertheless, in our study, we should always keep in mind that originally the dialogues delivered between the Masters were not meant for everybody at all; they were just made between the particular teacher and the particular student, at that particular time and place, and they are, in a way almost untransferable and impossible to reproduce its effects exactly as it has done. However, the benefit that we can acquire from learning it is its *spirit*, rather than its exact guidelines of verbal attractiveness. In or-

der to attain this, we can try to place ourselves in that particular situation and try to determine vicariously or visualize what exactly happened, how the teacher actually taught, and why the student was able to achieve his Enlightenment through this particular teaching.

If we can study the Kong-An in this vicarious fashion, and thereby ascertain its spirit, and get the answers for ourselves, we can be a step closer to our own Enlightenment. Therefore we need very much to comprehend what was being “expressed” in the Kong-An. Was it done through speech or body language, or by something beyond words or any form of expression? In the course of our learning, we need to adapt ourselves and try to visualize what had occurred, even though the time and place, the teacher and the student, the way of thinking, plus all the circumstances involved are totally different from ours.

This process of learning is called “contemplating on the Kong-An” or, in Chinese, “Ts’an Kong-An.” *Ts’an*, or to contemplate, does not mean that we need to “try to deliberately figure out” the Kong-An’s meaning or its purpose. Instead, we need to put aside all our accustomed calculated judgements, our own egocentric intentions, even all our trainings and education, and what not. Those things just will not help in the least; on the contrary, they can only hinder us—for the very nature of these things are against *the Supreme Bodhi* (the Supreme Enlightenment) which is “*Selfless*” and ineffable, for

Enlightenment is certainly beyond ordinary words and thinking. Therefore, if we try to delineate the purport of a Kong-An, especially with our own self-centered judgments and emotions, the frustrations could be enormous.

(B) Master Huei-ko

There are hundreds of *Kong-Ans* in Ch'an history, but one of the most celebrated is the one between Bodhidharma, the First Patriarch of Ch'an Buddhism in China, and the Second Patriarch Master Huei-ko. By the age of twenty-eight, Master Huei-ko, still a layman at that time, going by the name of Chi-kuang, was a scholar very well versed in Chinese literature and philosophical learnings, especially in Taoism. Up to then without being exposed to Buddhism, he thought that Taoism was the ultimate philosophy, whose supreme purpose it is to cultivate a person to become a long-life fairy, a quasi-immortal being. After having met with a few Buddhists and carefully pored over some of the *Sūtras* (Buddhist Scriptures), he came to realize that Buddhism was far more superior to Taoism. Shortly afterwards, he relinquished his Taoist "Fairy" pursuit and became a Buddhist monk. Presently Chi-kuang has perused and learned almost all the Mahāyāna and Hinayāna Sūtras.

Four years later, aged thirty-two, he returned to his hometown to do an eight-year retreat by himself. One day, during

the retreat, while he was meditating, a *Deva* (a celestial being, or “deity”) appeared to Venerable Kuang and instructed him to go South for the quest of *Supreme Bodhi* (Enlightenment). Later on, upon his entering *Dhyāna*, (meaning a deep state of meditation), he felt that the crown of his head was swelling up and hurting so much that he nearly fainted away. What is more, before he came out of the *Dhyāna*, the *Deva* reappeared and revealed to him that what he had just experienced in his crown was due to the change or transformation of his skull as a result of practicing merits. After that Kuang went to see his master, Bao Ching. Venerable Bao Ching was very much surprised to see that the crown of Kuang’s head had raised up so conspicuously. This was a meritorious sign, Bao Ching pointed out—the crowns of the Buddhas and great *Bodhisattvas*’ are also elevated in such a fashion; and he affirmed him that it was due to Kuang’s long ages of good practice in past lives that had resulted in the elevation of the crown. This kind of rising crown on the head, which is, called *Uṣṇiṣa* in Sanskrit, is far more valuable than a worldly royal golden crown, said Master Bao Ching. Furthermore, Bao Ching remarked that the raised crown portended that Kuang would soon be “coronated” over *Multibeings* (all living creatures), as a great *Bodhisattva* or great Patriarch is. It is well known that in Mahāyāna practice, *Bodhisattvas* are always at the lead of *Multibeings* towards the *Way of Supreme Bodhi*; hence, the raised crown signifies spiri-

tual leadership among *Multibeings*.

Then Bao Ching told Kuang that he had better follow the advice of the *Deva* and go South. The reason was that at that time, in the South, at Shao Lin Temple, there came a great master called Bodhidharma from India, who had been meditating in a cave at the back of the mountain, facing a wall ever since. Many people even thought that the Master might be mute, since he had not spoken to anyone. Kuang agreed to his teacher's advice to go south.

Since Kuang was visited and informed by a heavenly Deity, accordingly, Venerable Bao Ching renamed him as Shen Kuang, meaning "Divine Light." Venerable Shen Kuang then left for Shao-Lin Temple to seek Patriarch Bodhidharma's instructions. Later on, when Shen Kuang was accepted by Bodhidharma as his disciple, at his *Initial Enlightenment*, Bodhidharma in turn renamed him Huei-ko, meaning "Passable Wisdom." And hereafter we are going to refer to him by this new ordained name, which has become a household word throughout Buddhist history in China.

(C) Chopping off an Arm for the Dharma

Huei-ko reached the cave at Shao-Lin Temple where the renowned Master Bodhidharma was meditating. At the gate of

the cave he earnestly besought the Master's permission to ask a few questions concerning Dharma practice. The Great Master, however, simply kept on sitting there silently and motionlessly, and did not appear to notice that anything was going on. Huei-ko knelt on his knees patiently and perseverently at the entrance of the cave, waiting for a response for a long, long time. Gradually the nightfall came, and it began to snow very hard. In no time, the snow covered Huei-ko up to his ankles, calves, and knees—finally he was virtually buried in the snow from his thighs down. Still, Huei-ko did not make a stir. Gradually nighttime arrived and then came to pass.

At dawn, finally the Great Master Bodhidharma suddenly spoke with a stern voice, "What are you trying to do over there?" Surprised and overwhelmed with joy, Huei-ko implored anxiously, "I would like to ask Your Mastership to instruct me concerning the *Essentials of Buddhas' Dharma*." To this, much to Huei-ko's surprise, the great Master snapped gravely, "The Dharmas of the Buddhas are so pure and precious, and so hard to come upon! And now, with all those impure Karmas of yours, your overriding haughtiness, your outstanding pride, your unbearable arrogance together with that slighting attitude of yours—how could you ever expect to hear anything of it? How could you ever wish to obtain the deepest secret in such a casual and offhanded fashion?" By these remarks, the Master meant that Huei-ko had not endeavored much enough to purify his Karmas.

Huei-ko was confounded and became quite despaired for a while. He would not know what more he could do to convince the Master about his faith and sincerity, nor did he know what merits or qualities he would need, and what deeds he should accomplish so as to be accepted by the Master. All of a sudden, Huei-ko had his mind made up: producing a camping knife from his bag, he chopped off his own left arm, and presented it to Bodhidharma. This is the famous anecdote (or Kong-An) of “Severing an arm for the Pursuit of the Dharma” of our Second Patriarch in Ch’an lineage.

(D) The Kong-An *Per se*:

The Mind is Nowhere to be Found

After the arm had been presented (which symbolizes relinquishing even one’s own dearest and most cherished body for the sake of Enlightenment). Master Bodhidharma then inquired, “What now do you want of me?”

Huei-ko immediately went down on his knees and entreated, “Master, *my Mind is ill at ease*. Please, Great Master, *help me ease my Mind!*”

At this, Bodhidharma quickly responded, “*Fetch me your Mind, and I will ease it up for you!*”

Quite taken aback sharply by such a reply, Huei-ko hesi-

tated and bemused himself for quite a while, and then remarked, “Master, I have searched all over my being, and yet *my Mind is nowhere to be found!*”

No sooner had Huei-ko uttered these words than Bodhidharma snapped, “Quite so! *I have already eased up your Mind for you!*”

Lo and behold! On hearing those words, all of a sudden, Huei-ko seemed to see a flash of strong light dawning upon him, and he came to an *awareness* which had never happened to him before—thus our Second Patriarch, has acquired his *Initial Enlightenment*.

(E) To Contemplate on the Kong-An

The foregoing has been the illustrious *Kong-An*. What message then does this *Kong-An* carry? In the contemplation of a *Kong-An*, traditionally no answer is to be proffered to you; and you must find it out for yourself. Since, however, we are in the age of “conveniences,” when everything is made easy for us, I will also make it a little easier for you in this work and reveal to you parts of the answer, but I would still reserve a great part for you to solve on your own. This way it would have the advantage of being at once helpful and yet still keeping it challenging enough, I hope.

Now, the eminent statement of the *Kong-An*, “**The Mind is nowhere to be found,**” does not mean that there is no Mind at all—on the contrary, the Mind *does* exist; only it could not be found in a specific location. If something has a shape, it must be something tangible, and it can also be pinpointed and shown to others; moreover, it also can be seized and held and moved from place to place like an object. Mind, however, is formless, shapeless, and colorless; it cannot be grasped and shown to anyone. That is part of the reason why Master Huei-ko could not “find” his Mind.

As a result of modern science, we are prone to think of the brains as the “generator,” or the most powerful factor, of our lives. But according to Buddhist teaching, it is not like that: the brains are rather like a “circuit breaker,” while the Mind *is* the “Generator.” While the brains are more obvious and much easier to comprehend for an ordinary person, (as a switch is to a homeowner), but a power plant (like the Mind) is much less accessible for him to approach and lay his hands on. In addition, as the problems of the Power Plant are for the professional technicians to deal with, so is the problem of the Mind for the higher-level practitioners: it is almost like “caviar to the general,” so to speak. As a matter of fact, it can be regarded as an uncommon privilege for anyone to be involved in such a high level of practice. In the mean time, the very root of our problems in life does not lie in the brains, (or the “circuit breaker”),

but in the Mind or Heart (which is the real “Generator”). Therefore, we should not mistake the Circuit Breaker for the Generator, just as we will never mistake a twig for the trunk—and yet this is quite easier said than done. The Buddha said, “The populace often mistake ‘thieves’ for their own kindred, and so are frequently led astray by those thieves.” It is obvious that if we go astray and get lost, it would not be easy for us to find our way back. This is the reason why we need to study Buddhism—the purpose of which is “to find our way back home,” home to ourselves, home to our Original Mind, or to our own *Buddha Nature*, which all beings share in common.

If we, unlike Master Huei-ko, *could* actually find our own Mind, that might be very wonderful. However, if we do find *something* which we can claim to be our Mind, what we have found, according to Master Bodhidharma, would be nothing more than some “shadows of ghosts” or *phantasms*, for “All forms are *ghosts*”; remarked Bodhidharma; “therefore, if you do see there are forms of *Appearance* or even *Reality* to be grasped and obtained, and you grow attached to them, in that case, you are bound to see *ghosts* everywhere you go.” “Ghosts” here means something unreal, ungraspable, untouchable and harmful. In addition, the gist of this *Kong-An* is that *our Native Mind or Buddha Nature is not to be perceived by our naked eye: it can only be perceived by the Eye of Wisdom, or the Eye of Prajñā*, and the experience of perception is, beyond human

speech to describe, and so it is ungraspable; nevertheless, the Mind can be *enlightened* and *emancipated* to the full. These have been some brief clues that I could offer to you concerning the contemplation of this renowned *Kong-An*. And now I will reserve the rest of the work to yourselves. In the meantime, please always keep this *Kong-An* in mind. Keep contemplating on it, day and night, if you can. In time, hopefully it will illuminate your own Mind greatly, and help you on with your final goal of *Supreme Enlightenment*.

—Lecture given on 10/8/1988
at Chuang Yen Monastery, N.Y.

Chapter 2:
**The Patriarch's Quatrain of
Dharma (Gāthā) for Advanced
Practice**
(達摩傳心偈)

Today, once again I would like to talk about one of my favorite subjects—Bodhidharma, the First Patriarch of Ch'an Buddhism. Last year we discussed Bodhidharma's *Kong-An*; I related how both the First and Second Patriarchs met. As I explained previously, when the Second Patriarch, Huei-ko, went to the First Patriarch, he was not immediately admitted as a disciple. There was no "Registration" where you could sign up for a course and be enrolled: in Ch'an School, usually you had to prove to the Master that you were worthy of his instructions—the incidents in that *Kong-An* for Huei-ko, as it were, also worked as an Entrance Exam into the Ch'an School, or even a Qualification Test!

After having passed that tough test, Master Huei-ko was admitted as a disciple, and the common assumption might be that he was immediately instructed a lot of precious stuff that he wanted to learn. However, the case turned out to be otherwise. For during the following years Bodhidharma taught Huei-ko practically nothing but one *Gāthā* or a four-line stanza of Practicing Verse. Nevertheless, that *Gāthā* has in itself the consummate epitome of Buddhist teachings.

Cease all the external *Quests*,
 And soothe the Mind of its *Gasps*,
 Uphold your Mind as a *Wall*,
 —So as to embark on the *Bodhi Route*.

Personally I have contemplated upon this *Gāthā* for quite a long time, and it took me almost three years to fully grasp all the implications and hidden meanings of this *Gāthā*. More importantly, I contemplated on how the ideas in this verse could be put into practice both in sitting mediation and in everyday life. Once again, traditionally, a *Gāthā* for practice was not to be interpreted by the master to the student; rather, the interpretation should also be a part of the work for the learner. However this part of the tradition is hard to stick to completely nowadays. For one thing, the language of the *Gāthā* itself is very difficult to comprehend, even the literal meaning of the words and phrases are abstruse, let alone the hidden implications for practice purpose. For another, the *Gāthā* was generally a teach-

ing delivered from a great Master to a younger Master, both of whom were *enlightened* people, (although of different levels of *enlightenment* at that point); but most of us are not on the same status as the Patriarchs, and so we are not able to work on the *Gāthā* on our own, without some help of interpretations. For this reason, once again I would like to offer a little help, just enough to usher you in through the Gate of Comprehension and Practice.

Verse 1. “Cease all the external Quests”

In order to apprehend the verses properly, we need to have some knowledge about the two most important schools of Buddhist teaching at the outset. One of these schools is called the “Dharmic Nature School,” and the other one, “Dharmic Phenomenon School.” “Dharmic Nature,” or simply “Nature” for short, deals predominantly with the nature of things—their primal or underlying essence. The Phenomenon School, or Appearance School, on the other hand, is sometimes wrongly viewed as the school of an opposing theory (actually, they are intersupplementary in effect)—it deals with the ways that the “nature” (or “essence”) of things manifest themselves in the world. Thus, the two terms usually stand side by side. In Western philosophical terms, they are roughly comparable to Plato’s “Idea” and “Reality.”

An appropriate study of *Dharmic Appearance* can be very helpful to a practitioner and eventually it will facilitate him for the comprehension or awareness of *Dharmic Nature*. But in the study of *Dharmic Appearance* (or *Dharmic Phenomena*), one is very apt to get lost and become more confused than ever, for the *Phenomenal* terminologies are to such an enormous abundance that one cannot very easily disentangle oneself from them and get a clear picture of what they are all about. If one is involved in this kind of entangled situation, it is not going to help one in actual practice of the Dharma at all. Throughout history, up to now, it is all but very rare for a student of the *Phenomenon School* to get away from this embarrassed situation. Nevertheless, the teachings of the *Phenomenon School* were meant to help people in practice, rather than to get them more confused. But it is all up to the practitioner himself and how he is going to make use of the teachings. If one can stay vigilant in the course of the study of the *Dharmic Phenomena*, always bearing in mind the *Dharmic Nature*, and not mistaking the Means for the End, one will be able to come through fruitfully. By the way, the so-called “Buddhist Psychology School” is also a branch of the “*Dharmic Phenomenon School*.” The concept of the “*Eight Cognizances*,” which we covered last year, is also partly the teachings of the Buddhist Psychology School, which in turn belongs to the *Dharmic Phenomenon School* in general.

Now let us resume our topic concerning Master Bodhidharma's *Gāthā*. What does the word "*Quests*" mean in the *Gāthā*? "*Quests*" here denotes the reaching out to get to something external. How frequently does our mind reach out to get hold of something? And how many things do we yearn for? They can only be innumerable! There is actually no end to what we want to *quest* for. Please take a look at the following diagram:

THE 18 DHARMA REALMS

I. External Dharmas	II. Internal Dharmas
<p>The 6 Dusts:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Form 2. Sound 3. Smell 4. Taste 5. Tactile 6. Concept 	<p>1) The 6 Bodily Senses:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Eye 2. Ear 3. Nose 4. Tongue 5. Body (or Skin) 6. Mind <p>(Also called the Six Openings or the Six Roots.)</p> <p>2) The 8 Cognizances (of the Mind):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Visual Cogn. 2. Audio Cogn. 3. Smelling Cogn. 4. Tasting Cogn. 5. Tactile Cogn. 6. Conceptual Cogn. 7. Manaḥ (the 7th Cogn.) 8. Ālaya (the 8th Cogn.)

When our eyes meet with an object—for instance, a tree—the eyes “reach out” to *capture* the image of that object and store it into the mind (but not in the “brain,” which only functions as a “breaker box,” as mentioned before). The Mind then holds and cherishes the image as its new “assets” and would not give it up easily. Even though the image had been acquired many years before, we would still be reluctant to let go of it. This is the “Visual Quest,” which is followed by the “Mental Grasp.” Each of the Six Organs has its own “Quests”; each of them reaches out for its own stimuli—for example, no sooner has the ear heard a sound than our hearing organ “rushes out” to catch and hold on to the image of what we just heard, and then bring the shadow back and store it like some precious data or loot, and thenceforth go on to classify and pass judgments of it, so as to make a decision on its being either appreciable or depreciable, either likable or dislikable.

Upon the ocean, when a strong gust of wind comes along, the water of the ocean is blown high and wild; when the wind dies down, the waves also diminish, and even turn to ripples. Now, this is a very significant metaphorical statement in Buddhist Doctrines. The imagery of the Wind is compared to the *Six Dusts*; the Ocean is compared to our Mind, often called the *Mental Ocean*, for it is as enormous and ever-fluctuating as an ocean; while the Waves are likened to the undulations of the *Mental Ocean*. The metaphor shows thus: as the wind from

time to time blows across the ocean, driving the calm water of the ocean to form all kind of waves, so when the wind of the *Six Dusts* blows across the surface of our *Mental Ocean*, it drives the calm *Mental Water* of our *Mental Ocean* to form all forms of *Mental Waves*. But when the wind of the *Six Dusts* dies down, our *Mental Water* will resume its original tranquility, and our *Mental Ocean* becomes as calm and quiet as ever.

The size of the *Mental Waves* brought up by the wind of *Dust* in our *Mental Ocean* usually depends on the degree we ourselves are attached to the *Six Dusts*. However, in our usual disposition, we are very much inclined to exaggerate a wave of tiny size in our mind and try to magnify it into a gigantic one—for, more often than not, we consider most of our own problems as “big waves,” while the problems of others are “tiny ripples.”

Now let us get back to the contemplation on Verse 1 of the Gāthā. The most powerful of our “Quests” is that of the Mind. The Mind is constantly on the go, busying itself with all sorts of grasping, possessing, classifying, organizing, judging and justifying. These activities (or Karmas) of the Mind are the fundamental cause of unceasing *births and deaths* for all *Multibeings*. In Ch’an Buddhism, when a thought arises in our mind, we would call it “Birth”; when the same thought passes away, we call it “Death.” (These are the “narrowest” and strict-

est definitions of these two critical terms.) Therefore, “Birth” is constantly followed by “Death” which, in turn, is followed by yet another “Birth.” This will go on and on interminably until someday, hopefully, we are able to break the *chain* of both mental and bodily Rebirths *by stopping the “Quests” of our Six Senses*. (When that happens, we will have modulated our *Mental Waves*. And if ever the waves totally die down and the *Mental Water* becomes perfectly serene, it will be a realized state called *Nirvāṇa*.)

The more actively and passionately our Mind reacts to what is happening around it, the more violently the *Mental Waves* will be raised, and consequently the more perturbed and restless our *Mental Water* will become. Because the water in our *Mental Lake* (or *Ocean*) is constantly disturbed, usually we are not able to view a clear image of the undistorted *Reality* in the *Mental Lake*. For this purpose, our *Mental Water* needs to be tranquilized and then purified. In order to do this, we must hold our own *Six Openings* in close vigilant check, so that this “monkeyish” mind of ours will not wander away so often to gather so much garbage (or *Dust*) home and contaminate the native *Mental Water*. So far these have been the underlying import of the first verse of Bodhidharma’s *Practicing Gāthā*: “Cease all the external Quests.”

Verse 2. “And soothe the Mind of its Gasps”

This is the verse in the whole *Gāthā* that has taken me most of the two years to contemplate upon. But fortunately I have finally come up with a pretty clear comprehension of all its implicit meanings as well as its applications. First of all, how can a mind “gasp”? What did Master Bodhidharma actually mean by “gasping” here? Try to think this over carefully and deeply! Also remember that Master Bodhidharma is merely *ostensibly* making a “verse” and, in so doing, he appears to innovate a bold “image”—i.e. “grasping”—in the vein of the “metaphysical poetry.” (However, most Ch’an masters’ teaching or *Gāthās* of teachings have a strong Metaphysical smack. Of course, I do not mean to say that Master Bodhidharma studied metaphysical poetry, which came one thousand years later after him. What I mean to say is that Buddhist teaching is very sophisticated and usually very “poetic” in its approach.) This metaphor gasping, like all “Conceits” of the British Metaphysical Poetry of the 17th century or later age, has an astonishing effect of linking two seemingly unrelated things together, that is, the difficulty in breathing and the movement of the mind. The word “gasping” vivifies the “throbbings” or even “quiverings” of the mind even to the minutest puffing movements, as we can clearly visualize it. At this point, in order for you to get a “picture” of the purport here, try to visualize the fluttering wings of a hummingbird or a fly: normally the quiv-

ering of the mind is something like a bee's fluttering wings. However, there is something more to it—for the flutterings of an insect's wings are usually quite regular and even, but the *motions* or *commotions* of our mind are very unlike that. It is just like what the word “gaspings” depicts: within the general pattern of quivering, it involves a lot of jerking, bumpings, and even chokings, just as what is evinced by one who has asthmatic problem, or one who has difficulty in breathing, either caused by hard exercise, or anxiety, excitement, nervousness, or disease in the breathing organs. The motion of our mind is just like that: sometimes it puffs convulsively and helplessly like an asthmatic who gasps for air as well as strives for life; sometimes it labors so hard as if it were out of breath because of too much or too violent exercise; other times it almost quits breathing momentarily either due to some astonishment or emotional excitements or even deep concentration on something; at times it beats so violently like one who is going insane. In one word, the mind is almost always struggling *invisibly*, *blindly*, and *convulsively*. But for all these phenomena, we can almost do nothing about it—worst of all, if we do not learn to meditate and acquire some skills and ability of perceiving our own mind, we are even perfectly unaware of and ignorant about what is actually going on in this very mind of ours!—This is what the Buddha calls “Benightedness” (or Ignorance). Once we can discern the “quiverings” or “gaspings” of the mind, can we

begin to learn to calm it down; that is, we can ease it down by various means, as discussed in the previous volume of this sequel, i.e., *The Sweet Dews of Ch'an*. Nevertheless, as we are meditating on Bodhidharma's Kong-An, why don't we just try the *Bodhidharmic* way to ease down this uneasiness and quiverings in our mind? But how? —It is like this: *the moment the Mind is actually espied, it is at once eased!* But the hard point here is that it takes an *Eye of Wisdom* to view this *Appearanceless Mind*.

Therefore, in sitting meditation, if you are able to discern the *quiverings* of your Mind, you will be close to the comprehension of this Bodhidharmic Metaphor. So please try hard to meditate upon this from now on, until you can catch all the nuances and try to “taste” all the “flavors” of each word's meanings in this verse. Yes, take a good morsel of it, chew and munch away each bit of it again and again—dwell upon it and ponder it over and over, even in your sleep—until you can totally digest and assimilate it into your system.

Verse 3. “Uphold your Mind as a Wall”

There is a sequential relationship among the first three lines of the *Gāthā*. First of all, it is to cease *Questing*; and then, do not *gasp*; and thirdly, “Uphold your mind as a Wall.” And this sequence is also implying the *sequential steps of practice* to the

practitioner. Here the “Wall” is a very vivid and forceful image. Unfortunately, this figurative diction has bewildered practitioners of Ch’an for ages about its real purport. It is obvious that anyone who wishes to reach the advanced level of Ch’an would need to comprehend the nature of this “Bodhidharmic Wall.” Before admitting Huei-ko as his disciple, Bodhidharma himself had sat in meditation in Shao-Lin Temple’s cave for some time, facing the wall. This form of practice is called *Mural Visualization*, which is also a specific teaching of Bodhidharma’s. In China, there is a school called *Tsao Tung School*, wherein the practitioners are taught to sit facing a wall, rather than facing the Buddha or facing each other, as is customarily done in group meditation in other sects. But the word “Wall” in the *Gāthā* is only a figure of speech, not a *wall* of real bricks or blocks.

Now let us contemplate upon the significance of this “Bodhidharmic Wall”. What is the nature of this wall? First of all, it is *blank* on this *Bodhidharmic Wall*—there is not a single image on it. If there were any image, it would become an ordinary (mundane) wall, rather than a Ch’an Master’s wall. And if the *Wall* that the Patriarch tells us to uphold in our mind is only a mundane wall, full of all sorts of images (that is, troubles, worries, and fancies), this *Wall* will not be worthy of *upholding*. Therefore, this *Wall* must be *blank, clean, clear, and pure—unpolluted, unadulterated and uncorrupted*. In addition, the

very imagery of the Wall itself also signifies something *solid, strong, erect, impenetrable, invulnerable, unmoving, and unmovable*, as well as signifying *having a firm foundation*—In fine, it signifies the *Bodhicita* (the *Bodhi Heart*), as well as the *Vajraheart*, which is strengthened by infinite practice, and has become *unmovable* and *impregnable*. And this *impregnable Bodhisattvic Mental Wall* will be in the long run, after aeons of practice, become tall and strong enough to encompass and protect the *Citadel of Ultimate Bodhi* for all practitioners.

To a Ch'an practitioner, the significance of this *Bodhi Heart Wall*, lies not only in the *comprehension*, but also in its actual *construction*. Strange to say, nowadays many practitioners tend to take the practice of Buddhism overly too easily and too lightly. Sometimes these people claim that they *know* the meaning of the Dharma, but they will not bother to do their practice. Their mouths are full of words about practice, but words alone will not lead anyone closer to *Enlightenment*—only practice will do. In Bodhidharma's teaching, *constructing the Wall* is a very practical and painstaking practice: In the first place, the practitioner needs to start with the construction of the *foundation*, and then lay brick by brick to build a solid, strong *wall*. You do not *talk about* building a wall—you *do* it! Only after you have actually built yourself this *Bodhi Heart Wall* of yours, can you say that you are able to keep out or ward off or withstand the evil influences of the *Six Dusts* (i.e., external phenomena); and

only then can you say: “I am a genuine Ch’an practitioner (in the true sense of the word!)” Until you can do this, everything said is merely empty words and boasting. So, why not *start building your own wall?*

Verse 4. “So as to embark on the Bodhi Route”

Having completed the foregoing processes, we are ready to get into the *Entrance*, the *Portal of Bodhi Route*, and to start for our *Journey of Enlightenment*. The “Bodhi Route” in the verse means the *Route to Enlightenment*, of course. According to this verse, Bodhidharma points out very clearly that only after we have finished with the jobs specified in the first three verses, are we eligible to gain the admission of the entrance to the *Bodhi Route*. This also means to say that prior to this, all our efforts, all our practice, and all our joy in understanding and practicing, as a matter of fact, still lie *outside of the Gate* and, therefore, are merely *preparatory* or *preliminary*! And only after we have arrived at this point, do we really touch upon the starting line of our Journey to *Ultimate Enlightenment*. Therefore, it is for sure that *Patriarch Bodhidharma’s Way* is really a tough one—tough but sure.

【QUESTION and RESPONSE】

QUESTION: “Is it necessary, then, for us to sit facing a wall in order to achieve Enlightenment?”

RESPONSE: “No, not really. The spirit of Ch’an is not that rigid; there are no hard and fixed rules in certain things. Once you make the rules hard-fixed, your heart will become stiffened and you will not be able to respond properly to the *Ways of Enlightenment*. Please bear in mind that one of the meanings of ‘Enlightenment’ is ‘no confinements’. If auxiliary rules get hardened, they will cease from being helpful and become confinements themselves, which will in the end enslave us, rather than lead us to Enlightenment. By the way, all the rules are made to help and guide us, rather than to confine us.”

[Meditation session begins]

[After the meditation session]

As I have always said, the spirit of flexibility is of predominant importance in Buddhism. We used to recite the Holy Name of “Namo Amito-Fo” (Amitabha Buddha) prior to our *Walking*

Meditation. Someone has just told me that she has trouble reciting this, and so now I would like to teach you something else to recite. I would like to teach you a *Mantra*, “Om Mani Padme Hum.” The translation of this *mantra* would be “Take Refuge under the One with Jewels embedded in Lotus flowers.”

The Lotus is a very significant symbol in Buddhism. The Lotus flower grows and emerges from the mud at the bottom of lakes and ponds. *Mud*, as usually known, is dirty stuff—full of decomposing mess, stinking and odious. Nevertheless, without messy *Mud*, there would be no *Lotus*. The *Mud* here is a metaphor for the *world* we live in, which is unclean, filthy, rotten, disturbed, and full of obstacles and all sorts of afflictions. Meanwhile, the *Mud* also symbolizes *the populace* (general people) that we live with and deal with in this “World of Mud.” As the *Lotus* emerges from the *Mud*, so do we need to transcend the defilements in this world—that is, the Lotus is *rooted in* the Mud. But if you should try to uproot the Lotus from the filthy mud and totally get rid of the Mud, and then replace the dirty mud with some clean, good soil, even out of good intention, the Lotus will die: *no Mud, no Lotus*—what is more, no “Lotus,” no Buddhism; and so, *no “Mud,” no Bodhi!* “*To practice in the Mud*”—how incredible it is! Thus, from the fundamental metaphor of the *Lotus*, we know that we need *to practice everywhere and anywhere*—at home when the children are fighting noisily and your spouse is angry with you—at work,

when your boss is picky or some colleague is nasty with you and things are not going well. This is “*the Mud*.” For this reason, for Enlightenment’s sake, we must bear with the *Mud* in practice. No matter what the *Muds* (the circumstances) are! And this is the most imperative spirit of Ch’an Buddhism—the Bodhidharma’s Ch’an, as well as the Sixth Patriarch’s Ch’an—it is, in a way, even more significant than mere sitting meditation *per se*!

Now let us make a visualization of the Lotus flower: the flower’s roots are *in the mud* and it sits with its petals *above* the water; it transcends both the “mud” and the “water,” and yet it is *never divorced* from either of them, but “makes use of” them both: it employs the “mud” as its fundamental footing and the “water” as its second prop, and using both as its nutrient suppliers: it depends on them for its life and grandeur, and grows “out of” them! Such is the magical power of *Buddhist Transformation*: to *live with* the obstacles and at the same time to get the upper hand of them, and *turn them into good use*! Nevertheless, in this astounding *Transformation*, nothing appears to have actually changed—you see, the mud is still the same *mud*, and the water is still *water*. Only they have become *useful*, rather than *harmful* to the *Lotus*! And this is a “*Transformation without actually transforming anything*,” or an “apparent non-transformation” wherein there are tremendous transformations undergone and realized—only this is not to be per-

ceived by mundane people without wisdom. I would like to name this as “the Kong-An of the Lotus.” Please “Contemplate” (“Ts’an”) upon it well. This Kong-An or metaphor connotes at once the conflicting acts of *involvement* and *detachment* embodied in one single image or situation and both are maintained in perfect *balance*, and this is, in fact, the most accomplished state of *Bodhisattvaship*—to be involved and detached simultaneously!

In addition, methodologically, the Lotus, at once deep-rooted in the mud and emerging above the water, is utilized to stand for two most important methods (or Dharmas) in practicing. First of all, the root of the Lotus, being deep in the mud, symbolizes *Compassion*, for it goes without saying that Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are so compassionate that they will by no means abandon any *Multibeings* (the “Mud”) who are in afflictions (defiled and ranking situations). Secondly, the Lotus flower, blooming elegantly and freely in the air, free from the water and mud, is a symbol for “Transcendental Wisdom,” which can liberate a person from his mundane obstacles and enable him to reach *Ultimate Enlightenment*. Thus, the Lotus becomes a symbol for both *Compassion* and *Transcendental Wisdom*. If you dig the root of *Compassion* out of the Mud, then the Lotus flower of Wisdom will die, and so dies the Bodhisattva. That means where there is no Compassion for *Multibeings*, there will be no Wisdom for the Bodhisattva; when

Compassion is uprooted, the *Flower of Bodhi* withers and dies!
And what is left will be merely Vanity and the seeking for one's
Self and not for all *Multibeings*. This is why the *Lotus* has
become the emblem of Buddhism: with its Beauty and Elegance,
it manifests its own *Self-Liberation* by transforming all afflic-
tions and defilements into a unique Beauty, Delicacy, and El-
egance.

—Lecture given on 4/29/1989
at Chuang Yen Monastery, N.Y.

Chapter 3:

Bodhidharma's Skin, Flesh, Bones, and Marrow

(達摩皮、達摩肉、達摩骨、達摩髓)

Nine years came to pass after Patriarch Bodhidharma had taken Master Huei-ko as disciple. One day Bodhidharma summoned all of his disciples, and announced: “I have been here in China for so many years and now I am ready to return to the West. But before I leave, I am going to give you a final test, in which you are to tell me what you have learned during your stay with me. After that, I will pass over the *Lineage of the Dharma* as well as the *Ordained Robe* as a token of the *Lineage Transmission* to the most deserved person, who is to succeed to me as the Second Patriarch of *Ch’an Denomination* in the Dharma.”

And then, the leading disciples one by one volunteered to express what they have achieved in practice. Tao-Fu was the first one to rise, and thus he observed:

“So far as I view the Dharma, it should be neither clinging to Words nor departing from them. Yet, it should be employed for the fulfillment of the *Ultimate Truth*.”

On this, Bodhidharma commented, “You have got my *Skin!*”

Then the next disciple, Ni-Tsung-Tse, rose to say:

“To my comprehension, it is something just like someone who has witnessed *Buddha Akṣobhya’s Pure Land* with ecstasy and yet, once he has viewed it, he is not in the intention of seeing it again.”

To this, the Great Master remarked, “You have acquired my *Flesh!*”

Tao-Yu was the third one to stand up and presented:

“The *Four Elements* have always been *Vacuous*, and the *Five Aggregates* are *Non-Being*. Yet, in what I perceive, I do not see that there is even one bit of Dharma to be *obtained*.”

To this, Bodhidharma responded, “You have earned my *Bones!*”

Then Huei-ko, the fourth one to arise, went up to Master Bodhidharma. He did nothing but make a bow in silence, and then still without uttering a single word, he returned to sit down

at the place according to his position. Thereupon Master Bodhidharma said, “You have obtained my *Marrow!*”

A while later the Master added, “In the past, the *Buddha Tathāgata* transmitted ‘*the Treasure-Eye of Right Dharma*’ to Mahākāśyapa who became the First Patriarch of Ch’an. Mahākāśyapa, in turn, transmitted the *Right Dharma* to the Venerable Ānanda, the Second Patriarch. The last transmission so far was bestowed upon me, Bodhidharma, as the Twenty-Eighth Patriarch of the Western World (India). Now, I am transmitting this Right Dharma unto you, Huei-Ko, and you shall be the Second Patriarch in China, as well as the Twenty-Ninth in the whole *Lineage* of the *Right Dharma*. You must espouse and protect this Dharma with all your might. I also give to you my *Cassock* (Dharma Robe), as evidence of this *transmission*, so that all those who see it may recognize for certain that you have actually received the *Lineage of the Dharma* directly from me!”

The foregoing is the contents of another one of Bodhidharma’s *Kong-Ans*. Now, let us contemplate upon this *Kong-An* together and try to decipher what the message was meant to be. And we will break down the whole *Kong-An* into four parts, or four “sub-*Kong-Ans*,” and contemplate on them accordingly.

(1) The Skin Kong-An:

The first disciple's understanding was chiefly involved with words. Tao-Fu said, "Words of the Dharma **should be employed for the fulfillment of the 'Ultimate Truth'.**" Indeed, his opinion was superb. Words are indispensable for defining and explicating concepts, and for communicating ideas to others. The clearer the words are formulated, the better they can convey concepts and knowledge. But all of this involves thought or thinking; yet *thinking* is the function of the *Sixth Cognizance*—the one factor which does the thinking in the Mind, as I have discussed in my previous book, *The Sweet Dew of Ch'an*. This type of thinking divides the world into the doer (the thinker), the doing (the thinking), and the object directed (that which is thought of, or those who receive the action). Words here do not merely stand for words themselves alone: the words, uttered or unuttered, will stand for *thinking*, *concept*, *idea*, and *action*. Besides knowledge, words also convey feeling, understanding, and will. Therefore, when a practitioner does not grow attached to *words*, it would mean much more than *non-attachment to words*. It would mean that he does not cling either to *the thinking* action, or to *the Mind*, or to *the thing thought* about. To this disciple of Bodhidharma, all of these—the Mind, the thinking, and the words are begotten and then "forgotten" (or forsaken)! He is no more attached to those things.

Furthermore, Tao-Fu's words: **“. . . nor departing from words . . .”** This is even harder! Not clinging to words means non-attachment—the result of practicing *Śūnyatā* (Vacuity). This means that words are *vacuous*, something like a gust of wind. When he realizes that point, he has come to the stage of *incorporating Śūnyatā* (or *at one with Vacuity*). However, if someone has relinquished words, but in turn he *clings to* “the accomplishment of this relinquishment,” or to the *Śūnyatā* state resulted from it, then he still has *something* to cling to, and this is still not good enough. Therefore the disciple says, **“. . . nor departing from words . . .”** (and not to forsake words totally, either); and this amounts to making his practice arrive at the *Middle Way*. This is certainly a very laudable achievement.

Then, Tao-Fu continues, **“it should be employed for the fulfillment of the ‘Ultimate Truth’.”** This means that this kind of wisdom or attainment concerning words should be used exclusively for the realization of *Bodhi*, which is the conclusion of Tao-Fu's observation. And now, Master Bodhidharma's comment is, “You have my *Skin*,” which means that Tao-Fu's practice has actually embodied the essence or the *general outlook* of the First Patriarch's teaching; however, it is too general, if not superficial, and it is far from profound.

(2) The Flesh Kong-An:

The second disciple's presentation of his own highest achievement is, **“To my comprehension, it is as someone who has witnessed Buddha Akṣobhya's Pure World. . . .”** Buddha Akṣobhya is a Buddha's name in the *Eastern Universe*—very far from here (perhaps millions of light years away). “Akṣobhya” means “unmoved.” In some other *Sūtra* (Scripture), the Buddha says that the people in Buddha Akṣobhya's world are all great *Bodhisattvas*, who have practiced to attain the stage of being unmoved by impure *Dusts*. Hence, Buddha Akṣobhya's world is very much superior to ours. Therefore, whoever can witness Buddha Akṣobhya's world have already achieved great attainment and have acquired the “Divine Eye” that enables him to witness that Eastern Pure Land on his own—so far away though it is. In sum, this practitioner is enlightened to a very high degree!

“Once he has viewed it, he is not in the mind to see it again.” This expression signifies that when the practitioner has accomplished such a high state, no matter how great it could be, he will not cling onto it at all. Rather, for the sake of *Bodhisattvaship*, he will still keep on cultivating himself and inculcating all *Mortal Beings* and emancipating them from their sufferings—that is to say, for the sake of the suffering beings, he can even give up enjoying the wonderful Pure Land he has

earned through his practice, though that Pure Land is accessible to him at any time.

When this practitioner came to behold Akṣobhya's world, it is beyond a doubt that he would be enraptured. Remember what we have said concerning the *Four Boundless States of Mind*—what the disciple Ni-Tsung-Tse is expressing here is *the Boundless State of Joy plus the Boundless State of Renunciation*. This is certainly a very great accomplishment! Now let us put all our analyses together. What Ni-Tsung-Tse means here is that *Buddha's Way* is somewhat like someone who has practiced arduously, and he finally came up with the accomplishment of being able to see for himself the Buddha's Perfect World—one of the highest levels of accomplishments, to participate in the Buddha's Realm. At that instant, what he was experiencing can be nothing but an unspeakable overwhelming joy. Even if this person's practice and accomplishment has been so high-level and pure, his joy so overwhelming, and the *Buddha's Realm* that he is able to witness is so perfect and immaculate—for all that, he is still able to relinquish it, if necessary, for he has already attained at such high level of *Non-Attachment* (being able to release oneself from all *Attachments*), that he would *not cling to any success*, any joy, or any spiritual or material enjoyments, to the extent that he could even give up the wish to take a second look at the remarkable task he has finished executing!

For this wonderful attainment of Ni-Tsung-Tse, the First Patriarch remarks, “you have acquired my Flesh.” This would mean that you have acquired a deeper and weightier Essence of my teaching as compared with the “skin.” However, the remark also seems to imply that something more profound can still be wished for.

(3) The Bones Kong-An:

The third disciple comes straight up to the point—“**The Four Elements have always been vacuous, and the Five Aggregates are non-being. Yet, in what I perceive, I see not even one Dharma (thing) to be obtainable.**” The *Four Elements* (Soil, Water, Fire, and Wind) stand for the external world, and the *Five Aggregates* (*Matter, Sensation, Thinking, Kinesis, and Cognizances*) indicate our own body and mind. The former denotes the insentient, material world, and the latter stands for all *sentients* (or *Multibeings*). And so, the *Four Elements* together with the *Five Aggregates* would comprise all the *Worldly Dharmas*. And as Tao-Yu, the third disciple, sees them, all these Dharmas are *vacuous* and do not consist of a *Self Entity*. In one stroke, this disciple enters the realm of *Śūnyatā*!

“**Yet, in what I perceive, I see not even one Dharma to be obtainable.**”—by this he means that by means of the *Śūnyatā* state that he has achieved, he is able to perceive the Reality that

there is not even a bit of Dharma to be acquired. If he realizes that there is nothing to be *obtained*, it follows that he would not reach out to *grasp* and *obtain* anything, be it external or internal. Thus, he is perfectly “clean,” uncontaminated, and purified. To this, the Patriarch comments, “You have earned my *bones!*” By this remark the Patriarch means that this disciple has acquired the *framework*, or the *fundamental structure* of the Dharma just as the bones are to the body.

(4) The Marrow Kong-An:

Finally, Master Huei-Ko, stood up, bowed and took his seat according to his position. What does this pantomime mean? Why did he not say something? The fact that he kept silent implies that the Dharma itself is speechless and *ineffable*—it cannot be expressed in any human speech: it is beyond words. Accordingly, Master Huei-Ko did not make any verbal statement; instead, he acted out what he saw was supposed to be done in that junction. All the other disciples had already expressed their own very refined and wonderful doctrines; therefore, it could be that Huei-Ko saw that there would be nothing more to be added in the way of words. Since he had nothing more in words to add, Master Huei-Ko simply said nothing! And he did not try to show off what he knew or was capable of doing by speech or arguments so as to compete for the

Patriarchship. Therefore, normally speaking, by saying nothing he is virtually giving up his chance for competition.

Although the Dharma is ineffable, still Master Huei-Ko must be courteous to the Master and to his fellow practitioners. This signifies that proper *respect* and courtesy is always indispensable—it helps keep the world running properly. This *respect*, like everything mundane, may be “vacuous,” simply a form without a substantial *Entity* to itself, but it is still indispensable for the world—it holds the world together and keeps it from running wild and becoming a mess.

Master Huei-Ko’s silence signifies *Wisdom beyond words* and his bow would signify *Compassion*. Wisdom and Compassion—these are the two pivots of Buddhism. Master Huei-Ko’s wordless expression vividly incorporates both of these themes at the same time!

Patriarch Huei-Ko’s action also implies the wisdom of *Non-Duality* (which means that Bodhi or Reality is “One, and Only One” without *dichotomy*). By way of explaining this term, for instance, if something is regarded as “good,” it naturally follows that some other thing with opposite attributes must be “bad,” and thus “*Duality*” is formed. Therefore, the *Wisdom of Non-duality* is such that it is free from Differentiating, illusory thinking, from any verbal inference, or from any kind of self-justified judgments. And so one who has acquired the *Wisdom*

of Non-duality is also viewed as having achieved the *Speech-free Dharmic Essence* (離言法性). And this *Speech-free Dharmic Essence* is just what Master Huei-Ko has attained, which has won for him the Second Patriarchship.

Let us now make a brief review and comparison among the accomplishments of Master Bodhidharma's disciples. The first disciple's practice is still centered upon words and their uses. His accomplishment, therefore, is not of the highest level. The second disciple has acquired higher accomplishment. He has encompassed the vision of *Śūnyatā* (the essence of Wisdom) and, at the same time, he has realized that even *Śūnyatā* itself is not something to be obtained. Thus, his practice is higher on scale than the former. The third disciple evinces that he has acquired great Wisdom as well as Compassion; therefore, his realization is even higher in stature than the second one, for Wisdom accompanied by Compassion is obviously much worthier than the stark Wisdom of *Śūnyatā*! Yet Master Huei-Ko with his Wisdom and Compassion of *Nonduality* and *Inconceivableness* is undoubtedly the most supreme one among them all; therefore, he deserved the *Transmission of the Lineage*.

At this point, I will stop to conduct our meditation session.

[*Meditation session begins*]

[*After the meditation session*]

Finally, as a conclusion of today's class, let us make an offer of the *merits* of today's practice to all worry-stricken Mortals, wishing them to have an opportunity to be exposed to the precious teaching of the Buddha, so as to achieve Enlightenment as soon as possible.

【QUESTION and RESPONSE】

QUESTION: “When we offer our merits or our prayers to others who are in need, does the recipient have to believe, or know, what we are doing?”

RESPONSE: “When we are sincere in our wish to benefit others, the recipient need not know or believe in the efficacy of our prayers. If they do believe, however, the prayers will be much more powerful. It is something like the sun: Even if a person who was born blind and never saw the sun, and for that reason, even if he would not believe that the sun does exist, he is still benefited by the heat and warmth of the sun. Remember when I told you at the beginning of this lecture about Mr. K in Florida? He did not know we were praying for him, but he was helped nonetheless.”

—Lecture given on 5/6/1989
at Chuang Yen Monastery, N.Y.

CONTEMPLATION
II:
THE CONTEMPLATION ON
“HUA-TO”

(第二參：參話頭)

Chapter 4:

Who is saying ‘Namo Amito-Fo’?

(念佛是誰?)

(A) What is a Hua-To?

After the study of *Kong-An*, we are going to contemplate the *Hua-To*. In Chinese, “Hua” means “words,” and “To” means “head”—put together the phrase would mean “word heads.” Perhaps instead of translating it, we might just as well use the transliteration of the original language by saying “Hua-To.” A *Hua-To* usually consists of a sentence, or a phrase. In effect, a *Hua-To* is a miniature *Kong-An*, or a *Kong-An* in a condensed form.

(B) Where does the voice come from?

In order to *Ts’an* (to contemplate on) *Hua-To* effectively, we

need to know the process of vocalization, or the “articulation procedures.” Ordinarily, when we talk, in the first place we form a concept of the words which we are going to express in our mind. But, even prior to the inception of the concept and the following formulation of the words, there is even “something” that precedes the genesis of the concept. And *Ts’an Hua-To* is to *introspect* this “something,” i.e., to find out the foremost primary and fundamental *source of our thought and speech*.

Therefore, in the contemplation of the *Hua-To*, we are to probe and trace back to the deepest niche of our thought and mind in relation with the operation of our corporeal body to find out the very original source of the vocalization of words; that is, to put it in a “biological way,” “*Where do these concepts and words come from?*” If we put it more linguistically or metaphysically, it would sound like: “*Who is formulating these words?*”—or simply thus, “*Who is speaking?*” and “*Who is thinking?*” There is a very popular and famous *Hua-To* in Chinese Buddhism—“*Who is saying the Holy Name of the Buddha?*” or translated a little differently “Who is chanting ‘Namo Amito-Fo’?” (“Namo Amito-Fo” meaning “pay deference to Amitabha Buddha.”) In meditating upon this *Hua-To*, it is, as I said above, to probe the source of our *speech*, and eventually our *thought*, (to understand our speech and mind) by means of tracing the articulating process and perpending on this Holy

Epithet, Amitabha Buddha.

(C) Who is chanting ‘Namo Amito-Fo’ ?

Chanting the phrase “Namo Amito-Fo” (pay homage to Amitabha Buddha) is one of the primary meditating practices in the *Pure Land Denominatioin* of Mahayana Buddhism. In the past, it is not unusual for a strongly bigoted Ch’an adherent to say, “As I am a Ch’an practitioner, and you are a Pure Land follower, we are totally different, and so we shall go our own several ways.” Consequently, there was often an unreconcilable “ideological” discrepancy between the ardent adherents of these two Denominations, Ch’an and Pure Land (although the disagreements were always kept in the field of verbal arguments and never developed into physical fights or battles as seen in other religions). In the course of time, some very wise masters of Ch’an Buddhism found a way ingenious enough not only to bridge up the gap, but also to incorporate the two diverse practices into one by the brilliant innovation of the *Hua-To*, “*Who is chanting ‘Namo Amito-Fo’?*” Through this *Hua-To*, the two widely divergent sects encountered, conversed, reconciled and finally dialogued in unison. And from that point on, when one is practicing “*Who is changing Amito Fo*,” one can either chant in the way of the Pure Land, or can meditate silently in the fashion of Ch’an, or both at the same time; and in the latter

case, it came to be known as “*the Dual practice of Ch’an and Pure Land*,” which has satisfied the special needs of some people who take a liking to both sects.

Methodologically speaking, chanting “Namo Amito-Fo” is really a way of *meditation*, and, if done well, it can enable the practitioner to achieve *Samādhi*, too. So it is not too far apart from Ch’an at all. But to some people, it sounds somewhat less challenging. There certainly are more challenging and more advanced ways of meditation in the Ch’an School, and yet they require much more advanced techniques and wisdom, such as the ones expounded by Kuan Yin Pu-Sa, which will be the items we are going to cover in later teachings.

Someone once asked me, “If chanting the Holy Name of the Buddha mechanically can lead one to *Samādhi*, why can’t the repetition of any other words—such as ‘cabbage’ or ‘damn it’ or even the four letter words—have the same effect?” To this I replied, “All words stand for some objects or denote some meanings, and so when you say a word, at that very instant the image or meaning of that word arise in your mind. For instance, if you say ‘cabbage’ or ‘pig’ or ‘mad dog,’ the image of cabbage or a pig or mad dog appears in your mind. So, when you utter the name of the Buddha, the Buddha’s image turns up in your mind. Besides, the name of the Buddha would remind us of his wisdom and merits and would urge us to practice; yet the

name of ‘pig’ or ‘mad dog’ would not cause such good effects for anyone. By repeating the name of the Buddha, one would aspire to become a Buddha and obtain the *Samādhi* and Wisdom that the Buddha has achieved; whereas by repeating the word ‘pig’ or ‘cabbage,’ one would fill one’s mind with the images of pigs or cabbages, or some meaningless, indecent or hateful ideas; thus his mind becomes impure. At this point, we would like to ask: where would this person be heading by doing the meaningless or obscene chanting? I would say that he would most probably be going nuts or dumb like a cabbage or becoming a mad dog! As a matter of fact, the moment when a person actually starts chanting ‘cabbage’ or ‘mad dog’ incessantly, his mind is really in trouble.”

Although the *Natures* of all Dharmas are ultimately *equal*—such as the name of the Buddha and the name of a vegetable—the *Phenomena* attendant upon them are substantially different. The line between *Dharma’s Nature* and *Dharma’s Phenomena* of something, however, is difficult to draw to make it absolutely definite—that is exactly why we must learn “*the wisdom of delineating without discrimination.*” And this wisdom of delineating without discrimination is the very essence of Ch’an!

(D) To contemplate on the Hua-To about Amitabha Buddha:

Let us now begin to contemplate upon the *Hua-To* itself! When we chant the Holy Name of the Buddha, can you tell me: “*who*” is actually chanting the name? This question is very intriguing and very important, too. It can be said that all the happenings in this world arise from this “*who*,” i.e., the *doer*. This *who* decides the *what* (the thing done), the *when* (the time of doing), the *where* (the location of doing), and the *why* (the reason of doing it). Therefore, the *who* is the *doer*, *the mover*, and all the rest are *the moved*, which comes from *the moving*.

Who is doing this chanting then? “I am,” you might respond. But, who is this “I”? Now this is getting a little more difficult. You may reply, “This ‘I’ is composed of two elements—the mental and the physical.” And you may also add that *the mental* is invisible, while *the physical* can be observed. Therefore, it would be more convenient for us to start our contemplation from the physical part, for the physical is tangible and much easier to perceive.

Again, to the question “Who is saying Namu Amito-Fo,” you may respond that your body (your mouth and tongue) is saying “Namu Amito-Fo.” The sound of this utterance, however, does not come *by itself*; it needs a lot of help. It needs the assistance of the tongue, the lips, the teeth, the throat, the vocal

cords, and the esophagus, etc. to make the utterance become audible.

Now, contemplate on this : are the lungs or tracheae saying “Namo Amito-Fo”? No, they are not. Otherwise we would be able to hear voice coming directly from the lungs; in that case, we won’t be needing the tongue or the lips for speaking; but that certainly is not true—therefore, we cannot say that the lungs are speaking. Neither does the throat, nor the lips, nor the teeth, etc. say “Amito-Fo.” In fact, none of these by themselves can utter the words, because we cannot find the voice in just any single *one* of them. If individually and independently these organs cannot make sounds, can we say that they make the sounds all together? That won’t be true either, because if *two* of them collaborate to make the sounds, then which two organs are they? Suppose they are the lungs and the tongue that do the job, then what about the teeth and the throat and the lips? Are they useless? Obviously it is not so. Therefore, it would not be correct to say only *two* of them work together to produce the sound. Besides, even if it were true that *two* of them working together to produce the sound, then again, as in the case of *one*, all the rest of the speech organs will be reduced to uselessness. So, it is out of question to assume that *two* of the organs work together to produce the sound. If *two* is not plausible, what about three, or four, or even five of them? That will also amount to the same result as two—impossible and contrary to the fact.

Then what about *all* the speech organs working together to make the sound? If that were true, then we should be able to hear the voice in each and every one of them at the same time. But this is certainly not true. Because if the sound is in all of them at the same time, then even before the sound comes out of the mouth, we should be able to hear sounds either in the lungs, or in the throat, and so on. But this is evidently against the fact. Therefore, we cannot assert that the organs of the body, each of them individually, or all of them together, are saying the words. Consequently, in the final observation, we cannot even decide for sure that our body is doing the speaking! This is really incredible. Almost from the earliest days of our infancy, we notice and believe that our physical body does the talking for us. We have never had the least doubt about it, and we have always believed that it is absolutely true.

It cannot be otherwise. No way — we would revolt against such an idea. But under the scrutiny of *Ch'an's Eye*, this “natural” function, which has long been taken for granted, has suddenly turned out to be “unascertainable” — it rejects to be pinpointed anywhere! If one tries to get a closer look at each speech organ with the *Eye of Prajñā*, and there is not even a tiny vestige of sound traceable *in the organ!*

If the *Body* is not speaking, then *who* is speaking? At this point, without any other options, you might say, “Then it should

be my *Mind* that is speaking!”—Now, if the *Mind* can speak, what do we need the physical *body* for? Besides, does the *Mind* have lips and tongue? Of course not. Therefore, it will be incorrect to say that the *Mind* is uttering the words. Eventually, we might come to a conclusion which is pretty much a parallel to Master Huei-Ko’s—“*I cannot find the one who is saying it!*” (or “The one who is speaking the words is nowhere to be found!”). When a person is engaged in deep meditation, and he is suddenly able to visualize vividly and comprehend profoundly that “the one that says the Holy Name of the Buddha” is truly *nowhere to be found*—he will be reaching the state of Enlightenment called *the Śūnyatā of Man*. *The Śūnyatā of Man* (the Doer) and *the Śūnyatā of Dharma* (the Done) are the two major components of *Śūnyatā Wisdom*, or *Prajñā* (Transcendental Wisdom), which would lead us directly to *Nirvāṇa* and the *Supreme Bodhi*.

Despite the fact that we cannot find the “who” that is uttering the words, we still remain convinced that definitely “something,” or “somebody”—or, to be more explicitly—it is the “I” that is saying it! This strong conviction or obstinacy is called *Original Ignorance* or *Root Ignorance*.

It is very hard to do away with this *blind assertion*—it would take very strenuous, forceful and long practice to make that possible! At this point, please try your best to perpend on ‘who

is saying “Namo Amito-Fo”?’ in the following meditation practice.

At the end of the previous analysis or contemplation, we found that neither the *body*—not any part of it—nor the *mind* is speaking! Yet, *still we speak!* Then who is speaking? **“I” am speaking!** And it follows that where is this “I”? Now this is an imperative issue, and it is far from easy to solve at all. Let us meditate upon this. We will begin this meditation by reciting “Namo Amito-Fo”; then we will stop the audible chanting, only keeping on chanting silently in our mind, and at the same time contemplate upon the silent chanting. As you recite the words, listen closely to what you yourself are uttering. Make each and every syllable eligible and clear to yourself, and concentrate your mind on the “silent voice”; do not let your mind wander away. The distance from your lips to your ears is only about three inches—a pretty short distance; do not allow your mind to travel beyond that area.

[*Meditation session begins*]

[*After the meditation session*]

【QUESTION and RESPONSE】

1. The Sword of Wisdom

QUESTION: “If, while we are doing ‘running meditation,’ we are to be fully concentrated upon the running, why do you use the ‘sword’ to strike us with? Doesn’t that make us conscious of the ‘sword’ when we should be concentrated upon the running?”

RESPONSE: “Exactly, but some of you were not concentrated enough upon the running, therefore, I used the sword to remind you and bring you back to concentration. The wood ‘sword’ stands for the ‘Sword of Wisdom’ and it is used to dissever from us all kinds of spiritual obstacles—obstinacy, egoism, ignorance and attachments. The karmas we have accumulated prevent us from concentrating ourselves properly, therefore, sometimes we can use some external urge.”

2. Soul, Cognizances, and Buddha Nature

QUESTION: “Several weeks ago, you said that Buddhists do not believe in a soul. Is that correct?”

RESPONSE: “I do not remember my exact words; however, let me explain the Buddhist view of the soul. The Buddha’s

wisdom is different from that of other wise men and saints of the world. Throughout the ages, many people believed in the existence of a soul—and the soul is supposed to be *indivisible*, *unchangeable*, and owning a substantial *Entity*. The belief that the soul is indivisible and indestructible is held very strongly by many. According to the wisdom of the Buddha, however, there is no such soul as having a substantial Entity; there is only the Mind. The Mind, unlike the professed *indivisible soul*, according to the Buddha, can be divided into eight parts or levels (these have been expounded to you in a previous lecture). The upper level consists of *the five Cognizances*—*eye, ear, nose, tongue, and tactile*—which are the outcome of the *Five Senses* coming into contact with the *Five Dusts* (color, sound, smell, taste, and touch).

“*The Sixth Cognizance* is the *Conceptual, or Mental Cognizance*, and is the source of our discriminatory abilities. It is this *Cognizance* that analyzes things and evaluates and judges them as good or evil, and finally label them down accordingly. According to the judgment of this cognizance, we will either accept or reject things; yet from this acceptance or rejection there arises lots of conflicts, struggles, and pangs. When we wish to reject or get rid of something, but fail to do it, suffering will ensue. When we wish to accept or possess something, but we can not succeed in obtaining it, or it disappears very quickly from our grasp—again we suffer. While *the Sixth Cognizance*

seems to make all the discriminations or judgments, its function is only superficial. Behind *the Sixth Cognizance* lies the background ‘motivator’ of discriminating—*the Seventh Cognizance*, which is the Ego Center, in Sanskrit it is called ‘*Mana Cognizance*.’

“The *Ego* remains in the shadows, secretly directing all the activities of the *Six Cognizances*. Without the wisdom of the Buddha, it would be impossible to discover anything about this *Seventh Cognizance*, for it hides and disguises itself very well—exactly like a master criminal of Mafia, who always stays in the background, never actually committing the crime with his own hands; but he is actually the sole person responsible for all the crimes done. So *the Seventh Cognizance* is like the Godfather of Mafia, with *the Sixth Cognizance* as the chief of the gang, and the *First Five Cognizances* as the gangsters or gofers, who are supposed to take orders and assume all the blame when things go wrong. (That is exactly what some *ascetics* do: they wrongly mortify their desires by punishing their body or senses, without subduing their own *Mind*, which is the real evildoer.)

“Under *the Seventh Cognizance*, there is yet another *cognizance*, far more profound than all the others combined—*the Eighth Cognizance*, in Sanskrit called *the Ālaya Vijñāna* or ‘*Repertory Cognizance*.’ It is really the storage of all the other *Cognizances*’ “products” (i.e., karmas). When any one of the *First Seven Cognizances* has gathered data from the external

world, the *Cognizances* would then ruminate upon those data—they relish, analyze and classify them. And then, just like children, when growing tired of playing with some toys, they would fling them into the toy box, so would the *Six Cognizances* discard the data into *the Ālaya Cognizance*. Yet, nothing is ever lost; no matter how minute it may be. Any karma—be it good, bad or neutral—is very well stored and preserved in *the Ālaya Cognizance*. Furthermore, that which has been stored, will in turn become a new driving force to push us to perform more new karmas. Previously accumulated good deeds usually lead to generate more good karma; yet evil past deeds generally procreate karmas of their own kind; and neutral deeds will produce mediocre karmas or *harmless ignorance*.

“This is how the body and mind work together in perfect coordination to form a seemingly *indivisible* unity, which is called ‘soul’ by people of mundane comprehension. However, it is far from *indivisible* at all, as we can see from our scrutiny above, since it can be analyzed and subdivided—which is a perfectly unimaginable idea for a believer in the soul. Viewed and understood from this perspective, it is evident that the *soul* or Mind is not *an indivisible One*, for it can be analyzed and subdivided. Also, more importantly, the Mind is subject to *change*, whereas the traditional *soul* is believed to be *unchangeable*, with the same *appearance* and *identity everlastingly*. In contrast, the *Mind* does change. It changes even from

moment to moment both in its components and in its attributes. Each moment when there is some new input of karma coming from the *First Seven Cognizances*, the structure or pattern of *Ālaya* (which ignorant people called *soul*) is changed or readjusted. And these facts will be sufficient to refute the common misconception of a so-called ‘soul,’ or an *everlasting unchanged entity*.

The belief of an *indivisible everlasting unchanged soul* is very harmful, in that it prevents people from nurturing *the free will to change*, to *improve* their karmas, to liberate themselves by practice, and eventually to be the Master of themselves. Therefore, with the belief of an unchangeable soul, people would dwarf and degrade themselves by subjecting themselves to be everlasting servants to some External Divinity, without the slimmest chance to cherish and realize their own precious *Buddha Nature* which will make them stand tall, and make every man equal, equal even with Buddhas. For these reasons, the Buddha refutes the *ambiguous, misleading, traditional blind belief* of a *soul*, which belief would only become an excuse for obstinate and lazy people to refuse to practice and *refuse to change* for better, simply because they are accustomed to *spiritual slavery and tyranny*, the slavery and tyranny of the *blind karma* internally and the *blind belief* of an Almighty Master externally. That is to say, they are under the *slavery* of their internal blind karma, which results in the *tyranny* of an ignorant belief in an

almighty master, who takes care of everything for them. But in Buddhism, we practice to become master of ourselves by changing and improving our mind and behavior, so as to realize our Buddha Nature and become Buddhas ourselves. Therefore, a Buddhist with correct knowledge and belief would never talk about the so-called soul, but only the Mind and *Buddha Nature*.

3. What is being reincarnated?

QUESTION: “If there is no soul, then what is reincarnated?”

RESPONSE: “The *Ālaya Cognizance* is. Right after death, all the organs of our body will begin to deteriorate and cease to function. Even *the Seventh Cognizance* is as transient as *the First Six ones*. The *First Seven Cognizances* arise and die away almost in a matter of an instant; they are all short-lived but recurrent over and over again. At death, everything retreats to the *Ālaya*, the storage of all karmas, (like the head and limbs of a turtle retreating into its crust). Later on, at rebirth, everything will be regenerated from the *Ālaya*, just as animals awakening from hibernation, and will come to function all over again, for everything is preserved there. Therefore, after death, it is *the Eighth Cognizance*, the *Ālaya* as a whole, that *transmigrates* and reincarnates.”

4. \bar{A} laya does not disappear upon death.

QUESTION: “If the *First Seven Cognizances* disappear upon death because they are dependent upon external circumstances, why should not *the Eighth Cognizance* also disappear? Is it not dependent upon the other *Seven Cognizances* for its existence since they furnish it with the perceptions that it stores?”

RESPONSE: “That is an excellent question! First of all, the *First Seven Cognizances* do not actually disappear; they simply cease to function temporarily, and they are still stored in the \bar{A} laya; that is exactly why the \bar{A} laya is called *the Repertory of Cognizances*. Secondly, the \bar{A} laya will not disappear because even though the \bar{A} laya receives input from the *First Seven Cognizances*, the \bar{A} laya is also the original *supplier* or *begetter* of them all. The \bar{A} laya is like the ground, or Mother Earth, and the *First Seven Cognizances* are like the plants that grow from the ground. From *the Eighth Cognizance* arise *the First Seven Cognizances*. The *First Seven Cognizances* derive from *the Eighth*, and not the other way round. *The Sixth Cognizance* directs the *First Five Cognizances* to gather impressions or ‘food’ for both itself and *the Seventh Cognizance*.

“According to the *Ultimate Truth*, however, *the Sixth* and *the Seventh*—especially *the Seventh*— *Cognizances* are just of illusory existence. It is because of our *Ignorance* that this illu-

sive *Ego* comes into being. In the words of Master Bodhidharma, they are simply *phantasms* or '*ghosts*.' *The Seventh Cognizance* could be called a 'dark ghost' since it is hard to perceive; *the Sixth Cognizance* could be called a 'white ghost' since it is more visible than *the Seventh Cognizance*. They are all like *ghostly shadows* in our mind."

5. The Buddha Nature is real.

QUESTION: "If all these phenomena are not real, then what is real?"

RESPONSE: "Excellent question. What is real is the *Buddha Nature*. Imagine a movie screen. The screen is white and it is blank; nothing is written or painted or carved on it. With the help of lights, electricity, and a projector, however, images of a film about love, hatred, and war could *seem to appear* on it. Everything comes to play, and we as viewers will love it or dislike it. More often than not we tend to take the images for *real*, and even cling to them, and our emotions would revolve around them. Sometimes we hate some scenes on the screen so much that we actually become upset or angry or indignant to the point of gnawing our teeth.

"Right behind the appearance and busy play of the motion pictures on the screen, which is the *Original Nature*, the Screen

becomes so ‘cluttered’ with superficial phantasmagorical images that we would not be able to see the *Original Screen* any more. Such is the same with *Buddha Nature* in relation with the *First Seventh Cognizances*. The *Buddha Nature* is like the Original blank screen, while the *First Seventh Cognizances* together with the data they gather are like the images of the motion picture. Almost all the images *projected* upon the screen (the *Buddha Nature*) are the forms and images which we store in the *Ālaya*. Therefore, I would point out that despite the fact that all the *phenomena* of the *Cognizances* are not real, like the motion pictures on the screen, the *Buddha Nature* on which all the *cognizances* and *phenomena* show their *appearances stays real* as ever—In fact, it always stays *real, intact, and undefiled* all the time throughout countless ages, no matter what the *Cognizances* have to show on it; such is the same with the movie *screen* which is never stained or defiled by the images of the movie, regardless how loud the images may appear be. That is exactly why we still stand a chance of getting Enlightenment to achieve Buddhahood, however corrupted and defiled we may appear to be at this point—because our *Buddha Nature*, which is actually never adulterated, is always *latent* for the cultivation of Enlightenment. And that is also exactly why Buddhas and Bodhisattvas would still bother so much as to cultivate such impure people like us, because they never think that we are really hopeless.”

6. The Middle Route

QUESTION: “Then, is our goal to eliminate the images from the screen, to empty the *Ālaya*?”

RESPONSE: “It depends. There are various goals, and they can be accomplished according to your intelligence, your level of practice, and the type of practice you do. In *Hinayāna* practice, for example, the main emphasis is on the elimination of all the images—everything—until you are totally blank and clean. *Hinayānic* practice considers all the images as nothing but defiled, therefore they are definitely not to be allowed to exist for a practitioner. A strict *Hinayāna* practitioner is like one who has contracted mysophobia (a fear or distaste of uncleanness), so that he cannot tolerate even a single speck of dust on his desk or on his window sills. As a result that makes the *Hinayāna* practitioner reach an extreme, the extreme of abhorring all worldly *phenomena*.

“The people at the other extreme as opposed to the *Hinayāna* practitioners are ourselves—ordinary worldly people. We are totally different from them. We *love* dust and mess—sometimes the messier the better; and some even call it ‘art’! A friend of mine was so messy that it was very difficult for him to find anything on his desk or in the room. And this friend of mine called that an ‘artistic living’—so, we have all sorts of rationalizations for our behavior. So, this is another extreme,

the extreme of attaching ourselves to all worldly *phenomena*, and at the same time justifying and even fighting for it, and claiming it as our inviolable right to do things in our own messy way, either physically, mentally, or spiritually.

“The *Middle Route*, however, is the one practiced by the Buddha and the great Bodhisattvas or true *Mahāyāna* practitioners. This method takes much more practice because it teaches us that we should be *involved*, and yet remain *disinterested* or *detached* simultaneously. And this is called ‘*unattached involvement*.’ As a *Mahāyāna* practitioner, you may get involved in some worldly activity very zealously, and yet at the same time, you must remain aloof from it spiritually or mentally. This kind of practice is like walking upon a tight-rope: unless we can remain cautious and balanced enough, not leaning toward any of the four sides (right, left, front, and back), we may fall down to the ground instantly. Therefore, in order to walk this tightrope of *Mahāyāna* practice from one end to the other safely and successfully, we need to carry with us a pole for balance. This particular pole is called ‘*Prajñā Pāramitā*’—or Transcendental Wisdom. That is why Bodhisattvaship is so much more difficult than other practices—you are at once *involved* and *detached*: that is the hardest part.

“Therefore, in *Mahāyāna* Bodhisattva practice, you should on the one hand try *not* to contaminate your *Buddha Nature*,

and yet on the other hand, you should also learn not to detest any *phenomenal* 'images'—for any detestation is pernicious for Bodhisattvas and eventually for the *Supreme Bodhi*, too. In the meantime, if you do not like the movie (or the illusions in your own mind) and you want it to stop, you really do not have to smash the screen, or destroy the TV set; simply unplug it, and that will do it. (The *Hinayāna* practitioner could not tolerate not just the images on the TV, but also the TV set itself; therefore, they need to smash the TV set to ensure it will do no more harm; while the *Mahāyānic* Bodhisattvas simply unplug it.) In one word, in *Hinayāna* practice, all images should be eliminated, while in *Mahāyāna* practice, the emphasis is laid not on the *exterior images*, but on their own *internal love-hate sentiment* toward the *images*. In other words, the fault lies in our own mind, rather than in the *images*. Therefore this *sentiment* of love and hate is really the root of our *Transmigration*, and yet in *Mahāyāna* this *sentiment* is not to be dealt with by *elimination*—it is only to be **transformed** by means of the power of *Prajñā*. By this way, nothing, *worldly* or *ultra-worldly*, is to be disgusted or detested and destroyed, but they will be **transformed for good use.**"

—Lecture given on 10/8/1988
at Chuang Yen Monastery, N.Y.

Chapter 5:
Who is saying ‘Namo Amito-Fo’?
(Contd.)
(念佛是誰？——續)

The theme of our previous lecture was the contemplation on “Who is saying ‘Namo Amito-Fo’?” This contemplation is of tremendous significance. Actually, it can be of the highest level in Buddhist practice, which can direct us to the core of Buddhism.

We will begin this meditation session by reciting the holy phrase “Namo Amito-Fo.” Now I would like to tell you how to do this particular meditation. When we recite this phrase, we should *articulate* each syllable very distinctly and with full consciousness—please do not mumble or slur away! Concentrate upon the pronunciation of the words and then try to determine: (1) where do the sounds come from? And (2) “Who is saying

‘Namo Amito-Fo’?’”

As we have analyzed before, while you are meditating upon this phrase, you may have already come to the awareness that your body, by itself, is not speaking. Now let us go a step further: If the body by itself were *able* to speak, then what would the role of the *Mind* be? Why would we need the *Mind* if the *Body* could do the talking *by itself*? If, on the other hand, we say that it is the *Mind* that is speaking, and not the *Body*—then, by the same token, what do we need the *Body* for? The *Body* would become useless since the *Mind* can do everything alone.

Now we are going to meditate in order to find out the answer—but the answer would not come easily. Together, we will delve into the depths of this *mystery*!

[*Meditation session begins*]

[*After the meditation session*]

In one of our previous classes, after we had meditated upon the *Bodily Uncleanliness*, someone remarked that it seemed to him that *uncleanliness* did not reside in the eye or in the nose, but rather in the *Mind* that utilized the sense organs. That was very good observation, and it is a very significant point, too.

I said that we should expand the theme of “Who is saying the holy words?” to encompass more and more of our experience. Will some of you tell me how you have done regarding this?

【QUESTION and RESPONSE】

Student A: “*Who* is doing the breathing and counting the breaths?”

Student B: “*Whose mind* is wandering in meditation—‘*who*’ is having all these thoughts?”

Student C: “*Who* is watching the mind wander in meditation?”

[*The Master’s Comments:*]

“Those are very good explorations and observations indeed, but we still can expand this theme a lot more—therefore, keep on exploring! In Ch’an, this is called *Sense of Doubt*. We have been living our lives taking everything for granted for a long long time—now we are going to raise doubts about virtually everything!

“The Buddha says that we have been ‘lost’ for such a long time that we have taken the *Four Elements* as our *True Body*

and the *images* (or grasped shadows) of the *Six Dusts* as our *True Mind*. And these two, the *misappropriated Body and Mind*, combined together, have come to be recognized as 'I'—and thus, we are misled and beguiled by all the untrue *phenomena*.

“Let me explain what the Buddha means by ‘The *Grasped Shadows* of the *Six Dusts*’: We use the *Sense Organs* to ‘grasp’ the external images of the *Six Dusts*: Once we have reached and fetched the *images* back with our sensual organs and recorded them in our mind, we would relish, and ruminate upon them. In the next instant we would begin to analyze and classify these new collections, so as to make judgments on each and every one of them. And then based on these judgments, we will come to a decision about whether it is likable or unlikable, whether we are going to keep it or discard it. And this whole process is called ‘*Differentiation*,’ or *Illusory Differentiation*. But mark here, these *differentiations* and judgments and *opinions* are *not in the ‘Dusts’* themselves—that is, it is not the *Dusts’* own fault. In fact, the *Differentiation* is neither in the *External Dusts*, nor in the internal ones. The so-called ‘*External Dusts*’ are the physical matters lying external to us, while the *Internal Dusts* are merely *shadows* of their external prototypes. Out of these *shadows* (or *mental images*), however, we are able to create virtually all the important spiritual evaluations in life—loves, hates, cravings, values, everything. Although the process appears to be rather complicated, yet the

whole process takes only like a twinkling of an eye—because we have turned very skilled workers in this field, due to countless practice, and so we can work everything out instantly. Now, all the problems seem to start with the *Dusts*. We consider the *Internal Dusts* which we collect as ‘real’; however, they are not—they are only ‘copies’ or *shadows* of their prototypes in the external world; they are, according to Patriarch Bodhidharma, ‘ghosts’ or *specters*. Nevertheless, we take these *ghostly images* as real and we even recognize them as the truthful visions of our *Mind*. We often say ‘*I have this feeling*,’ or ‘*I have that feeling*.’ (‘Have’ here means ‘owning,’ and so ‘I’ am the owner who *owns* that feeling, just as someone who owns a piece of tangible property.)”

QUESTION: “Is our *Original Nature*, that which is the ‘I,’ another manifestation of *the Universal* common denominator which science calls *energy*?”

RESPONSE: “No! *Energy* is something which can be measured on a scale, can be tested by instruments. Our *Original Nature* is not like that at all! No instrument can measure it, no equipment can test it—it is beyond testing, beyond measuring. That is why the practice of Buddhism is so difficult! We need to disregard and forget about a lot of old stuff which is irrelevant before we can really begin to learn the Dharma.

“In this connection, let me relate a tale or a Kong-An to you. Once in Japan, a great scholar, who was a professor in the university, went to visit a Zen Master (*Zen* is the Japanese way of saying *Ch’an*). The Zen Master knew that the scholar was a very learned man—replete with several fields of knowledge, including some Buddhism. The master invited the scholar to join with him in a tea ceremony in his drawing room. At the ceremony, the master poured the tea into the scholar’s cup until it was full to the brim. But the master did not stop pouring, so that the tea overflowed from the cup and began to spill upon the table and then onto the floor (the ‘*tatami*’). Nevertheless, the master went on decanting, as though he had not noticed that the tea was already spilling everywhere. Finally, the scholar could not stand it any longer, and he exclaimed, ‘Enough! Enough! Stop! Please stop! The tea is overflowing!’ To this, the Zen Master, still pouring the tea, coolly replied, ‘If you don’t empty your tea cup of its old contents, how can I ever serve you with any new stuff?’ What the Zen Master means is this: ‘If your **tea cup** (your mind) is **full** (which also carries a connotation of being arrogant and proud), how can I give you any **new tea** (knowledge and wisdom which is new to you)?’”

QUESTION: “When a person is enlightened, will he be aware that he is enlightened? Will it be perfectly clear to him?”

RESPONSE: “Let me use an analogy to answer this question. When a person who has been sleeping begins to wake up,

he *knows* that he is awaking and that he is not in a dream any more. He also *realizes* now that whatever has happened in his sleep, prior to his awakening, was all *dreams*, and those dreams have now vanished into thin air, and are all *unobtainable* after his waking up. This is the quintessence of Enlightenment.

“But, there are numerous levels of Enlightenment. Some people are deeply asleep and totally immersed in their *dreams*. When such a person begins to *awaken*, he might be aware of some external sounds—such as a door being slammed—but he is not yet ‘fully awake’ (*Ultimately Enlightened*). He is partly aware that something is happening (i.e., has acquired some wisdom), but he is not quite sure what that is. And this is the state of *Partial Enlightenment*.

“When an *Initial Enlightenment* dawns upon a person, there will be no more fear for him, only joy. At that instant of *Initial Enlightenment*, the joy may be so overwhelming that it becomes almost like ecstasy—but it would be only a calm, serene ecstasy, not a wild, uncontrollable frenzied one. Like the undercurrent of a huge river, this joy runs deep and long. And from this serene joy there will ensue a ‘spontaneous Compassion.’ If this does happen, then this is a genuine *Enlightenment*.”

—Lecture given on 10/22/1988
at Chuang Yen Monastery, N.Y.

CONTEMPLATION
III:
THE ŚŪRAṄGAMA
ENQUIRIES

(第三參：七處徵心)

Chapter 6:
An Overall View of
The Śūraṅgama Sūtra
(楞嚴經要義)

The theme of today’s teaching is “the Essentials of *The Śūraṅgama Sūtra*.” This *Sūtra* (Buddhist Holy Scripture) is one of the most important *Sūtras* in Mahāyāna Buddhism—especially in Ch’an Buddhism. The *Sūtra* very clearly delineates the specific methods and techniques for higher level (or advanced) meditation practice. It expounds the various stages of meditation, and describes in detail how the practice of meditation is to be applied to *the Route to Enlightenment*. For these reasons, this *Sūtra* has always commanded a very significant position in the Dharma.

It is quite often that the Buddha’s teaching begins with an interesting and exciting story; and it is the same with this *Sūtra*.

Therefore, before I begin my lecture about *The Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, I would like to tell you the story of this *Sūtra*. And this story is also the incident by which the Buddha came to deliver a whole body of teachings now known as *The Śūraṅgama Sūtra*.

Ānanda, a cousin of Buddha's and also one of his youngest disciples, became a member of the *Samṅha* (the Buddhist Order). One day, while away from the *Samṅha*, all alone (not accompanied by any Elders), Ānanda was begging for food (which was the way that monks were supposed to make their livelihood) and he decided to follow the *Ordinance* of *Almsbegging* enjoined by the Buddha, without any personal preference about whom to beg from.

Some members of the *Samṅha*, however, such as Mahākāśyapa, preferred to beg from the poor; for it is believed that poor people, due to being parsimonious *karma* in their past lives, were thus reduced to poverty in this life, and so they needed very much the opportunity to do good in order to improve their *karma*, so that they might have better life in their next reincarnation. Thus, these members of the *Samṅha*, including Mahākāśyapa, out of their compassion, preferred to beg from the poor in order to give them a chance of doing good.

On the other hand, some other members of the *Samṅha*, like Subhūti, felt that wealthy people usually would not bother to practice the Dharma, since they were able to enjoy the abun-

dance of their worldly life right now, and they normally do not feel any urgent need to practice. Yet little do they know that they were only draining the blessings which they have accumulated in their past lives without acquiring some more. Therefore, if they just went on enjoying life, totally disregarding practice at all, the wellspring of their blessings would be soon depleted, and they would not have any more merits left in their “account,” and eventually they would be suffering from poverty and hardships in their future lives. Therefore, these members of the *Samgha*, out of their compassion, would prefer to beg from the wealthy to give them a chance to do good.

The Buddha reproached both the extreme adherents of these viewpoints. He said that you should not form discrimination of any sort and should beg from whoever happened to be present while you were begging. If the person was poor, make him your donor; if he be rich, make him the same. You should have equal compassion for all *Multibeings*. And this is just what Ānanda was going to do when he started out for his *Almsbegging*, totally following the Buddha’s injunctions.

After a while, it was getting late and Ānanda did not have very much luck in his begging. Finally, he came into a neighborhood where Mātaṅga’s daughter, a courtesan, dwelt. Mātaṅga’s daughter, the Buddha told us, in five hundred previous lives, had been Ānanda’s spouse. Because of this *Karmic Relation* in the past lives, as soon as Mātaṅga’s daughter caught

sight of Ānanda, she became profoundly enamored of him and besought her mother's help to make him come to her. Under the daughter's eager supplications, Mātaṅga exercised a very powerful *Mantra* called the "Ex-Brahmin Deva Mantra" together with a certain esoteric ritual to charm and seduce Ānanda for her daughter.

Ānanda, influenced unawares by the power of the *Mantra* and magical power, became totally out of control of himself, and was lured into Mātaṅga's daughter's boudoir. While Mātaṅga's daughter was on the point of beginning to undress Ānanda and caress him, the Buddha, with his *Divine Power of Sight*, saw that Ānanda was in great trouble. The Buddha then meditated and entered into a very profound *Samādhi* called *Śūraṅgama Samādhi*. While in that *Samādhi*, from the crown of the Buddha's head emitted a great shaft of bright light, and in that light there appeared many images of Buddhas, who sat in lotus posture, all reciting the same Mantra called the *Śūraṅgama Dharani (Mantra)*. At the voice of the *Dharani*, Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva was summoned and commanded to carry the *Dharani* to the spot where Ananda was. Mañjuśrī did as he was bid instantly. Upon arriving there and reciting the *Śūraṅgama Dharani*, Mañjuśrī destroyed the black magic of the *Ex-Brahmin Deva Mantra*, and thereby subjugated Mātaṅga and her daughter. He then brought both Ānanda and Mātaṅga's daughter back to the Buddha.

After returning to the Buddha's place, Ānanda repented very much for what had happened. He lamented that, ever since his youthful days when he first joined the *Samṅha*, he had always been dedicating himself exclusively to the acquisition of knowledge about the *Dharma*. Due to an extraordinary gift of forceful memory, he had been able to commit to his memory all the teachings he had heard from the Buddha without leaving out even a single word of it, and so he had become very famous for his learning about the Dharma. Ānanda said remorsefully that, although he had devoted himself to *learning*, he had not yet exerted himself to put to practice the knowledge he had learned, so that the knowledge had not actually become *part of himself*. As a result, when critical situations like today's turned up, he found himself totally unable to apply his knowledge to cope with the problems, and was thus reduced to miserable helplessness. He also acknowledged that, since he was a blood kin of the Buddha's, the Buddha's own cousin (his father and Buddha's father are brothers), in the past he had been secretly hoping that the Buddha, for kin's sake, might exceptionally favor him with some of the Buddha's *Samādhī* without any hard work on his part; but now he realized that he had been quite mistaken; for he understood now that *Samādhī* could only be obtained by one's own effort of practice, and would never come as a gratuitous gift—it is untransferable.

Ānanda avowed to the Buddha that from then on he would

really practice the Dharma; and he besought the Buddha for instructions on how to attain *the immovable state of mind*, so that he could face up to all difficulties and trials. The Buddha, seeing that Ānanda was truly repentant and sincerely wishing to practice, began to instruct him, first of all, by means of a series of preliminary provoking questionings and answers. Those probing questionings and answers have come to form the main body of *The Śūraṅgama Sūtra*.

First of all, the Buddha asked Ānanda why he had joined the *Samṅha* to become a monk. Ānanda replied that he had done so because he had perceived the extraordinary physical beauty and magnificence of the Buddha which had aroused in him an enormous admiration. And he asserted that this physical magnificence of the Buddha resulted from nothing but immaculate practice on the Dharma. He wished very much to be as magnificent-looking as that, so he decided to join the *Samṅha* to practice the Dharma. [By the way, Ānanda was very well renowned for his great beauty—he was, so to speak, an *Adonis* at that time—and like Adonis, he cared overly much about physical beauty. Upon seeing that the Buddha was even much more “good-looking” than himself, he resolved to acquire such beauty by practicing the Dharma.]

Now comes the really significant point: The Buddha asked Ānanda, “When you first saw me and thought that I looked magnificent, *what did you employ to see me with?* And *what*

was it that has been enamored?” Ānanda replied that naturally *he used his eyes to see*, and that *it was his heart* (or mind) *that had become enamored* and enraptured with the Buddha’s magnificent looks.

The Buddha then asked Ānanda, “*Where are those eyes and heart of yours located?*” Ānanda responded that his eyes, just like the Buddha’s, were located at no other place than *on his face*, and that his mind undoubtedly was *inside his body*. In the *Sūtra* the Buddha then proceeds to help Ānanda explore the *Reality*, and the debating dialogues that follow is called “The Seven Propositions to locate the Mind.” We will come back to cover this in the next lecture. Right now, I would like to propound to you the “Essentials of *The Śūraṅgama Sūtra*.”

The first essential of *The Śūraṅgama Sūtra* is “To Cleanse and Comprehend the Mind.” As ordinary mortals, we are so *beclouded* by our own Ignorance that we really do not know very much about our own Mind: we do not know what it is, how it works, how the *Eight Cognizances* function—about all of these, we know so very little. But we really need to know it, so as to cleanse it of our bad karmas. It is evident that, the more we know, the more we can cleanse the karma; and it happens that the more we cleanse the karma, again the more we will be able to perceive and know our *Mind*. Therefore, the work of *knowing* and *cleansing* should be carried on simultaneously.

The second essential of *The Śūraṅgama Sūtra* is “To Witness Our Innate Nature.” The *Innate Nature* (or “本性 Ben-Hsing” in Chinese; *Svabhava* in Sanskrit) is much deeper and more profound than *the Eighth Cognizance*. To be able to witness the *Innate Nature* (or Buddha Nature) is the ultimate goal in practicing Buddha Dharma. In studying *The Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, we will be following Ānanda, who is in turn led by the Buddha, hand in hand, as it were, to seek and penetrate into the deepest niche of our own *Mind*, to locate exactly this ever, ever precious *Nature* of ours!

The third essential of this *Sūtra* is “to Destroy *Māras*.” *Māra* means “the Destroyer of good intentions and deeds.” In this world, the highest and best enterprise is nothing but to achieve Enlightenment through the practice of the Dharma. *Māra* is an evil *Deva* (or god) who is jealous of other people’s good fortune, or of those who are endowed with merits. And he especially hates those who practice the Dharma, since through the practice, the practitioner (who *Māra* thinks up to now is still a subject in his domain and therefore should be at his mercy) will eventually transcend the *Three Realms*, and as a result, will be able to reach a higher status than that of *Māra*’s own. Therefore, the *Māra* cannot tolerate those who try to improve themselves and to be elevated to a higher level than his own. For this reason, *jealousy* is the worst of all human emotions, for it makes one become hateful, malicious and destructive like

Māras. To see from the Buddhist Dharma's view, jealousy is the predominant attribute of Māra's; it is so venomous that it can poison a person's mind to the extent of wishing to destroy everything contrary to his desire; jealousy can turn friends into enemies, kins into foes, and good things into evil. It is nothing but filthy and ugly. It is a sick state of mind.

In the biography of the Buddha Himself, we know that only after he destroyed the militant followers of *Māra*, was he able to achieve the *Ultimate Enlightenment* (*Anuttara-samyak-sambodhi*). But mark you here, in Buddhist terms "to destroy" does not mean literally to kill someone as commonly understood. In Buddha's teaching, from the very beginning of practice to the end, *no killing* is allowed in any case, and this precept is followed throughout without exception; moreover, it is even applied to the treatment of *Māras*, let alone people of different beliefs. But exactly what is meant by "destroying the Māra"? It would mean that, when confronted by Māra's treacherous schemes, the practitioner should *stay unmoved* so that the Māra is *baffled, frustrated, and defeated* in his evil attempt. In other words, the Māra's intention of impeding or distracting our practice will be discouraged, and so he is in this sense "destroyed"—his evil will is destroyed). Therefore, *to destroy Māra* is "*to remain unmoved and incorruptible,*" without actually committing slaughter. (In the meantime, I would like to emphasize this once more: Killing is strictly prohibited by

Buddha’s own precepts, and Compassion is the very root of Buddhism; for this reason, how can the Buddha preach against Himself? Remember: the language of the Buddha is so “metaphorical” that it takes a very sophisticated mind to fully comprehend and appreciate its profound imports.)

According to Buddha’s teaching, there are four kinds of Māras:

1. the Māras of Vexation (or Kleśa),
2. the Māras of the Five Aggregates (or Skandas),
3. the Māras of Death,
4. the Celestial Māras.

I am going to explicate these as follows:

1. The Māras of Vexation (Kleśa)

The Sanskrit word “Kleśa” means disturbances and annoyances (or vexations and worries), in the sense that they will disturb the tranquility of the practitioner’s mind, and thereby make it beclouded. In reality, *Kleśas* are innumerable, but among them, six of them are most harmful. Because these six are the archetypes of all our worries, they are called *the Six Basic Vexations*, or *the Six Root Kleśas*:

- (1) Attachment (love)
- (2) Aversion (hate)
- (3) Ignorance

- (4) Arrogance (or Pride)
- (5) Doubt (Disbelief)
- (6) Evil Views (Misconcepts)

As for the first three Vexations—**Attachment, Aversion** and **Ignorance**—they are generally called *The Three Venoms*, which we have already discussed before. So we may just as well skip discussing them at this time. (Please refer to my previous work: *The Sweet Dews of Ch’an*, concerning the *Three Venoms*.)

(4) **Arrogance (Pride)** is also very pernicious since it has its root deep in *the Ego Cognizance (the Seventh Cognizance)*. That is to say that *the Seventh Cognizance* is the birthplace of *Arrogance*. *Arrogance* is obstructive to our good deeds and practice. It is always prompting one to think and do things only for one’s own vanity, even at the expense of disregarding others. Yet that kind of egocentric thinking and behavior will turn out to be harmful even to oneself.

(5) **Doubt**, or lack of faith (especially regarding the Dharma), will totally disable a person in practicing the Dharma. There are four kinds of *Doubts*:

- A. *Doubt* about oneself
- B. *Doubt* about the Dharma
- C. *Doubt* about your Guru
- D. *Doubt* about the *Buddha Nature*

A. Doubt about oneself

First of all, if you have doubt about yourself in regard to your capability to practice and to reach Enlightenment, you will be detained from proceeding to further practice, and you will not be able to do your best—for you will be wasting much of your time and energy in doubting. Besides, the best of your potentials will not be released freely and employed properly, and ultimately your achievement will be greatly limited. Furthermore, if you have doubt about yourself, you will be forever *hesitating* and *flinching* from making efforts, and this is very bad for practitioners, for it can pose as a great stumbling stone to the *Route of Bodhi*.

B. Doubt about the Dharma

Secondly, if you doubt the Dharma, then you would have nothing to guide you to practice for Enlightenment. By “the *Doubt about the Dharma*,” it means to have doubt about the *validity, efficacy, value and truthfulness of the Dharma*. And since the Dharma includes the Dharmas of the *Three Vehicles* (or *Three Yānas*), doubts about either one of them are harmful. For instance, even when a Mahāyāna practitioner doubts about the Hinayāna Dharma, or a Hinayāna devotee has doubts about the Mahāyāna practices, either one of these doubts would be harmful to the practitioner himself, to the Dharma, and to other

Multibeings. Therefore, the faith in the efficacy, value and truthfulness of the Dharma is of tremendous significance to the practitioner.

C. Doubt about the Gurus

Thirdly, **doubt about your Gurus** include the following three respects:

a) Doubt about our “Root Guru”—the Buddha

If you doubt about the Buddha, then everything would become undermined. Because all the teachings come from the Buddha, and the reason why we are practicing is that we are also aspired eventually to reach Buddhahood, to become Buddhas ourselves. Therefore, to foster doubts about the Buddha is a fundamental hindrance to practice.

b) Doubt about the Holy Saṃgha—Gurus in general

If you have doubts about Bodhisattvas or other Buddhist Saints, it will also enfeeble you in practicing the Dharma. The reason is that although the Dharma comes from Buddha, it is the *Saṃgha* that helps propagate the Dharma; and most people learn the Dharma directly from the *Saṃgha*. Therefore, the *Saṃgha* is our sacred gurus. If we harbor a doubt about our Sacred Gurus, it will definitely handicap our learning.

**c) Doubt about the Master who is instructing you –
–personal Guru**

As explained above, it almost goes without saying that if the practitioner nurtures doubts about his personal teacher, he is not really learning anything from him—for he will not sincerely listen to him. And so the result of the learning and teaching will be very limited.

**D. Doubt about the Tathāgata Nature or Buddha Nature
(or “眞如 [read as Jen-Ru]”)**

Among all other doubts, this is the most devastating one. For if the *Buddha Nature* were doubtful, no one would ever strive for Buddhahood again. And as a result, no one would ever become enlightened to witness his own *Buddha Nature*. Therefore, this doubt, first and foremost, should be uprooted at the very start of our practice.

The above has been an explication on the *Four Doubts*.

(6) Evil Views (Incorrect Concepts): There are several kinds of Evil Views:

- 1) Lateral Views (or Extreme Views)
- 2) Vicious Views
- 3) The View of Corporeality
- 4) Views of False Precepts

1) *Lateral Views*:

Among the *Evil Views* these are the most dangerous ones. Generally there are two main types of *Lateral Views*: (a) the View of Constancy, and (b) the View of Nihilism.

(a) The View of Constancy

Some schools of philosophy and religion hold the view that our “Spirit” or soul remains eternally the same—it never changes. It is this *false view* that gives rise to the belief of *Four Castes* in Hindu society. Thus: if you were born in a slave caste family, you will always remain a slave, not just in this life, but also in your future lives, for ever and ever—for nothing ever changes, as they believe. And this also goes with your children and grandchildren, and all of your descendents forever and ever. It is believed that you have got a slave’s soul, and the soul will never change, so you will always remain nothing but a slave. It is *Brahma* (the Supreme Hindu god) that makes the decision about what you are, and there is no gainsay about his decision, for he is believed to be the *Creator of everything*, and being the Creator, he owns everything that he has created, and the owner naturally has the privilege to make any decision concerning the fate and station of his possessions as he sees fit. The Buddha, however, realizes that actually everything is *always changing* and that nothing ever remains the same, even for a brief dura-

tion like a twinkling of an eye, and even from *kṣaṇa* to *kṣaṇa* (from instant to instant) there are changes in everything. Both physically and mentally nothing ever stays the same. This correct view of Buddha's was divulged more than twenty-five hundred years ago, and the findings of modern sciences in many branches have come to the same conclusion. In the fields of physics, chemistry, and biology, many of their findings are within the bounds of what Buddha has said.

In physics, for instance, they observe that even in a piece of wood, or metal, or rock, under the superficial changelessness, the electrons, the protons, and the neutrons are all incessantly revolving in an incredible speed. Such is also the same in biology: within the cells of a human or animal body, the cell wall, the cell fluid, the cytoplasm, and especially the chromosome, i.e., the DNA and RNA—all of them are always moving and changing and transforming. Nothing remains unchanged, not even for a second. It is also true of all the universe, ranging from the heavenly bodies, down to the tiny cell of a pig's body, or a piece of rock. Therefore, the *Views of Constancy* that things never change are proved to be faulty. Furthermore, from Enlightenment's standpoint, if people's karma cannot be changed, then there will be no Enlightenment at all, for nobody will be able to improve himself, either in his behavior or in wisdom by practice to change for the better. In consequence, nobody can become better or wiser—if you are stupid, you will

remain as stupid as ever; if you are poor, and you will be forever poor. But that is simply not the fact. People do change, either in their status or in their mentality, even in their looks. And so, the *View of Constancy* is not only *invalid* in logic, but also *false* in reality; it is not only *misleading* but also very *harmful*. Therefore a true “Seeker of Wisdom” should do away with this kind of incorrect and foolish tenet, the sooner the better.

(b) The View of Nihilism (The Views of Nothingness)

Some schools of philosophers hold the view that at the end of this life of ours, nothing will exist. That is, when we die, nothing will remain. Once you die, everything is gone, disappears into the thin air. The Buddha, however, through his Wisdom of Enlightenment, realized that *something*—especially, the *Ālaya*—does remain and carry our karmas from one life to another, from age to age, through innumerable reincarnations, until it is eventually cleansed of its impurities through practice to result in Enlightenment. Between now and Enlightenment, however, there will be lots of struggles and afflictions. In this way, the Buddha refuted this evil *View of Nihilism*. Those who believe in this *Destructive View* tend to hold the hedonistic philosophy of

“Eat, drink, and make merry,
for tomorrow we die!”

This philosophy, however, will result in creating more bad karmas and will cause nothing but further endless painful *Transmigrations*.

The *View of Constancy* and the *View of Nothingness* are antithetical to each other, for they stand at two extremities. The Buddha accepted neither one of them. Instead, he instructed the renowned *Middle Way*—nothing is of a constant, unchanged nature, nor is it ever destroyed totally. But this takes *Prajñā* (or Transcendental Wisdom) and lots of *Meritorious Roots* to believe and perceive.

2) *Vicious Views*

Vicious Views are such as uphold the belief that there is a “Creator,” or Creators, of lives of *Multibeings* and insentient things. For instance, most Hindus believed in “Brahma” as their *Creator*. Some other Hindu philosophies believe the Creator to be *The Four Elements*, or Time, or “Emptiness” (the *Vacuity*) or Locations, or Seasons, or Particles, etc. Each of these Hindu philosophies has its own concept about the *Creator*. This is also the same with all other religions or philosophies in the world, such as Taoism, Judaism, Christianity and Islamism. The Buddha, however, says that nobody or nothing creates you; rather that *you create yourself through your own karma*—in other words, *karma creates everything*. If you be-

lieve that other things or Beings created you, then you are in error and in ignorance. And this ignorance will lead you through endless *Transmigrations*, and you will never be able to achieve Enlightenment if you do not reform your erroneous thinking. Because based on this faulty doctrine, you will never practice the right Dharma to really become *your own Master—the creator of your own karma*. These *Vicious Views*, the Buddha remarks, come from ignorant teachers. Thus, in the final analysis, those inept teachers are to blame and not the adherents. The followers are simply misled; but the misleading can be corrected and should be corrected. What a comfort this is to us! But you should be careful in selecting your teacher!

3) *The View of Corporeality*

The *View of Corporeality* contends that the Ego is a *Noumenon* (something of real entity) and that this *Entity of Ego* either resides in the body (i.e., in *the Inner Four Elements*) or outside the body (i.e., dwelling in *the External Four Elements*). The Buddha confutes this view by saying that in the *Four Elements* there is actually no such thing as a “You” or “Me” to be found. The “You” or “Me” is merely a word, a concept, and an illusion, which arises from *Ignorant Attachment*. If we nurture this kind of *false views*, we would be attaching ourselves too much to the body, and this will both impede and delay our *Lib-*

eration or Enlightenment a great deal.

4) *Views of False Precepts*

This phenomenon was quite common in India: quite a few ascetic devotees of various tenets believed that some extraordinary and even bizarre forms of *asceticism* will help to cleanse their karmas—for instance, by imitating and following the behaviors of dogs, cows, or pigs in their daily life by constantly hanging oneself upside down from a tree, or by burying themselves in the sand for a long period of time, or by hanging themselves by the hair down from a tree, or by going naked all year round, or by eating nothing for a month, two months or half a year, etc. These practitioners contended that, by suffering to the utmost in this life, nothing bad or painful would remain but happiness for the next life. The Buddha taught us that this view was due to *Ignorance*. The Buddha taught that if we were suffering from agony and anxiety during practice, how could we expect to attain serenity and *Samādhi* and Wisdom from this kind of practice? In fact, during such *perverted practice*, we would be only torturing ourselves and disconcerting our own mind in vain. Thus, the Buddha chided those practitioners as “foolish people,” who practiced according to False Precepts.

The foregoing has been an explication about the first group of *Māras*, the *Māra of Vexation*. Since these *Six Vexations*

(Attachment, Aversion, Ignorance, Arrogance, Doubt, and Evil Views) can disturb and destroy the Merits of our practice, they are called *the first group of Māra*.

2. The Māra of “the Five Aggregates”

The Five Aggregates (or *Skandas* in Sanskrit) are *Material, Perceptions, Conceptions, Kinesis, and Cognizance*. In other words, *the Five Aggregates* as a whole are “the Body and Mind.” The Body and the Mind compose what we call “ourselves.” The *Five Aggregates* come to be called *Māras* because they are constantly bringing us pains and troubles, causing us hunger, thirst, heat, cold, and all sorts of discomforts, lusts and cravings that are either hard to gratify or tending to interfere with our practice. Remember, the definition of *Māra* is “the Destroyer of Merits (or good deeds).” *The Five Aggregates* which would give rise to physical and mental discomforts would hinder our practice on the Dharma; therefore, they are figuratively called *the second group of Māras*.

3. The Māra of Death

This is the most formidable kind of all *Māras*. If we are practicing very strenuously and diligently—say, in a retreat—then the knowledge about this *Māra* will be very crucial to us.

I have had some personal experience with this kind of *Māra*. Once, while performing a retreat, I fell ill. The illness was very severe and involved the movement of *Chi*. It was quite painful and I felt a pain like arthritis. The pain progressed from the lower part of my body to the upper part, and it grew to be so severe that I was unable to move around. As the *Chi* accompanied by the pain gradually progressed upwards toward my throat, I realized that eventually it would get to my brains—at that point I began to have fear of death. And I had also the fear that once it reached my brains, even if I did not die of it, I might have a stroke of paralysis, or become a “botanical man” for the remaining years of my life.

As the *Chi* ascended, the pain also aggravated, and the fear grew larger. But all of a sudden, I stopped pondering over the fear, and I tried to get the upper hand of it. Thanks to the blessings of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, I succeeded in overcoming it. What I did was this: I thought to myself, “If I am going to die, I’m determined to see *how* Death is going to take me, and *how* I die—I am going to *look Death in the face*.” With this resolution, I virtually talked to Death himself, as if he were present and right in front of me, “Come, Death, come and take me if you wish. I am all yours, if you can make use of it.” At this, I lay myself down perfectly still on the reclining chair, and relaxed. I let go of the *Chi*—not to care about where it went; I let go of my body, and I let go of *myself*, as if I no longer owned

it; I did nothing but lay still and concentrated myself on watching the excruciating *Chi* as if it were Death personified. I perceived it ascending through the esophagus to my throat, going into the veins in my neck, passing through the hindbrain, and finally beginning to enter into my brains—and it did! But look, what happened? Even though the pain was indeed unbearably agonizing—but I did not die! I even did not faint or have a fit of stroke, although my brains seemed to suffer a little convulsion. I lay still, let go of everything, and watched concentratedly, and all the while forbore the pangs calmly. And then, thanks to Buddhas, finally it coming to an end: I perceived the *Chi* start leaving my brains and descend from the back of my head down to my nape, and then it went down to the spine, and from the spine it went further down to my waist, hips, and legs, and finally it kind of “emitted” itself through the arches of the feet. And soon the pains alleviated quite a lot because of that “emission”—And I was still alive, safe and sound.

All the while, during that process, I was like a man in his deathbed, awaiting his time to come; that was really awful. However, throughout that time, I carried on the struggle in both relaxation and concentration with a very keen discernment. In retrospect, it seemed I was watching a movie, or more specifically, I was like an onlooker watching someone else dying, and this dying person was some other person than ME! And I was watching *him* die.

Now, by way of concluding this narration, throughout this incident, I had always been keenly aware that these ailments were all due to my past *karmas*, and also that what I was encountering was in fact the *Māra of Malady*, who was reinforced by the *Māra of Death*, trying to scare me out of my practice. I knew this well enough, and I was aware of it all along. I think it was owing to the fact that I had acquired the knowledge about the *Māras* prior to the retreat, and that I was quick enough to become *aware* of it, so that I was not *kept in the dark and suffered ignorantly*. Furthermore, the *knowledge* and *awareness* also kept me from becoming panic, so that I was able to keep calm and cool through the struggle without fear. Therefore, the success of the struggle is derived from the *awareness*, and that *awareness* in turn comes from the *preparations* prior to the practice, that is, the acquisition of *knowledge* concerning all aspects in the practice of meditation. Therefore, I would like to offer this advice to practitioners out of my own trying experience: whoever wants to practice sincerely, please get yourself *well prepared*, by acquiring all the necessary Right Knowledge before you go on; do not just jump headlong into it without the “knowhow” and only to get yourself hurt or harmed or frustrated, either physically or mentally or spiritually. Believe me, this can be a very *dangerous enterprise*, and it is not meant for fun at all.

Now let me resume what we were talking about. From this

unforgettable experience I am convinced more than ever that during ardent practice, if any *Māra*, especially the *Māra of Death*, comes to pay you a visit, do not panic, and more importantly, do not give up practicing or even leave your practicing room. Just let go of yourself and of everything—don't be attached to anything; simply try to concentrate yourself and relax and be consciously aware of everything that is happening. Don't go to sleep or close your eyes, especially your *Mental Eye*. Keep yourself constantly consciously aware and look Death or Illness in the face—and Death will be no more! This is the right way to “defeat” the *Māra of Death*.

4. The Celestial Māra

Devoted practitioners believe the *Celestial Māras* to be real beings, and not just a figure of speech. Both the *Māra of Death* and the *Celestial Māra* are considered to be *External Māras*, that is, they come from without, and they have their own real physical entities. On the other hand, the *Māra of Vexation* and the *Māra of Aggregates* are *Internal Māras*; that is, they come from within; in reality they are derived from our own illusions, which are also the result of our bad karmas.

In the *Sūtra* it says that some of the *Celestial Māras* dwell in the topmost (the sixth) level of the *Heavens of Six Desires*, and they are the rulers of the *Realm of Desire* to which we belong.

That means that we are all their subjects within their domain. Moreover, they deem us as their creation as well as their possessions, just as most other *gods* do. If, however, we try to practice the Bodhi Way, so as to transcend this *Realm*, they will be infuriated, because if ever we succeed in our attempt and actually surpass the bad karmas in this World, we will be at the same time surpassing the *Māras* themselves. And as a result we will be promoting ourselves to a status even higher than the *Māras* themselves. To them, that would mean nothing but revolt! It is unbearable. Therefore they would never tolerate any person under *his sovereignty* trying to practice seriously so as to be *liberated* from this *Realm* (or World)—he hates that to the quick. However, from our own point of view, we are practicing to purify ourselves by cleansing our own bad karmas, which as we see it must be a good thing; but from the *Māras*' standing point, they take it as a *rebellion* against them, so as to get away from them—but that is also very true: for we would like to be free from the evil influence and domination of the *Māras*, within and without, for we do not want to stay at the mercy of our bad *karmas*—we have had enough of it. We want to get rid of its control. No longer do we want to do anything *blindly*, as one who is blindfolded and led along by some bad company. We simply want to put an end to it: we want freedom, to be free from our own bad karmas, free from the impurities of this world, and free from evil influence of all sorts of *Māras*—But this

would sound too bad to the *Māra's* ear. It is somewhat comparable to some people under a totalitarian government striving to free themselves from the administration or tyrant by defection. And what would be the outcome of it? Suppression, bloodshed, arrests and confinements, and even torturing and execution as may be foreseen. Such is the same as our *Rebellion* against the *Māras* (or bad karmas in general). Therefore it is really an “Invisible Warfare” (invisible only by our worldly naked eyes)—which is awesome and utterly unfair from the very start. We have so very few succors to resort to, yet we have so many invincible foes to confront: including our own deep-rooted bad karmas, the defiled surroundings, and the tyrannic, ruthless *Māras*. In the face of these frightful foes from all sides, and all concurring at the same time, we are very easily reduced to a pitiful state of infantile helplessness. What can we do then? At such critical moment, the best thing that we can do to help ourselves is to constantly resort to the *Ultimate Truth* of the Buddha Nature. We need to remind ourselves from time to time that like all other *Multibeings* we are endowed with the same pure *Buddha Nature* as all Buddhas. And by referring to this *Innate Nature*, we are, in a way, invoking on the invisible support and *Empowerments* from all Buddhas. And by this means we would be able to stay calm and cool, and we will grow strong and firm enough to cope with the dire situation at hand—and we shall overcome.

Up to now, I have been speaking both symbolically and literally. So please try to comprehend both the literal and the symbolic imports of these words. If you have been practicing seriously and assiduous, then I suppose you might have already had the experience in meeting with some unbelievable difficulties or obstructions. The obstacles may have arisen either from yourself or from your surroundings (that is, people around you), and they may have thwarted your practice for some time. You might even lose most of your desire to practice at all! But beware! That may be the *work of the Māra* or *Celestial Māra*. If that be the case, then *the Māra is using others and your own foibles* to prevent you from practicing or advancing. But once you become aware of his *treacherous tricks*, then all of a sudden his power would seem to dissolve instantly. It is something like finding out the trickery of a magician: once you have detected where the magician's hocus-pocus lies, he won't be able to deceive you any more. And so, always keep alert and watchful for all kinds of trickeries—the trickeries of *ghosts*, *phantoms* and *Māras*, which are played both externally and internally. And in the end the Māra's cat will *out*—Thus Māras will be banished out of your world of practice.

The above is an examination of the *Four Māras*. All of these *Māras* simply take advantage of our own faults, *weak-*

nesses and *ignorance* (or unawareness) and try to intensify and aggravate them. In order to defeat the *Māras*, we must improve ourselves. The Buddha teaches us that, if we wish to overcome the *Māras*, we should overcome ourselves first. We ***should not seek externally*** to overcome the *Māras*; instead, we need to *pursue within*. In reality, *Māras* have their reinforcements right within ourselves. Do not merely rely on *mantra* put in your shrine for protection from the *Māras*—you should go a step further by holding the *mantra* in your heart to become a part of yourself! If you have kept one *Mantra*, even just a single one, in your heart—or to put it in another way, if some part of your heart is made of the Buddha’s *Mantra*, even if it is just a very short one—its power would be sufficient to baffle an army of *Māras*. In consequence, you will be freed from the fear of *Māras*, or their allies (that is, the evildoers). And Enlightenment will be beckoning at you.

The outstanding nature of the *Māras* is jealousy and domination. *Māra* is like the “master criminal” of a Mafia. Unfortunately, we have all joined his *secret society* to become his gangster, committing all kinds of wrongdoings. We are also like some members of certain underground organizations who have got tired of that “society” and all the crime-doings (killing, stealing, adultery, lying, drinking, . . .) in it and wish to quit and reform themselves. But in so doing, we would need to

suffer greatly and even would need to pay for it by meeting our own death at the cruel hands of the “godfather,” who never allows anyone to quit his “organization.”

By the same token, for *Multibeings* in this world, it would take a lot of hard practice to get out of “*the Syndicate of the Three Realms*,” out of the hands of the *Māras*, so as to join the *Pure Fields* of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

To conclude this lecture, I would like to inform you of some specific ways which hopefully would help to baffle or defeat the *Māras*.

First, try to attain the *Right Samādhi*. This means that you would need to practice meditation and wisdom sedulously so as to attain *Samādhi*; and thereby you will not be vexed or fooled by any of the tricks of the *Māras*.

Second, you must get to know that elusive mind of yours, as well as all the illusive *dharmas* of this world, and learn how to transcend or surpass their *deceptions*. The *Māra* is like a magician and he would use all the illusive materials in order to *beguile* and *ensnare* you into his *trap*. If we can perceive that all the *phenomena* of the mind and the *External Dharmas* are *illusive* and *deceiving*, we would be able to evade the trap. If at any time you find yourself enmeshed by *Māra*, recite this verse from *The Diamond Sūtra*:

“All *Appearances* are *spurious and unreal*;
 Those who can perceive that all *Appearances* as
 Non-Reality
 Are the people who are actually
 Beholding the Thus-Adventist (the Buddha)
 in the face.”

The supreme wisdom in this verse is an *antidote* against *Māras*, and it will serve to defeat the *Māras* ultimately, for this wisdom can reveal the *Maras*’ true identity—their vanity, their illusions, and their Ignorance.

Third, work hard to witness the *Innate Nature* for yourself. To do this is to get to the root of all *dharmas* (or everything) or the *Dharmic Field* (or Universe). The *Innate Nature* is the best thing that we can resort to, so as to practice one of the most advanced *Samādhis*, the *Śūraṅgama Samādhi*, which will help to eliminate all impediments and expedite all good deeds for speedy accomplishment, and eventually help in gaining the *Supreme Enlightenment*. The practice of *Śūraṅgama Samādhi* through the groundwork of the *Innate Nature* is the pivot of *The Śūraṅgama Sūtra*.

In the original language (Sanskrit), the word “*Śūraṅgama*” means *to practice all of the Buddha’s Dharmas, assiduously so as to attain firmly the consummate accomplishments*. Thus, *Śūraṅgama* is something like “*the Diamond-like Samādhi*”—a *Samādhi* so firm and indestructible that it can cut through all

kinds of *Annoyances*, impediments and Ignorances. In this sense, *The Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, among all *Sūtras*, is the most instrumental one that shows advanced practitioners how to cope with the *Māras* by revealing their treacheries and prescribing the antidotes against them. Basically speaking, for a practitioner, once the *Māras* are baffled, both externally and internally, there will be no more obstacles for him in *the Way of Bodhi*, and the *Buddha Nature* will be revealed to him to the full in no time. These are the major themes propounded in *The Śūraṅgama Sūtra*.

—Lecture given on 6/3/1989
at Chuang Yen Monastery, N.Y.

Chapter 7:
**The Seven Propositions
to Locate the Mind**
(七處徵心)

All literary dramatic works have a beginning, middle, and an ending (dénouement). Usually, between the middle and the ending lies the climax or culmination of the play. Now we are just coming to the culmination of our discussions on Buddhism, and this is something worthy of rejoice, because for the next three lectures we will go to the “Heart of Hearts of Buddhism.” In other words, what we are going to cover is the pith in Buddhist Tenets.

In the practice of Buddhism, the most important thing is not just how many things you have learned, or how long you can sit in the meditation posture, or how many *dharanis* you can recite, or how many *Sūtras* you can memorize—rather, it is the

state of your *Mind* that is of the highest consequence. Thus said the Buddha in *The Mahāyāna Mental Terra Vipāśyanā Sūtra*:

“Those who can perceive the *Mind* will be liberated, and those who cannot perceive the *Mind* will be bound forever.”

The subject of this lecture is the renowned “The Seven Propositions to locate the *Mind*” or, simply “Where is the *Mind*?” We will pursue this subject with the help of Ānanda’s questions and doubts, together with the Buddha’s ingenious answers to clarify those questions and doubts.

The reason why we need to inquire about the *Mind* is that when we are devoted to cultivating ourselves, our objective is to cultivate or improve our *Mind* rather than the *body*, or anything else. Therefore, if a person tries to improve the condition of his *body* by means of meditation (for instance, aiming to make it healthier, or stronger, or to cure it of some disease, etc.) he is not practicing genuine *Buddha Dharma*. Even if the skills he utilizes come from Buddha Dharma, he is still not a true Buddhist for this reason, and he is still an adherent of *Other Religions* (or *Etraneous Ways*), for he shares the same motive and purpose with *Etraneous Ways*.

Furthermore, the reason why the purpose of our practice should be laid on the *Mind* is that it is the *Mind* that generates

all the actions of *karma*, and it is also the *Mind* that in the end relishes or enjoys the outcome of all *karmic* actions. Therefore, the *Mind* is the “original motivator,” as well as the “ultimate harvester”—it activates everything and procures everything, be it good or bad. Consequently, it is *all due to the Mind* that we are able to create all our *karmic actions*; yet conversely at the same time it is also *all for the sake of gratifying the Mind* that all the *karmic* actions are undertaken and executed. And so it is the *Mind* that is ultimately responsible for everything: the *Mind* is behind everything we do. Without the *Mind* (or its dictation), nothing could be planned, undertaken, or even accomplished. In consequence, it is all because of the *Mind* that we come to do things, either good or bad or neutral. For instance, if an ordinary worldly person endeavors to pursue riches or fame, it is because these things can make him feel happy. Now the so-called “happiness” is something that is felt in the *Mind*. Therefore, for all pursuits, in the end, it is *all for the Mind’s pleasure*. As for a *Dharma* practitioner, although he is no longer pursuing worldly things to gratify his *Mind*, all his *Dharmic* practice (that is, *Ultra-Worldly* pursuits) is still centered upon the *Mind*. For instance, first of all, he needs to purify the *Mind* of bad *karmanas*, and then to gain *Samādhi*, or *Transcendental Wisdom* by cultivating his *Mind*. And so all the *Worldly* and *Ultra-Worldly* pursuits are done through the *Mind*.

Since the *Mind* holds such an important position in both

Worldly and *Ultra-Worldly* pursuits, we must perforce try to cope with it and cultivate it at the outset of practice. But if we wish to cultivate the *Mind*, first of all, we need to know where the *Mind* is located, don't we? If we even do not know where it is, how can we cultivate it? For instance, if we wish to drill for crude oil, obviously we must determine where the oil is before we can start drilling at all. Thus, the *where* is the first important problem to solve in oil drilling. After the location has been pinpointed, then comes the second important issue, the *how*—how can we get the oil to the surface (or in the case of practice, to expose the precious ore of *Mind* for our close scrutiny)? After the *how* comes the question of *what*; that is, as soon as the oil is brought up to the surface (i.e., the *Mind* is revealed clearly to the *Eye of Wisdom*), we will then examine what it is (i.e., what the *Mind* is composed of and how each part of the *Mind* works, both individually and as a whole). Finally, we will come to the eternal enigma of the *why*. Why is Oil (the *Mind*) appears the way as it is now? Why do we have oil (the *Mind*)? None of these questions can be resolved until we locate *where* the oil is. Likewise, we cannot really answer any of those questions until we can locate the *Mind*—this *wellspring* of everything.

Before we begin our search for the Mind, I would like to talk a little more about *Doubts*. In my previous speech, I told you that there were six *Root Vexations* (or *Fundamental An-*

noyances or *Major Annoyances*), and *Doubt* is one of these *Six Vexations*. However, in Buddha’s teaching, not all doubts are necessarily bad; for there are two kinds of *Doubts*—*Positive* and *Negative Doubts* (or *Constructive* and *Destructive Doubts*). The *Positive Doubt* is also called *Dubious Sentiment* in Ch’an Buddhism. Most of us have taken a lot of things for granted, for instance, our life, breathing, time, and the atmosphere (air). Throughout our lives we hardly raise a doubt about “why am I breathing?” “What is the *Reality* of breathing and breath?” “What is the connection between life and breath?” And so on. The seemingly ordinary phenomena in life have mostly escaped our notice, since we have taken them for granted; hence we have never given a thought about them. But once we begin practicing the *Dharma*, some very fundamental phenomena in life would begin to demand our attention, and we would be astonished to say, “Oh, why I never noticed it?” or “I never expected it to be a problem.” Such as, when we start practicing *Ānāpāna Vipāśyanā*, or the *Contemplation on Breathing*, we would undergo a lot of new experience concerning Breathing, Air, Mind, Thinking and Life, which experience we would not have dreamt of before. The things that looked so common, so natural, and so out of question to us, have now come to pose a very big problem, and we would start probing deeply into its *Reality*. And by probing into these, our *Mental Eye* is opened, our *Wisdom* developed, and our *Ignorance* uncovered. And

this probing together with the feeling about the need to probe, to trace into the *Reality*, is called the *Dubious Sentiment*, which is a *Positive Doubt*.

Furthermore, *Positive Doubts* or the *Dubious Sentiments* will lead us to the solutions of problems, while *Doubts of Vexation* only lead to more unnecessary and irrelevant questions and give rise to more harmful doubts. Usually, the *Negative Doubter* seems to “doubt for Doubt’s sake,” as a confirmed *skeptic* would do. The basic difference between the two is that the *Positive Doubter* has an open and modest mind, while the *Negative Doubter* has a closed and conceited one. Specifically speaking, the latter is so obsessed and preoccupied with his own *Doubts* that he seems to take pride in the doubts he has; therefore, more frequently than not, he would reject listening to or thinking about the answers offered to him, and would only keep on dwelling upon his own doubts all the time, unwilling to give them up for any reason. In other words, he just enjoys doubting, and *he does not doubt to find out the answer*. Even when he is expressing his doubts, he is not asking a question: he is simply *reasserting his doubts*. He will never take anything for an answer. And he thinks that *he is so smart to be so skeptical*, to be forever doubting and questioning, always confounding and puzzling and embarrassing others by his smart doubts. And so under such close scrutiny, it would reveal how self-centered and self-conceited and obstinate a *Negative Doubter* actually

is. But the skeptics usually proudly label themselves as “free thinkers” or “liberals”; in fact, they are among the most die-hard, obstinate, close-minded, bigoted irresponsible *fools*—in the true sense of the word, they are neither “free,” nor do they “think”; for they are incarcerated by their self-conceitedness, and they have actually given up thinking for improving. The reason why a *Negative Doubter’s* mind is closed-up is because it is beclouded by his *negative karmas* which, in turn, give birth to his overly-strong *Ego*. The hard-boiled shell of his *Seventh Cognizance* (the *Ego Center*) gets to be so thick that it keeps the Light of his Original Wisdom from filtering in. And so his *Mind* is forever shrouded by the impenetrable crust of self-conceited *Doubts*, and if he does not change, he is to live in the utter darkness of skepticism throughout his time.

It is important to note that, while we point out the *Fundamental Vexation of Doubt*, this does not mean that Buddhism does not permit doubts at all. On the contrary, Buddhism is probably the only “religion” that would not only allow, but actually encourages practitioners to express their own doubts, to articulate their problems. This is interesting indeed! It is especially true in Ch’an Buddhism, wherein the Patriarchs would encourage their disciples to raise doubts about virtually anything (—but not “doubt for doubt’s sake”). Anyone who is able to raise a *Positive Doubt* (or *Dubious Sentiment*) about something is surely making some progress in his practice. As I

just said before, people have grown into the habit of taking everything for granted, questioning nothing—for they have formed all kinds of “stock responses” for all the concepts, personal habits, or social customs, traditions and culture. Since we rarely raise a question about the *Reality* of anything, and so things go on and on as they have ever been. For an individual, this is called *Individual Karma*, while for a group of people sharing the same “stock responses,” it becomes *Group Karma*.

These *Karmas* have become so forceful that we are almost unable to cope with them: we become powerless in the face of them. We are even afraid of raising doubts or questions about these *karmas*. In some totalitarian states, doubting can be a capital “crime”—you are not supposed to doubt anything of the state: the government and the leaders can do no wrong. Buddhism, however, believes in and upholds true *Liberation*—spiritually, ethically, and politically as well. The total effect of our *karmic* habits have enabled us to form our *mental and spiritual laziness*, which leads us to take things for granted, never wishing to change them, so that we have become “animals of habits,” (as psychologists, sociologists, and anthropologists call them), satisfied with all the *status quo*, accepting them all, be it good or not. When *karmas* are repeated so frequently, they become *Karmic Habits*. The *Karmic Habits* are the fundamental driving force of people’s *Transmigration*, or Reincarnations.

Our own body is like a nation, or a microcosm. And this

“little nation” of ours has become a *feudal state*, while the external macrocosm (the whole physical world) has become a huge feudal state—wherein there is *no democracy* or *freedom* to be seen, *no doubts* or *questions* asked, and *no Liberation* for all the objects, for everything is motivated and pushed on by the blind force of Karma. Therefore, the Buddha has told us that we must “rebel” against all blind corrupting forces of karmas and karmic habits—within and without, groupwise and individually. We must raise doubts about things which have never been doubted before, and which have been taken for granted and deemed absolutely true for eons of age since.

Thus, according to the Buddha, we must raise constructive questions or *Inquiries*. But we should not make *Inquiries* at random: the *Inquiries* should be made step by step. And the first *Constructive Inquiry* proper for a practitioner to make is: “*Where is my Mind?*” For this is the fundamental *Inquiry* that can lead to *the ultimate solution* of all questions—i.e., *the Supreme Enlightenment*, or *the Unsurpassed Bodhi*. At this point, I think we would need to review a little bit how this particular *Inquiry* was brought up in this *Sūtra* (that is, *The Śūraṅgama Sūtra*), so that the flow of our observations can be clearer and smoother.

As I mentioned in the previous section, Ānanda, the youngest disciple of the Buddha, was on the verge of violating his ordained vows of *Precept* by the seduction of a courtesan,

Mātaṅga’s daughter. The Buddha, by the power of his *Samādhi* and the *Śūraṅgama Dharani*, intervened and rescued him in the nick of time. After returning to the monastery, Ānanda sorrowfully besought the Buddha to teach him how he could attain some *Samādhi* to be able to stay *unperplexed* by external circumstances. He also confessed to the Buddha that, although he had been very much devoted to acquiring *learning*, he had not as yet tried to put the learning to practice. Ānanda confessed further that he became aware that, when faced with difficult situations, all of his learnings seemed to disappear and he was rendered utterly helpless. He now acknowledged that he needed something to consolidate his knowledge and try to assimilate it to be part of himself.

The Buddha replied, “Ānanda, you are my youngest disciple and my kindred; I will try to help you. First of all, I will ask you some questions, and you will answer me truthfully, without trying to conceal or deceive me, for there is no place for Truth or Real Wisdom in a deceitful heart.”

Truthfulness can be compared to something straightforward, like a straight road—And the *Road to Enlightenment* is a straightforward one, rather than twisting and meandering. One who wishes to seek Enlightenment must be straightforward in the *Mind*, as straight as an express highway, so that there will be no wrong turns or unnecessary detours. If the practitioner’s *Mind*

is narrow and twisting like a winding path in the mountains, then anything can happen to the traveler—rock slides can kill him, fallen trees can block his way, and the path is hazardous to travel on. In this sense, we must maintain our *Mind* as straight and clear as the *Enlightenment Route* so that we can be spiritually correspondent with the *Bodhi*.

The Buddha then asked Ānanda, “Now tell me plainly, when you first made up your mind to become a Buddhist monk, what actually motivated you to do that? Specifically, what did you see, and what was the desire that set you upon that path?”

Ānanda replied, “When I first saw that *Your World-Hallowedship* looked so magnificent with so many meritorious traits that I immediately decided to join the *Samṅha* to cultivate myself so as to be like *Your World-Hallowedship* in the future.” Personally, Ānanda was well noted for his good looks, but upon seeing the Buddha, who looked even a lot finer than himself, he wished to have looks as magnificent as that.

【The INQUIRY】

Where is the Mind?

The Buddha said, “when you saw my appearances and were pleased with it, tell me, **who was it that saw it and who was pleased?**” “I saw Your Holy Appearances *with my own eyes*,

and *it was my Heart* (or *Mind*) that was pleased and enamored with the sight,” replied Ānanda.

“Tell me, then,” asked the Buddha, “if you saw me with your *eyes* and loved the sight with your *Mind*, at the present moment **where are your eyes and your Mind?**” With this question put forth, we have got the first Inquiry—“Where is the *Mind*?” And this has been covered in the previous section. Now let us go on.

【 PROPOSITION 1 】

The Mind is in the body.

To this question Ānanda replied, “*Your World-Hallowedship*, my eyes are, naturally, in my head, and beyond a doubt my *Mind* dwells within my body. Quite so, it is not only true with myself, but also true with all people, and even with *Your World-Hallowedship*, too—for all your Holiness, your adorable Holy Eyes are still on your Face, and your *Mind* is within your Holy Body.”

Now, this is the first *Faulty Assumption*—to assume that the *Mind is in the body*. At this point, let me make the following observation. If the *Mind* were actually secluded inside this thick wall of body, how would it be able to come into contact with external things? Contemplate upon this.

Before we continue with our discussion of this *Sūtra*, I would like to make a little introduction of the Classical Buddhist Dialectics to you. It is called *the Penta-Segmental Dialectics*:

1. Premise
2. Reason
3. Analogy
4. Assimilation
5. Conclusion

At the time of the Buddha, if you wished to debate or discuss in a scholastic way with another person to prove one of your points on philosophy, theology, ethics, sociology or even politics, or any learning or theory at all, you had to follow this formula of Dialectics. The Buddha, however, in addition to using the Indian traditional Penta-Segmental Dialectics, also employed a Dialectic form very similar to the Western or Hegelian Logical Dialectics; that is, Thesis, Antithesis, and Synthesis. These are very generously utilized in the present *Seven Propositions*.

Here the **Premise** that the Buddha put forth was: “Where is your *Mind*?” In response to this, Ānanda’s proposition was: “the *Mind* is in the body.” The Buddha refuted it by saying that *if the Mind was within the body, then you must be able to know your own internal organs!* Now this is the **Reason** for refutation, in which the Buddha made use of an **Analogy**. To augment and elucidate the refutation, the Buddha then asked Ānanda

what he saw *outside* of the building when he was in the Temple. Ānanda replied that he could see flowers in the garden, and trees and a lake and mountains in the distance. The Buddha then asked Ānanda what he could see when he was *inside* the Temple. Ānanda responded that from where he was, before he could see what was outside of the Temple, undoubtedly he could first see the interior of the Temple, as well as his fellow monks, the Buddha, and then he could see the door to the Temple, and finally, the outdoor scenes.

Then the Buddha told Ānanda that it was exactly the same with *his Mind*. Analogically speaking, the *Mind* was compared to Ānanda, and the body was compared to the Temple that Ānanda was in. If the *Mind* were in the body, the *Mind* should be able to view the internal organs in the first place, and only after that, would it be able to perceive the external world. Because of the fact that you could not see your own internal organs, the **Conclusion** was that to say that the *Mind* resided within the body was erroneous. In short, the “insider” should be able to see the “inside” first, and then he could see the “outside.”

That is a significant point. People usually *take for granted* that our Mind is absolutely *within* the body; how can it be otherwise? But this *preconceived belief* causes all our *problems*. Please keep this in mind, and contemplate upon this. Follow the argument in your meditation and look for your *Mind's*

whereabouts. Is it really *inside* your body as we have always assumed and believed it to be, or is it not?

【 PROPOSITION 2 】

The Mind is outside of the body.

Ānanda, seeing that his first Premise (or *Proposition*) was refuted, went on to assert that since the Mind is not *in* his body, it “**must**” be *outside* of his body.

Ānanda then used an **Analogy** for **Reasoning** to support his new **Premise**. Here he compared the *Mind* to a lamp that was lit outside of a room. The lamp, being outside of the room, apparently could only illuminate the outside without being able to illuminate the interior of the room. Therefore, Ānanda argued by an Application of his Analogy that since the mind was outside the body, there was no reason to presume that it could see the internals of the body. And in **Conclusion**, Ānanda said, as it was a fact that we could not see our own internals, this must be sufficient evidence to infer that our *Mind* was *outside* of our body.

The Buddha replied that if the *Mind* was *outside* of the body, then ***the Mind and the body must be separated*** from each other. First, the Buddha set forth a **Thesis** (a direct Premise): if the *Mind* and the body were *separated*, then either of them would

not be able to perceive or feel what the other perceived or felt.

And then, the Buddha presented the **Antithesis** (a counter-Premise): but actually, what the body knew, the Mind knew, too, and what the body felt, the *Mind* felt it as well.

Therefore, the **Synthesis** (or **Conclusion**)—Ānanda's second **Premise** that “the Mind is outside of the body” was invalid.

【 PROPOSITION 3 】

The Mind lies in between —within the Visual Organ.

Ānanda, seeing that the *Mind* was shown to be neither inside nor outside of the body, he then put forth his third **Premise** that **the Mind must be in between, that is, hidden within the visual organ.**

To illustrate this, he utilized another **Analogy** for Reasoning: when someone wore glasses, the glasses would not interfere with his sight. Likewise, to *assimilate* the Analogy into the Dharma, Ānanda argued that the *Mind* lay inside the visual organ, and the organ was compared to the glasses. When the *Mind* looked outward, the organ (glasses) would not hinder, and the *Mind* would be able to see clearly. The reason why our

Mind could not see our internal organs, Ānanda then maintained, was simply because it was always *looking forward and outward*, rather than looking *backward and inward*.

Thereupon the Buddha refuted by examining the validity of Ānanda's Analogy for Reasoning in asking Ānanda whether a person who wore glasses was able to see not only the *scenery* he was looking at, but also could see the *glasses* he was wearing? Ānanda responded that a person could indeed see the *glasses* he was wearing as well as the *scenery* he was viewing, at the same time. "Then," (as *Assimilation* or *systhesis in Dharma*) said the Buddha, "if the *Mind* is like a person who is viewing the scenery, and the eye is like that glasses worn by that person, why can we not see our own *Eyes* when we look at the scenes in front of us?"

Then making a concession, the Buddha said that even if we really *could* see our own eyes, then our eyes, like glasses, would become *some thing* like an external object which we see. An external object, however, was *inanimate* and did not belong to *sentient creatures*. Eyes, however, belonged to *sentient creatures*, therefore eyes were not without any sensations.

The **Conclusion**, accordingly, was that the *Mind* could not be inside of the organ like someone wearing glasses. And so Ānanda's third Proposition was once again refuted.

【PROPOSITION 4】

The Mind is on the Threshold.

Ānanda then ventured to propose that the *Mind* was not *inside* of the organ, but rather *on the threshold* of the visual organ—like someone who stands with one foot within the threshold of a room and with the other outside of it.

“Therefore,” Ānanda said, “when one stands with one’s face toward the *inside* of the room, he would see darkness, but when he turns his head about and stands facing *outside*, he would see brightness. Likewise, since my *Mind* stands on the *threshold* of the Visual Organ, it is able to turn *either way* to see: If it turns to face the *Inside* and look, it would see nothing but *darkness*, for our ‘inside’ and internals are in darkness. But when it turns to face the *Outside* and look, it would see the external *brightness*. Therefore,” said Ānanda, “my *conclusion* would be that when I *open my eyes* to look, I can see *brightness*, it means that I am seeing *the External*. Whereas, when I *close my eyes*, I would see all *darkness* right in front of me, it would mean that I am seeing *my Internal*. How would this sound to *Your World-Hallowedship*?”

The Buddha replied thus:

“When you *close your eyes* and see the *Darkness*, is this *Darkness confronting* your eyes or not? If the *Darkness* seen

confronts your Eye, the *Darkness* should be right in front of your Eyes. Yet, anything in *front* of one's Eyes should be **outside** of one's body, how can you say that the *Darkness* you see is *inside* of yourself, rather than outside? Therefore, to say that when you see the *Darkness*, you are seeing your *Inside*, such a statement is faulty.

“However, even conceding what you just said were true, that is, the *Darkness* you see is really your *Inside*, then suppose when you stay in a dark room, where there is without sunlight, moonlight, or lamplight, you would see all darkness around you, would this *Darkness* in the room that you see all become your *Internals* and Intestines? Of course not. Therefore, in conclusion, to say that when you see the *Darkness confronting* your Eye, you are looking at the *inside*, and that the *Darkness* seen is your **Inside**, such a statement is erroneous.

“To the contrary, if you avert this to claim that the *Darkness* you see does **not confront** the Eye, so as to rescue your statement, this would not work, either. For anything that we see must be right in front of our eyes; i.e., *confront* the eyes, otherwise, how can we see it? If the *Darkness* does not *confront* your eyes naturally, it would not lie in front of your eyes, and so it would not have any *contact* with your eyes; therefore, you should not be able to see it. Then how can you say that the *Darkness* you see does not *confront* your eyes? Therefore, in conclusion, to say that when you *close your eyes*, you can see

Darkness, which is your *Inside*, and so that you are looking at your *Inside*, (whether you assert that the *Darkness* seen is right in front of your eyes or not), such a statement is invalid.

“If you still assert that your internal vision does not have to turn *outward* to see, and that rather it turns *inward* to make the vision possible; therefore the things seen does not have to lie outside of your body. Granting that this be true, we accept your statement that when you *close your eyes*, you see the *Darkness*, which is your *Inside*; then, our question would be that when you *open your eyes* to look, you see the *brightness* right in front of you, if it be so, how come you could not *see your own face* (since you claim that your view directs *inward*, or *backward*, rather than *outward*)? Therefore, to say that one can *look inward* (or *backward*) and see, such a statement is false.

“Again, to make another concession of that, granting that you really could see your own face, it would follow that that sensible and conscious *Mind* of yours, together with your Eyes, would inevitably come to *hang in the air*, otherwise, they won’t be able to see your own face with awareness. If they are dangling in the space, they should not be *part of your body*, that’s the only way that you can see your own face. However, *the Thus-Adventist* (the Buddha) can also see your face right now, would He be also *part of your internals*? Therefore, to say that your eyesight can *look backward* and see is an erroneous statement.

“To make yet another concession, if what you aver were true, when your *eyes*, even though they hang *outside of your body*, can still see and recognize things, it would turn out that your body, which is devorced away from your eyes, ought not to sense anything at all, for there are no more eyes on your body. If at this point you still insist that both the body and the eye have *its own perception* separately, so that either one of them can perceive independently, and so there are *two perceptions* accordingly. Should this hold true, then, even though you have only one physical body, you should be able to become two Buddhas in the future (for you claim to have *two* distinct and independent *awarenesses* in your body). Would that be true, too?

“Therefore, in the final conclusion, your statement that when you see the *Darkness*, you are seeing your *Internals* is completely invalid.” This concludes *the Fourth Porposition*.

【 PROPOSITION 5 】

The Mind arises at the Rendezvous of Senses and Dusts.

Up to now, with his four *propositions* all refuted (the *Mind* being ① inside the body, ② outside the body, ③ hid in the visual organ, and ④ on the threshold of the Visual Organ), Ānanda

ventured to make another *Proposition* to see how it would work. He said to the Buddha, “The reason why the *Mind* is neither at the inside, nor at the outside, nor in between, is because it manifests itself at the place where the *Senses* meet with the *Dusts* (objects perceived).”

To this, the Buddha replied, “If the *Mind*’s manifestation relies on the encounter of the *Senses* with the *Dusts*, it is certain that the *Mind* does not have an *Entity* to itself. If the *Mind* does not have an *Entity*, how can it function to meet with the *Dust*? Therefore, your *Supposition* cannot stand.

“If you still allege that the *Mind* does have an *Entity* of its own, then when you pinch at some spot of your body, where does your awareness of this pinching come from? Does it come *from within* your body, or *from without* your body?”

“If it comes *from within* your body, then it should be able to see your own internals before it can reach out to feel the pinching, for it apparently dwells *within* your body.

“If it comes *from outside* of your body, then it should be able to see your own face first before it can feel the pinching.

“Therefore, either way, your *Premise* cannot hold true.”

Ānanda argued, “Nevertheless, that which can see is the *eye*; and the function of the *Mind* is *knowing*, rather than *seeing*. Therefore, to say that the *Mind* can *see* does not agree with the

truth.”

The Buddha said, “If the *eye* by itself can see, then all the *dead people* who still have eyes should be able to see. But if they could see things, why are they still called dead people?”

“Moreover, Ānanda, if your perceptible and knowing *Mind* does have an *Entity* (a substantial body), does it have only one single *Entity*, or multiple *Entities*? Also, does it dwell all over your body, or does it not?”

“If it has only *one Entity*, then when you pinch at any part of your limbs, all of your four limbs should be able to feel the pinch simultaneously. However, such is not the fact. Therefore, you cannot say that your *Mind* has only *one Entity*.

“If you argue that all of your four limbs do feel the pinch simultaneously, then this pinch could not be said to have been done at some definite spot. But this is against the fact. Therefore, to say that, at one pinch, all of your four limbs can feel it simultaneously does not stand up to Truth.

“If you persist to say that the pinch really happens at a certain location, then the *Premise* that your *Mind* has one *Entity* will also fail to stand.

“Should you concede to say that the *Mind* has *Multiple Entities*, then one Ānanda should become several people. In that case, which *Entity* is *you*? Therefore, the *Supposition* that the

Mind has *Multiple Entities* is faulty.

“If you say that your *Mind* covers all over your body, then this would become the situation like the foregoing Premise that *the Mind has only one Entity*. So this would also be invalid.

“If you retreat to say that the *Mind* does not cover all over your body, then when you touch both your head and foot at the same time, if you can feel the touch at the head, you should not be able to feel anything at the foot. But that is evidently not the fact. Therefore, the *Premise* that *your Mind does not cover all parts of your body* is invalid.

“In the final conclusion, your statement *that your Mind arises at the place where the Senses meet with the Dusts* is invalid.”

【PROPOSITION 6】

The Mind is in the Middle.

Ānanda then said, “*Your World-Hallowedship*, I used to hear the Buddha discourse on *Reality* with some great *Pu-sas* (Bodhisattvas) like *Mañjuśri Pu-sa*. At such times the Buddha also used to say ‘The *Mind* is neither in the *inside*, nor in the *outside*!’ Accordingly, I thought that the reason for this Sacred Dictum of the Buddha is, on the one hand, because we are unable to see anything in our internals (hence, ‘it is neither in the

inside’); on the other hand, because we would be unable to feel anything if our *Mind* lies outside of our body (hence, ‘nor is it in the *outside*’). Therefore, from there I infer that the *Mind* must be somewhere *in the Middle* between the *Outside* and the *Inside* of the body.”

The Buddha said, “If you say it is *in the Middle*, this ‘Middle’ must denote some definite location beyond a doubt, and it certainly would not mean just a place *unidentifiable*. Now, where is this ‘Middle’ that you speak about? Is it some place *outside of* your body or *on* your body?”

“If it is *on your body*, there would be two possibilities to this. First, if it is located *on your skin*, then it lies *on the surface* of your body, which is at variance with *the Middle* that you profess. Second, if it is located *within your body*, then it would become the same case as *the Inside*, which has been mentioned and refuted previously. Therefore, in both cases, the *Premise* that the *Mind* lies *on your body* cannot stand.

“If you argue that the *Mind* lies somewhere *outside the body*, there will be also two possibilities to this: Is this place *identifiable* or *unidentifiable*?”

“If the location is *identifiable*, the location would become *indefinite*. Why is it so? For instance, when someone identifies something by denoting its position, if he denotes it as in the *Center*, the *Center* would become the *West* if viewed from the

East, and it would become the North if viewed from the South. Consequently, the thing denoted would become confusing, and so would the *Mind*.”

At this point Ānanda interrupted to argue, “The *Middle* that I spoke about was not the same as these two. What I meant was like what the Buddha used to say, ‘With the *Eye* and *Matter* as *Causes*, there will arise the *Visual Cognizance*.’ Therefore, from this I infer that the *Eye* has the capability of *Differentiation*, that the *Dusts* are *insentient* matter; however, if these two (*Eye* and *Matter*) are joined together, the *Cognizance* can arise in the *middle* of them. And this *Middle* is exactly the spot where I meant to be the whereabouts of the *Minds*.”

The Buddha said, “If your *Mind* is in the *Middle* of *Senses* and *Dusts*, does this *Mind* of yours partake of the attributes of them both or not?

“If your *Mind* does partake the attributes of both the *Senses* and the *Dusts* (*Matter*), then the nature of your *Mind* will become muddled and confused. For the *Dust* does not belong to the *Mind*, and it is *insentient*; yet the *Senses* are a part of the *Mind*, and so they are *sentient*. The *sentient* and *insentient* are two opposing qualities and stand contrast to each other; how would the *Mind* arise out of the *Middle* of them? For it is impossible for the *Mind* to incorporate the two antagonistic attributes simultaneously; otherwise, the nature of the *Mind* would

become *neither sentient nor insentient*, and would in the end amount to something without an articulate quality or *Entity*. If this be the case, what is the *Middle* that you meant?

“Therefore, in the final conclusion, your statement that *the Mind lies in the Middle* is invalid.”

【 PROPOSITION 7 】

The Mind is Nowhere.

With all his proposed locations confuted, Ānanda then proceeded to make his final all-out strife. He said to the Buddha, “I used to see the Buddha propound the *Doctrines* with the four great disciples, that is, Maudalyāyana, Subhūti, Purṇa-maitrāyaniputra, and Sariputra. At those times Your Holiness used to say ‘the conscious and *differentiating Mind* is neither in the internal nor at the external, nor in between. There is no set location to be pin-pointed. The Mind is something that does not adhere to any place or anything.’ Consequently, I would say that right now I feel *I am not adhered to any place*. And I would call this my *Mind*, could I not?”

Here Ānanda displays the most frequently committed mistakes among practitioners, who misunderstand and distort the true meaning and intention of *Buddha’s High Doctrine*, and eventually fall into the trap of *Nihilism* unawares.

The Buddha said to Ānanda, “You say that your conscious and differentiating Mind lies *nowhere*. Yet in this world, all the *Beings* in the sky, water, and land, as well as the soaring creatures are called all the Animated and Inanimated Beings. Does your ***Non-adhering Mind*** that you talk about belong to any of these? Is it *something else* or simply *nothing*?

“If it is ***nothing***, then your *Mind* would be just like a *turtle’s hair* or a *bunny’s horn*, which is only a vain name without any truthful *Entity*. In this case, it would be superfluous for you to profess that *it does not adhere to any place* (for it is ***nothing*** already).

“Moreover, if a thing is said to be ***un-adhered*** to any other thing, it must have an *Entity* to itself; and if it has an *Entity*, it could not be named as ***Nothing***. *Non-appearance* is *Nothing*; if it is not *Nothing*, it must have an ***Appearance***. If there is *Appearance*, it must occupy some space and reside at some place. How could it still remain *un-adhered to any place*?

“Therefore, in the final conclusion, you should know that your statement that ‘the *Non-adhering something* is your conscious and perceiving *Mind*’ is entirely false.”

Thus concluded the *Seven Propositions to enquire or locate the Mind*. It should be known that the purpose of these Inquir-

ies is not only to lead Ānanda to the final truth, but also to reveal and display the common, traditional *fallacy* in the most basic presupposed conviction that *the Mind is inside the Body*. If the Mind is inside the body, then it automatically set an invincible boundary between *the Inside* and *the Outside*. And it naturally follows that the Inside, steadfastly walled in by the flimsy carcus (body) is called *Me*; and within this territory it all beongs to *Me*. In constrast, apart from this *sacred inviolable Me*, all the rest is called *Others*, which either belong to my possession, at my mercy and disposal, or are rivalling antagonies to me, who forever pose a threat to my existence or livelihood, or power, or glory; but in most of the cases, they are strangers to me, whom I do not care a whit, nor they me, and so they can be easily ignored, neglected, or sacrificed, if necessary, for any of my purposes. Thus the *Me* becomes a “lone star” in the infinite cosmos, an island in the ocean, a foresaking and foresaken orphan in the Universe. This is all due to the conviction that the Self is different, distinctive, apart from all others. And this conviction derives its origin from the fallacious belief that *the Mind resides in the body*, which constitutes all the competitions, strifes, struggles, frictions, and afflictioins for all beings. If only the hard crust of the *Self-Shell* could be crashed and pried open, the *Mind* would be released, freed from the *Shell of Self*, and it would be able to reach anywhere, to anybody, and to acquire the *Omnipresent Divine Feet* (which would

enable him to go any place instantly), as well as the *Divine Omniscience* (which will enable him to acquire infinite wisdom and knowledge). And the state of total *Emancipation* and *Realization*, not just for the *Mind*, but also for the body will manifest itself. But this *Eventual Emancipation* comes from the breaking through of the *Ego-Boundary*, which is often justified and reinforced by the false conviction about the several locations of the *Mind*, whether in the *inside, outside, in between, or nowhere*, as claimed by different religions or philosophies. In the final analysis, if there is a *Mind* that is *Me*, or that *belongs to Me*, there will be a boundary between *Me* and *Others*, and from this fundamental discrimination, there will arise innumerable discriminations, such as the discrimination between *the Sacred* and *the Commonplace*, between *Wisdom* and *Ignorance*, and so on. Consequently there will be no end to fights and struggles, Afflictions and Bondages. And *Emancipation* and *Enlightenment* would always remain only a vain name, an empty dream, and an everlastingly unreachable goal.

[*Meditation session begins*]

[*After the meditation session*]

In *The Diamond Sūtra*, the Buddha asked Subhūti, (who was the most accomplished disciple in the practice on the contemplation of *Śūnyatā*, or *Vacuity*): if one who has attained the *First Fruition* in Hinayāna practice (i.e., the First Stage of Hinayānic Sainthood) would he call himself a *First Fruition Attainer*? Subhūti responded that a *First Fruitioner* would not call himself a *First Fruitioner*.

The Buddha then asked Subhūti if a *Second Fruitioner* would call himself a *Second Fruitioner*? Again, Subhūti answered that a *Second Fruitioner* would not call himself a *Second Fruitioner*.

The Buddha also asked the same question of Subhūti with regard to a *Third Fruitioner*, and *Fourth Fruitioner*. For each of these, Subhūti answered that they would not call themselves by those titles.

Then, the Buddha asked Subhūti if a *Pu-Sa* (Bodhisattva) would call himself a *Pu-Sa*. Subhūti responded that a *Pu-Sa* would not call himself a *Pu-Sa*. This was because there was no such *Dharma* as called “*Pu-Sa*.”

How can all of these be? It is because the practitioner who has attained, for instance, the *First Fruition of the Minor Vehicle* or even something higher, has already achieved the state of cultivation wherein he has eliminated his own *Ego* to a great extent. Therefore, he is already free from that kind of ego-

centric thinking such as “*I* have obtained something.” Furthermore, the *First Fruitioner* has come to a stage of Enlightenment that he no longer thinks of his body as *his own*, although he still has not relinquished the illusive vision to see his *Mind* in the same way.

One who has attained a stage of *Egolessness* would not say that he has attained the stage of *Egolessness*. If he proclaims that *he* has attained the state of *Egolessness*, at that same moment he is contradicting himself and is losing his *Egolessness*, for he is still entertaining an *Ego* which deems that it has attained something which is called *Egolessness*! And consequently, his *Ego* is still there, or it is just coming right back to him at that moment! To be specific, no sooner has someone said “*I* have attained *Egolessness*,” then the “*I*” (*Ego*) *reappears* in him, and all of his previous practice and attainments are annulled or revoked at that very same instant. Thus, one who has attained any *fruition* in practice should not claim that he has attained such and such thing. It is not due to “humility,” rather it is to avoid the tricky snare of the sophisticated working of the Mind, so that one could be in good keeping with *the awareness of the attributes of the Dharma*. This is true not only for the *First Fruitioner*, but for all practitioners, even including all the *Budhisattvas*!

In consequence, any one who has achieved some spiritual merits would do better not to “broadcast” about those merits.

According to Buddha's doctrine and precepts, they are not supposed to even mention about it, let alone praising themselves on account of that. Therefore, from now on, beware of anyone who tells you that he has such and such Saintly Merits, or such and such Divine Powers. Why should he be telling you all these? He is expecting for respect or worship, or wishing people to treat him as a Saint or holy Master. As a result, his practice is for the purpose of gaining fame or power or money; but this is all in contradiction to the teachings of the Buddha, as well as at variance with the *Bodhi Way*. Beware of such people, and try to avoid them if you can for your own good, for such "mountebank practitioners" can be very misleading. In my opinion, you are practicing very well right now, but I cannot guarantee that if you willingly go to places like Las Vegas (places of temptations), you would not be beguiled and misled. Any teaching that is not in agreement with the teachings of the Buddha should be treated as a "Las Vegas" (a corrupting and misleading force). So, if you are not yet invulnerable right now, try to stay as far away from all unwholesome temptations as possible.

—Lecture given on 6/10/1989
at Chuang Yen Monastery, N.Y.

Chapter 8:

The Epilogue

(尾聲)

1. The Mind of Normalcy and Unfluctuation is the Tao.

QUESTION: “In certain types of exercises, it is possible to feel the Chi rising in oneself. How would you explain that?”

RESPONSE: “It is but perfectly natural; it is simply the working of nature; nothing ‘marvelous’ there. There was once a Ch’an master who was asked to describe Tao (the Ultimate Truth). His response was: “*The mind of normalcy and unfluctuation is the Tao.*” And this has become a household maxim among Ch’an Buddhists ever since. However, people are forever looking for *the unusual*; they are always on the look

out for the *unusual* or even abnormal. They never see that all that are *unusual* are merely the *transformed illusions of the normal*. Yet people would rather leave alone the Normal and depart to search for the illusions and seem to enjoy them. They feel *happy to be deluded by illusions*—for instance, we are happy to go to the movies and would rather believe what we are watching to be real, so much so that we would even cry or rejoice or hate about what takes place in front of our eyes on the screen. Should someone say to us at that time that everything that we see on the screen is all made up and unreal and fake, we would become indignant, upset and even infuriated, and we might say that this guy is a damned fool of no imagination, and so he is a stupid, insipid bore. In other words, we got hurt when someone tries to tell us the truth—we do not appreciate Truth; we would rather enjoy sweetened lies, enjoy being cheated and cheating ourselves: we absolutely would not like the *veils of deception* to be uncovered, and we hate to the guts that the *Naked Truth* be revealed fully in sight. This analogy can be applied in many ways of our life.

In this world most of everything follows a law of its own; and that becomes its norm or normalcy. With our limited intelligence or wisdom, however, we cannot penetrate the illusive veils of the things viewed with our naked eye and so we are frequently misguided. We marvel at what is *unusual* and we often take it to be *precious* and important. Wordsworth said in

his poem, “My heart leaps up when I see the daffodils in the fields!” I should be frank to say that this kind of sentimentalization would do harm to meditation. The fact is that our mind leaps up not only when we suddenly see some daffodils, (which have been neglected and stayed out of our notice, but which have always been there, with or without our notice), but our mind would *leap up* at virtually *anything* that we suddenly see or have neglected and suddenly take notice of. For instance, if you see a member of the opposite sex who is very attractive, your heart would not just leap up, it would almost be stuck in your mouth!

2. The Middle Route

The highest practice in *the Way of Bodhi* is: “*Neither accept nor reject*”—that is, to stay exactly *in the middle*, for the *Middle Route* would not lean to either side. To exemplify this point, suppose the President of the United States should pay a visit to a Ch’an master—a real one—the Master would neither get excited nor pleased nor feel honored; he would just accept the visit calmly. A real Ch’an Master should not expect or welcome anything, nor does he reject or spurn anything, and this is the High Dharma—actually, this is the *Supreme Dharma*.

In *Ultimate Reality*, there is no *Differentiation* good and there is no *Differentiation* evil, for good and evil are concepts

formed by our *Sixth Cognizance*. But *the Sixth Cognizance* itself is illusive because it is not *self-independent* or *self-existent*. Rather, it is dependent upon both *the Former Five Cognizances* and the external Perceptions, all of which are of a transient, fleeting, and ever-changing nature. How can you affix a certain value on anything under these transient circumstances? Any values or judgments in the world must undergo a change from time to time, from place to place, and from person to person.

Therefore, a good practitioner would not hold any preconceived ideas about anything. This does not mean that he is to get himself or others confused by confounding good and evil in saying that good can be bad, and vice versa. Right now we can again refer back to Bodhidharma's Kong-An wherein Master Huei-Ko, trying to express what he had attained, joined his palms together, bowed, and returned to his seat, according to his status. Master Huei-Ko's final action here is very significant. Although in view of the *Dharmic Nature* there remained little to be said, the disciple's *position* of status should still be sustained according to the proper order: This signifies that this should be an orderly world. For compassion's sake at least, the world should not be allowed to go into a turmoil or anarchy; it still needs some laws or rules for people to go by. Although a great practitioner might no longer need those laws to guide himself, he still needs to follow them so as to set a good example

for ordinary people. In turn these rules will serve as a good foundation for people for the quest of the ultimate, *Ultra-Terrestrial* good.

When the Buddha had attained the *Ultimate Enlightenment*, He seated Himself upon His *Vajra Seat* under the tree and contemplated upon the fact that the *Enlightenment* that He had accomplished was so profound and difficult that it would be very hard for ordinary people to believe and practice; therefore, He concluded that He might just as well enter into *Nirvāṇa* Himself (as an Arhat would do). But, as the *Sūtra* says, right at that moment, the celestial King of Brahman appeared in front of the Buddha and besought Him for Mercy's sake not to enter into *Nirvāṇa* right away, but to stay in this world to teach all mortal beings about the *Right Dharma* so that all mortals may have a chance for Liberation.

Just as a student at a teacher's college is expected to teach upon his graduation, so the Mahāyāna Pu-Saship (Bodhisattvaship) practitioners are expected to teach full time (which means to devote themselves on teaching) upon their Initial Enlightenment. As for those who are still working on their degrees (minor Pu-Sas not yet fully Enlightened), they should work as part-time Teaching Assistants (a Pu-Sa working for the benefits of himself and others at the same time). For this world is like a Bodhi School (a college for Enlightenment) and we

must work hard to get the full Teachership (Buddhaship)—the sooner, the better!

3. About “Auras”

[*Later conversation during the tea*]

Some people just asked me concerning “Auras.” Nowadays, much is made of the fact that some people have “Auras” over their head or body. Scientists are studying these Auras, and some people become proud of the fact that they actually got some of those Auras. Concerning this, I would like to say that Auras are not important. The only thing that is important is the state of your mind. Can you conquer any *kleśas* (vexations or afflictions)? Can you overcome any anger, attachments, or jealousies? That is what is important, and that is what we mean by “This Shore” (Bondage) and “the Other Shore” (Liberation). “This Shore” is the world of *Vexations* where people are under the control of *Afflictions*; while “the Other Shore” is *Nirvāṇa* or *Bodhi*—the state free from anger, hatred, jealousy, or any destructive factors; hence it is the state of Liberation. That is what is important. If we can develop and grow in the way of wisdom for ourselves and compassion for other people, if we can see things clearer—this is what it counts. As for the *phantasm* of Auras, they are simply insignificant illusive phe-

nomena; don't ever take notice of or put any trust in them—even if they are manifested in however refined or gaudy manner, they are still dream-like phantasms, accounting for nothing real. Try to see through all perfidious phenomena, and you will get closer to the Ultimate Enlightenment. And fare thee well.

—Lecture given on 6/10/1989
at Chuang Yen Monastery, N.Y.

—7th Revision on 1/14/2002
at Mahā-vairocana Temple, Taipei, Taiwan

—8th Revision on 8/1/2002
at Americana Buddhist Temple,
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【 APPENDIX 】

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- 說服：行爲科學實例分析 *Persuasion: How Opinions and Attitude Are Influenced and Changed*. (A translation into Chinese. Buffalo Publ., Taipei, 1979)
- 楞伽經義貫 *A Commentary on Lankavatara Sūtra*. (Chinese Version. Mahāyāna Vihara Publ., Taipei, 1990)
- *The Sweet Dews of Ch'an*. 禪之甘露 (First Edition, Torch of Wisdom Publ., Taipei, 1990; Second Edition, Vairocana Publ. Co., Taipei, 1995; Third Revised Edition, Vairocana Publ. Co., Taipei, 2002)
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- 北美化痕 *The Metamorphic Vestiges in America: a Collection of Speeches on Buddhism*. (Chinese Version. Vairocana Publ. Co., Taipei, 2001)
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發行者：毘盧出版社

登記處：行政院新聞局局版台業字第 5259 號

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承印者：田園城市文化事業有限公司

版次：佛曆 2546 年(2002 年 9 月)地藏聖誕日初版敬印一千冊

國際書碼：ISBN 957-9373-13-2

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