

LISTEN TO YOURSELF
THINK EVERYTHING OVER

Dharma Talks by
VENERABLE MASTER HSUAN HUA

CHAN MEDITATION

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1. A volunteer must free him/herself from the motives of personal fame and profit.
2. A volunteer must cultivate a respectful and sincere attitude free from arrogance and conceit.
3. A volunteer must refrain from aggrandizing his/her work and denigrating that of others.
4. A volunteer must not establish him/herself as the standard of correctness and suppress the work of others with his or her fault-finding.
5. A volunteer must take the Buddha-mind as his/her own mind.
6. A volunteer must use the wisdom of Dharma-selecting Vision to determine true principles.
7. A volunteer must request Virtuous Elders in the ten directions to certify his/her translations.
8. A volunteer must endeavour to propagate the teachings by printing Sutras, Shastra texts, and Vinaya texts when the translations are certified as being correct.

Introduction

*The sweet dew from the Bodhisattva's
 1 willow branch
 Can cause one drop to pervade the
 1 ten directions.
 All filth and dirt are completely wiped away...*

With these words, in June of 1970, the Guan Yin recitation session was opened. It was the first such session ever held in the western world, and those attending, inspired by the Venerable Master Hua's daily instructional talks, worked to their utmost reciting the name of the Bodhisattva.

In 1962 the Venerable Master Hua brought the banner of the Orthodox Dharma to the West. In 1968 a group of young Americans asked him to speak the *Shurangama Sutra*. The Master consented and the Sutra Study and Practice Session lasted for ninety-six days. From that time onwards, the Master has continued to lecture daily on the Dharma, expounding such Sutras as: *The Lotus Sutra*, *The Sixth Patriarch's Sutra*, *The Earth Store Sutra*, *The Vajra Sutra*, *The Heart Sutra*, and many others. Currently, at the newly established City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, the Master continues to explain the King of Sutras, The Great Avatamsaka Sutra.

In our age of moral and spiritual decay, many bemoan the advent of the "Dharma-ending Age". But the Venerable Master has made a vow that he *will not allow the Dharma-ending Age to descend*. Because he has taken the maintaining of the Orthodox Dharma as his personal responsibility, from the very beginning he has taught his students the fundamental importance of practicing what they learn. During the 1968 Study and Practice Session he spoke to his freedom-loving American disciples, telling them, "It

is absolutely essential for people who want to cultivate the Way to receive the precepts...From the lectures we derive understanding, and we practice by investigating Chan. Through the combination of practice and understanding we can stride forward...An example will help to illustrate the value of combining understanding with practice. A blind man and a cripple lived together in a house. One day it caught on fire. The blind man couldn't see and had no way to get out. The cripple could see, but he didn't have any legs. What a predicament! Then a wise advisor told them, 'You two can get out of this burning house. How? Cripple, let the blind man use your eyes. Blind man, let the cripple use your legs.' They followed his advice and made the best of their situation. The cripple climbed on the blind man's back and told the blind man where to walk. Thanks to the timely advice, they managed to save themselves."

From the Sutras and the teachings of the Buddha we gain understanding. From holding the precepts and through meditation we put that understanding into practice. As his students tackle the often elusive principles of the Doctrine the Master encourages them. "Do not be afraid of not understanding," he will say. "Just be afraid that you will not practice what you know. If you do not practice, you are useless..."

As long as there are those who practice the teachings, the Orthodox Dharma remains. In the final analysis, there is no Orthodox or Dharma-ending Age. Those who practice the Orthodox Dharma live in the Orthodox Dharma Age. Those who practice deviant dharmas live in the Dharma-ending age. Those who follow the Buddha's precepts, study the teachings, and practice them, are certain to gain wisdom and eventually reach enlightenment, even now, in our "corrupt" age. On the other hand, those who do not follow the Buddha's instructions could not be saved, even if they were face to face with Shakyamuni Buddha himself!

The present volume contains the Master's lively and practical

instructions given to a group of hard working cultivators of both recitation and Chan. As you find this volume in your hands, you can be assured of your affinities with the Dharma. In 1968 the Master said, “We have karmic connections with Shakyamuni Buddha and the Dharma which he proclaimed and which remains in the world. So now we have the opportunity to understand the doctrines. We are now in an advantageous position, even though we have been born after Shakyamuni Buddha spoke the Dharma.”

The Master has brought the Orthodox Dharma to the West. We now can hear, study and practice it. The house of the Triple World is on fire. Crippled and blinded as we may be by our degenerate age, we have been shown a way out. The world needs the light of Dharma and there is really no time to stand on the sidelines “bemoaning the descent of the Dharma-ending Age”. It is time we got down to the work at hand.

Bhikshuni Heng-yin

Buddhist Text Translation Society

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The Venerable Master Hsuan Hua

a brief portrait

Dhyana Master Hsuan Hua (Dharma name An Tz'u, also known as Tu Lun) was born on the sixteenth day of the third month, 1908, in Shuang Ch'eng County, Northeast China. His father, Pai Fuhai, and mother, Hu, had eight children, of which the Master was the youngest. His mother often recited the name of Amita Buddha and in a dream one night shortly before the Master was born, she saw Amita Buddha emitting light from between his eyebrows that illumined the entire world system of one billion worlds. When she awoke, her room was filled with a rare fragrance.

His home was located in the countryside where there were few neighbors and not until he was eleven years old did he discover the phenomenon of death. While walking with some friends through a pasture, they came upon the body of a dead baby girl. The Master did not understand why this baby lay so still upon the ground and inquired of his friends, who replied, "She's dead." Puzzled, he returned to his home and asked his mother what exactly was this thing called death. She replied, "All people, whether rich or poor, must die, either from old age, sickness, or through an accident." The Master further asked, "How does one free oneself from death?" At that time there was a visitor at his home, one who cultivated the Way, and he answered the Master's question, "It is only through cultivation of the Way, awakening to one's own mind and seeing one's fundamental nature, that one can be liberated from birth and death in the continuous cycle of the six paths."

On hearing this the Master wished to immediately leave the home-life and begin to cultivate, but his mother told him that he

must wait, for she needed him to care for her in her old age.

When he was nineteen years old, his mother died. He left the home-life, bowing to the Venerable Master Ch'ang Chih as his teacher, and received the ten precepts of a sramanera, after which he took up the practice of sitting by his mother's grave, observing a mourning-period of three years. He lived in an A-frame hut made of sorghum stalks, cultivating dhyana samadhi and recitation of the name of Amita Buddha, eating one meal a day, and always sitting, never lying down. Occasionally he would enter samadhi for weeks at a time, never rising from his seat.

One night the residents of the nearby village saw that the Master's hut was on fire. A brilliant light shot up ten yards into the air, and the area around the hut was as bright as broad daylight. Many people rushed to the graveyard, crying, "The filial son's hut has caught fire!" and soon there were hundreds of people there to lend assistance with buckets of water. When they arrived, however, they found the hut unburned; the Master was sitting absorbed in meditation.

On one occasion, the Sixth Patriarch, Great Master Hui Neng of the T'ang Dynasty, came to the Master's hut and told him that in the future he would go to the West where he would meet many people with whom he had affinities and thereby establish the Dharma, causing it to flourish. After the Second World War, the Master traveled three thousand miles to Nan Hua Monastery in Canton Province to pay his respects to the Venerable Hsu Yun, who was then one hundred and nine years old. During his journey he resided at P'u T'ou Mountain, the Bodhimanda of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara, where he received the complete Bhikshu Precepts. When he arrived at Nan Hua, the two masters greeted one another; the Venerable Master Hsu Yun recognized the Master's attainment and transmitted the wonderful mind-seal to him, making him the Ninth Patriarch of the Wei Yang Lineage,

and asked him to serve as the Director of the Nan Hua Institute for the Study of the Vinaya.

In 1950 he resigned his post at Nan Hua Monastery and journeyed to Hong Kong, where he lived in a mountainside cave, until the large influx of Sangha members fleeing the mainland required his help in establishing new monasteries and temples throughout Hong Kong. He personally established two temples and a lecture hall and helped to bring about the construction of many others. He dwelt in Hong Kong for twelve years, during which many people were influenced by his arduous cultivation and awesome manner to take refuge with the Triple Jewel and support the propagation of the good Dharma.

In 1962 he carried the Buddha's Dharma banner farther westward, to the shores of America, where he took up residence in San Francisco and patiently waited for past causes to ripen and bear fruit. In the beginning of the year 1968, the Master declared that the flower of Buddhism would bloom that year in America with five petals; in the summer of that year the Master conducted the Shurangama Sutra Dharma Assembly which lasted for 96 days--five of the people who attended that session left the home-life and became bhikshus and bhikshunis under the Master's tutelage. Since that time the Master has conducted many Dharma assemblies and delivered lectures on the Heart Sutra, the Diamond Sutra, the Sixth Patriarch's Sutra, the Amitabha Sutra, the Sutra of the Past Vows of Earth Store Bodhisattva, the Great Compassion Heart Dharani Sutra, and the Dharma Blossom Sutra. The Master then lectured the Avatamsaka Preface, Prologue, and the entire Sutra over a period of nine years. With such tireless vigor, the Master has firmly planted the roots of Dharma in Western soil so that it can become self-perpetuating. He has spent hours every day explaining the teachings and their application in cultivation, steeping his disciples in the nectar of Dharma that they might

carry on the Buddha's teaching.

The miraculous events that have taken place in the Master's life are far too numerous to relate. He has freed many from the burdens of disease and other afflictions, and his followers number in the tens of thousands. His steadfast cultivation of bitter practices, the moral prohibitions, and the six paramitas, paired with his unwavering samadhi and profound knowledge of the teachings serve as a model for gods and men throughout the Dharma Realm.

At the age of nineteen, on the anniversary of the enlightenment of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara, the Master made eighteen vows before the Buddha, saying, "Bowling in obeisance to the Buddhas of the ten directions, the three divisions of the Dharma, and the venerable sages of past and present, I call upon them to bear witness as I, disciple Tu Lun, Shih An Tz'u, resolve to not seek blessings among gods and men, the vehicles of sound-hearers, those enlightened to conditions, and so forth, up to and including all of the Bodhisattvas of the provisional teaching, but only for the sake of the most supreme vehicle resolve my mind on Bodhi, in the wish that I and all living beings of the Dharma Realm simultaneously obtain the utmost, equal, and right enlightenment.

- 1) I vow that as long as there is a single Bodhisattva in the three periods of time throughout the ten directions of the Dharma Realm, to the very end of empty space, who has not accomplished Buddhahood, I too will not attain the right enlightenment.
- 2) I vow that as long as there is a single Pratyeka Buddha in the three periods of time throughout the ten directions of the Dharma Realm, to the very end of empty space, who has not attained Buddhahood, I too will not attain the right enlightenment.

- 3) I vow that as long as there is a single Shravaka in the three periods of time throughout the ten directions of the Dharma Realm, to the very end of empty space, who has not attained Buddhahood, I too will not attain the right enlightenment.
- 4) I vow that as long as there is a single god who has not accomplished Buddhahood, I too will not attain the right enlightenment.
- 5) I vow that as long as there is a single human who has not accomplished Buddhahood, I too will not attain the right enlightenment.
- 6) I vow that as long as there is a single asura who has not accomplished Buddhahood, I too will not attain the right enlightenment.
- 7) I vow that as long as there is a single animal who has not accomplished Buddhahood, I too will not attain the right enlightenment.
- 8) I vow that as long as there is a single hungry ghost who has not accomplished Buddhahood, I too will not attain the right enlightenment.
- 9) I vow that as long as there is a single hell-dweller who has not accomplished Buddhahood, I too will not attain the right enlightenment.
- 10) I vow that as long as there is a single god, immortal, man, asura, air-bound or water-bound creature, animate or inanimate object, or a single dragon, beast, ghost, or spirit, etc., of the spiritual realm that has taken refuge with me and has not accomplished Buddhahood, I too will not attain the right enlightenment.
- 11) I vow to fully dedicate all blessings and bliss which I ought to receive and enjoy myself to all living beings of the Dharma Realm.

- 12) I vow to fully take upon myself all sufferings and hardships of all the living beings in the Dharma Realm.
- 13) I vow to manifest innumerable bodies as a means to gain access into the minds of living beings throughout the universe who do not believe in the Buddhadharma, causing them to correct their faults and tend toward wholesomeness, repent of their errors and start anew, taking refuge in the Triple Jewel and ultimately accomplishing Buddhahood.
- 14) I vow that all living beings who see my face or ever hear my voice will fix their thoughts on Bodhi and quickly accomplish the Buddha-Way.
- 15) I vow to respectfully observe the Buddha's instructions and cultivate the practice of eating only one meal a day.
- 16) I vow to enlighten all sentient beings, universally responding to the multitude of differing potentials.
- 17) I vow to obtain the five eyes, six spiritual penetrations, and the freedom of being able to fly in this very life.
- 18) I vow that all of my vows will certainly be fulfilled.”

Chan

Three weeks of Chan meditation are represented in these instructional talks. The first two weeks were held in the winter of 1973, the last week of December, and 1974, the first week of January. The sessions occurred at Gold Mountain Monastery in San Francisco.

The last week of Chan represented in this volume was a one week session held in August of 1973, also at Gold Mountain. The instructional talks printed herein were given once or twice daily during the sessions and deal with a wide variety of topics pertinent to Chan meditation.

The sessions commenced at 2:45 a.m. each day and ended at 12 midnight. During the twenty-two hours between, participants alternated between walking and sitting meditation. Silence was generally maintained except for the afternoon and evening periods of instruction. Most participants chose to eat only one meal a day, taken at 11 a.m. At that time there was no heat at Gold Mountain, so meditators truly endured hunger and cold as they worked on developing the skill of forging a “vajra indestructible body”.

Every year we have Chan sessions and each year different people attend them. But I believe this year's Chan session is going to be different from the previous ones in several ways.

Once the session has begun, everyone should be clearly attentive to the question of birth and death. During this session we must be determined to end birth and death. During this session we must be determined to become enlightened. If anyone remains unenlightened, he or she is going to have to undergo one hundred strokes of the incense board. And my incense board is very heavy. When you're beaten with it, it can pulverize your bones and smash your body. When beaten with it, you experience indescribable pain, unspeakable agony. Indeed, it is to be feared that if you have to go through a hundred blows from my incense board, you will have no further opportunities to attend Chan sessions. You should be clear about this.

This year we want to be sure to put down body and mind and work at investigating Chan. The Dharma of investigating Chan is the mind ground Dharma door. The mind ground Dharma door must be personally cultivated in order to reap the Bodhi fruit. This year nobody should be lazy.

You don't have to become enlightened, but if you don't, you will have to undergo a beating with the incense board. If you are afraid of a hundred blows from the incense board, then absolutely everybody has to become enlightened. Whoever doesn't become enlightened is surely going to get beaten. Not only will you be beaten, but you'll make me so angry that I'll reach the point of losing my temper and wanting to kill somebody! I'm telling you this frankly, because otherwise you'd be gutless, lazy, and not want to work at all. What use is it to be like that and still remain in the world?

This year some who work outside are at the Chan session. When they have finished working they can immediately come

and participate in the Chan session. Whoever comes to take part is going to have a share in it. Whoever fails to come and participate won't have a share. So it's very equal, it's a very fair method. None of you should miss this rare opportunity.

Now I will recite a verse and afterwards say the word *ch'i* and everyone will follow me saying the word *ch'i*.

*The furnace in the great foundry smelts vajra.
All Buddhas of the ten directions
protect the Bodhimanda.
Every sage and worthy one
comes forth from this,
And in the Saha world
another Dharma King is born.*

* * * * *

Learned Advisors, as the Chan session begins, some of you are already able to do the work. You should attend to your own work developing your own skill. Don't be lax at any time. At all times, keep your work in mind. Continue to exert effort, and you will reach this point:

*The mountains have disappeared,
the waters have vanished.
No road lies ahead.
In the shade of the willows
bloom the bright flowers,
And yet another village.*

Perhaps you'll get to the top of a one hundred foot pole and be able to take that one last step. At just that point, quite naturally you'll understand your original face; you'll know what it looks like.

But, some of you are just beginning to investigate Chan

and have never participated in a Chan session or have had a Good Learned Advisor instruct you. Those people have been like the blind led by the blind. Their practice has been like cooking sand with the hope of getting rice. In no way would it have been possible for them to succeed. If you want to have some accomplishment, it is essential to meet a bright-eyed Advisor who can instruct you in the methods of increasing your skill. Then, day-by-day, you can make progress. But there are not many bright-eyed, Good Learned Advisors. In the whole world they are very few. Since there are so few, then how are you to know who is a Good Learned Advisor?

A Good Learned Advisor would never plaster the sign on his forehead saying, "Do you recognize me, or not? I'll tell you now; I am a good, bright-eyed Advisor." If, in fact, he did advertise in this way and claimed to be a Good Learned Advisor, then he wouldn't be a genuine Good Learned Advisor. As to a genuine Good Learned Advisor, if you recognize him, then you recognize him; but, if you don't recognize him, he will not put any pressure on you and say, "You should draw near to me. I am, within this world, a Great Good Learned Advisor, a bright-eyed Good Advisor." He wouldn't say that. He couldn't be like Wang Ma Tse, selling his plasters, peddling his own products by boasting, "Say, you ought to know, my tonic is mysterious and wonderful. No matter what your illness, apply one of my plasters, and everything will be okay. Not only will your sickness get better, but if you use my plasters, then even if you don't eat, you won't be hungry; even if you don't drink, you won't be thirsty; even if you don't sleep, you won't be tired. In the future, you won't even have to die."

A true Good Knowing Advisor wouldn't be like Wang Ma Tse selling his tonic. He wouldn't be able to praise himself. If you recognize him, that's fine; if you don't recognize him, that's okay, too. He won't introduce himself. Since that's the way it is, how

are you to know who is a Good Knowing Advisor? It's not easy to know. It's said, "A Learned Advisor is hard to meet." As a matter of fact, in the whole world, very, very few genuine Good Learned Advisors exist.

I can give you a simple introduction to a Good Knowing Advisor: a Good Knowing Advisor teaches people to go on the right road. He does not teach people to go on deviant paths. What is meant by the right road? He teaches people not to kill, not to steal, not to commit sexual misconduct, not to lie, and not to take intoxicants. He would be a bad advisor who'd say, "Oh, wine is no problem." When the Buddha prohibited wine, including it among the five precepts, he was talking to people who were as fond of wine as they were of their very lives. He wasn't referring to ordinary people. To speak that way is teaching deviant knowledge and deviant views. It is not teaching proper knowledge and proper views.

And this bad advisor also says to you, "Now, as to your sexual desire; although the Buddha said that desire and lust are not good things, if you can use sexual desire to the ultimate, then you can also become enlightened." That is also an example of deviant knowledge and deviant views. And so this bad advisor goes on, and as he continues to tell you to do improper things, he is indicating to you that he is not a Good Learned Advisor. A Good Learned Advisor won't teach you to destroy something useful, like your eyes. He wouldn't say to you, "Oh, your eyes really give you a lot of trouble. If you were to gouge them out so you couldn't see anything, then you wouldn't have any trouble at all. If you were unable to see forms, unable to hear sounds, or unable to smell odors, unable to taste flavors, unable to feel tangible objects, and unable to think about things, that would be truly wonderful. What you should do is put a stop to the realms of your six organs and their six objects." This is the teaching of an

Advisor who teaches blindness, and it's very dangerous. So, I'll continue to introduce you to a Good Learned Advisor.

One who hasn't any jealousy is a Good Learned Advisor; one who hasn't any hatred is a Good Learned Advisor; one who hasn't any greed is a Good Learned Advisor; one who hasn't any stupidity is a Good Learned Advisor. One who is without greed, hatred, and stupidity is a Good Learned Advisor. He can actually cultivate precepts, samadhi, and wisdom. That's a Good Learned Advisor. If you are contemplating a Good Learned Advisor, you should take a look and see if he has any selfishness. If he's selfish, he's not a Good Learned Advisor. If he's after profit for himself, he's not a Good Learned Advisor. Someone who doesn't have any selfishness or desire for self-benefit is a Good Learned Advisor.

For instance, in Canada there is a certain person. I don't know where he stole his name from, but he calls himself a Lama. When he teaches people, he has them give all their wealth and worldly possessions to him. The people who follow him to study the Dharma give him everything. They even give their own heads of hair to him, their skin, and their flesh. It's just the bones that he's not interested in. Why? Bones are rigid. Be careful, and watch out for that kind of advisor.

As to those of us here, maybe there is a Good Knowing Advisor among us and maybe not. If there is, then we can draw near to him, and if not, we can wait. While we are waiting for a Good Knowing Advisor, I will teach you first a little bit about the methods of applying your skill.

When you sit and do this work, you should sit very straight and properly. You shouldn't lean back and tilt your head back or bow your head down and lean forward. You should keep your head erect. Your eyes should regard your nose and look to see if your nostrils are pointing up or down. Look at the nose clearly. The nose regards the mouth. Does a nose have eyes that it can see

the mouth? In time, the nose will produce eyes. You just tell it to look, and it will look and look, until eventually the nose will be able to see the mouth. Then you'll say, "Oh, basically that's the way the mouth is." The mouth knows the heart. Is the heart black? White? Yellow? Red? Is the heart green, white, red, yellow, or black? What kind of heart is it? Ask it and see. If you see a black heart, then day-by-day you can change its color--change it to white--until it becomes the great storehouse of light, which is one with the Dharma Realm. Then there will be a little hope for you.

When you breathe, don't use your mouth. That is, if you are able to, breathe through your nose. Now, some people find it very, very difficult to breathe through their noses. So if you can use your nose to breathe, then breathe in, and put the breath behind your naval. Stop it behind your naval. Not below; that place is empty--vacuous. There isn't anything there. It's just what is meant by, "Basically, there isn't anything at all." "Basically, there's not one thing", is just referring to that place. You want to stop your breath at that point.

So this is what's meant when people ask each other, "Are you able to link your breath? Can you link your breath?" That's a very important question. If you can link your breath, then the outside breath is just the inside breath, and the inside breath is just the outside breath. So, someone who has the Way, can cease his outer breath, and yet his internal breath moves. Although no breath is coming in and out of his nostrils or his mouth, every pore in his body is able to breathe in and out. He looks like a dead man, yet he's "... dead and not gone". Perhaps he is dead and not gone. What is "... dead and not gone"? It is living. But, when it's that way, it's unnecessary to have the outer breath, because the internal breath has come to life.

At that time, "Your eyes see forms, but inside there is nothing. Your ears hear sounds, but your mind doesn't know

them. When from within, you contemplate your mind, there isn't any mind. When outside, you contemplate forms, there are no forms either.

If you look off into the distance at all the myriad things, all those things are also empty. But at that point, you shouldn't think that you're such great stuff. That's still just a preliminary expedient. It's just experiencing a little light ease. You shouldn't take a thief as your son and think that because of it you're just peerless. What's so peerless about you? You're really shameless. To do this is to not recognize yourself. You get a little bit of skill and you're satisfied. But you're still miles away from accomplishing Buddhahood. Don't obtain just a little and think it's enough. Don't be like a little child with a piece of candy who takes that one little piece of candy and is overjoyed. He runs outside, somebody gives him a piece of candy, and he's in ecstasy--totally satisfied, just because he has some candy to eat. What he doesn't realize is that in his own home there is a stash of honey and candy that's so vast that you can't say how much there is. He's just unable to get hold of it and eat it. That's the way it is with people who get a little and are satisfied.

Now, I have told you just a very, very little bit about the methods for developing your skill. If you want to know all about how to do the work, you'll still have to wait for the Great Good Learned One to come. When the Great Compassionate Good Learned One comes, he will tell you how to do the work. And then you will have done what has to be done. You will have accomplished the task of a great human being.

When you have all been sitting until your minds are empty and your bodies are empty, then I, having nothing to do, will come to find something to do, and I'll pass the time with you, people of the Way with no minds.

Before I called you Good Learned Advisors, but now, as I

think about it, you are people of the Way with no minds, because we are still waiting for the Good Learned Advisor. So, you are people of the Way who have no minds, but without any minds, you must also not have any bodies. You can't whimper, "My legs hurt, my back hurts, I can't stand it. What am I going to do?" As soon as you start thinking that way, even Shakyamuni Buddha himself can't save you. Why not? Because you can't practice what's difficult to practice. You can't bear what's difficult to bear. You can't cultivate what's difficult to cultivate.

What's so great about this body anyway? When Shakyamuni Buddha was cultivating on the causal ground, he relinquished his body, his nature, and his very life. He gave them away. He gave them to people. Not only can we not give our bodies, natures, and very lives, but we can't even stand it if our legs suffer a little. Don't be so gutless. If you can't take it after one day, what's going to happen after two? After three, you'll be beside yourselves. Strike up your spirits, get hold of your genuine vajra resolve. Didn't I say last night, "The furnace in the foundry fuses vajra"? This furnace can smelt anything.

Gold Mountain Monastery is like the furnace in a foundry. When you come here, if you're a dragon, you must curl up; if you're a tiger, you must crouch and use one mind to cultivate. No matter how bad a person you are, you have to become good. And no matter how good you are, you must get better. That's what's meant by the first line of the gatha I spoke yesterday.

There may be yet another Dharma King. If too much is said, it's just a bother. And so now everybody should bring forth his own skill and advance vigorously and courageously.

*The furnace in the great foundry smelts vajra.
All Buddhas of the ten directions
protect the Bodhimanda.*

*Every sage and worthy one
comes forth from this,
And in the Saha world
another Dharma King is born.*

* * * * *

All of you people of the Way who have no minds, since you are called people of the Way with no minds, it is essential that you don't have a mind. If you have a mind, then you have false thinking. If you have no mind, you have a response. In the Chan hall, we are walking, walking, sitting, sitting; sitting a while, walking a while. Why do we do this? Because when you cultivate the Way it is essential that you understand the method of cultivation. If you don't understand the method of cultivation, then you don't know where to step. You don't know where to begin practicing.

In the Chan hall, walking subdues the body and sitting subdues the mind. Your body is caused to be without any sickness and your mind to be without any false thinking. When the body has no sickness, then it is healthy; when the body is strong and healthy, then you can do whatever you want to do. If your mind has no false thinking, then your mind is in samadhi. It is concentrated. If your mind is concentrated, then your nature is fixed.

So it's said,

*When the nature is fixed,
the demons are subdued,
And every day is happy.
When the false thoughts do not arise,
Then everywhere is peaceful.*

If your mind isn't concentrated, then you can't subdue the demons. But if your mind is concentrated then there are no demons at all. Gluttonous demons are no longer gluttonous. Lazy

demons are no longer lazy. Heavenly demons lose their divinity, and earthly demons lose their earthliness. Human demons no longer have human form.

A concentrated mind can subdue the demons inside and it can subdue the demons outside. So it is said, “When the nature is fixed, the demons are subdued, and every day is happy.” Every day you experience bliss. Not a day passes when you’re not blissful.

“When false thoughts do not arise, then everywhere is peaceful.” If you don’t have any false thinking, then your mind is as composed as still water. It is like water without any waves--like pure still water. When your false thoughts don’t arise, every place is peaceful.

Why is it that when you’re here, you feel that there is better? And when you go there, you feel that somewhere else would be even better? It’s because your false thoughts have control over you. Your false thoughts control you and cause you to feel dissatisfied with where you are, and to feel that if you went elsewhere, it would certainly be better. They cause you to be dissatisfied with the way things are.

A saying goes, “Stand on this mountain, and that mountain is taller; when I arrive at that mountain, I have to stand on tiptoes.” You stand on this mountain and you aren’t satisfied because you see a taller mountain, but when you get to the other mountain, you still feel it’s not high enough. You want to stand on your tiptoes to find a higher mountain yet. Why are we that way? Because we don’t have the skill to subdue our bodies and our minds.

When we run around the room in the Chan hall, it’s like having a race to see who’s going to come in first. However, from the way I see it, everybody in the Chan hall is first, because we’re running in a circle. From where I stand, I’m first, and from where you stand, you are first. From each person’s point of view, each gets to be first.

But that kind of being first is unreal. Who is truly first? Whoever runs right to enlightenment is the one who is truly first. We aren't like other big track meets where the concern is who finishes in first place. We are interested in who will be the first to wake up. When we run around the room, we want to run right to enlightenment. The goal of our Olympic games is to become enlightened. If you don't become enlightened, it makes no difference how fast you run, it's useless. You still won't be a winner; you have to become enlightened to be a winner.

Whoever becomes enlightened is number one, whoever doesn't become enlightened, comes in second. Those of you, who want to be first, hurry up and become enlightened. You might say, "Well, how do you become enlightened?" How? Just be very reliable and diligent in your cultivation. Be dependable in your investigation of Chan. Be dependable in your sitting meditation. That means that you don't strike up false thoughts when you're sitting. You don't depend on things.

What is "depending on things"? It's when you say something like, "Now, I'm going to investigate dhyana and the Buddha is going to cause me to become enlightened, and the Bodhisattvas are going to help me become enlightened." Or, "I'm going to meet a great Good and Wise Advisor who will teach me how to become enlightened." Or perhaps, "If I believe in a certain person, he will teach me to become enlightened." All of those views are mistakes. That's not becoming enlightened, it's just a mistake. Why? Because you're depending on something.

You're depending on someone to teach you to become enlightened. How is that possible? If someone could tell you how to become enlightened, it wouldn't be necessary for you to eat to become full. Someone else could eat for you and you would become full. If that's possible, then somebody else could also tell you how to become enlightened. But when somebody else eats,

you don't get full. You, yourself, have to eat in order to become full. Becoming enlightened is the same way.

You may say, "If you don't cultivate, somebody else can help you cultivate, and tell you how to become enlightened." But that's just like watching somebody else eat and trying to get full. If you can't get full when somebody else eats, then someone else can't help you become enlightened, either.

The most that a Good and Wise Advisor can do is tell you how to cultivate, how to sit in meditation. Although that is pointing out the Way to you, it's still necessary for you to walk down the road yourself. If you don't go yourself, then it hasn't been of any use. That's what depending on somebody means.

It also refers to not leaning against the wall when you're sitting. You think, "The wall is really solid. I'll lean back on it and I won't knock it over, I won't make a hole in it. If I lean back when I fall asleep, I won't fall down to the ground." I'll forewarn you: If you lean against the wall like that for a long time, you will spit blood; you'll get sick from it. So don't depend upon things, don't lean against the wall or stick a cushion behind you to soften the hard wall so that it feels more comfortable when you lean back. That's also a mistake.

People who cultivate the Way shouldn't be concerned about their own comfort. They shouldn't fear pain. "The more it hurts, the more I'm going to butt up against it." As soon as the pain comes then things start to get good. It's just to tell you to have some pain. Legs hurt? Then say, "Hurt a little more, hurt a little more." Back hurts? "Good, hurt a little more. I'm not paying any attention to you, do whatever you want. The more it hurts the more I want to sit. I'm going to battle with you and I'm going to come out on top." This is the way to not depend on anything.

But if instead, you pile pillows up behind you, if you sit like that, it's going to lead to only one place, and that is to falling

asleep. As soon as you get comfortable you fall asleep. If you're not so comfortable, if the wall's a little harder, and it hurts when your back hits up against it, you won't sleep so much. So don't lean against the wall.

You should sit there and not rely on anything. You shouldn't lean backward. You shouldn't lean left or right. Say, "I'm not going to lean on anything. I'm going to get up my courage. I'm going to bring forth a heaven-filling resolve and decide to end birth and death. I am not going to be the least bit sloppy about it. I'm a great hero. I'm a great person. I'm extraordinary, far above my peers. I'm most unusual. How can I depend upon things?"

So people who cultivate the Way should stand on their own and not depend on anybody or anything, should not depend on any circumstances. "I want to sit very firmly with my body as tough as iron. If I cultivate and I don't become enlightened, I'm not going to rest. Each day I'm not enlightened, I'm not going to rest. I'm certainly going to figure out what my original face was like before my parents bore me."

You should make this kind of durable, strong, sincere resolve, this kind of constant resolve to cultivate the Way and develop your skill. During these two weeks of Chan sessions, we want to figure out what each of us is all about. We want to clear up our own individual matters, so that we haven't come into this world all confused, just waiting to die, not knowing how we'll die. That's really meaningless. We certainly want to know how we were born and how we will die.

Will we be comfortable when we die? And free? We want to cultivate until we are free to come and free to go. That's true freedom.

If I want to come, then I come. If I want to go, then I go. When I come it is without affliction, when I go it is without worry. When I want to go, I just fold up my legs and say, "I'm going off

to be reborn in the Land of Ultimate Bliss.” You bid farewell to people just when you feel like it. That’s truly having control over birth and death.

What does it take to be that way? It takes just this preliminary work that we are now doing. If somebody doesn’t want to die, he first must develop his skill in dying. If you want to end birth and stop death, then you have to come up with some true skill.

So don’t be afraid of the pain. Don’t be afraid of the difficulty. Don’t be afraid of anything, and then it will work.

A Chan session is like smelting vajra. We don’t even fear living dragons and lively tigers. The more you want to sleep, the less I’ll let you sleep. We’ll see what kind of method you come up with. If you don’t even have the least bit of energy, how in the world are you going to be a cultivator? How can you accomplish the Way? People who accomplish the Way are all people with bones and blood. They all have spine. No spineless, boneless, bloodless people can accomplish the Way.

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Yesterday I said that those great heroes and awesome leaders among the ancients were people with bones and breath and blood that enabled them to give rise to their accomplishments. “Bones” represents the fact that in hundred chopping they were not disturbed. So it is said, “Hundreds of impediments do not bother him.” No matter what state he encounters, he can subdue it. He is not turned by circumstances, but he can turn conditions. As it is said, “In the world the goal of people is to be victorious over heaven.” If a person has a fixed determination, he can overcome the heavens. Common people think that heaven is the highest place of all, that nothing can surpass heaven. Still, it is said that if you have unswerving determination, you can be victorious even over heaven.

By “heaven” the ancients are implying God. But this God, this heavenly ruler, is not necessarily the Catholic or Christian God. Nor is the heavenly ruler the one spoken of in Confucianism. This heavenly ruler is just a county official who must keep an eye on the rights and wrongs of the people. He is not the one and only Supreme Lord. Although he is above us, this heavenly ruler is not an unsurpassed lord.

In Confucianism it is said, “By eating vegetarian food, practicing prohibitions and bathing clean, then one can wait upon the Supreme Lord.” “Eating vegetarian food means one eats vegetables.” “Practicing prohibitions,” means one holds the precepts, which means you do not violate them by engaging in lustful, desirous conduct. “Bathing clean” means to wash clean your body, wash clean your mind. Then you can wait upon the Heavenly Lord. You can establish a mutual contact with the Heavenly Lord. You can reach the Heavenly Lord, that is, your sincerity will be known by the Heavenly Lord.

The ancient king, T’ang of the Shan dynasty said:

*I, the small one, Lu,
With the sacrifice of this black ox,
Presume to inform you, Magnificent Ruler,
of this: when I have faults,
I do not blame the people.
When the people have faults,
Let the blame be placed with me.*

King T’ang said, “I, the small one, Lu.” He spoke of himself as the “small one” and then added his name “Lu”. “With the sacrifice of this black ox, presume to inform you, Magnificent Ruler...” He uses the black ox to inform the Magnificent Ruler very clearly that “When I have faults,” (if he has offenses), then “I do not blame the people.” Don’t blame the ordinary citizens, don’t cast

blame on the populace. He says, “When the people have faults,” (or if the people have offenses), “Let the blame be placed with me.” The offenses belong to me. Why? Because I have not taught my people well. So when they commit offenses they are not to be blamed; blame me. In this way the King of Shang sought within himself. He acted in accord with propriety. He was able to take the offenses, the myriad offenses of others, and make them his own. He did not want his offenses, moreover, to be put on other people.

People who cultivate the Way also should have this kind of determined propriety. You shouldn’t, when encountering profit, forget about the principle. Then you see a sage, you should want to become his equal, to imitate him. When we people investigate Chan, we should find a model. Whatever Patriarch’s conduct I admire, I should choose to study that Patriarch and imitate him. Whatever Arhat’s conduct I like, I should make that Arhat my mirror and allow him to reveal to me my shortcomings so that I may learn from him. Or perhaps I admire a particular Bodhisattva. I should make that Bodhisattva my model, always keeping his conduct in mind, as I do whatever I’m doing. In everything I do, I should follow that Bodhisattva’s example and actually do what he did.

If my resolve is greater, if I feel I would like to practice the example set by a particular Buddha, then I should vow to follow the example set by that Buddha’s cultivation, the determination exemplified in that Buddha.

Some people say, “Oh, but we’re just ordinary people. How can we follow the examples of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas? How can we follow the examples of Arhats and Patriarchs?” If you can’t study and follow those examples, then you might as well not study Buddhadharma. Nor is there any need for you to come and investigate Chan because if you investigate Chan, that’s like

standing by the side of the river and wishing to gaze upon the sea. So if you want to study the Buddhadharma, as you begin you should know that basically we are no different from the Buddha. It is just because we have not cultivated that we haven't become Buddhas. We have not become Bodhisattvas, we have not become Arhats, we have not become Patriarchs because we have not chosen to cultivate.

If we are able to cultivate, Buddhas are just made from people. Bodhisattvas are also made from people, as are Arhats and Patriarchs. So we need only have sincere strength in our willpower and determination. Then we can realize any of these states. If your determination is to be a sage, then you will be a sage. If you have the determination to be a hero, then you will become a hero. If you have the determination of a Buddha or Bodhisattva, then you are a Buddha or Bodhisattva. Just see where your determination stands, where it is established. If your vision is far-sighted and your determination is solid, things certainly will accord with your wishes in the future.

So it is said, "Shun was a person, I am also a person. Why can't I do the things that great Emperor Shun could do? Maybe I can do them even better than him--I can transcend him." You should not belittle yourself. Dispense with your self-imposed boundaries. What does that mean? It means you draw a little line and say, "Oh, this is just the way I am. I can't go any farther. I can't progress any more. I haven't any great accomplishment." You draw a line on yourself. You should know that people are the most efficacious creatures among the ten thousand things. Everything is ruled by people. Without people there would be nothing. If there weren't any people, nothing in this world would be of any use.

So, if you are a Buddha, then just be a Buddha. If you are a Bodhisattva, then we'll see you as a Bodhisattva. But if no one

receives your teachings, then you are Buddhas and Bodhisattvas who are unemployed.

So it is people who propagate the Way. The Way does not propagate people. Everything is ruled by people, so if there weren't any people in our Chan hall, it would be of no use. Having this many people in the hall investigating Chan increases the bright light and dazzling adornment of the Chan hall immeasurably. If no people were cultivating in the Chan hall, then the Chan hall would go on strike. So, everybody, be resolute and hold firmly to your determination to become Buddhas. We should hurry up and become Buddhas and we will be able to teach and transform Western living beings.

At the outset of Buddhism in the West, if you don't become Buddhas a little sooner, then you are delaying the living beings of the West from becoming Buddhas. You do not know how many people are behind you waiting for you to save them. Do you still want to be lazy and not stand on your own, and rely on other people? You should stand on your own. Take up what you should take up, and put down what you ought to put down. Get your skill precise so that you don't lose track of your goal for even a fraction of a second.

Take a look at Mao T'se T'ung swimming in the great river. The newspapers say he goes as fast as a steamship. Never mind steamships, we should be faster than rockets. Mao T'se T'ung is going to swim the river and we're going to swim across the great void.

Don't look upon yourself as so small. Don't say, "I'm a common person; I cannot become a Buddha." You just lack confidence. Don't look down on yourself. It is said,

*Don't find yourself despicable;
Don't throw yourself away.*

If you can be like that, then if you want to become a Buddha, you certainly can become a Buddha. If you want to become a Bodhisattva, that's not difficult either. To become a Sage is even less of a problem. You just have to believe in yourself, believe that you ultimately can become a Buddha. Don't not believe in yourself. If you can't see yourself as a great hero among the ancients and moderns, a Great Sage, think of yourselves as being their brothers and sisters and you will be the same as them.

But they're not the only ones, however. Earlier I was talking about the Lord on High. Well, the Lord on High should be beneath me. I'm going to transcend the Lord on High. So there is a saying,

*Don't yield to the ancients
As the only ones with wisdom;
Just because you're ancient,
What's so unusual about you?*

What is so unusual about them? Say, "What if you are already an ancient? I'm going to be even better than you, right now." Don't yield to the ancients, recognizing them as the only wise ones. Yield means to be polite to, to make concessions to them. Don't be polite to the ancients. With a single blow I can flatten you, and then I can turn around and save you again. So, you should believe in yourself and not suppose that your contemporaries exceed you and go beyond your measure either. So you shouldn't say of the current president, "Oh, I couldn't possibly compare with him." You should be a great good learned one in the world and go and teach and transform the President. This is what it means by not yielding to the people of the present as beyond your measure.

This kind of will stands on the earth with its crown in the heavens. It can break through space. I use my will power to fill up empty space. I fill up empty space with my will, so there's no room left for it. That's the way it is. Don't look upon yourself as

so small, like a tiny ant that can just steal honey. Don't be like that. And don't be like a rat that only knows how to steal cheese, beans, and grain to eat. This is meaningless.

Then, make great vows such as those made by two monks from Gold Mountain who have vowed to bow once every three steps to Washington. In making that kind of great vow, you shouldn't have even one false thought. If you make a big vow and then you have a few false thoughts, these can obscure the big vow. So don't have false thoughts about killing, don't have false thoughts about stealing, don't think about saying false things or drinking a little wine or looking at pretty women or taking intoxicating drugs; don't have these kinds of false thoughts. As soon as you have these kinds of false thoughts, the gods, dragons, and others of the eight-fold division, the Dharma-protectors and good spirits, and the eighty-four thousand Vajra Store Dharma Protectors who follow you must simultaneously retreat. And, when the Vajra Store Dharma Protector Bodhisattvas retreat, then the retinue of demons attacks. That's why that ghost came to bully you. If you hadn't had those false thoughts, then the demonic ghost wouldn't have had even a little crack to get in, no hole to squeeze through.

This is very, very important. No matter what house you stay in, no matter where you stay, be especially careful not to let your samadhi power become diffused and scattered by striking up false, improper thoughts. This is very important, very important.

So today I have used some of this precious time to explain these important doctrines to you. The Way is actual practice; it's not something that's just spoken of. If you actually go and practice, then that is immeasurably better than just speaking: So it is said,

*Spoken well, spoken wonderfully,
Without real practice
There is no actual Way.*

The Way is to be practiced. Without practice, then of what use is the Way? Virtue is done; if it's not done, then what virtue is there? If you don't do virtuous things then the virtue is not there.

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Speaking Dharma is to teach people to break all of their attachments. When you have no attachments, then you very naturally obtain liberation. If you have attachments, then you cannot become liberated. No one is tying you up so you can't become liberated, but you have attachments that prevent you from attaining liberation.

As to attachments, even in investigating Chan there are attachments which can occur. One says, "I am a Chan Master." In studying the teachings, attachments arise when one says, "I'm a Dharma Master." Holding to the Vinaya has the attachments involved in holding to the Vinaya. One says, "I am a Vinaya Master." When cultivating the Secret School, an attachment to holding mantras arises. "I am a Secret School Vajra Superior Master." People who recite the Buddha's name also give rise to attachments, saying, "Oh, I'm one who is mindful of the Buddha and cultivates the Pure Land."

Because of these attachments, the very lively and animated Buddhadharma is relegated to a very rigid kind of worldly dharma. Buddhadharma is the study of leaving all attachments; worldly dharma promotes attachments. If you can dispense with all attachments, then you are in accord with the whole of creation. If you want to understand this then you must first make a great sacrifice. A great sacrifice is just great giving. Giving what? Giving away the attachments, giving away your greed, giving away your anger, giving away your stupidity.

When you investigate the Buddhadharma, the investigation

of what's just before your eyes is more than enough for you to deal with. You don't have to run to India to seek the Buddhadharma and go to Nepal to get the Tripitaka and then go to the Himalaya mountains to see if the snow the Buddha sat in is red or not. Searching for answers in this way is called "renouncing what is near and seeking what is far". It is called "forsaking the root and grasping at the branches". One of my disciples went to India to find a master and in the end her master ended up in jail. So she returned to San Francisco and then she left home. Would you say this is strange, or not? If she'd just left home here in the first place she could have saved more than a thousand dollars. That thousand dollars could have bought a Tripitaka to put in the library--a Dharma treasure which would have been here permanently.

Now it is still not too late, you can work well and develop your skill in cultivation. Don't just seek after profit and name. People who cultivate the Way should put aside their thoughts of fame and profit. These small matters of name and fame everybody likes, but the great matter of birth and death is something no one wants to face. Everyone neglects the great matter of birth and death, except those few of us here in the Chan hall who know that birth and death is a big problem and want to learn how to end birth and death. We want to study that Dharma-door. We want not to fear any kind of difficulty, any kind of suffering, or any kind of pain. Sleep less, eat less, and apply your skill to cultivation. When you eat, don't eat too much. If you eat too much it's easy to doze off.

Sleep and dozing belong to *yin*. When one is not dozing that is *yang*. I have often explained before that if you restrict your eating, you will dispense with ghosts. Eat less. Don't eat too little, but don't eat too much. Neither too much nor too little. If you eat too much, your stomach will complain. If you restrict your eating and drinking, then you will get rid of the ghosts. If you are *yin*

then the ghosts come; if you are *yang* then the ghosts go.

This year those who are in attendance at the Chan session are very sincere. I see that although some are sleeping, there are fewer sleeping than in the past. We have made progress. This may well be because we now have more, Good Learned Advisors staying here, and they have influenced people to work hard at their cultivation. Originally, when a Chan session was going on, people didn't even wash their faces, brush their teeth or cut their boards or their hair. During a Chan session, they didn't know heaven was heaven, earth was earth, and that there were people in between. They didn't know that heaven was above, that earth was below, and that there were people in between because they'd forgotten everything and put everything down.

That kind of skill brings a response, even to a point in the session when you don't even know what day it is. You don't know, "Oh, today is the third day." You haven't any idea; it's just as though the session had just begun, exactly the same. Time passes very quickly if you don't attach to it; there is no time. If you attach to it, you count one day, two days, three, four, five days, and then it's just like any other week. But there's no time if you don't attach, there is no past, no present, no future. If you can be that way, putting down your body and mind, you yourself can become a Buddha. If you can put down your body and mind, if you can be without attachments, then you certainly can become a Buddha.

In this Chan session there's a little something that's not quite perfect. What is it? Although many people are not talking, some are talking a great deal, like me. Every night I get up here and spend some time talking to you. But, of course, in the Chan hall talking is open, is public, when you give instruction. So this is all right. What is not in accord with the rules is to go up to the bathroom and have a meeting. It's not very appropriate to make

it into a meeting hall. Basically, the bathroom is a pretty smelly place. I often hear many people talking in the bathrooms. It's my hope that we can get rid of this particular problem, and that would make our Chan session even better. Our Chan session would be even more perfect. If you haven't lived at Cold Mountain or Kao Min Monasteries, you don't know the rules of the Chan hall. At Kao Min in China people all lived together and would go for several years without ever saying a word to one another. They might have slept side by side, sat side by side, but still they didn't really know one another; they did not even know each other's names. Such practice is called, "genuinely putting it down". They are truly Mahasattvas who don't pay attention to anybody else. Amitabha Buddha, everyone for himself!

We are planting the seeds of Buddhism in America, and the very best way to do this is to establish the foundation very well. So, we are particularly thorough in our ceremonies, classes, and in all of our public meetings. In a Chan session we should be even more true about our work. We need even more not to be sloppy. We don't, at the beginning, want to turn it into the very end for Buddhism.

In the beginning, we must establish the Proper Dharma. If it turns into the Dharma Ending Age, that's not right. So, in this country, we want to uphold and propagate the Proper Dharma. We ourselves want to practice the Proper Dharma, and we want to spread the proper Dharma. It's certain that we can't be sloppy about it. We can't be lazy, we can't be fond of leisure, we can't be lax. We should keep our minds on birth and death, and be ever mindful of impermanence, be careful not to be lax. That's the way we should be. If I say any more, I'll just be taking more time. We should continue to work on our own, and develop our own skill. That's very important.

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*In cultivating do not seek outside.
Recognition of the right road is essential.
If indeed you find the Proper path,
Birth and death will quickly come to rest.*

These Four sentences say that when people cultivate the Way, they should not seek outside. You want to attain the Dharma Door of the mind ground. If you don't obtain that Dharma Door, then you don't know how to cultivate. That is why the next line says it's essential to recognize the road. If you know how to cultivate, birth and death aren't big problems. You'll be able to end birth and death quite spontaneously. But if you don't understand how to cultivate, you are like the blind being led by the blind, and that's useless.

This is why it was the custom of the ancients who cultivated the Way to go around visiting Good Learned Advisors in order to find such a one to draw near to and study with. They believed that when their potentials had ripened, they would be able to meet a Good Learned Advisor who could instruct them in the methods for cultivating the Way.

But it's not the case that someone is going to deliver the Dharma on your doorstep. When the ancients went out to look for teachers, they endured a great deal of hardship and tribulation. Even so, it wasn't certain that they all would meet Good Learned Advisors. So it is said, "it is difficult to meet a Good Learned Advisor".

Now, at Cold Mountain Monastery, the Good Learned Advisors from the ten directions are continually instructing us and making it possible for us to know how we should go about cultivating. You can say that this atomic age is certainly not the same as past ages. Now, as we sit in Gold Mountain Monastery, Good Learned Advisors from all countries and from all the ten directions are teaching and transforming us. We should be

grateful.

We should also be vigorous. If we are vigorous, we can make progress every day. If we are thankful to our Good Learned Advisors, then we have not forgotten our source. People who cultivate the Way should be extremely careful not to become self-satisfied, arrogant or haughty. If you are self-satisfied, then you won't make progress. If you are arrogant, then you won't be able to learn from those beneath you. You should feel that what you know is very little, and study with other people. Learn from other people, seek wisdom from everyone. You should be open to both favorable and adverse situations. You should be able to accept not only pleasant states, but also unpleasant ones. You shouldn't say that you can't stand unpleasant experiences, nor should you just endure what is unpleasant and remain unreceptive to what is agreeable or pleasant.

If you are attached to what is pleasant--to what is agreeable, or compliant--or to what is adverse--unpleasant--then you can't obtain samadhi. For example, if someone praises you and you like it, then you have been moved by the wind of compliance. If people slander you and you are stirred up, then you have been moved by an opposing or adverse wind. Whether compliant or opposing, you should progress right through them. What is compliant is a Good Learned Advisor, and what is opposing is all the more a Good Learned Advisor. It is said that adverse situations--situations of adversity--create heroes. Heroes are made from situations that are not easy to get through. When adversity comes you should take it as though it were an agreeable state. This is being equally near to and involved in compliant and adverse states. Of course, you must recognize them for what they are, because if you don't, then that's completely useless.

Speaking of this, I recall the case of a certain "sutra-hustling ghost". This was a monk who spent all day reciting sutras for

people in order to save the souls of their dead relatives. He hustled sutras and was called a “Na mwo”. All day long he droned, “Na mwo, na mwo, na mwo” (“homage, homage”), one knows not how many times. He recited so many “na mwo’s”, but he was always Na mwoing for other people; he never Na mwoed for himself. He never Na mwoed to see what he himself was doing.

So, one day he went off to Na mwo for somebody, and afterwards he set out for home. It was probably fairly late in the day as he was returning when he went past a little village and a dog barked at him. Inside the house where the dog was barking he heard an old woman’s voice say, “Hey, take a look and see who it is. What’s the dog barking so fiercely about?” A man got up and pecked out of a hole in the window. The window wasn’t made of glass, but of oiled paper. There was a hole in the paper, so he peeked out of it. The woman kept saying, “Who is it? Who is it? Do you recognize him?” The man said, “Oh, be quiet, it’s just the sutra-reciting ghost.” He said “sutra-reciting ghost” so loud that the monk heard it and wondered, “Hey, why did he call me a sutra-reciting ghost? I’m always reciting sutras for people, and he calls me a sutra-reciting ghost.”

But there wasn’t anything he could do about it, after all; he did go around reciting sutras for people, and if someone wanted to call him a sutra-reciting ghost he couldn’t go to court and file a suit. So he kept his temper and swallowed his hurt feelings. When the opposing came, he accepted it compliantly and walked on.

Pretty soon he came to a bridge. It started to rain and this made him very unhappy, so he crawled down under the bridge to get out of the rain. There he was, trying to keep dry, and without anything to do. There were no dead people under the bridge, so he couldn’t help them with his Na mwoing. Since there were no Na mwo affairs to do under the bridge, he decided to Na mwo himself. He said to himself, “Hey, everybody says sitting in

meditation isn't bad. I'll try sitting in meditation; I'll try it out." So he sat down and pulled his legs into full lotus. He got his legs all arranged and sat there, and immediately a wonderful state appeared.

What state? Two ghosts appeared. Here he was, day after day crossing over ghosts, and although he had never seen a ghost he wasn't afraid of them. He was more or less in the retinue of ghosts--he was that far-gone--so when he saw the ghosts he wasn't afraid. One ghost said, "Hey, what's a golden pagoda doing here? I've never seen that here before." The other ghost said, "Oh, a golden pagoda has the Buddha's shariras in it. We'd better go bow to it. The Buddha's Dharma Body is there."

So the two ghosts started bowing like chickens eating grain. They bowed over and over and over and over again. But they didn't knock their heads on the ground when they bowed because, after all, they were ghosts! There was just this *yin* energy there bowing.

So, they were bowing in a very agitated way. Standing up, bowing, standing up, kneeling, bowing, standing up...

Since this cultivator was on pretty friendly terms with ghosts (he crossed them over every day) he considered all the ghosts he crossed over as his special friends, and so he wasn't afraid.

But soon, after he had sat for a while, his legs refused to cooperate. His legs said, "It hurts, it hurts, it hurts." They started crying, "Pain, pain." As soon as they yelled "pain, pain", he listened to them. He listened to his legs talking to him. He said, "Okay, I'll liberate you." So he eased out of full lotus position into half lotus. And there were the ghosts, bowing and bowing.

Once when they were standing up, they took a look in front of them, and then they stopped to confer with each other. One said, "Hey, that was a golden pagoda. How did it turn into a silver one? That's really strange." The other ghost said, "Oh, what difference

does it make? Gold pagoda, silver pagoda ...Silver pagodas also have the Buddha's Dharma Body inside. We ought to keep bowing." So they started bowing, bowing, bowing again, but by now they probably weren't as fast as chickens eating grain. They were bowing more and more slowly. They kept it up for another half hour or maybe even an hour. In general, you shouldn't get attached to how long it was.

But eventually, the monk couldn't take it any longer. His legs were complaining again. They started making uproar and screaming, "Oh, the pain is unimaginable. It hurts, it hurts, it hurts. We just can't stand the pain any longer." The legs made such a ruckus that he thought, "Okay, okay, okay, I'll liberate you." So he slipped out of half lotus and just sat in an ordinary, casual fashion, just as he pleased. Then the ghosts got enlightened. They said, "Look, that's not a gold pagoda or a silver pagoda either. Basically, it's just a mound of mud. We've really been fooled. Let's kick it. Let's kick this mound of mud." To them the monk now looked like a mound of mud, but as soon as he heard the ghosts were going to kick him, he immediately got back into full lotus. As soon as he got his legs crossed over each other, the ghosts blinked in astonishment. They said, "Look! It's a gold pagoda again. It transformed into a gold pagoda again. We'd better keep bowing." So, the two of them continued to bow.

They bowed until dawn, until a cock crowed. Then they left and the cultivator thought, "Oh, full lotus is a golden pagoda, half lotus is a silver pagoda, and sitting any way you please is a mound of mud. That's really inconceivable. Okay, after this I'm not going to be a sutra-reciting ghost any more. I'm going to change my trade. I'm going to make a jeweled hall of gold for the Buddha. I'm going to become a golden pagoda."

And after that, every day he sat in full lotus. After sitting for a time, he became enlightened, and after becoming enlightened,

he thought, “Wow! Who was my Good Learned Advisor? Turns out it was those two ghosts.” So after that he called himself the Dhyana Master Pressured by Ghosts. The ghosts forced him into cultivating.

So, everyone, if you see a ghost you shouldn't be afraid. If you cultivate well, the ghosts won't be able to give you any trouble. You should be a little more sincere and not be afraid of anything. Put everything down. Ghosts helped this Dhyana Master cultivate, so, people who cultivate the Way, no matter what experience you have, if you can avoid being turned by it you will develop samadhi power. If the eight winds don't move you, then you have wisdom power. Where do samadhi power and wisdom power come from? First of all, you must hold the precepts. When your morality is thoroughly pure, you do not do anything bad and offer up all good conduct. When you don't commit any evil acts, day by day your offenses get smaller. And, when you offer up all good conduct, your merit and virtue increase every day. Increasing your merit and virtue is an aid to your morality, samadhi, and wisdom. When you decrease your offenses, your greed, hatred, and stupidity are also diminished. Therefore, when your precepts, samadhi, and wisdom are perfected, greed, hatred, and stupidity disappear.

You should know that the merit and virtue derived from sitting in full lotus is not merely a golden pagoda, but rather a pagoda adorned with the seven precious gems: gold, silver, lapis lazuli, crystal, red pearls, mother-of-pearl, and carnelian. If you can merely sit in full lotus, the merit from just sitting is inconceivable. It's very easy to enter samadhi when you sit in full lotus, and it's also easy to increase your wisdom. When you sit in full lotus, that is just the precepts; that is just samadhi. Sitting in full lotus is just the power of wisdom. Full lotus increases all kinds of merit and virtue. If you can sit in full lotus, in the future you will certainly

have the opportunity to achieve Buddhahood. The Buddhas of the ten directions all attained realization from sitting in full lotus, so you shouldn't look upon full lotus as an ordinary thing.

Earlier we were talking about the two ghosts who pressured the sutra-reciting ghost into cultivating the Way; this is just a bit of a response. If the merit and virtue of sitting in full lotus were spoken of in detail, and if its advantages were enumerated in detail, one couldn't finish speaking to the ends of the bounds of the future. Therefore, those who cultivate the Way should bear a short period of suffering in order to accomplish limitless, boundless merit and virtue. If you can't endure this period of suffering, then you won't be able to accomplish this unlimited merit and virtue. So, force yourself to do the difficult. If you can sit in full lotus until it doesn't hurt no matter how long you sit, then you certainly will be able to certify to the fruit. You'll be able to certify to the sagely fruit without a shadow of a doubt because your skill will be mature. And when your skill is mature, it is impossible not to certify to the fruit of sagehood.

Good, now I'm going to give all of you a prediction. I hope that all of you will become Dhyana Masters pressured by suffering, Dhyana Masters pressured by tigers, Dharma Masters pressured by pain. What is meant by pressured by suffering? Well, attending a meditation session involves a lot of suffering. What we eat is very ordinary, and the Chan hall is cold. This makes it very bitter. But when you are smelted and refined in the bitterness, it then becomes very sweet. So it is said,

*If the plum tree did not endure cold
that chills to the bone,
How could the fragrance of its blossoms
be so sweet?*

So you can become Dhyana Masters pressured by suffering.

You can also become Dhyana Masters pressured by tigers. We won't speak of Dhyana Masters pressured by ghosts, we'll be pressured by tigers. You look at a Chan hall, and it is as though there are tigers following along behind ready to bite you, to eat you. You think, "I'd better hurry up and concentrate on being vigorous because everyone here is like a tiger." If you can become accomplished in the midst of this situation you will become a Dhyana Master Pressured by Tigers, or a Dhyana Master Pressured by Pain.

You sit and your legs hurt. That pain is just to see if you have a true heart, see if you truly have the mind to cultivate the Way, truly have the mind to become a Buddha.

Do you want to become a Buddha? Then don't be afraid of pain or suffering. If you're afraid of pain, you can't become a Buddha. We can become Dhyana Masters pressured by pain. But then, thinking it over, being a Dhyana Master isn't a very high position, so what we should become is Bodhisattvas pressured by suffering, Bodhisattvas pressured by tigers, Bodhisattvas pressured by pain. And yet this still isn't the ultimate goal. Ultimately we must become Buddhas accomplished through the pressure of suffering, Buddhas accomplished through the pressure of tigers, and Buddhas accomplished through the pressure of pain. With those three criteria fulfilled, you are absolutely certain to become a Buddha.

Now, I have already transmitted predictions to all of you, so go ahead and cultivate! Someone is thinking, "There's not much interesting about becoming a suffering Buddha." Buddhas do not suffer. When you cultivate, it is suffering. When you become a Buddha, it is not.

People of the Way with no minds, are you really without a mind? You should examine yourselves, ask yourselves, "Do I still have a mind?" Or, are you without a mind? Do you still have

false thinking? Or, are you without false thinking? You should ask yourselves this every sitting period. Do you just sit there and wait for the bell? Every sitting period do you sit there and think, “Wow, it’s Christmas time, and there’s a party at home. I wonder if they’re thinking of me, and the fact that I’m not at the party?” That’s false thinking. Is it possible that when you’re sitting there you think, “This year I wonder how many Christmas cards I’ll get? I wonder what will be painted on them?” Or, perhaps you think, “Is someone going to write me a letter? Will someone call me on the phone?” These are all “having a mind”, and “having false thoughts”.

“In a little bit I think I’ll call up my father and mother and ask how they are.” That’s called false thinking. Or, perhaps you’re thinking, “I want to go home tomorrow and see my grandparents.” That’s why I say one novice is always returning to lay life, because he goes and sees his grandmother all the time. If you visit her and she can come to believe in the Buddha, that’s good; but, if she’s not converted and turns around and converts you, that’s not too good.

So we should take a look to see whether we have any false thinking. You’ve been working for so many days and still haven’t subdued your false thinking, so you should quickly think of a way to do so. In all the big monasteries in China, on the fourth day of a Chan session, instruction may be requested. If you have a certain experience--perhaps you see the Buddha, or you see a ghost, or you see some people--you can tell about it. At Gold Mountain Monastery, we’re going to have instruction asked on the fifth day in the afternoon at three o’clock; whoever has had an experience that they haven’t understood can ask about it. If you understand it, then there’s no need to ask, no need to look for trouble. So, there’s a little difference between the rules at Gold Mountain and the rules at an ordinary monastery.

Last night I said, “When you develop your skill, you have to know the method for developing skill.” This is very important. This is as when eating a lichee nut, one should peel it and then eat the nutmeat inside, but one shouldn’t eat the kernel.

Cultivating the Way and eating things are the same. If you understand the nature of the thing you’re eating and how it should be eaten, then when you eat it, you won’t get sick. If you don’t understand how to eat--for instance, a lichee nut--you just swallow it whole. That’s like when monkey ate the ginseng fruit and didn’t know the flavor. He was so nervous that he just gulped it down whole, and then he turned around and said to piggy, “What’s its taste like?” So it’s said, “Monkey ate the ginseng fruit and didn’t know the flavor.” This is the same as if you ate a lichee without peeling the skin and eating the nutmeat inside but swallowed it whole; not only would it be of no use to you, it would hurt you. There is no way you could digest it. And, although the seed inside the lichee is not as hard as vajra, it would not be too easy to digest. So, in the same way, you must understand the method for cultivating. The ancients braved the seas and scaled the mountains in order to look for a Bright-Eyed One; that is, they looked for a Good Learned Advisor. But, they’re not easy to find. It is not easy to meet a Good Learned Advisor.

Now I’d like to tell you a story to illustrate how dangerous it is to cultivate when you are the blind leading the blind. Once, long ago, an old cultivator had cultivated until he had developed spiritual penetrations. What kind of spiritual penetrations did he have? He could, “. . . go out the mysterious and enter the female.” “. . . going out the mysterious . . .” means to send a little person out the top of your head. When the little person gets out there and the wind blows, he breaks loose; and once he breaks loose, he can go wherever he wants, a little like a kite, because the kite is up in the air but still attached by the string. So, when the old cultivator

went out the mysterious and entered the female, he had a little string attached.

Now this string cannot be seen by ordinary flesh eyes. If you attain the five eyes, then you can see the string. And, when he went out, the string didn't break; and, whenever he wanted to come back, he could. Because he could go out the mysterious and enter the female, he went everywhere roaming about, playing. This is truly the case of suddenly being in the heavens, suddenly being on earth, suddenly being a hungry ghost, suddenly being animal. He could go anywhere at all. Because he was a *yin* spirit, he couldn't be seen by most people; but he could see people. He could go to a play and not have to buy a ticket; he could go to a movie and not have to buy a ticket; he could go to the ballet and not have to buy a ticket. Nowhere in the heavens, nowhere among men, could he not go.

He could go up to the heavens and check out the gods--how the gods danced, how fine their music was, and how the whole atmosphere of heaven was adorned and luxuriant. The flowers, grass, and trees were not the same as ours, and their fragrances were not known to human beings. A rare fragrance pervaded everywhere, unbeknownst to humans. He could go there whenever he wanted to and smell that fragrance, and look at the beautiful forms and listen to the sounds. Forms, sounds, tastes, tangible objects, and dharmas--the sensuous delights of the six dusts. He enjoyed them again and again and was pretty self-satisfied. He always thought, "Look at me; I don't have to buy tickets for anything I do. I can see all kinds of things really cheaply, with no money at all." And he roamed around, taking in everything. He was in the playful samadhi.

One day, he was walking down a road with no hotels ahead and no inns behind, so he stopped at a temple to spend the night. In the temple lived an old bhiksu and a young shramanera. The

old bhiksu was very compassionate. Although it was a small temple, the old bhiksu would allow passers-by to spend the night, and so he allowed the old cultivator to stay. He gave him a room to stay in. Once again the old cultivator brought forth his spiritual penetration, and the little man popped out of his head and ran off.

How far did he go this time? Well, for instance, he went from, say, China to America, or from America to India; he just went everywhere, playing around. He played so much that, after he got out, he forgot to come back. He roamed around and forgot to return. He got so engrossed in what he was experiencing outside, that he forgot to come back.

The old bhiksu and the small shramanera were the ones who were,

*. . . in a dream transmitting a dream
so that one transmitted,
and two didn't understand
The master falls into hell,
and the disciple follows along respectfully.*

Since they were that way, they didn't know that when someone cultivated the Way, they could “. . . go out the mysterious and enter the female.”

In the morning the small shramanera went to call on the old cultivator, who had stayed overnight, to come and eat. He knocked on the door, but no one answered; so he went back and told the old bhiksu. The old bhiksu said, “Well, open the door and take a look.” He opened the door and looked . . . dead! The old cultivator was dead. He didn't have any breath going in and out of his nostrils, and his mouth wasn't open. So, the little shramanera went running back and said to the old bhiksu, “Shih Fu, Shih Fu, that man's already dead!” The old bhiksu said, “Oh, he's died. Well, prepare a fire, and we'll cremate him, then there won't be

any affair. If the officials were to find out, it would be something else; let's hurry up and cremate him." They were afraid that the local officials would find out and then come and bother them. So they took the corpse and burned it.

Of course, after it was burned, guess what happened? The little man came back. After ". . . going out the mysterious . . .", the mysterious returned. When he got back, he couldn't find his house. He said, "Where's my house?" He couldn't find it anywhere. The old bhiksu and the little shramanera could hear this person speaking, looking for his house, and it nearly scared them to death. It looked for its house by day, it looked for its house by night. It looked day, after day, after day, and the more it looked, the louder its voice got, until its voice was so loud that it was screaming day and night. The old bhiksu and the little shramanera thought, "Oh, it's a ghost coming to bother us; we're going to have to move. We have to get out of here; this place is unfit to live in." They decided to move the next day, and they were about to renounce the little temple.

That night another old cultivator came who was probably a professional Chan sitter. He came there in the evening looking for a place to stay overnight. He knocked on the door, and the little shramanera came and saw him and asked, "What do you want?"

The cultivator said, "I'd like a place to stay tonight."

"Sorry, we don't take anybody overnight any more, because when people stay overnight, it brings a lot of trouble down on us. And now we have to move."

The old cultivator said, "Well, you used to let people stay overnight."

"Of course we did, and somebody who stayed overnight here died, and since then we've been troubled by a ghost."

The old cultivator said, "Oh, so you've an old obnoxious ghost, huh? Well, I'm pretty proficient with ghosts. Go tell your

Shih Fu that I can take care of ghosts.”

The little shramanera heard this and thought, “Oh, he can take care of ghosts; well--maybe.” So he went back in and told his Shih Fu, “Shih Fu, Shih Fu, somebody wants to stay overnight here. He says that he can take care of ghosts!”

His teacher said, “Ah, he just wants a place to stay. What do you mean he can take care of ghosts? He’s just putting you on. Just the same, if he can take care of ghosts, let’s try him out.” So they let the old cultivator stay.

The old cultivator said, “Take me to the room where the ghost is, and I’ll stay there.” So they took him to that room, and he could hear the ghost talking, looking for his house. “Who took my house?” He was looking for his body, of course. They had taken his body away. So the cultivator told the small shramanera to prepare a pan of water and a brazier of fire. When it was all prepared, he heard the ghost calling out and said to the ghost, “Your house is in the water.”

The ghost went down into the water and searched all around. “But it’s not here, it’s not in the water.”

The old cultivator said, “Oh, if it is not in the water, it certainly must be in the fire. Go look in the fire for it.”

The ghost was very obedient, he offered up his conduct in accord with the teaching. So he plunged into the fire, searched around--scraped around all the coals and fire--but couldn’t find it. So he got out and said, “No, it’s not there. My house isn’t in the brazier of fire.”

And the old cultivator said, “Say, old fellow-cultivator, old fellow-Chanist, you’ve just entered the water and not drowned, you’ve just entered the fire, and not been burned. Why in the world are you still looking for your house?”

After he said that, the ghost woke up. After that, he didn’t trouble them any more. Thank goodness that this old cultivator

who knew how to go out the mysterious and enter the female met somebody who really knew Chan, thus becoming awakened. If he hadn't met up with this person who really knew Chan, he probably would have gotten angry and fallen. There's nothing fixed about it. But, of course, this is just a story.

That is a public record, which explains the principle. That is, it's telling you not to study going out the mysterious and entering the female, not to learn that dharma door. What you want to learn is how not to go out, how not to enter--how not to be produced, how not to be extinguished, how not to be defiled and not be pure, how not to increase and decrease, how not to be born and die. That's the dharma door that you should cultivate. Don't go off to see free movies, free plays, and free concerts, figuring that you're getting off real cheap. Don't be greedy for these cheap things. You want to be able in a hair pore to manifest a precious Buddha Land, to sit in a mote of dust and turn the great Dharma Wheel. If you can reach that level of accomplishment, that is true freedom. That is really having it made. Then you can go anywhere you want, and it's no problem, not difficult at all.

*When you are confused,
ten thousand books are too few.
When you are enlightened,
one word is too much.*

When you are confused, you read: one book is not sufficient; two books, still not enough; three books, not satisfactory. You read a thousand books, ten thousand books and still it's not enough.

After you have become enlightened, one word is more than enough. When you awaken you'll find that the entire Treasury of Sutras is within your own self-nature. There isn't anything outside. When you realize that, one word is too much. It's laboring the point.

*What's spoken is Dharma,
What's practiced is the Way.*

We still have to undergo a little more bitterness.

* * * * *

This Chan session is very convenient. Everyone gets to develop his own skill and he can also have false thinking. The more false thinking you have, the better. The bigger it is, the better. It's just to be feared that you won't have any false thinking. If you don't have false thinking, then you become stagnant and don't have any accomplishment. It is said, "Dragons cannot live in stagnant water." Even, "Who is mindful of the Buddha?" is false thinking. And that is a particularly fierce false thought--a particularly big one. It's the very worst false thought.

But the worst can turn into the best. The biggest can turn into the smallest. When you reach the ultimate point, when you've had false thinking to the ultimate extent and looked at the false thinking to see where the root is, that's called using the Vajra King's Sword. "Who is mindful of the Buddha?" That one word "who?" penetrates the heavens and pierces the earth. It pervades the Dharma Realm to the ends of empty space. It's all the word "who". So the bigger the false thought of the word "who" is, the better. It's just to be feared you won't pull it up, bring it forth. Your Vajra King's Sword is just your Wisdom Sword. Wielding your Wisdom Sword, you can cut off all affliction. And the severing of afflictions is just Bodhi. So, in most Chan halls you are told that it's not good to have false thinking. But with us here, false thinking is good.

Well, is it good not to have false thinking? That's also good. If you don't have any false thinking, then you don't have to work so much: you can rest. I remember a Chan Session in Hong Kong

at Ta Yu Mountain. An illiterate layman attended. Someone told him to investigate “Who is mindful of the Buddha?” What do you suppose he did? He was extremely intelligent. When he heard “Who is mindful of the Buddha?” what do you suppose he did? He recited “Pa Shih Tzu Sui--84 years old.” He misunderstood the words and so instead of saying, “Who’s mindful of the Buddha?” he kept saying, “Eighty-four years old, eighty-four years old.” He wanted to live to be that old, but as to how old he lived to be, I don’t know. So it is with us here: some have skill and they can plant a Vajra seed, plant a Bodhi seed. Those without skill, are they useless? They also can plant a Vajra seed.

Long ago an old cultivator became enlightened. And after he was enlightened he took a look ahead and he took a look behind. What kind of a person was he before? You’ll never guess. He had been a tofu seller; he sold bean cake. Long ago in the past he had been a bean cake vender. After he had finished selling his tofu, he’d go to the Chan Hall and sit in meditation. While he was sitting in meditation, he would figure out his tofu accounts. Eventually, he spoke a verse. What did the verse say? Well now though it wasn’t extremely subtle, it also wasn’t particularly coarse. Now for a tofu vender to be able to write verses, if that isn’t enlightenment, then what is? He said,

*It’s not strange that in the Chan Hall,
everyone’s looking for ‘Who’.
Ten thousand Kalpas of unpaid accounts,
everybody’s trying to find out ‘who’.
All I’ve done is sit here for half an hour.
And I’ve figured out several years of tofu accounts.*

He said, “I’m a tofu vender and I’ve gone to the Chan Hall to sell tofu and the monk who went off to the kitchen to get the money took an awfully long time. So I was there in the Chan Hall

waiting, and what did I see everybody doing? All those monks are saying, “Who, who, who?” And when he saw that everything was “Who?”, he then sat down in meditation and started to figure out “who?”, who owed him money for their tofu? “Say, five or six years ago there was that man named Ma, and he bought ten cakes of tofu and didn’t give me anything for them. Four or five years ago Li Ch’ui Tzu bought five cakes of tofu from me and he didn’t give me any money either. How is it that I haven’t thought of that for so many years now? Wow, it’s really good to sit here in the Chan Hall. If I hadn’t been sitting here investigating dhyana and trying to find out “who’, how could I ever have caught up on my tofu books? This is unspeakably wonderful.”

He was very happy and so he wrote this verse. He said that it’s not strange that everyone’s looking for “who, who, who?” Now I realize that wonderful secret. Probably for limitless kalpas past, till now, people are indebted to them and they are figuring out “who”. “Ten thousand kalpas of unpaid accounts--everybody’s trying to find out ‘who’.” Year by year, year by year, as the years accumulated into ten thousand kalpas, they still hadn’t figured out “who” owed them money. Now if they sat in the Chan Hall they were NaMwoing themselves, praying to themselves, saying “who”. “Who” owes me money? “Who” hasn’t returned things that they borrowed? Probably that’s what they are all looking for. They’re reconciling their accounts. So he speaks again, he’s manifesting a body to speak the Dharma here and he says, “All I’ve done is sit here for half an hour and I’ve figured out several years of bean curd accounts. Now I can go collect all these past debts on my bean curd. I can seek them out.”

See how fine that verse is. Now this is no joke, it’s true. Now it isn’t that he wrote this verse and that was the end of it. It wasn’t as simple as that. After that, every day he went and investigated dhyana. He investigated until the books were all finished. He

didn't have any more outstanding accounts for his tofu. Then he thought, "Say, last life, who still owes me money for my tofu? And the life before that, who never paid up on their tofu?" He investigated like that. He investigated and planted a vajra seed. So then this life he went back to the Chan Hall, but it wasn't to reckon his tofu accounts. It's because before, he planted the seed there. So he went back there to sit in meditation. And this time when he investigated dhyana his opportunities were ripe and he suddenly had a great enlightenment. "Oh, originally this is what I was all about."

Now you take a look. Ultimately, what are you all about? You should open your Five eyes and then you can take a look and you can find out. Who was my mama, who was my daddy, who are my flesh and blood, my closest relatives, and how does it come about that I have gotten here to Gold Mountain together with these people, sitting and then walking, walking and then sitting? Oh, before *he* was my father. Oh, before *she* was my mother, and that one was my brother, and that was my younger brother and all those "accounts" from past lives' cause and effect, you will understand. You should all find out the relationships in the cycle of cause and effect that you have been involved in from limitless kalpas until the present, life after life. And then work very hard developing your skill. If you work very hard in developing your skill you will open enlightenment and know, "Oh, originally I had made a vow to help the Master come to America to propagate the Buddhadharma! Oh, originally that's the way it was. Oh!"

So in cultivation it is important to be vigorous, courageous, and not lax or lazy, but just go forward and cultivate, just as when you plant things. When you've planted the ground then you have to fertilize it, water it, care for it, and then you will get a harvest. If you plant the seed and you don't give it any water, or any earth, don't put it where it will get sunlight and all the other conditions

necessary, it will not grow. Our cultivation of the Way is also like that. Our sitting in the Chan Hall is planting a vajra seed. Once the Vajra seed is planted you should practice giving, and you should hold the precepts, you should be patient, you should be vigorous, you should have Chan samadhi, and prajna wisdom. With the water of prajna you should constantly nourish it, use the strength of vigor to constantly tend it. In this way, sooner or later, the vajra seed will sprout. If you sit in Chan one day and plant the seed and then don't pay any attention to it after that, although you can say in the future that it will come up, one doesn't know how long it will take.

People who cultivate the Way shouldn't be too hasty. If you're too hasty, it's as if you planted the fields and couldn't wait and said, "Oh why haven't the seeds, the grain that I planted ripened? I planted the seeds." Then you'll be like the man from Sung, the Chinese person who helped his plants grow. He went off to his field and he took every sprout and pulled it up an inch, helping them grow an inch taller. He worked all day at helping them each grow an inch and that night he went home and said to his wife and son, "Today I'm really tired." He said, "Today I've just been through too much because I've been helping these sprouts grow. All those seeds we planted, I've helped them grow." His son heard that and he said, "When did my father learn about such a scientific method? How can he help the sprouts grow? That's strange, that's very unusual. If there's this scientific method to help the sprouts grow, then every year we can plant several crops. This father's really a fine father. My father's scholarship is out-of-sight. He could be a scientist!" Because he thought that way he decided to go see what his father had done, to check out his talent and see how he made the sprouts grow. So he didn't even wait until the next day. That very night he went out to investigate the field and have a look for himself. And when he looked, what

do you suppose he saw? Not only had the sprouts not grown, they had withered, they were dead. So he went back and he said to his father, "I thought you had some scientific method to cause the sprouts to grow but the dumb method you have is impossible. How could you be so dumb as to try to help the sprouts grow like that?" The father didn't believe him, "How could it turn out that way? I helped every one of them grow an inch higher. I'll go back and check it out tomorrow. You're lying you lazy bum." The next day the scientific father went out to his field to look, "Oh, how have you all ended up like that? I helped you all grow and you're not growing." If you cultivate the Way and you want to be quick about it, it's just like trying to help the sprouts grow. So it says, "It won't work to try to help the sprouts grow." It is also said, "Don't try to be too quick. If you're too quick you'll never get there." If you're too quick about it, you won't have any accomplishment. So in cultivation of the Way, you cultivate today, you cultivate tomorrow, and the next day you still cultivate, year in and year out, it's all cultivation. So it's said, "In the morning it's this way, in the evening it's this way." In the morning you must cultivate the Way, at night you must cultivate the Way and then after a while you will accomplish the Way. Somebody says, "But the Chan Sect is the sudden teaching, the sudden dharma, instantaneous realization of Buddhahood, immediate enlightenment. The Sixth Patriarch transmitted the Sudden Teaching." Sudden what? What's meant by sudden? Speak up and tell me. You say, "Well it's becoming enlightened very fast." You know that now, at present, his enlightenment is sudden. How do you know he's not like the man who sold tofu, who in the past went into the Chan Hall and reckoned his tofu accounts? Perhaps he had already cleared up his tofu accounts and so now he is also clear about the causes and effects of the accounts of past lives and so he has become enlightened.

In the past, the first time I read *The Sixth Patriarch Sutra*, I discussed this question with others. At the time I was seventeen. I saw that the *Sixth Patriarch Sutra* talked about sudden and gradual, the Southern Sudden School, and the Northern Gradual School, “Southern Neng, Northern Hsiu”. Since, at the time, I was still attached to the mark of literature, I wrote a matched couplet. What did the couplet say?

*Although Sudden and Gradual are different,
Upon completion they are one.
Why make divisions of north and south?
Sagely and common are temporarily different,
The basic nature is absolutely the same.
Do not discuss east and west.*

“Although Sudden and Gradual are different.” Although the Sudden Teaching and the Gradual Teaching are not the same, Sudden is immediate enlightenment. Gradual is slow enlightenment. When you look at their manifestations they seem to be two, not the same. “Upon completion they are one.” When you come to accomplishment they are the same. With the Sudden there is enlightenment and with the Gradual there is enlightenment.. With the Sudden the time’s a little shorter. With the Gradual the time is a little longer. But the Sudden doesn’t stand sudden all by itself. It exists because of the Gradual. This means that in the past one cultivated and one nourished and tended one’s seeds until they reached maturity, so in this life the opportunities have arrived and one opens enlightenment. If one had not cultivated in the past and had no collateral for oneself, how could one go into business? How could one become enlightened?

The eyes of ordinary people who are unaware of former causes and latter effects don’t see how he nourished and tended his good roots in past lives--all they see is that he became enlightened at this time. And so they say it is sudden. This is called “for the

sake of the sudden dispensing the gradual, opening the gradual to manifest the sudden”. In the Tien Tai Sect they say, “for the sake of the actual dispensing the provisional”, “opening the provisional to manifest the actual”.

I still remember when the Elder Dharma Master Ching Ch’ien lectured Sutras, he would close his eyes and chant, “For the sake of the actual, dispensing the provisional, then the provisional is included within the actual. Opening the provisional to manifest the actual, then the actual is functioning within the provisional.” He recited the commentaries from memory and he could recite them quite correctly. Sudden and Gradual are also like this--they are the same doctrine as, “For the sake of the actual manifesting the provisional.” So I said, “Upon completion they are one.” When you reach accomplishment they are both one and the same. “Why make divisions of north and south?” Don’t say which one is the Northern Gradual School and which one is Southern Sudden School. It’s just a temporary appearance and that’s all. How do you know that in the future the Sudden won’t go north? How do you know that in the future the Gradual won’t go south? When I heard the Elder Dharma Master Tse Kuo lecture *The Vajra Sutra*, he moved the Sixth Patriarch to the north. He said, “The Sixth Patriarch was a Northerner and how can you Northerners become enlightened?” The Elder Dharma Master was indulging in a little bit of banter but at the time I didn’t understand, so after that I asked the Elder Dharma Master, “When did you move the Sixth Patriarch up to the north, Elder Master?” So the verse says, “Although Sudden and Gradual are different/ Upon completion they are one./ Why make divisions of north and south?” Don’t have so many discriminations and discuss north and south. The second line of the rhymed couplet says, “Sagely and common are temporarily different”. “The sagely and common are temporarily different,/ The basic nature is absolutely the same.” The basic

nature is the Buddha Nature. No matter whether you're a common person or a sage, you have the Buddha Nature. Their basic nature is absolutely the same. The Buddha said it very clearly, "All living beings have the Buddha Nature, all can become Buddhas." It's just a matter of time, that's all. Confusion and awakening may be slow or quick. And the last part of the rhymed couplet says, "Do not discuss east and west". Don't say that in the west is the Land of Ultimate Bliss and in the east is the Crystal Azure World and the Saha World. Don't make so many discriminations. So it says, "Do not discuss east and west". That's the kind of madness that I indulged in when I was seventeen. I spoke like this. I hope you Americans won't follow me in going mad like this, raving like a maniac. If you want to speak mad talk, you must first be a madman, which means that first you have to run around the Chan Hall for a while. And if you don't want to, you can just sit there for eighty thousand great kalpas and try it out.

* * * * *

Striking up a Chan Session in the Chan Hall is just like being beaten. When you are beaten by someone, it hurts. Now all of you are having a war with your legs. Your legs are out to get you; they don't want you to participate in the session, and your back is forming an alliance with your legs, saying, "Fine, let's not participate in the session." The legs hurt and the back goes along and hurts too. It feels just as though you were being beaten. But, if you have patience and are not afraid of the pain, the pain will be defeated. And, once defeated, it won't hurt.

Why does it hurt when we sit here? Why should one sit in meditation? Sitting in meditation subdues the mind. When we sit we cause all the energy and blood in the body to return to its original source. And, we cause all the apertures which have not

been passed to be penetrated through. Of all the places in your veins where the blood ordinarily does not flow, it is forced to flow there now. So, just as you're sitting here, your blood and energy are travelling around. Usually, when we are walking, lying down, or just sitting for not such extended periods of time, the blood and energy just travel along their ordinary routes of circulation. But, sitting as we are now will cause all the obstructed places to be penetrated through. It is like in water pipes--in some places the water flows through; in some other places the water's stopped up, it can't flow through. Now, in the way we are sitting, the blood and energy will all penetrate through, especially if you sit in full lotus position. When you sit that way, it's not easy for the blood and energy to flow through your legs, so you feel pain. If you apply your skill to this pain, when the time comes, quite naturally there won't be any more pain. At that time the final victor is you.

Speaking on this point, I remember in Manchuria there was a man named Kuan Chung Hsi, and he lived near me in Pei Yin Ho near to the mountains. Because he was a mountain person, his kneecaps were really big. He was a master of an outside way sect. It was the Way of Shou Yuan, and he had more than three thousand disciples. But, he himself knew that the outside sect didn't pass the test, it was not ultimate. So he resolved to go everywhere seeking the Way. Now, in Manchuria when I was there, there were many different strange sects and outside-way sects. There was the Shou Yuan Tao, and the Yu Shu Men and the Ru I Men, there were a lot of them. It would be impossible to name all the outside-Way sects. Now I'll tell you something, I have looked into all those outside-Way sects. I have attended them all. So, this person went everywhere looking for the Way, trying to find a Good Knowing Advisor. This persisted for several years, and he still hadn't found anyone.

One day I went to his home. Prior to my visit, a strange

thing happened. He had a nephew called Kuan Chan Hai who at the time was 21 or 22 years old, and when I arrived at his house the nephew asked his uncle, "Do you recognize that person?" The uncle said, "I know of him. I knew of him before he practiced filial piety, but have never met him; I still know who he is." His nephew said, "Last night I had a dream and in my dream that man came and together, you and I, knelt before him and sought the Way. There I was seeking the Way, and that man placed his hand on my head and ripped a piece of skin off from my head clear to my feet, all the way off my body. Then, he put that piece of skin on the ground, and when I looked at it do you know what kind of skin it was? It was the skin of a pig." The uncle said, "Really? Why, the Way has been brought to our very household! Let's hurry up and seek the Way."

So, the two of them knelt before me seeking the Way. I said, "What are you doing, what Way are you seeking from me? You're really muddled. What Way do I have? The only Way I know is eating and sleeping, nothing else, but I can introduce you to a few Good Knowing Advisors. You can see which Good Knowing Advisor possesses the Way, and you can seek it from him." I said, "Now before we go to see any Good Knowing Advisors, I will first teach you a method for developing your skill. What is it? You should first practice sitting in full lotus." And I showed him how to do it, and he could do it. I said, "If you practice sitting in full lotus until it doesn't hurt, then I will take you around to seek the Way, visiting Good Knowing Advisors." I taught him how to pull his legs up into full lotus and how he should hold his body erect, not leaning backward or forward, not putting his head down or holding it up, not acting like he was spineless, that he should keep his back erect to show that he had determination. I taught him that method, and he took it up and began to practice. After 70 days I returned to his house, and I saw his kneecaps--originally

they were big, but by now they were huge! They were swollen to two or three times their original size. He couldn't even walk, in fact. I said, "What have you done?" He said, "I've been practicing sitting in full lotus, and I've practiced to the point that I can't even walk. I can't even step over a cart-rut on the road. I can't even step over the door sill."

I said, "Oh, if that's the way it is, you'd better not practice this method. That's too much suffering for you."

He said, "Not practice sitting that way? I could die, and that would be all right. But it wouldn't be alright to stop practicing sitting this way. I've made a vow; I'm determined to perfect sitting in full lotus."

I said, "It's too unbearable, the way you are now."

He said, "Well, I have to bear what can't be borne."

I heard that, and I knew that there was a bit of potential here. I said, "Okay, if you're not afraid to die, then go ahead and practice." Then I left. After 100 days, I returned again and saw him. This time his legs were back to normal. The swelling had gone down, and he was walking. They weren't swollen any more. I said, "Well, what about it. Did you stop your practice, huh?"

He said, "No, I perfected it. It doesn't hurt any more. After you'd left, gradually as I sat, the swelling began to go down, and it didn't hurt any more. So, now I sit very well."

So, then I taught him how to develop his skill in cultivation. He cultivated for about three years, and after that he predicted his own passing. He knew three months ahead of his own death. He told those in his family that at such and such a time he was going to "pass into extinction". And he said, "The thing I regret most is that I haven't seen so-and-so." He was referring to me. He would have been most happy if he could have seen me. On that day, as predicted, he just sat there and completed the stillness. In his village many, many people had a dream in which they saw

him, accompanied by two youths in dark colored robes, going toward the west. Now, that person basically was from an outside-Way sect, but he realized that he should seek the Proper Dharma. Afterwards, he was able to not fear suffering. He did not fear the pain. Although his legs swelled up, he would rather have died than to discontinue his cultivation, practicing how to sit in meditation. As a result, he had some accomplishment. If at the point when his legs were so swollen he had not continued to practice, I believe he would not have had such a level of accomplishment. So, people who cultivate the Way must bear a certain period of suffering and pain in order to certify to inexhaustible bliss. If you don't bear the pain and suffering, if you don't bear a temporary period of pain, you won't attain eternal bliss. I know there are an awful lot of people who when they sit, relax their legs, or stretch them out. A lot of people can't keep their legs up when they're sitting, so I've told you about Kuan Chung Hsi, so that he can act as a model. His kind of practice can be a model for us. If we truly wish to attain samadhi and wisdom, we'll certainly have to endure a period of pain in order to accomplish eternal bliss.

Moreover, people who cultivate the Way should not be arrogant, should not be self-satisfied, should not feel, "I am better than anybody. My scholarship is better than anyone else's; my cultivation is better than anyone else's; my Way virtue is higher than anyone else's." If you are full of self, it is truly a great obstruction to cultivation of the Way. So, it's said, "The arrogant come to harm; the modest receive benefit." This is not just speaking for those who have cultivated for 2½ days and sat for five minutes and haven't any particular accomplishment, this is also for those with accomplishment. They should act in such a way that, "what exists is as if non-existent, and what is real is as if false". If you have it, it should be as if you didn't have it. If you have it as if you didn't, then you won't be full of self, "real as if

false”. Basically you have genuine talent, but you act as if you didn’t have any talent at all.

In Hu Nan, at Mt. Wei, the Old Man of Mount Wei was living in a hut there. One day the official P’ei Hsiu came to see him. When he saw the kind of hut the old man was living in, which was all broken down, Minister P’ei was moved and said, “I’m going to give you three hundred pounds of silver, you can repair your hut.” There wasn’t really any place in the hut, so he set the three hundred pounds of silver down in some deep grass in front of the hut. Three years later, Minister P’ei came back to pay another call on the Old Man. He saw that the hut was just the same, causing him to wonder about the Old Man of Mt. Wei. What were his doubts about? He thought, Oh, he just intentionally lives in this old hut so that people will make offerings to him. He didn’t fix up his hut after all! I gave him three hundred pounds of silver. He could have built a whole big monastery with that amount. I wonder what he’s done with the three hundred pounds of silver? I wonder why he didn’t make the temple?” So, he asked the Old Man. He said, “Old Cultivator, three years ago I gave you three hundred pounds of silver and told you to build a temple. You didn’t build the temple; what did you do with the silver?”

The Old Man of Mount Wei said, “Ohhh, silver? Where did you put it?”

He said, “I put it in the grass outside the door.”

The Old Man said, “Well, go look for it out in the grass.”

Minister Pei went and looked in the grass, and right there were the three hundred pounds of silver. The Old Man hadn’t even moved them. The grass had protected it very well, better than in a strong box or a safe.

Minister Pei said, “That’s great cultivation. He didn’t even acknowledge the three hundred pounds of silver, and it’s been sitting in the grass for three years. Okay, now I’ll build him a

monastery.”

He used a lot of money and built a monastery on Mount Wei, which could house a thousand people. It could hold a thousand Bhikshus. It was really strange. While the Old Man was living in the old hut, nobody came to see him, but as soon as there was this big monastery--a Ten Direction-Bodhimanda--people came and went; two or three thousand bhikshus came. At that time you had to carry the water and chop the wood. Even the wood choppers alone numbered several dozen, and those who carried water were quite a few.

Now at the time, Minister Pei had a son, and the son saw all those monks there, and he too wanted to leave home. Minister Pei thought it over. He knew that as an official, the obstacles he had created were not few; if his son left home, it would take care of a few of his offenses--it would lighten his load of karmic offences.

So he said, “Good, good, good.” He was very much in favor of his son leaving home. Now his son was a high-ranking scholar, and the Minister went to the Old Man of Mount Wei and said that his son wanted to bow to the Old Man of Mount Wei as his Master and leave home.

And the Old Man of Mount Wei said, “Fine, your son wants to leave home. Originally he’s a high-ranking scholar; when he comes here he should practice bitter practices, ascetic practices. One rule we have here is that before leaving the home-life people must first practice ascetic practices.”

To the son he said, “Be an ascetic. Let’s see, what shall you do? You can carry water. The work of carrying water is very important, and you can’t be lazy, because if you’re lazy, there won’t be enough water for people to drink.”

So, the son got up at two-thirty in the morning and carried water and worked until ten o’clock at night. People were in the Chan Hall having Chan Sessions, and he was having “water-

carrying sessions”. From morning until night he carried water. He never rested. He ate in a hurry, never having quite enough time. He carried water that way for three years. All he ever did was to carry water; he had never even seen the inside of the Chan Hall.

One day he said to himself, “Gee, I see all those people going in and out of the Chan Hall; what are they doing in there? I think I’ll go take a look.” So he went to look around and said, “Ahhh, so what they’ve been doing all this time is sitting here sleeping. I’ve been carrying all that water for all you non-cultivators. You’re supposed to be cultivators, and all you do is sit there sleeping. It’s been so bitter for me, and you’ve got it so comfortable. You’ve been sitting in here sleeping.” He was very upset.

Now, the old Man of Mount Wei was a Bright-Eyed Good Knowing Advisor, and he knew that the son had had that false thought. And so, he summoned him to the Abbot’s room and said to him, “You haven’t carried your water well. You say that all these people are just sitting here sleeping. Today you have violated the rules of this monastery. I’m kicking you out. You can’t stay here any longer.”

Minister Pei’s son, whose name was Fa Hai, said, “What rule have I broken?”

The Old Man of Mount Wei said, “You went into the Chan Hall, and you said that everybody was sleeping, and you, a scholar, could not quite bear the job of carrying water to nourish them. Because you had that false thought you have to leave. You should know that for every period of sitting, an old member of the Sangha can digest ten thousand pounds of gold. Compared to that, what does a stinking scholar like you who’s carried a few buckets of water have to offer? And yet you dare to go ahead and have such false thoughts. Okay, now I’m kicking you out. Get out!”

Fa Hai thought to beseech him, but when he took a look, he

saw that the Old Man of Mount Wei was particularly severe and stern, and he knew that there weren't any two ways about it.

“So, where should I go? I haven't got any money.”

The Old Man of Mount Wei said, “Okay, I've got eight and a half dollars here. Just keep going till you reach the place where you've used up those eight and a half dollars, then just live there.” Fa Hai took those eight and a half dollars but didn't dare use them because what would he do when he used them up? So everywhere he went, he begged. He begged his way from Hunan to Hupei, from Nanking to Chenkiang. When he arrived at Chenkiang, he wanted to go look at a mountain, but he had to first cross a river. The boatman didn't want any more or any less money, he wanted just eight and a half dollars. So Fa Hai used the eight and a half dollars to take the ferry, and when he arrived at Gold Mountain--well at that time it wasn't called Gold Mountain, it was just a mountain in Chenkiang--he climbed the mountain and lived there. And, while he was there, he came upon two barrels of gold. He found them in a cave, now called Fa Hai cave. Once he found those two barrels of gold, he used them to build Chiang T'ien Monastery on Gold Mountain, which became one of the most famous monasteries in China.

And here we have some of you who have PhD's and some of you have Masters, some of you are Graduates--a lot of you are more or less like that scholar, and yet you haven't been carrying water here. Don't go looking outside for Gold Mountain. This is Gold Mountain. So while you're here in this Gold Mountain, you should obtain some of the precious things it has to offer. What's that? You should become enlightened here in Gold Mountain Monastery. You should develop your skill very well. Become one of the first to be enlightened at Gold Mountain Monastery.

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The merit and virtue of Dharma Master Hsuan Tsang's contribution to Chinese Buddhism is limitless and boundless. But, originally there wasn't any difference between him and those of us now. He was a person, and we are people. It's just that he has already accomplished his virtuous karma. We here now hope in the future to accomplish our virtuous karma. So it is appropriate to use the Dharma Master as a very fine mirror. If we can take Dharma Master Hsuan Tsang as our model, if we can make him our mirror, then we can cause our originally existent wisdom to appear and our originally existent merit and virtue to appear.

Dharma Master Hsuan Tsang made a vow to go to India to seek the sutras, to seek the Buddhadharma. Before he began the expedition, he used to practice mountain-climbing in his home. He knew that the route to India passed through many mountains, so in his rooms he practiced climbing mountain. Now most people couldn't figure out what he was doing. They thought that he was just playing around. How did he manage to practice mountain-climbing in his room? He took the benches and tables and piled them up like a mountain. Then he would jump from one bench to the next, and from that bench he'd jump to a table. Every day he practiced like that as if he was learning Kung Fu; in his room he used the tables and chairs to make a mountain, and he climbed them until he more or less had the knack. Then he went out and found some high mountains and climbed them. And his several years of practicing mountain-climbing paid off.

With his mountain-climbing skills pretty much perfected, he asked T'ang Emperor, T'ai Tsung, for permission to go to India to seek the sutras. T'ang T'ai Tsung was a firm believer in the Buddhadharma. But, when he thought about it, he realized that the road from China to India was very long, and if he was to give his permission, the country would have to offer its aid, so he decided not to give permission. Now, T'ang T'ai Tsung, though he was

said to be a fair ruler, was probably a bit stingy. His blessings were full, and he had plenty of whatever he wanted, but he still wasn't satisfied; he wanted to keep the money of the empire to himself, he didn't want to give it away. So he didn't give his permission. However, Dharma Master Hsuan Tsang said, "Well, if you give permission I'll go, and if you don't give permission I'll still go," so he slipped across the border and snuck out. When he got to the border, he stole his way across and took the road through Siberia to India, and as to the dangers on that road, it would be difficult to speak of them in a few words. So we're not going to dwell on the dangers. What is essential here is to talk about the one who knew his sound. Who was this one who knew his sound?

When Hsuan Tsang had been walking--it's not known how many days he'd been walking--he arrived at a mountain and saw a cave which was laden with bat droppings. It is also not known how many spider webs there were. He figured that nobody lived in the cave, but after walking in he saw a weird creature. What was this weird creature like? The hair on his head was matted together like a big lump which must have weighed several tens of pounds. There was a bird's nest on top of his head. Not only had the birds built a nest on his head, but there were little birds in the nest chirping. The dust on his clothing was probably three inches thick, and there was a lot of dirt on his face; he seemed like a stone-man, though he wasn't really made of stone. He looked like he might have been carved out of wood, and yet that wasn't quite right either. And, then Hsuan Tsang suddenly realized, "Oh, that's an old cultivator, and he's entered the mindless samadhi here." So he tried to think of a way to bring him out of samadhi. He happened to have a hand-bell, so he rang it. The first time he rang the bell, he didn't break the samadhi, and when he rang it the second time, the cultivator still didn't come out of samadhi. He'd entered the mindless samadhi too deeply. It wasn't so easy

to come back. It wasn't like here where as soon as the hand-bell is rung, all the people who are meditating say, "E mi to Fo!" Why do they want to utter the name of Amitabha Buddha? Because they've been waiting for that bell for an hour, and now finally it's been rung, so this is obviously a response from Amitabha Buddha.

After he hit the bell three times, he brought the old cultivator out of samadhi. The old cultivator tried to move his lips, but his words wouldn't come out. Dharma Master Hsuan Tsang asked him, "Old Cultivator, what are you doing here?" He seemed to be a man, and yet wasn't. You could say that he was a ghost, but he wasn't. If you said he was stone, he wasn't stone, and you couldn't really say that he was wood either. After all, his lips were moving; but when he spoke it wasn't very clear. He said, "I-I-I'm woo-woo-waiting fo-for the Re-Red Yang Buddha to-to co-come into the world. I-I'm going to-to he-help him propagate the Buddhadharmas."

Now, Dharma Master Hsuan Tsang was quite intelligent, and although it wasn't so easy, he understood what the old-timer was saying, "Oh, he's waiting for the Red Yang Buddha to come into the world." So he said, "Oh, Dharma Brother, the Red Yang Buddha has already come into the world." The old cultivator heard that and said, "Oh, when did the Red Yang Buddha come into the world?" The great Dharma Master Hsuan Tsang said, "He came into the world over 1,000 years ago. In fact the Buddha entered nirvana quite long ago." The old cultivator said, "Well, if the Red Yang Buddha has already entered nirvana, I'll just go back into samadhi and wait for the White Yang Buddha to come into the world."

Now, the Red Yang Buddha is Shakyamuni Buddha, and the White Yang Buddha is the Buddha of the future, the venerable Maitreya. The Green Yang Buddha was Dipankara, the "burning

lamp” Buddha.

The old cultivator wanted to go back into samadhi, whereupon the great Master Hsuan Tsang said, “Hey, old fellow cultivator, don’t go back into samadhi. If you go back into samadhi, then you won’t know when the White Yang Buddha comes into the world either. You’ll miss it by several years again.” And the old cultivator said, “Well, if I don’t go back into samadhi, what am I going to do?” “Ah, you ask what you can do? You can help me propagate the Buddhadharma.” “How am I going to help propagate it?” The great Master Hsuan Tsang said, “The Red Yang Buddha has already entered nirvana, but the Buddhadharma is still in the world. You can now go to China to Chang An and be reborn there. Become a young person there, and wait there while I go to India for the sutras to bring back to China. Then, we can together propagate the Buddhadharma. You can make that vow.” The old cultivator listened to this advice. Probably he had become a bit impatient with his sitting. He’d entered the no-thought samadhi, and he didn’t know anything at all. Eventually he agreed and said to Dharma Master Hsuan Tsang, “Fine, I’ll go.” Dharma Master Hsuan Tsang said, “When you get to Chang An, take a look and see which house has yellow tiles on the roof, and be reborn there.”

The old cultivator left, and the Great Master Hsuan Tsang went on to India to get the sutras. His whole trip took some fourteen or fifteen years. On the day when T’ang Emperor T’ai Tsung saw the needles on the pine tree all pointing west--whereas they ordinarily pointed east--he knew that he had an appointment to keep. That is because before Dharma Master Hsuan Tsang left for India, he wrote a letter to T’ang Emperor T’ai Tsung in which he said, “When you notice the needles on the pine trees pointing west, you’ll know that I’ve come back.” And on that day, the pine tree’s branches were pointing west. So, T’ang Emperor T’ai

Tsung saw that the pine needles were bending west, and he went to welcome Dharma Master Hsuan Tsang. When Dharma Master Hsuan Tsang saw T'ang Emperor T'ai Tsung, he congratulated him, saying, "Best wishes to you, T'ai Tsung. You have an extremely intelligent son, and I should congratulate you." T'ang Emperor T'ai Tsung didn't know what this was all about, and he said, "What are you talking about?" Hsuan Tsang answered, "In the first year after I left China, the emperor had a son, an heir to the throne, who must be over ten by now." T'ang Emperor T'ai Tsung said, "No." Dharma Master Hsuan Tsang said, "No? Well, that can't be. You must certainly had one." T'ang Emperor T'ai Tsung said, "Really, I didn't." Dharma Master Hsuan Tsang could sit and look into things; so he sat and contemplated, and he realized that the old cultivator had taken the wrong road. He'd gone into Yu Ch'ih Kung's house and had become Yu Ch'ih Kung's nephew instead. He said to the emperor, "Oh well, he went the wrong way, that old cultivator; he had entered samadhi there, and I told him to come to Chang An to help me propagate the Buddhadharma. Now he's gone down the wrong road, so I'll go save him."

So Dharma Master Hsuan Tsang went to Yu Ch'ih Kung's house and spoke with Yu Ch'ih Kung's nephew. He told him that he should leave home. What do you suppose Yu Ch'ih Kung's nephew did? In the home of a great official, there is a lot of power and a lot of money; he had a lot of food and drink, and he was happy and did as he pleased. He dared to do anything at all. When Dharma Master Hsuan Tsang saw him he said, "Hey, old cultivator," and Yu Ch'ih Kung's nephew stared at him and growled, "What are you talking about?" Dharma Master Hsuan Tsang said, "I asked you to come here to propagate the Buddhadharma; you should leave home." The reply came, "Look old monk, if you want to leave home, leave your home. What home are you asking me to leave. You're crazy." He scolded Dharma Master Hsuan Tsang

quite thoroughly. There was nothing that Dharma Master Hsuan Tsang could do, so he went back to see the Emperor. He wanted T'ang T'ai Tsung to issue an edict ordering Yu Ch'ih Kung's nephew to leave home.

When the emperor ordered one to leave home during that time and one didn't do it, he lost his head. So Hsuan Tsang first said to the emperor, "Now look, all you have to do is to get him to leave home; just get him to agree to leave home. No matter what conditions he asks for, grant them; don't give him any arguments." T'ang Emperor T'ai Tsung said, "Fine," and he ordered the nephew of Yu Ch'ih Kung to leave home. The nephew of Yu Ch'ih Kung went to the emperor and said, "Say, you're telling me to leave home; why don't you leave home?" And when the emperor heard that, it sounded reasonable. Here he was telling Yu Ch'ih Kung's nephew to leave home and he himself wasn't leaving home. But the emperor was also very eloquent, so he said, "Say, your leaving home is just representing my leaving home. After all, I'm the emperor and I have to rule the country. I don't have any time to leave home, but you're representing me in leaving home. The very reason I'm asking you to leave home is to represent me."

And the nephew of Yu Ch'ih Kung said, "Oh, you want me to represent you; o.k., fine, but I need three carts." The Emperor said, "Three carts? You can have nine if you want. What do you want these three carts for?" He said, "When I leave home, it's not going to be the same as an ordinary monk leaving home. When I leave home, I want a cart of wine to follow me wherever I go. Besides that, I want a cart of meat; no matter where I go, I want a cart of meat to follow me. I'm going to be a wine and meat-eating monk. And, third, although I'm leaving home, I can't be apart from women, so I want a cart of beautiful women, too." T'ang T'ai Tsung thought, "Boy, this is really messed up. When one leaves home one is supposed to keep the precepts, but here

he wants a cart of wine and a cart of meat and a cart of beautiful women. How is this permissible? It's not legal." But, Dharma Master Hsuan Tsang had already told him that he should agree to any conditions that the lad set up. The emperor thought it over and decided that if Dharma Master Hsuan Tsang had told him to do so, then it probably wouldn't be wrong. So, he agreed. He agreed to a cart of wine, a cart of meat, and a cart of beautiful women. He said, "Wherever you go, I will make offerings to you. I will be your donor and protect your dharma." The emperor accompanied him to Ta Hsing Shan Monastery to leave home. Behind them followed three carts. The carts came so close to Ta Hsing Shan Monastery that they were in sight, not far at all from it. Now, since the nephew of the Prime Minister was leaving home, there should be a welcoming, so the monks in the temple began to hit the drum and strike the bell. As soon as he heard the bell and drum, Yu Ch'ih Kung's nephew understood. He said, "Oh, originally I was sitting there waiting for the Red Yang Buddha. I was that old cultivator," and he immediately turned around, waved the carts, and said, "The three carts can go back, I don't even want any one of them."

In that way, Yu Ch'ih Kung's nephew arrived at Ta Hsing Shan Monastery to leave home. He became a Great Virtuous One of that time, and a future Patriarch. His name was Dharma Master K'uei Chi. But, K'uei Chi Dharma Master, though an old cultivator, had become confused when he was born back into the world. How much more those of us who are not old cultivators, who aren't even little cultivators; how much the more should we use effort and work hard. So, today in the midst of my busy-ness, I have told you this story, and it is my hope that you will digest its principles and work well. And, I hope that you will be of some benefit to the Buddhadharma.

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The first Chan session is already gone by, and now the second Chan session is starting. You should all take stock to see if in the week gone by you have had any accomplishment. Accomplishment means enlightenment. Some enlightenment's are big, and some are small; some are middle-sized. Enlightenment are not the same. As for those who did not become enlightened (wu), they also got some "thing" (wu). Why didn't you become enlightened? It is because there was some "thing" in your mind. What was that "thing" in your mind? "Every day I'm participating in this Chan session because I want to become enlightened." That thought of wanting to become enlightened is a "thing". When the Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas of the ten directions look at you, they say, "You spineless ghost! Here you are sitting in meditation investigating Chan, and you want to become enlightened." What enlightenment do you expect to open? You're not developing your skill well. You just give rise to greed.

Your greed for enlightenment is also just greed. The thing that directly prevents you from becoming enlightened. If you weren't greedy then you could really sit. "You hurt, legs? Hurt a little more! No matter how much they hurt, I am going to sit in meditation. No matter how much they hurt, I am going to investigate Dhyana." You want to fight the pain. Wage war. Don't harbor the greedy thought, "Ah, I'm joining in the Chan session because I hope to get enlightened." That's just plain filthy. That kind of hope is what's meant by impure thought. It's a filthy thing that you've got caught in your mind.

Don't be like Patriarch K'uei Chi. What was he like? All he thought of from morning to night was eating. He also was greedy, you can tell from how fat he was. If he wasn't 500 pounds, he must be at least 488. That's how fat he was. And why? Just because he was interested in eating good food. I'm not slandering him. If Patriarch K'uei Chi came here this very minute, I'd tell

him this to his face. He was greedy for food. What's there to prove that he was greedy for food? Contemporary to him was a Vinaya Master named Tao Hsuan who lived at Chung Nan Mountain. He was stern and pure in his maintenance of the Vinaya rules --he had cultivated to perfection the 3,000 awesome mannerisms and 80,000 subtle practices. His cultivation was so good that the gods were moved to give him offerings. Every day, it was not necessary for him to make food himself. Every day, was it necessary for men to make offerings to him. How did he get by then? The gods made offerings to him. There he was, living in a hut on Chung Nan Mountain and experiencing this inconceivable state. Just to speak about the fact that the gods made offerings to him--if he didn't have any cultivation, or Way virtue, if he had not held the precepts purely and sternly, how could gods have given him offerings? If you strike up false thoughts from morning to night and develop excessive habits of climbing on conditions, gods certainly won't come. Gods don't make offerings to ghosts who climb on conditions. They don't make offerings to those who do not keep the precepts.

So the gods made offerings to the Vinaya Master, Tao Hsuan, and Patriarch K'uei Chi's gluttony got the better of him. From morning to night he struck up false thoughts. "Of all the food and drink known to man--delicacies of every description--I've tasted them all. But, ultimately, what is the flavor of heavenly food?" He kept striking up that false thought for a long time. "I've got to go there for a meal and have a taste of heavenly food and drink. What can the flavor of heavenly food be? Is it sweet, sour, hot, bitter, salty? Or, perhaps it completely transcends those five flavors and is a flavor above and beyond them--a sixth flavor--perhaps pleasant, perhaps unpleasant. I've got to try it out." It wasn't just for one day that he had those false thoughts. Day after day for many days he had them, until the day came when he was

determined to go have a meal. He didn't take an attendant or a companion; he slipped away all by himself and headed for Chung Nan Mountain. He climbed up Chung Nan Mountain thinking about how he wanted to eat the offerings of the gods. Who would have guessed that in the end he wouldn't get his meal!

On the appointed day, he rose quite early and dressed lightly so that he could walk swiftly and easily. But, he was so portly that, even though he had dressed lightly, it was still not easy going. It may have been that he, even began to perspire; at the very least he was soon out of breath. From Chang An to Vinaya Master Tao Hsuan's hut was a distance of at least 35 miles. So, he got up extremely early and began the long trek, allowing himself enough time so that he could make it by noon. He didn't let Vinaya Master Tao Hsuan know he was coming. He hadn't said, "I am coming to join you for lunch, so tell the gods to bring along a little extra." He hadn't let anyone know. So, he arrived unannounced about ten minutes before time to eat.

When he arrived there, he said to Vinaya Master Tao Hsuan "I've heard that you are a Vinaya Master to whom the gods make offerings. In Chang An I have eaten all the fine flavors that man has to offer. But, I have yet to taste the flavor of heavenly fare. Can you give me a share of your food today and allow me to join you in your meal?"

Vinaya Master Tao Hsuan scratched his head as he thought. "I certainly have to agree." So he said, "Fine, when the food arrives, we will share it. The worst that can happen is that we won't get full. No problem." After he agreed, they waited. Ten minutes passed. Ten more minutes passed. Ten more minutes passed. Ten by ten, the minutes kept passing. Originally he had arrived ten minutes before time to eat, but after several hundred tens of minutes, the afternoon was gone, and still the gods had not brought any food. Dharma Master K'uei Chi, who was really

able to put it away, had been dying for a meal of heavenly food, but now, not only had he not tasted the food of the gods, but he hadn't even gotten a bit of food of the earth! He basically didn't get anything to eat at all. The two of them went hungry that day, and Patriarch K'uei Chi's stomach objected. It kept growling. His belly complained, "Hey, why didn't you give me anything to eat today? How can you face me when you act like that?" It complained, but there was nothing he could do about it, so he decided to go to sleep. "I can't pay any attention to whether or not you have food to eat, stomach; it's dark now, and so I'm going to sleep."

Vinaya Master Tao Hsuan held the precepts, and he had eaten the food of the gods for a long time now, so his stomach was better behaved and did not complain. It didn't growl. What I'm telling you is true. It's all been recorded.

"Why haven't I even read that historical account?" someone wants to know.

You haven't read enough books. If you had read The Sutra of Food and Drink, you would know.

Dharma Master K'uei Chi went to sleep, and Vinaya Master Tao Hsuan sat in meditation. As soon as Dharma Master K'uei Chi fell asleep, he entered the sleeping samadhi. In the sleeping samadhi, he rang bells and beat drums. How was it that he rang bells? Every few minutes his hand would flop around and bang on the table, and the table would sound out like a bell. And his snoring was like thunder. His bells and drums rang out like he was doing morning and evening recitation, until Vinaya Master Tao Hsuan's mind moved, and he thought, "Ai, he behaves like that, and yet he is a National Master. How can someone who's a National Master sleep in such an unruly fashion and disturb other people? Here I am trying to enter samadhi, and I can't even do it. He's so busy with his bells and drums." On top of it all, his stomach

was growling; it sounded like an automobile engine turning over and over. So Vinaya Master Tao Hsuan sat there having false thoughts about Dharma Master K'uei Chi's qualifications to be a National Master. But, he couldn't quite bring himself to rouse the National Master out of his sleep. Right when he was sitting there in meditation having those false thoughts, the lice on his body began to bite him.

Since he was an old cultivator, he rarely bathed. He lived in a hut, and most likely there weren't any bathing facilities. Although the gods brought him food, they didn't come to bathe him. I know that for certain. So, a louse bit him, and he carefully took it off and looked at it. It was really fat, and he saw clearly how many legs it had. Now, people who hold the precepts cannot kill. To kill is a violation of the precepts. So, he let the louse fall gently onto the floor. When he dropped it, he broke two of the louse's legs. After a while, another louse bit him. And, it bit so hard that when he took it off, he probably used a little more force in pitching it to the ground, and the louse was crushed to death upon landing. But Vinaya Master Tao Hsuan did not know this. His act of killing was unintentional. It was not premeditated. But, the louse was put out. It went to King Yama and complained about Vinaya Master Tao Hsuan "He's supposed to hold precepts. What precepts does he hold? Just now he killed me. I want his life."

Vinaya Master Tao Hsuan was unaware that he had killed it. The next day Dharma Master K'uei Chi woke up, and Vinaya Master Tao Hsuan scolded him. "Here you are a National Master. Why is it that you don't have any cultivation? You haven't developed any skill at all. When you sleep, it sounds like a drum and bugle corps. You snore like thunder. It's really terrible. How can you be a National Master?"

K'uei Chi laughed and said, "Great Vinaya Master, you have cultivation, and you hold the precepts. Last night you took

two fleas off your body, and the first you dropped broke two of its legs. Take a look, you can still see it on the ground beside you. And, the second flea you threw to the ground was smashed to death. That flea went to King Yama and complained about you, saying that you were not a Vinaya Master. You hold precepts, and still you smash fleas to death.”

Vinaya Master Tao Hsuan wondered, “How could he have known about that? He was sleeping like a log.” And, when he searched around on the ground, he found one flea with two broken legs and one dead flea. Now, as to the truth there was in all of this, as to how Dharma Master K’uei Chi knew about the two fleas, Vinaya Master Tao Hsuan did not ask. Those who hold the precepts find that the less they talk, the less likely they are to violate the precepts. So, he was silent. He neither admitted it, nor took issue with it.

Dharma Master K’uei Chi said, “Vinaya Master, you have violated the precepts and still are not repentant. You say that the gods give you offerings. You are just cheating people. I came for a meal. Why didn’t any gods come with offerings? You’ve just been selfish. Now I’ve come to take a look, and basically there’s nothing to it. I’m leaving.” And he flapped his sleeves and left as if in a huff.

Dharma Master K’uei Chi left early, and at noon the god, Lu Hsuan Chang came once again with offerings. When he arrived, Vinaya Master Tao Hsuan--although he was an old bhiksu who held the precepts--was a bit put out, and he asked Lu Hsuan Chang, “Why didn’t you bring any offerings yesterday? Yesterday, not to speak of me going hungry for a day, there was a guest who came for the meal, and he had to go hungry along with me. What were you doing yesterday? If you were not going to come and bring me offerings, then you should have let me know a day in advance. How could you do that?”

Lu Hsuan Ch`ang knelt before Vinaya Master Tao Hsuan and said, “Actually, it’s not that I did not bring it. For a radius of 40 li around your hut there was a dazzling, golden light, and I couldn’t even open my eyes. I tried to take a step forward, but there was no way. Finally, I asked the local earth spirit what was going on, and he said that there was a living Bodhisattva of the Great Vehicle here with you, and I couldn’t bear up under his light. I kept circling that 40 li radius, but there was no way that I could get to you. So, I have committed this offense.”

When Lu Hsuan Chang spoke, Vinaya Master Tao Hsuan understood. “Oh, Dharma Master K’uei Chi is a flesh body Bodhisattva of the Great Vehicle. And, while he was here, the god could not penetrate his golden light. My Way-virtue is still not up to his. No wonder he’s a National Master, and I am a Vinaya Master. Although the gods give me offerings, my reward of blessings is still not comparable to his.” So Vinaya Master Tao Hsuan made a special point of going before Dharma Master K’uei Chi to repent. Dharma Master K’uei Chi said, “Oh, bag it!”

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In the *Classic of the Way and Its Virtue*, Lao Tze has spoken well, but the principles have still not penetrated to the ultimate:

*When the great Way disappears
there is humanity and propriety:
When wisdom comes forth there is great deceit.
When the six kinds of relatives are not in harmony,
there is the filial son.
When the country is in a turmoil
there are the loyal ministers.*

This verse is very logical and has a lot of principle, but it’s looking

at things from a superficial point of view. To look from an internal point of view, why would the Great Way disappear? Why would wisdom come forth? Why would the six kinds of relatives not be in harmony? Why would the country be in a turmoil? You have to go back to the foundation, the source. Why would the Great Way disappear? Because, people don't cultivate the Way. It just means that people don't investigate dhyana. What happens when people don't investigate dhyana and don't assume responsibility to cultivate? Then one speaks about humanitarianism and propriety. They say, "You should practice humanitarianism; you should be upright." Hence, the first line; "When the Great Way disappears, there is humanity and propriety." If the Great Way pervaded, such concepts as humanity and propriety wouldn't come forth. When you see humanity and propriety, you'll have to investigate the source, and the source of it is that people aren't cultivating the Way. They don't know how to cultivate the Way, so they cast aside the root and grasp at the branches. They pick up the superficialities and they say, "Ahh, one should be humanitarian, and one should practice propriety." So they say, "Humanity means to love others. You should love, love to the point of giving up your life." They talk of love. They've come under the control of the defiling love. So, that's why Lao Tze said, "When the Great Way disappears, there is humanitarianism and propriety." Not bad, that's the way it is.

When wisdom comes forth, there's great deceit. When a wise person manifests, he can play tricks to deceive ignorant people. He can cheat those without any wisdom. What he says here is also right, and we can prove it. This proof occurred during the Three Kingdoms Period. You can pull out the tape recordings for the Three Kingdoms Period and play them. You say, "Well, when did they record the happenings in the Three Kingdoms Period?" Why, in the Fourth Kingdom Period, of course! Whose tape was it? It

was Hsiao Feng Huang's, who was also called Feng Ch'u Tzu, Pung Po, and P'ang Feng Ch'u. And just who was Feng Ch'u Tzu? He was one of the wise ones of the time of Hsu Shu Tzo Ma Ge Ju, when Liu Pei was forced into retreat. He was truly a wise one, he was able to cheat Chang Fei. How did he cheat him? Oh, it was a really good joke. Hsu Shu Tzo Ma Shen Ju Ge said, "Fu Lung Feng Ch'u can quell the disharmony of the kingdom." Fu Lung is Wo Lung. Feng Ch'u is P'ang Feng Ch'u. P'ang Feng Ch'u and Mr. Wo Lung at the time of Ju Ge were the same. After Ju Ge gained control, the small Feng (phoenix) couldn't fly, but the Lung (dragon) flew. Feng Ch'u said that the Lung (dragon) had flown, so he thought that the Feng (phoenix) should also fly. So he went to see Liu Pei. Liu Pei had heard of him but didn't know what he looked like. Feng Ch'u was really ugly. He was pretty disreputable looking, with a beard and all. His appearance was not the least bit respectable. But, after meeting Feng Ch'u, Liu Pei made him mayor.

P'ang went to take up office and put a sign on his door, an announcement, which read, "If any of you people have any complaints, bring them to me, and I will hear them." So every day he heard complaints. Once the announcement was up, people came--one person complained that his land had been taken by another; one person complained that a lot of his trees had been cut down by someone; another one came and complained that his brother was always giving him trouble; then another one came and said that his son wasn't filial. Everybody had complaints that they wanted to air. While all these complaints were being aired, what do you suppose P'ang Feng Ch'u did? He drank. He drank until he was sopping drunk, and he couldn't fly. The phoenix was drunk. So all day long he slept in that room. He'd drink till he fell asleep, and when he finished sleeping, he'd drink again; it went on like this for six months. The recorder recorded more than a hundred

books full of complaints of the people. Although there were a hundred books full of complaints, none were investigated.

Six months went by and Liu Pei sent Chang Fei to spy on Feng Ch'u. Of course, old Chang Fei disguised himself before going to spy on P'ang Feng Ch'u, so that no one would recognize him. When Chang Fei went to see what P'ang Feng was doing, what do you suppose he found out? One person reported, "Somebody put in a complaint, and it's already been three months," and another one said, "I complained about so and so to the mayor four months ago." Another said, "Oh, it's been even longer for me; it's been more than five months, and nobody's looked into it. I haven't heard a thing. All the mayor does is drink; that's all he does from morning till night, he drinks. He doesn't pay any attention to anything. He's become a wino mayor." So, Chang Fei listened until he got his ears full. Then he changed back into his official clothing, went into the city and said, "Okay bring in the Mayor; I want to see the Mayor."

So, there was P'ang Feng Ch'u, his eyes hardly opened, trying to arrange his clothing and put on his shoes as he came stumbling out to see Chang Fei. Chang Fei said, "My superior sent you here to be a Mayor, and you've had your post. Why didn't you do anything?"

Feng Ch'u said, "What did you want me to do?"

Chang Fei said, "What do you mean do? There are all these people with complaints, and you haven't looked into them--you haven't taken care of them."

Feng Ch'u replied, "Oh, well that's a small matter. Okay, sit down; I'll take care of them right now." So, he called all the people in, opened all hundred books together, and he said, "Okay now everybody--whoever has something to say--go ahead and speak your principles. Simultaneously speak them all to me; I'll take care of you all." What do you suppose it was like with hundreds

of people, each one speaking his own mind, his own principles at the same time? They were all babbling about what village they'd come from, et cetera, et cetera; and he was listening with his ear, and with his hand he was writing out the judgments.

Chang Fei said, "Wow, this is really out-a-sight. He's listening to a hundred people talking to him, and all he has to do is glance at the records, and he's able to make the decision. He doesn't have to look closely at them at all. He's truly one who can read ten lines at a glance and can listen to a hundred people speaking. That's really inconceivable."

So, P'ang Feng Ch'u had been cheating people from the Three Kingdoms Period onward. And, now I'm going to tell you the secret: P'ang Feng Ch'u was there drinking, and while he was drinking he didn't have anything to do, so he looked at the records. "Today Chang San said that somebody had taken over some of his land, and so my verdict is that people can't steal other people's land, you'll have to give it back. And as to the man who cut down the hundred trees, he will have to replant a hundred. That will take care of that." And he went along like this. He'd looked at every entry, and he'd already made his decisions; he didn't have to go look at them in great detail again. So, when Chang Fei came and P'ang Feng Ch'u got everybody together and let them all speak simultaneously, he just sat there and announced the decisions. Chang Fei was so coarse and simple that he thought this an inconceivable thing. Now, wouldn't you say that this is a case of "when wisdom comes forth there is great deceit"?

So, when Lao Tze said,

*When wisdom comes forth there is great deceit.
When the six kinds of relatives are not in harmony,
there is the filial son.
When the country is in a turmoil
there are the loyal ministers*

An example of there being the filial son when the six relatives are not in harmony can be found in the case of Ta Shun and his little brother Shang. Ta shun was very filial, but Shang was arrogant, and the house was not in harmony. Thus, it appeared that Ta Shun was filial and Shang wasn't. "When the six kinds of relatives are not in harmony, there is the filial son", is also this principle.

"When the country is in turmoil there are the loyal ministers." In the Sung Dynasty, Hui Ch'in Erh Tsung was ousted by Chin Wu Chu. In the Northern Sung capital at Hang Chou, which was called Lin An, there were loyal ones among the officials. Among the disloyal ones was Ch'in Hui and among the loyal ones was Yao Fei. Thus, "When the country's in turmoil there are the loyal ministers", also has principle.

But, now we're not going to explain "the six kinds of relatives not in harmony, there arises the filial son," or "When the country's in a turmoil there are loyal ministers." We're going to talk more about how, "When great wisdom comes forth there is great deceit." Why do we want to talk more about that? Because now we all wish to have our wisdom come forth; we all want to become enlightened. But, if you become enlightened, you should do genuine things--you shouldn't do devious things. You shouldn't get involved in phony matters. So now, whoever has great wisdom should help those who don't have wisdom, and should not deceive those who don't have wisdom. What's really important is that if you have great wisdom, you should be very responsible in teaching and transforming living beings and should not deceive living beings. Today, the important point is that whoever gains wisdom should not follow in the footsteps of Feng Ch'u. But, why do I criticize Feng Ch'u and say that he cheated people? Was it really the case that he was able to write out the verdicts in all those cases of hundreds of complaints at once? No, he had to write them one by one. It's just because he

had wisdom that all he had to do was look at a word or two and he was able to realize whether or not the complaint was justifiable. He was very clear about it. It was like having it all reflected in a mirror. It was all very clear to him. But, he had done them one by one. And, since he had done them one by one, he was really able to hear a hundred things with his ear at the same time, and at the time he was listening, he was just listening, that's all. It's not at all sure that he was able to pick out what each of the hundreds of people were saying individually. But, when Chang Fei took a look at the scene, he couldn't break that barrier. He didn't recognize the false face, and he thought that what Feng Ch'u was doing was extraordinary, so he said, "His eyes can read ten lines at once." Now, that may have been possible. Why? Because he read fast. What this means is that for the time it takes you to read one line, he could read ten. That might be possible, and he could have perhaps heard a hundred peoples' voices at the same time. But, I don't believe that he could have done it with a hundred. He might have done it with ten. If there were ten people talking, you could be able to clearly hear what each one was saying. And you say, "Well if it's possible with ten, then why isn't it possible with a hundred?" Well if that's the case, then you could say it's okay for a thousand or ten thousand. You will have to have some proof. When I estimate ten, that's the highest, the very most possible. It's not the least possible. That's my highest estimate.

So, now as our wisdom comes forth, we should have great truth and not great deceit. Have great truth and great functioning, propagate great teaching, and transform living beings.

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A disciple of the Master relates: In Colorado there is an American who previously went to Ceylon to study for two years.

It's not known what he studied there, or what kind of precepts he took. It's said that he left the home-life.

When this 24 years old American returned to the United States, he set up a place where people go and study. One person who went there came as a vegetarian and did not want to eat meat. But when he got to this "monk's" place--who by the way now says he's not a monk but that he was one formerly, though he still wears robes and I don't know if he takes disciples but he does transmit precepts--he saw that people were eating meat. So the vegetarian asked the 'monk,' "Aren't Buddhists supposed to be vegetarian?"

The 'monk' replied, "We eat meat. In the first place, since this is a place that serves meat, when you come here you should follow along and eat meat. Secondly, you can eat meat because basically you shouldn't make discriminations. If you don't make discriminations between eating meat and not eating meat, then eating meat is alright. In the third place, when you eat the meat, you can project feelings of love towards the meat. You can love that living being whose flesh you are eating. If you love him, then it won't count as any kind of offense on your part for eating him. Thus, in the first place, we give you the meat, so you should eat it. In the second place, don't discriminate whether it's meat or not. In the third place, love the meat you're eating."

The Master's reply: "Fine, if on the one hand one should eat what is served to him, somebody should prepare a plate of shit--human shit or dog shit--and give it to him to eat. When he freaks out on it say, 'Well Sir, you should eat whatever is served to you, so, eat this shit. And, the second thing is that you shouldn't discriminate the pure and impure, meat and non-meat. So, there is no need for you to discriminate whether it's shit or not shit, pure or not pure, or anything else. You should eat it. And, the third is, of course, that you should love this shit as you eat it.'"

That was the Master's answer to that person's three criteria for eating meat. The Master continues, "Although this answer isn't very polite, it's quite appropriate when discussing the question of eating meat. It's a good answer to the topic of eating meat, because they feel that meat is clean, and so it can be eaten. In actual fact, meat is even more filthy than human excrement or dog excrement, but because people love it, they want to eat it. The man hasn't looked into it deeply, because if he had, then he'd realize that eating that kind of thing just makes fertilizers. It creates more sexual desire. So, people who cultivate the way should not eat meat or the five kinds of pungent plants, or drink intoxicating beverages. All aspects of cultivation are just for the purpose of getting rid of desire and cutting off love. Not only does the monk not teach people to get rid of desire and cut off love, he teaches people to produce love for food. And, because they give rise to love for food, they have love for sex. Because, when love for food comes up, then love for sex also arises. And, once the desire for sex arises, then it's very difficult to cut off your lust and desire. This is extremely important. In Chinese Buddhism it is advocated that people eat vegetarian food, and there are reasons for this. In the *Shurangama Sutra* it says, "If you don't cast out your lust, then you can't get out of the dust." All kinds of things which produce desire are not particularly nourishing to the body.

People who cultivate the Way should not eat these kinds of things. And you say, "Well, if they don't eat these kinds of things, their bodies won't be strong." As to the body--if you do not allow your treasures to be lost, then at all times the body will be strong. But, if you can't find the pearl in your clothing, and if you lose the treasures in your body, then no matter what you eat, no matter how good it is, your body won't be strong. Basically, Buddhism does not necessarily advocate that people eat vegetarian food only. The Buddha permitted people to eat three kinds of pure

meat. If that person had brought up the three kinds of pure meat, then that would have been okay. But, as it is, his theory is just prejudiced. It's a one-sided view, which can only fool children or people without any wisdom.

What are the three kinds of pure meat? The first is that which has not been killed. I didn't see that killed. Which means that you don't say, "Oh it's been killed, I'm certainly going to eat it. I didn't see it killed." The second is, I didn't hear it killed. I didn't hear the sound of the pig being slaughtered or that cow being slaughtered, that very anguished sound. I didn't hear the sound of killing. The third is, it was not killed for me. It was not especially killed for me. Meat like that is called pure in three ways and can be eaten. But, when it's eaten, it should be eaten because the body is not strong, or because you have some sickness. It was for people like this that the Buddha said it was alright to eat meat which was pure in three ways. But, for people whose bodies are sufficiently strong, there's no need to add more fertilizers. They are already sufficiently fertilized. If you add more fertilizer than is necessary, it's possible to burn up the things you have planted in your field. Why? Because too much is also not appropriate. So, too much is just as bad as not enough. Because of this, when people cultivate the Way, they cultivate the Middle Way. Not too much, and not too little. If you can cultivate the Middle Way, then eventually the fruit of Bodhi can be accomplished.

Now we are having a Chan session in order to cultivate samadhi. And we need not even speak of precepts, because here we are holding them without holding them, they are "precepts without holding precepts". All you do is walk and sit all day. So, you aren't able to kill, or steal, or practice deviant sex, or lie, or drink intoxicating beverages. We walk and sit and nobody talks, and in practicing in this way you're not killing anything, and so you're holding the precept against not killing. You're also not

going to do things in order to steal, and so you're holding the precept against stealing. You're not going to do things that involve deviant sex, and so you're holding the precept against deviant sex. And, if you don't say anything from morning till night, you won't break the precept against lying.

I see that one of my disciples is not talking. From the beginning she hasn't talked, and when it came time for her to translate, I figured she wouldn't do it, but she did. Not talking is very good, because you absolutely can't lie. During this period of the Chan Session you will absolutely not break the precept against lying. Suppose you stole some honey to eat and were asked, "Did you steal honey?" You wouldn't be able to say, "I didn't eat it," because you're not talking, and nobody's asking. You wouldn't be able to drip the honey all over the floor so the floor could eat honey. That's very good.

And as to taking intoxicants, I have some good disciples who asked me to go drinking at New Year's. I said, "How much are you asking me to drink?" They said, "Oh, a glass or two." And I said, "That's not enough. If I'm going to go drinking, I have to have a hundred glasses of brandy, otherwise it's not sufficient." In America there are all kinds of disciples, but in the Chan Hall nobody drinks. I should say more clearly that this disciple who asked me to go drinking is a very good one, not a bad one. He says, "Shih Fu, for so many years you haven't had a drink, let me invite you to have a little drink. How about it?" I said, "Wait until the session's over."

And so here we hold the precepts, and when holding the precepts, one can cultivate samadhi. Samadhi is just seeing if you're going to be patient with what is impossible for you to be patient with. When you can't be patient, you say, "Oh my legs hurt so bad, my back hurts, and I'm so cold. This is really hard to bear." So you lean forward, or you lean back, or you stretch to

either side, and you move around a bit. That's called no samadhi power. If you have samadhi power, you will be more or less like Kuan Ti Kung. You sit there very straight and upright. That's called cultivating samadhi power.

Where does samadhi power come from? It comes from patience. You should be patient with pain, patient with suffering, patient with difficulty. When it hurts ask, "Who hurts?" And somebody is saying, "Well of course it's me that hurts. I can't cheat myself." If you can't cheat yourself, but you cheat others, it's equally wrong. So, you should cultivate samadhi. Once you have samadhi, then you can have wisdom--your wisdom will open. After you've maintained samadhi for a long time, you'll spontaneously have wisdom. And this wisdom is true wisdom. It isn't wisdom taught in any book. It's your basic inherent wisdom. This wisdom isn't stolen from somewhere else. So, sitting in Dhyana is extremely important. It's just teaching you to bear what cannot be borne--to be patient with what is impossible to bear--that is samadhi power. For instance, somebody takes a knife and cuts out a piece of your flesh. If you have samadhi power, it doesn't even hurt. It's just an ordinary matter. Like Kuan Kung, who cut out a piece of his bone to cure his poison. Why did he do that? Because he had samadhi power. Kuan Kung had samadhi. While standing guard over the Emperor's wife, he "held a candle until dawn and did not cheat in the dark room." Where did his samadhi power come from? He had cultivated for many kalpas, many lives.

Now we are in the Chan Hall, and why don't we have any samadhi power? You hurt a little and can't take it, suffer a bit and can't hack it; a little difficulty and you can't bear it, even to the point that in being unable to take it, you want to cry. It's because you haven't any samadhi power. You haven't broken through that barrier. You haven't broken through the barrier of difficulty;

you haven't broken through the barrier of suffering; you haven't broken through the barrier of pain. Now, we want to break through them. We break through these barriers, and we can be at ease with pain--pain to the extreme, to the point that we forget that there is ourselves and others. How can there be pain? There isn't any pain. No matter what it is you do, you should do it to the ultimate point. When you've cultivated to the extreme, your light is penetrating. This means that when you're pure to the ultimate and quiet to the ultimate, then you will spontaneously manifest the light of wisdom--you will become enlightened. Everyday you talk about enlightenment, enlightenment, and you can't even bear the least bit of pain. How in the world can you speak of enlightenment?

Today there is not a lot of time, but I want to clarify this principle of eating meat. Now, basically there may be those who understand more about this principle than I, but they don't want to speak. Now, although I understand a little, I will speak to all of you about the little that I understand. First, we will explain the word 'flesh'. The word for flesh, or meat, in Chinese has a picture of two people. One inside a mouth, the other one half-way outside a mouth. So the verse goes:

In the character for flesh there are two people.

The inside person is grabbing the outside person.

The meaning being that the people inside and the people outside have a connection with one another. The one inside is the one being eaten, and the one outside is the one eating. Both the one being eaten and the one eating are people. So, in the character they are placed in an open mouth. The mouth is open because it's eating meat. You could also say it's because it loves to eat meat. The man inside is caught by the man outside.

Living beings are still eating living beings' flesh. For example, the pig you're eating, for all appearances it's a pig, but it might have been a former ancestor of yours from limitless kalpas

past. In the *Surangama Sutra* it says, “When the sheep becomes a man . . .” If a sheep can become a man, why can’t a pig become a man, why can’t a horse become a man, why can’t the cow become a man? So, in the turning wheel of the six paths, there’s ceaseless turning.

If you think about it, “It’s really people eating people. And, since it’s people eating people, could that person perhaps have been a friend of mine?” Perhaps. “Oh well, it doesn’t matter--even though he’s my friend, I’ll still eat him.” Well, if you can eat your friend’s flesh, what about the fact that it might be a relative of yours? One of the six kinds of relatives? “Oh well, if I eat the flesh of one of the six kinds of relatives, that really doesn’t matter either.” So, you go ahead and help yourself. But, that’s still pretty far away from you. Perhaps it was your grandparents or your father and mother from limitless kalpas gone. Now, if it was your father and mother, is that being filial? How inhuman is that? The Buddha who is a person who has certified to and attained the five eyes and the six penetrations, is able to know causes and effects. He knows that all living beings are interconnected, and that they are not able to escape these interconnections. Because of this, Buddhism advocates eating of vegetarian food and not eating meat.

In Confucianism it says, “If I’ve seen it born, I can’t bear to see it die. If I’ve heard its sound, I can’t bear to eat its meat.” This is the humanity and compassion of the gentleman. It says, “. . . can’t bear to see it die. If I’ve heard its cry,” if I’ve heard that sound, “I can’t bear to eat its flesh.” This is compassion and humanitarianism. So, the gentleman who practices compassion and humanitarianism stays far away from the slaughterhouse.

Some may say, “But, meat is really good to eat, although I also want to study Buddhism. So I’ll eat a little less meat. I’ll fast on the first of the month, and on the fifteenth of the month I’ll

eat vegetarian food. The second through the fourteenth and the sixteenth through thirtieth, I'll eat meat. And on the first and the fifteenth I'll abstain and eat vegetarian food."

That's okay. Okay is okay; but, since you know it's wrong and decide to fast you're still committing an offense. There is a story in Mencius which expresses this very well:

"There was a man who daily stole his neighbors chickens." Everyday he stole a chicken from his neighbor. "Perhaps someone told him, 'You shouldn't do that.'" They said, this isn't in accord with reason. It's not principled. "And so he said to them, 'Okay, since this isn't principled, it's not legal for me to steal a chicken everyday from somebody. I'll decrease the number. I'll steal one a month.'" I won't steal so often, I'll steal one chicken a month. Now tell me, to steal a chicken everyday or to steal a chicken once a month, isn't that still breaking the precept against stealing? Doesn't it all amount to theft? People who go on vegetarian fasts are more or less like this. But, it should be made clear that this is a case of decreasing, like the Gradual Teaching, and the fact that it's being decreased is good. But, you still have to call it stealing.

Now we have been born into the evil world of the five turbidities, and we do not realize that the evil world of the five turbidities is an unclean place. Every day we mistake suffering for bliss, and we don't know that we should first get out of the triple realm and put an end to birth and death. There is an analogy for this circumstance. What is it like? The world of the five turbidities is like a pit toilet. The little living beings that live in a pit toilet don't think that it's a smelly place, they are not aware that it's unclean. They feel very comfortable there, very happy. We people are in the evil world of the five turbidities. If a certified sage looks at it, the evil world of the five turbidities is a big toilet. It's a big pit toilet,

We are now here cultivating and working to get out of the

pit toilet. Some people recite the Buddha's name. Some people investigate Chan. Some people study the teachings. Some people hold rules, some people cultivate the Secret School. No matter which school you cultivate, they're all designed to end birth and death, to get you out of the Turning Wheel, to go beyond this triple realm. So that one no longer lives in a pit toilet.

Why is it that the sages in the heavens and the Bodhisattvas don't like to come to this world? Because this world smells too bad. The stench gives the gods a headache. They don't dare come into the pit toilet. But the living beings in this great pit toilet feel that they are very comfortable, just like the little bugs in a real pit toilet. The little bugs in a pit toilet are very happy; they feel very happy swimming around there. But, suppose somebody comes along and takes pity on them and says, "Ah, those bugs in that pit toilet are too filthy. I'll move them." And where does he move them? He puts them in a vat of fragrant oil. So the bugs can drink the fragrant oil and live in it. Who would have thought that as soon as they are moved there they'd die? Why? They can't take it. That's why we cannot take this body of ours, this stinking skin bag, and have it reborn in the Land of Ultimate Bliss, or in the heavens. If the stinking skin bag went there, it would die.

We want to borrow the false body to cultivate the true. The true is basically inherently ours. The false, basically, is not ours. We have come to be attached to what was basically not ours, and as for what basically was ours--although it certainly is not lost--it's been covered over by the false. So, now we are investigating Chan and sitting in meditation, just hoping to find the true. We borrow the false to cultivate the true. But, that's not easy. It's very difficult to renounce false things, and it's very difficult to take up true things. So, several years ago I made this joke: I said,

*Pick it up, put it down,
Who's mindful of the Buddha? Ha! Ha! Ha!*

Now, you shouldn't think this "Ha! Ha! Ha!" is really Ha! Ha! That "Ha! Ha! Ha!" is just opening enlightenment. When you open enlightenment it's not sufficient to laugh once. You have to laugh three times. Ha! Ha'. Ha! But, this isn't what Lao Tze meant when he said, "When the fool hears of the Way, he laughs out loud." This laughter represents having attained something in your mind.

And the second line says,

*Put it down, take it up
Who's the Buddha mindful of? Hee! Hee! Hee!*

This laughter is a little quieter than the "Ha! Ha! Ha!" It's a subtle laugh, like when the Buddha twirled a flower and gave a subtle smile.

The third line says,

*It also is you, and it also is me
Because when Mt. Sumeru is smashed down
There isn't anybody.*

If you smash down Mt. Sumeru and get rid of the arrogance and fullness of self, then there isn't anybody at all. "Without self and without others, one contemplates one's own mastery. It's not empty, and it's not form, and you see the Tathagata." That's what this says. That's the way it's said, but if you really want to get to a state of no people and no self, you'll have to actually cultivate.

When one of my disciples came she said that she was empty--that everything was empty. But, now that we are having a Chan Session, her legs aren't empty. She keeps straightening out her legs and patting her head and it's quite evident that the emptiness isn't there. If she were truly empty: "True emptiness is without others and without self. The Great Way is without form or appearance." If you are truly empty, you can bring forth wonderful existence. What a shame. Not being truly empty,

wonderful existence doesn't appear. Cultivation isn't just being able to explain things, being able to talk, to recite "empty, empty, empty" a few times and acquire skill. You have to truly, actually certify to it yourself, just as the person who drinks the water knows for himself whether it's warm or cool. You must truly taste the bliss of dhyana as your food and become filled with dharma happiness. If you can truly sit down there, then you can sit for eighty thousand great kalpas and not get up. "That's impossible. Not only can I not sit for eighty thousand great kalpas, I can't even sit for eighty minutes."

If you can't even sit for eighty minutes, then what have you emptied? Take a look at this child. She also is not empty, because if you hit her she hurts. As little as she is, she is still not empty. If she were empty, you could hit her, and she wouldn't know; you could scold her, and she wouldn't know. So, people who cultivate the Way should regard genuine skill as essential. They should not renounce the root and grasp at the branches, renounce what is near and seek what is far. Don't let your own fields go to waste and go help somebody else plant theirs. That's too pitiful.

You should know that now in Asia, the Buddhadharma, day by day, is decaying. Day by day, there are fewer people cultivating the Way and more and more people just talking about the Way, even to the point that soon there won't even be any people talking about the Way. And as to this, disciples of the Buddha should certainly be very ashamed and repentant. It should cause them extreme pain and anguish. What use is there for pretension, if we are disciples of the Buddha and have not made any contribution to the Buddhadharma.

You use your hand to touch your flesh heart, but you don't have any idea about your true heart. You don't recognize it. Can you stand there rubbing your flesh heart and face up to Shakyamuni Buddha? Our Original Teacher, Shakyamuni Buddha,

founded Buddhism, and he sacrificed everything--his position as future king, his kingdom, his beautiful wife--and he went to the Himalayas and cultivated ascetic practices for six years.

Now we are sitting in Gold Mountain Monastery, and we feel that it's very cold, and we wrap ourselves in blankets. We wear cotton quilted clothing, and we still feel cold. We should think about Shakyamuni Buddha in the Himalayas; what was it like for him? So, though I've called Gold Mountain Monastery an icebox, this icebox is a long way from the cold of the Himalayas. The Himalayas are a lot colder. Here we are using our skill in cultivating and not being afraid of the cold, not being afraid of suffering, not being afraid of difficulty, and we want to be genuine disciples who renounce absolutely everything.

Everyday we investigate dhyana and sit in meditation, we walk and sit, and we walk and sit. Yesterday two bhikshunis came. They had planned to stay and attend the evening instruction. Who would have known that winter had settled in Gold Mountain, and the cold caused their noses to run. The little bhikshuni got so cold that she was on the verge of tears and asked to be excused. Now, you think about it. They were here for an hour or two, and they couldn't take it. We're here every day, and it's just like this. If you still have false thoughts, you should get a little colder, because if you're cold you'll have to work against the cold bringing your fire up so you're not cold anymore; then you can work.

That's why in China it's said that, "In the winter it's Chan, and in the summer it's study." In the winter you investigate Chan because it's cold. If you sit there in the cold and don't perk up your spirits--if you just slouch over as if you want to sleep--you will get so cold that you won't be able to stand it. Perk up your spirits, and start up your own furnace; the fire will burn, and your heater will get warm. Once your heater gets warm you can steam rice dumplings and *mant'ou* and *chiao tzu*.

Now you're steaming your very life, and you'll be able to steam it through, but you should start the fire of your own furnace. If you can't start your fire, then you'll get so cold that you won't be able to stand it. We say that, "The great glowing furnace smelts vajra." We are smelting vajra here. So everyone should take hold of their *hua-t'ou* and light their furnace--it will burn up all the filth of the evil realm of the five turbidities. Everyone should be particularly attentive to this. Use fire to burn clean the evil realm of the five turbidities and smelt out the real vajra, and that will amount to something. If you don't smelt genuine vajra, then it will have been useless, so please don't let the time pass by emptyly.

Light the fire in your furnace. You're cold? Don't be afraid of the cold. There's snow out there, there's ice? Well, inside yourself there's fire. So you don't need to fear the cold. If you can't light that fire, then you have to find a Good Knowing Advisor, and ask him how to light that fire. You should ask for the technique. Unfortunately, there are few Good Knowing Advisors here now. It's not easy to find one. If you want to find a Good Knowing Advisor, go to the Himalayas to see Shakyamuni Buddha. Ask our Elder Patriarch, Shakyamuni Buddha, how he endured such cold as in the Himalayas. Our Original Teacher will certainly be compassionate to you and will tell you clearly.

If you can't find the Old Patriarch Shakyamuni, because you say, "The Buddha's entered Nirvana," that's no problem. Go find the Patriarch Kasyapa. Go to Yunnan, to Chicken Foot Mountain, and find our First Patriarch, Old Kasyapa. Ask him his method for lighting the great furnace. And you say, "I won't be able to find him." Well, if you can't find him, what are you going to do? There's nothing you can do if you can't find him. You've got to look! Don't just give up if you can't find him.

Somebody says, "We're going to need some travel money to go to India to find a Good Knowing Advisor, or perhaps to go to

Yunnan to see the Patriarch Kasyapa. If my mind is sincere, I will certainly get a response.” It’s not necessary for you to prepare the fare; nor is it necessary to go as far as India or Yunnan. Shakyamuni Buddha has already come to our Gold Mountain Monastery, and the Patriarch Kasyapa is also here. If you recognize them, then there’s a way open to you. If you don’t recognize them, then no matter where you go, you will not be able to find them. If you recognize them, they will recognize you. If you don’t recognize them, they won’t recognize you.

So you should develop your skill and apply the paramita of patience. You have to be able to bear things, and within that ability to bear, you’ll find Shakyamuni Buddha, just as the paramita of patience is the Patriarch Kasyapa’s door of cultivation. When there’s pain, bear it; be patient with what you can’t be patient with. Then you’ll give rise to, (1) patience with production (2) patience with dharma and (3) patience with the non-production of dharmas. You have to be patient. So it’s said, “Patience is a priceless gem, but nobody knows how to use it well. If you are able to use it, how can you worry about not obtaining the Way?” Don’t worry, go on cultivating.

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“If you can’t renounce death, then you can’t change your life. If you can’t renounce the false, then you can’t realize the true.” If you can’t renounce death, then you can’t change your life. This means that if you develop your skill, then you’re not afraid of dying. I’m not talking about sickness, I’m not talking about pain, I’m not talking about suffering--I’m talking about death. Even if someone says, “Oh, then we won’t cultivate, because even if we cultivate we will die. We won’t develop our skill.” That’s called, “If you can’t renounce death, you can’t change your life.” If you die a great death, then you can live a great life.” “If a man wants

to not die, it is necessary first to be a living dead man.” You don’t want to die? Then you should now be as if you’re dead. If you’re dead, then if somebody kicks you with their foot, you don’t know. And if you’re scolded, you don’t hear it. Before you’ve died, if you can be like that, that’s wonderful. Then there’s hope for you. Your perfection of patience will certainly be accomplished.

When Hsu Lao was 53, in the Jen Ch’en year (1889), he went along with Pu Chao, Yueh Hsia, Yin Lien, and several other Old Cultivators of the time, to go to Chiu Hua Mountain, where they made a hut and lived. Dharma Master Pu Chao lectured the *Avatamsaka Sutra*. And a lot of people came, because most masters didn’t lecture according to the “five teachings” of the Hsien Shou. They mostly lectured according to the Tien Tai; and since Pu Chao was there discussing the five teachings, many came to hear him. During the first year, lots of people came, and the second year the Elder Master Ti Hsieh came to stay for the summer. In the third year they still lectured on the Sutra, and in the fourth year the problem came.

What was it? Well, in Yang Chou at Kao Min Tze, the Abbot Yueh Lang decided to give everybody some bitterness to eat. What was he going to do? He was going to have twelve Chan sessions, and he wanted the Chan cultivators from the ten directions to come. The session was to begin on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, and so prior to the fifteenth day of the seventh month, people had to make their reservations in order to participate. At Chiu Hua Mountain, the Dharma Masters wanted to go to the Chan Session, and they selected the Venerable Master Hsu Lao to go first to Kao Min Tze and make their applications, then afterwards the others would join.

The Elder Master Hsu Lao, having been selected, went down the mountain. The road he took went through Ti Kang, and at Ti Kang there was a river to cross, which had to be done by boat.

At that time the Venerable Master Hsu Lao was perhaps holding the precept against the holding of money--it's not for certain, but in any case, he didn't have any money with him. He wanted to cross the river, but the ferry cost money, and he didn't even have eight and a half cents. So, the boat didn't wait for him; it left without him. Because it was raining and there was a lot of water on the road, the Venerable Master Hsu Lao followed the road that went along the river. Since the water was all over the road, he couldn't tell what was deep and what was shallow, and as he was walking along, he suddenly fell into the river. The river was high and flowing very rapidly. Probably at about noon he fell in, and more than likely, he wasn't able to swim. So, he was tossed about in the water for a day and a night.

The next day he was being carried pass T'sai Shih Chi, and at that point he was caught in a fishermen's net. When the fishermen pulled up the net, they found a human fish in it. When they looked more closely, they realized that it wasn't a human fish, it was a human being! And, when they looked closer, they realized that it wasn't just an ordinary person, it was a monk. They wondered how the monk had fallen into the water. They thought that he wasn't breathing, so the fishermen went to the local temple, called Pao Chi Monastery, and asked a monk to come and identify the body.

At Chih Shan, this particular monk and the Elder Master Hsu Yun had lived together, so that he knew who Master Hsu Yun was. He said, "Oh, that's Dharma Master Te Ching." Although the Dharma Master had been in the water a day and a night, they were able to revive him with artificial respiration. However, this kind of disaster had caused him to be more dead than alive--his mouth and nose and ears were bleeding, and he was bleeding from his rectum and in his urine, too. That was the twenty eighth day of the 6th month. He lived a few days at Pao Chi Monastery and

then quickly left and went on to Kao Min Tse Monastery to make a reservation.

The guest prefect saw him and noticed that he was very pale, and he asked Master Hsu Yun if he was sick, to which the Master replied that he wasn't. So you see that Chinese Dharma Masters, even those as high as the Venerable Master Hsu Yun occasionally lied expediently. He basically was sick--he'd practically drowned, and yet he didn't say so. He said that he wasn't. Why did he expediently lie? He was afraid that people would worry about him--afraid that they would be anxious--and he didn't want to cause that kind of worry.

Then Master Hsu Yun went to see the Abbot, Yueh Lang, and Yueh Lang asked, "How many Masters are coming from Chiu Hua Mountain?" And he said, "Oh, at the very least fifteen or sixteen." He named the Dharma Masters and said, "They asked me to come first to make reservations. When the Chan begins, they'll be here." After they finished talking, Master Yueh Lang asked Hsu Yun to act as abbot. He said, "There are a lot of things connected with this Chan Session this year, and I can't handle all of it myself. Besides, I'd like to participate in the Chan Session, so would you represent me as Abbot?" Hsu Lao was not polite and refused. Now, the rules at Kao Min Monastery were extremely severe; if you were asked to take an office, and you refused, that was taken as a slight to the entire assembly. So, this was a very severe predicament. So, the Abbot said, "You come here Te Ching, and I ask you to put forth your resolve with regard to the permanent dwelling, and you don't do it."

Abbot Yueh Lang scolded Hsu Yun severely, and when I say severe, I mean that he was really severe. He didn't just call him a gluttonous worm or a lazy worm, as simply as that; he scolded him to the point that there was no way to bear it. He was as severe as he could be--just trying to make it impossible to bear. That's

the way Good Knowing Advisors are sometimes. They're not like me, this evil advisor, who doesn't even dare scold you. Not only was Hsu Lao scolded, but he was beaten with the incense board. The Abbot took the incense board and hit Hsu Lao on the shoulders ten times. Each side five times. And he said, "Let's see if you can take that. What kind of session are you going to sit? You don't even offer to help in the least." The Abbot scolded Hsu Yun and hit him, and this was done in front of everybody. Hsu Yun wasn't scolded when he was alone with Abbot Yueh Lang. The more people there were around, the more severe was the scolding. Some people say that this is wrong, but actually this is a method of teaching one to be apart from marks--teaching one not to have a mark of self. If there isn't a mark of a self, then who's being scolded?

After being scolded and beaten, Hsu Yun went into the hall; the Session began, and the Elder Master Hsu Yun's sickness arose. He bled from all his bodily apertures, and the sickness worsened day by day. Not only did he hemorrhage, but his essence also flowed. See how severe the illness was? The sickness was so bad that Hsu Lao was just waiting to die. But he said, "If I'm going to die, I'm going to do it sitting in this session. Even if I die, I'm going to sit in this session."

He sat for more than twenty days, and then the sickness suddenly abated--it completely left him. At the instant the sickness left, his mind and nature became pure. So it is said, "When the mind is pure, in the water appears the moon. When the mind is fixed, then there are no clouds in the sky." There weren't any clouds, and so his mind became empty cloud, Hsu Yun. At that time, his skill was developing very well. His body and mind were clear. He had seen through it, put it down, and was very comfortable--extremely comfortable.

At that time, from Tsai Shih Chi, the Pao Chi Monastery

Abbot, Te An, sent clothes and food and other things to the Chan Session. In China, when there are Chan sessions going on, the monks from the small temples of the ten directions resolve to contribute and tie up conditions. When Te An came and saw that Hsu Yun was completely well with no sign of sickness, he asked, “Oh, you’re better now?” And people asked what it was all about—what he meant.

During all the time of the Session, Hsu Yun hadn’t mentioned to anyone that he had fallen into the river and was pulled along by the current for a day and a night and finally caught in the fishermen’s net. He hadn’t talked about it. But Te An told everybody about it when he came, and everybody much admired the Elder Master Hsu Yun. They respected that although he had met with such an extreme situation he still wanted to cultivate. Everyone very much admired him. After that, they didn’t ask him to take his turn at watching the hall; since he didn’t have to take his turn, his skill developed very smoothly. He got quite a response. Then he spoke a verse. He said,

*The cup shatters to the ground;
 sound clear and penetrating.
 Empty space is smashed to smithereens.
 The mad mind at that moment ceased.*

Now we who are developing our skill should reflect upon ourselves. Should we intentionally take a cup and drop it, listen to the sound of the cup, and then become enlightened? If it’s like that, I’d like to buy a few more teacups, because one, two, three, four, five, aren’t enough. You hear one, and you don’t wake up; then you have to hear two, then three, to hundreds of thousands of ten thousands, and then perhaps you might have an opportunity to become enlightened.

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With the Dharma door of investigating Chan, you need to have patience. So it's said, "After sitting a long time, there's Chan." After you sit for a long time, then very naturally you'll enter dhyana. You'll have some good news. If you don't sit long and just act like you're riding a horse, looking at the flowers or going to see a play, you won't have any response. So if you want to investigate dhyana you have to be courageous and vigorous.

Strike up your spirits! Do battle with the demon king of birth and death, and be victorious over the lazy demon. Be determined to defeat the demon who enjoys ease. If you can strike up your spirits and do the work, then you'll certainly get some good news. What's most important is not to be afraid of your legs hurting or your back hurting. Don't be afraid you aren't going to get enough sleep. Those who have this kind of courageous energy and spirit will certainly succeed.

Today, at the beginning of this Chan session I don't want to talk too much, because when you talk too much, it's useless. What's most important is to hurry up and cultivate. Before we begin, I have a four-line verse to speak to everyone. If you can remember this verse, and not forget it, it will be a great help to you in your cultivation in dhyana. The verse says:

*All Buddhas were originally living beings.
Through vigor and courage they transcended
the common lot, cultivating the Dharma doors
without any laziness.
Blessings and wisdom both perfected,
a great enlightenment was accomplished.*

The verse says: "All Buddhas were originally living beings." Originally all Buddhas weren't Buddhas, they were living beings, just like you and me. And although you and I are now living beings, we are future Buddhas. All that's needed for us now is

to be vigorous and apply effort, and in the future we certainly can become Buddhas. How did the Buddha become a Buddha? After all, he was a living being. “Through vigor and courage they transcended the common lot.” It was because he vigorously and courageously applied effort. He was very stupid. You could say that in the past, all Buddhas have been just as stupid as you and I are. Stupid to what extent? To the extent that they weren’t interested in getting a bargain for themselves. They weren’t interested in helping themselves out, but only in helping other people. So they were courageous and vigorous in practicing the Bodhisattva Way.

“Through vigor and courage they transcended the common lot.” They surpassed ordinary people, and so they became Buddhas. They reached the goal they wished to reach. They have already succeeded in their aims. “Personally cultivating the Dharma doors without any laziness.” That’s the way all Buddhas did it. They personally cultivated the Dharma doors without any laziness, no matter what Dharma it was. They cultivated courageously and vigorously without any laziness.

“Blessings and wisdom both perfected, a great enlightenment was accomplished.” Because at all times they were not lazy; at all times they cultivated all the Dharma doors. Since cultivating other Dharma doors was an aid to the Dharma door of Chan, their blessings were cultivated to perfection, and their wisdom was cultivated to perfection. They became greatly enlightened ones. Their great enlightenment was accomplished. So it says, “When the blessings and wisdom were both perfected, then a great enlightenment was accomplished.” You can deeply consider this verse and the doctrines in it. Although the verse is very simple, if you use it in your cultivation, it will have a very effective response, a very effective use. It will help you a lot. I can’t say any more. All I can say are these few words. Now, everyone, strike up your

spirits and begin the sit!

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All Good Knowing Advisors, we have come together to cultivate, to mutually help one another. Some of us work very well and we can help those who can't work so well. That's called mutually borrowing the light. You borrow my light, and I borrow your light.

The elder Dharma Master T'an Hsu said that the fish helps the water, and the water helps the fish. Here in the Chan hall, we can say that people help one another. You help me investigate Chan, and I'll help you investigate Chan. That's also mutually helping one another. When people work at cultivation to the point that there is a response, then they suddenly become enlightened.

What is enlightenment all about? It's waking up from the dream. We living beings are all dreaming. When you open enlightenment, you wake up from the dream. When you wake from the dream you say, "Oh-h-h . . .," you say, "Ah-h-h . . . , everything that was going on was being done in a dream." Before you become enlightened, you're in the dream, and you don't realize it. You don't know that you're dreaming.

Becoming enlightened is also called breaking through the black energy barrel. We are all in a black energy barrel now, covered by ignorance. Ignorance is a black energy barrel. Breaking open the black energy barrel is just breaking through ignorance. When ignorance is broken through, the Dharma nature appears. That means that your wisdom comes forth--great wisdom, great comprehension of everything. Those who have great comprehension of everything understand all phenomena and all noumena. They know about all the ten thousand things. They know why salt is salty, why vinegar is sour, why hot peppers

are hot, why candy is sweet, why huang lien (a medical herb) is bitter. They understand the nature of people and the nature of things, all the mysteries between heaven and earth. What they hadn't been aware of, they are now aware of. What they hadn't understood, they now understand. At that time, the self is like a mirror, and in the mirror absolutely anything at all can appear. Yet the basic substance of the mirror is that it has nothing in it. It's empty, without any substance at all. Basically, there is not one thing. Where can the dust alight. That's the experience of becoming enlightened.

After one becomes enlightened, one certainly doesn't use this simple human mind to think. One does not think, "Oh, I've become enlightened." It's not like that. Basically, one is just enlightened. It's not something you get from outside of yourself. Where does one go to find enlightenment? Just into the midst of non-enlightenment.

When you become enlightened, you can have great perfect-mirror wisdom. If you have great perfect-mirror wisdom, then you also have wonderful contemplating and investigating wisdom. If you have wonderful contemplating and investigating wisdom, then you can have the wisdom of doing what must be done. And, when you have the wisdom of doing what must be done, then you also have the equality nature wisdom, the wisdom of conducting yourself. These four wisdoms all gradually become perfect.

Becoming enlightened is simply awakening to a principle, a noumenon and understanding the noumenal aspect of the ten thousand things. When one is no longer upside-down, one is no longer confused. Clearly knowing, one does not perform an act that is not in accord with the Dharma. One does not go ahead and do it. Nor does one refuse to do the things which one clearly knows are proper. After becoming enlightened, one has no more afflictions, no more trouble. Inside you don't know there's a body

and mind; outside you don't know there is a world. Yet saying that you don't know there's a world or a body and a mind is not to say you aren't aware. You are unattached. You say, "If my body has to endure a little bit of suffering, well, let it suffer," because you can bear everything. In all situations you have samadhi power. You are not upside down.

Now to speak frankly about what not being upside-down means, we say that it means not having any desire, being totally devoid of thoughts of desire. One has no desire for food. No matter what you eat, it's very tasty, or no matter how unappetizing the food is, you're able to eat it. You don't consider very appetizing things so fine. You don't enter form, sound, smell, taste, tangible objects, or dharmas. When you become a first stage Arhat, you don't enter form, sound, smell, tastes, tangible objects, or dharmas. "Not entering" means you don't become attached. You're not turned by experiences involving form, sound, smell, tastes, tangible objects, or dharmas. It will be impossible for you to want to look at beautiful things from morning till night; it will not be the case that you cannot put down beauty, or that from morning till night you are unable to give up beautiful sounds, or to put down smells, or to give up tastes, tangible objects and dharmas.

But, now you are attached to all of these. Since you have attachments, you are unable to not enter these realms. If you don't have any attachment, then you don't enter them; you are not turned by objects of form, sounds, smells or tastes, tangible objects, or dharmas. You aren't shaken by the experiences involving the six dusts. When you take your noon meal, you don't eat a single grain of rice; when you put on your clothes, you haven't put on a thread. Why? Because you don't have any attachment. All attachments are empty. The attachment to self is gone, the attachment to dharma is gone. If you don't have an attachment to self, but you still have an attachment to dharma, that won't

work. That still can't be called not entering form, sound, tastes, tangible objects, and dharmas. When the attachment to self is empty, and the attachment to dharma is empty, then the origin of great perfect-mirror wisdom manifests. Before, I spoke of not being upside-down. That simply means to be in control. Being in control in what way? I spoke earlier of the desire for food and the desire for sex. One also shouldn't have the desire to be a leader. What does desire to be a leader mean? It means that wherever one goes, one has to be the leader.

One also has no desire for fame and profit. "If I do this thing, in the future I'll have a good reputation, I'll get a lot of profit from it." That's a desire for fame and profit. In general, there is no desire at all.

Most crucial is sexual desire. If you have skill, *kung fu*, then your thoughts of desire will not arise. If you are really in control, then your sexual organs will not move. Even though you may not want your mind to move, as soon as you encounter some object of sexual beauty, it moves, if you aren't in control. The more you tell your mind, "Don't think about sex, don't think about sex," the more it happens, even to the point where it controls you and turns you upside-down. It bullies you into doing things you wouldn't ordinarily want to do--the upside-downness of men and women.

Even that's not enough. Sometimes you reach the point where you're upside-down with yourself. Some people masturbate, and some people think about sex. These are both upside-down. Such people aren't in control. If you're in control, you can be together with a woman and your sexual organs won't move. That's being in control. And no matter what kind of state comes from outside to tempt you, you are unmoved. That's called being in control. You say, "Oh, I have *kung fu*, I have skill, I sit in Chan." Yet sitting in Chan day by day, your sexual desire gets stronger, gets greater, until the point where you enter deviant knowledge and

deviant views, and you desire to indulge in cultivating in pairs. You think, “Men and women sitting together transmitting the unmarked great Dharma. That’s really wonderful!” It’s too pitiful. Why do people end up thinking that? It’s because they aren’t in control. If you’re in control, then no matter how you’re tested, it’s no problem. Men and women can be face to face for several tens of great kalpas, and their sexual organs will never move. Then that counts as your having skill, some *kung fu*. If you can’t be that way, then you’d better be able to bear some pain, bear some suffering, and progress with courage and vigor.

If people still don’t know what I’m talking about, then we can have a test right here and now. We’ll see who is true and who is false. Everyone can take off their clothes and stand together, and we’ll see if anybody’s sexual organs move. We’ll test everybody out. I’m not afraid of anything; I’m not bashful, because basically that’s just the way things are. The question of whether or not you have kung fu is just at that place. Just ask yourself, “Do you let your semen just casually flow out?” And, if it doesn’t go, then do you try to think of ways to get it to go out? Do you masturbate all the time? Do you involve yourself in homosexuality? Do you have a lot of filthy thoughts? If so, then you absolutely don’t have genuine wisdom or any light. Light? Sometimes you say, “Oh, that person has a really great light.” Why does he have light? Because he doesn’t let his treasures go--the Buddha jewel of his own nature, the Dharma jewel of his own nature, and the Sangha jewel of his own nature. He doesn’t let them get scattered. If you can really keep your essence from leaving, then that’s the Sangha jewel of your own nature. If you can keep your essence from going, that will cause your body to become very strong. That’s called being filled with Dharma happiness. If you can bring to perfection your own originally existent Buddha nature, that’s the Buddha jewel.

The Buddha jewel of your own nature, the Dharma jewel of your own nature, and the Sangha jewel of your own nature are right there within you. Don't look for them outside anywhere. No matter how many years you study the Buddha Dharma, if you can't be in control, if you let your essence go casually, you will be very lax and will have no vigor at all. You will be useless. All the time you will have studied will have been useless. You will not have obtained any real use from it, nor will you be able to bring forth genuine wisdom.

In order to have genuine wisdom, you absolutely must have samadhi power. In order to have samadhi power, you first have to develop your precept power. Precept power is guarding your essence and keeping it from going. You say, "Wow, that's not easy." If it were easy, anybody could do it. We wouldn't have to wait for you to come and cultivate. Long ago, sexual desire would never have gotten around to you.

As to this matter, you must be careful in all places. If you eat too much, that won't do. If you eat too much, your essence can go. Even if you don't masturbate and don't involve yourself in male-female relationships, but you eat too much, your essence can still go.

You say, "Well, if eating too much does it, then I can eat a little less. Okay, yes." But, if you have a big temper, then every time you lose your temper your essence goes. So you have to be patient. This is why you have to be patient. Be patient when you can't be patient. When it's impossible to be patient, you still have to be patient.

When one speaks of cultivating, one has to talk about this doctrine. You have to bear what you cannot bear. Then, after awhile, you will have some accomplishment. So, why is it that people who cultivate the Way want to have a nature like ashes? No fire, no anger. You say, "My treasures are always going." If

you have that much temper, how can you possibly contain them? If you could have that much temper and still contain them, then there would be Buddhas with big tempers. Everybody would become big-tempered Buddhas. So, what's really important in cultivating the Way is not to have any temper.

As soon as you lose your temper, everything goes. If you work too hard, you work until you're too tired, that won't do either. Your essence can go then too. In cultivating the Way, all sides of you, all the conditions, have come together. Then you can have some success in your cultivation. Not just one principle, one Doctrine, leads to accomplishment. You must have no temper, you must not eat too much, you don't want to get too cold, you don't want to get too hot, you don't want to get too thirsty, you don't want to get too hungry. You have to cultivate everything properly. Then you can have some accomplishment.

But, I want to say this doctrine clearly. What I have said is for people who have left the home life. People at home, people who are married can't do it this way. You can't say, "Oh, I heard Shih Fu say that we shouldn't have any sexual desire, so we are going to cut off all relationships." That's not right, because you've already entered that cage. You have to come around slowly. If you cut it off suddenly, that's just stupid. You cause unhappiness in your family, and that's wrong. You want to do it very gradually, and then it's all right.

For instance, a few days ago one of my disciples called. Both husband and wife were on the phone crying. They wanted to be divorced, "Because your magazine said it was dirty." The wife said, "He says I'm filthy. Am I dirty? I'm really dirty, but I don't think I'm dirty." Talking on the one hand, crying on the other. "Should we cut off our sex?" "Should we get divorced?" And, I couldn't speak English. I just said, "No, no, no, no. Don't cry, no, no, no." You must have common sense. You have to understand

that if you are involved in that karma, if you come face to face with that, you can't just go overboard and not be the least bit humane. What is humane is what is in accord with the Buddha Dharma.

Now, it's really difficult to talk about this dharma. Don't listen to what I've said. It would be better to go ahead and listen to what you say. Don't try to figure out what your Master's all about. As to your Master, not only you, but even third and fourth state Arhats don't know what I'm all about. I'll tell you today that even when you become fourth state Arhats, you aren't going to know. And, here you are not even first fruit. All of you are named Kuo, Kuo, Kuo, yet no one here has reaped any fruit.

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Those who investigate dhyana want to subdue their bodies and minds. You subdue the body by exercising it, by walking and then sitting. Walking is movement. You apply your skill in movement. Sitting is stillness. You do the work of being still. Movement aids stillness. Stillness also aids movement. So it is said, one is still for the sake of movement. One moves for the sake of stillness.

Movement is exercise; stillness is quiet sitting. So it's said, "Walking, standing, sitting, and lying down, don't be apart from it." To be apart from it is a mistake. Ultimately, what is "it"? "It" is, "Who is mindful of the Buddha?" That one thought. Walking, the thought is, "Who is mindful of the Buddha?" standing it is, "Who is mindful of the Buddha?" sitting it is, "Who is mindful of the Buddha?" lying down it is, "Who is mindful of the Buddha?"

If you can maintain "Who is mindful of the Buddha" when walking, standing, sitting, and lying down, and not be scattered, never cut off that one thought, that is *kung fu*. That is skill. The

word “who” is a wisdom sword. The word “who” is a precious vajra sword. The word “who” enlightens you. If you can keep the word “who” continuously in every thought without interruption, eventually you’ll have skill, *kung fu*. Then one day your black barrel of energy will burst open. Your investigation will have smashed it. That means you have broken through the coarse division of ignorance, not the subtle one. For the subtle section remains even in a Bodhisattva at the level of equal enlightenment. The Bodhisattva at the level of equal enlightenment still has one section of production-mark ignorance which has not been broken through. You can only say that you have cut through the view delusions.

View delusions are being confused by what you see. You need not talk about it too esoterically, too wonderfully. It just means you’re confused. You’ve been confused by views. Some state arises, you see it, and become confused by it. That’s view delusion. Thought delusion is being confused about principle and giving rise to discrimination. View delusion is giving rise to greed and love when you’re faced with a state. That’s view delusion. Before you encountered the state, before you saw it, you didn’t have any greed for it. Your love had not arisen. But the state comes along, you take a look, and greed and love arise. When does this happen? It happens because you haven’t any wisdom. Your ignorance is covering you over. Covered with ignorance, the light of your wisdom can’t flow forth.

Last night I talked about people’s thoughts of desire. I talked about the male organ not rising. Is it the case that it still can rise? It can. If you want it to arise you can cause it to do so. When you don’t want it to, it doesn’t. That’s called being in control. Now last night I didn’t say this to you. I didn’t say that if you want it to move, it still can move, and if you don’t want it to, it doesn’t. So six or seven people started having false thinking. They thought

“Look! In America that’s just the most pitiful, gutless, lowest kind of person there is. In fact, he isn’t even considered a person.” So a lot of men are really afraid of being impotent, afraid they won’t be able to have intercourse with women. That kind of man is most pitiful.

Some people are perpetually afraid of impotency. Do you know what happens quite often to those very ones? They develop that kind of sickness. They have to go see a psychologist, they give the psychologist a lot of business. The person himself goes out and works to make money to pay the psychologist. A lot of people are like that. They have those false thoughts, thinking, “That kind of person is most pitiful.” So I wanted to make this point clear today. It’s not that he’s not able to move it. It means he has subdued it. He’s subdued his mind. So when we speak of subduing one’s mind, it’s just concerning this matter.

Subduing your own mind is called “quelling the dragons and taming the tigers”. When the Way is lofty, the dragons are quelled and the tigers are tamed. When the virtue is weighty, one is in companionship with the ghosts and spirits.

To quell the dragons and tame the tigers. Whether man or woman, the thoughts of desire are like a tiger. If you can control them, if you can remain in control, that’s called taming the tiger. If you cannot, you lose your temper. Temper is like a dragon. As soon as you lose your temper it has the strength and the spiritual transformations and penetrations of a dragon.

This analogy is very apt. The temper is like a dragon. A dragon can hide away or it can manifest. When it’s hidden away, you don’t have any temper. When it manifests, your temper flows out. Your temper can be big, or it can be small. If you can get really angry, that’s a really big dragon. If you can just get annoyed, that’s a little dragon. If you don’t lose your temper at all, that’s the dragon behaving himself. You’ve subdued the dragon. So subdue

the dragon and tame the tiger. It's just that kind of *kung fu* which does it.

To subdue the mind is to subdue the mind of lust. You should quell the lustful thoughts of sexual desire in your mind and then you will have real skill. If you can watch over yourself that means you're in control. When you're in control, you're not turned by states. You can't be upside-down. If when you meet up with these states you are just upside-down and unable to put it all down, then you're not in control. When you're not in control, then ignorance gets heavier day by day. So when we investigate Chan, dhyana, it is so we can smash ignorance, subdue our minds, bring out the stillness within movement, and the movement within stillness. Movement and stillness are not two. Movement and stillness are one.

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When that's been done, then I will grant that you have had a minor response. To talk too much is of no use. It's still up to you to work at whatever *kung fu* you're developing, and when it all comes together you will have a major response. Okay?

In the Chan hall, we subdue the body and subdue the mind. In subduing the body, we refine the body into a vajra body, an indestructible body. In subduing the mind, we increase the Bodhi mind day by day and decrease the mind of false thinking day by day. So use patience in your cultivation.

Cultivation is cultivating bitterness which you do not want to cultivate. You shouldn't feel that at the first signs of pain you are going to retreat. When we investigate Chan and sit in meditation, your mind must be durable, as durable as vajra. No matter how much your mind is grounded and polished, it doesn't change. No matter how it's refined, it doesn't change. It has that quality of

durability. For instance, when you're sitting in Chan and your back hurts, ask yourself, "Who hurts?" When you sit till your legs ache, reflect upon yourself and ask, "Who hurts?" With no self in evidence how can there be pain? If there is pain, you should bear it. When you have borne it to the ultimate point, a day will come when you will become enlightened.

So don't be afraid of the pain in your back, don't be afraid when your legs hurt. Force yourself to do what is difficult. Do what other people can't do. "What others can't do, I do. What others can't bear, I bear. What others can't cultivate, I cultivate." Eventually your *kung fu* will be realized.

Before your *kung fu* is realized you should work hard. When you have worked to the ultimate point--we need not even speak of pain--you won't know the sky is above, below you'll be unaware of the ground, and around you, you will be oblivious to people. At that time you unite as one substance with the great void, one substance with the Dharma Realm. Inside no body and mind, outside no world.

So it is said that the myriad things arise from nothing. Inside there's no body and mind, outside there is no world. Looking far, there's nothing; looking up close, there's nothing. This is what's meant by "looking in at your heart--your mind, your mind is not your mind, looking out at things, things are not things". That is the state in which you know inside there is no body and mind, and outside there is no world. There's no mind, no body, no world. All three are empty. Even the emptiness of the three is empty. It's also non-existent. Emptiness is non-existent; non-existence is also non-existent. Then, in a still and profound way your original face appears.

When your original face appears, you know, "Oh, basically that's the way it is!" But if you still have a thought of that's the way it is, then you're not empty. When the "that's the way it is"

thought is gone, that's really your original face.

When you're enlightened basically there isn't anything at all. Everything is clean, pure, bright light, your inherent self-nature. Your body becomes a living Tathagata.

If you can understand that basically there isn't anything at all, your body is just a living Buddha, a living Tathagata. But this isn't just "head-mouth zen" I'm talking. If you really get to that state, then it can be that way. If you haven't reached that level and you say, "I'm a living Tathagata," what kind of living Tathagata are you? That's very pitiful. Prior to enlightenment, don't be lax. Day by day, don't be lax. Don't be casual about the false thoughts you have. Didn't I say last night that in walking, standing, sitting, and lying down, you should protect yourself, mind your own business, look after yourself. You have a lot of gems in your household. Don't lose your gems. If you lose your gems then you will think to go outside and find gems. That's a case of relinquishing the root and grasping at the branches. You've relinquished your foundation and are clutching at branches. I've told you this often, but you keep letting it go by. True skill, true *kung fu*, isn't in any book, isn't in any sutra, or any shastra, or in any part of the vinaya. It requires that you actually, truly, do the work of cultivation.

The sutras just tell people the Way. They teach you how to cultivate. But if you merely know the Way and you don't cultivate, that's useless. That's as if you decide you are going to go to some city and you know the way there, but you don't go. If you don't go, then you won't get to the city. You won't be able to get to the treasures. If you don't get to the treasure chest, then you won't be able to get at the valuables that you wish. Sutras tell you the road to the treasury.

The vinaya is a method which teaches you how to get to the treasures. But if you know the method and you don't use it, then

you're never going to get to the treasury. The shastras discuss the doctrines, discuss how to get to the treasury. But if you merely discuss coming and going, talk about it back and forth, and you don't actually cultivate, to the ends of the boundaries of the future, you won't get to the treasury.

*When you're confused,
a thousand volumes are too few.
When you're enlightened,
one word is too much.*

When you're all muddled and unclear, you can look at a thousand books and it won't be sufficient. Still too few. If you have really become enlightened, if you've really penetrated to enlightenment, you have awakened, then one word is a lot of talk. You have no use for it. In the Chan school we discuss using the mind to seal the mind, not based on language and literature. There isn't any language or literature. The inheritance of the Singular Dharma is also called the Mind Ground Dharma. The Dharma door of the mind ground tells you to cultivate it, to recognize it. It is the light and wind of the original ground. It's not from any other place. It's also called the Mind Ground Dharma door. You won't find the Mind Ground Dharma outside. But if you return the light, search within yourself, apply your *kung fu* to the self-nature, you will recognize your own mind and see your own nature. That's what counts. So in the Chan school, they talk about enlightenment. They talk about "smashing your investigation" which means there's no further need to investigate, you've broken through it. When you break through your topic of investigation, then that is the time when, after enlightenment, one word is more than enough.

Several days ago, I said when you work you have to have three qualities: durability, sincerity, and constancy. Durability means your mind has to be as solid as vajra, so that you don't change it. For instance, when you're working at developing your

skill, you pay no attention to whether or not your practice has been of any benefit to you. You just strongly do the work. You must also be very sincere. You can't even have a hair's worth of artificiality in what you do. And you should be that way every day, constantly, unchanging.

You shouldn't wish for anything. You shouldn't have any hope of something. You shouldn't wish, for instance, "I wish I'd get enlightened, I wish I'd open my wisdom, I wish I'd get spiritual penetrations, I wish for some advantages." If you are one who truly cultivates the Way, you shouldn't have these kinds of hopes. Don't cultivate while harboring such wishes.

You say, "If there's no hope, what am I doing it for?" It just because there's no hope that you should do it. If it were something that was entirely feasible everybody would go and do it. But in this particular matter, it's not for sure that there will be any accomplishment. So you must think, "I'm definitely going to do this."

This is what is meant by "just paying attention to how the planting is going, and not worrying about the harvest." When a farmer plants his field, he carefully plants the seeds, and then takes care of them, nourishes them, weeds and waters them. He pays no attention to how many bushels his harvest will yield in the fall. He just takes very, very good care of the sprouts of grain when they come up. He doesn't think about the harvest.

Cultivating the Way is just the same. "I'm just cultivating." Pay no attention to whether or not you are going to become enlightened. With sleeping, eating, and wearing clothes, it should be the same way. When I'm hungry, I eat, and after I eat my fill I'm not hungry any more. When I'm cold I should put on clothes, so I won't be cold.

Now, when cultivating, the question of birth and death arises. Birth and death are like great hunger. We cultivate and use

the skill of the Chan school to feed birth and death, so that birth and death disappear. We exhaust birth and end death.

Not only is investigating dhyana that kind of Dharma door, if you hold mantras it works the same way. You should pay no attention to, “Oh, if I recite this mantra, I’ll get such-and-such a spiritual penetration or a certain kind of response” because just that one thought of seeking spiritual penetrations or seeking a response is a false thought. It’s a second thought. It’s not the number one truth. When you fall into the secondary truth that is a false thought. When you hold mantras you shouldn’t think of the kinds of advantages they will bring you.

Reciting the Buddha’s name is the same way. Just recite the Buddha’s name, “Namo Amitabha Buddha, Namo Amitabha Buddha,” time after time, just keep reciting. Pay no attention to whether there’s a response or not.

“I just take cultivation as my own. It’s what I should be doing.” If you can think like that, then you can really cultivate. For instance, when you investigate Chan, you just carry that one thought, “Who is mindful of the Buddha?” and you just look into it. You don’t look into it thinking, “Oh, when am I going to become enlightened?” Because if you have that thought there will never be a time when you become enlightened. Why? You are not on the ground of primary truth. You have a thought and then another thought on top of that thought until you have ceaseless numbers of thoughts. Thought after thought flowing on and on. You can’t become single-minded.

When you cultivate you should be single-minded. When you’re single-minded there is an efficacious response: when your mind is scattered, then you are obstructed. If you can turn your mind to one, there will certainly be responses with your skill. If you can’t become single-minded, then you won’t have any such responses. If your thoughts are all divided, then you’re stupid and

you can't become enlightened.

When we cultivate and work at meditation we must return to the root and go back to our source. When you return to the root, basically there isn't one thing. When you go back to the source, originally everything pervades the Dharma Realm to the bounds of empty space. There are no obstructions; there isn't anything in all creation. Originally there isn't anything at all, so where can the dust alight? What we think about, what we find necessary, what we wish for, are all the common mind, they are not the mind intent upon the Way. If you become single-minded and can subdue the common mind, then that is the mind intent upon the Way. The common mind is a false thought. The mind intent upon the Way is a true thought.

Those of us who cultivate the Way should first understand the Dharma of the Four Truths, which are: suffering, accumulation, extinction, and the Way. This is the first turning of the Dharma Wheel by the Buddha when he spoke Dharma for the five bhikshus. The first is the truth of suffering, the second is the truth of accumulation, the third is the truth of extinction, and the fourth is the truth of the Way.

First of all we must understand suffering. How many kinds of suffering are there? There are three sufferings, eight sufferings, and all the limitless sufferings. The three sufferings are: the suffering within suffering, the suffering of decay, and the suffering of process. When you are poor and in addition have nothing to eat, no place to live, and no clothes to wear, you experience the suffering within suffering.

The suffering of decay involves wealthy people. Now they're not poor but sometimes their wealth is destroyed. It decays; it goes bad.

The suffering of process occurs when you go from being young to being middle-aged, to being old, to your death. It is the

continual flow in thought after thought of birth, old age, sickness, and death, which in every thought never ceases. And you aren't in control. For instance, when your eyes start to go bad, you can't be in control and say, "Don't go bad. I don't permit you to go bad." You aren't the owner. When your ears go deaf, you have no control over them. You can't say, "Don't go deaf." Once again you can't be in control. When your teeth fall out, you don't have any way to tell your teeth not to fall out. In all these cases, you aren't in control. When you get sick and you think to arrest the sickness, you once again aren't in control. When it's time to die and you don't want to die, you still aren't in control. That's the suffering of process, a life-time suffering of process.

The eight sufferings are the suffering of birth, the suffering of old age, the suffering of sickness, the suffering of death, the suffering of being apart from those you love, the suffering of being together with those you hate, the suffering of not getting what you seek, and the suffering of the roaring blaze of the five skandhas. So the Buddha turned the Dharma wheel of the Four Truths for the five bhikshus. He said, "This is suffering; it is oppressive by nature. This is accumulation; it beckons one by nature. This is extinction; its nature is that it can be certified to. This is the Way; its nature is that it can be cultivated." Then he said, "This is suffering; I already know it. This is accumulation; I have already ended it. This is extinction; I have already certified to it. This is the Way; I have already cultivated it."

Then he said, "This is suffering; you should know it. This is accumulation; you should cut it off. This is extinction; you should certify to it. This is the Way; you should cultivate it." He turned the Dharma wheel of the Four Truths, and Ajnatakaundinya, whose name is interpreted as "understanding the fundamental limit", became enlightened as soon as he heard the Buddha speak this Dharma. So he's also called "the first to understand". He

was the first to understand the Buddha Dharma and to become enlightened, to certify to the fruit of Arhatship. People who cultivate the Way should understand these Four Truths. Formerly an American who studied the Buddha Dharma asked me if there was really such a thing as the Dharma of the Four Truths. That's the kind of question he asked.

In America there are also self-proclaimed Buddhist groups who do not bow to the Buddha, who do not recite sutras, and who do not hold mantras. They ask, "Basically everybody is a Buddha, what's the sense in bowing to the Buddha? The sutras were spoken by a person, the Buddha spoke the sutras, what's the use in reciting the sutras?" But those of deviant knowledge and deviant views hear these doctrines and find a little meaning in them. "Take a look at that, without bowing to the Buddha or reciting the Buddha's name one can just become a Buddha. That's certainly the skill-in-means within skill-in-means. An excellent Dharma-door!" So they follow these people and learn how to be pieces of wood. Whenever they see the Buddha they stand stiff as a board, when they see the Dharma they are like statues, they don't move. They are even less respectful when they meet the Sangha.

This is really pitiful. Some people say within Buddhism the Small Vehicle is good. Others say within Buddhism the Great Vehicle is good. Some people say the Great Vehicle is phony, others say the Small Vehicle isn't true.

In the end what would you say is right? Which is false and which is true? Which is right and which is wrong? This is an example of working, applying your effort to self and others and to right and wrong. Originally within the Buddhadharm there was no Great Vehicle or Small Vehicle. There was only the Buddha Vehicle and no other. But as time went on, the Buddha's undesirable disciples, his disobedient disciples, made divisions

of great and small within his teachings and divisions of right and wrong. From that point until the present, categories and divisions have not been abandoned, and so there are very, very few first-stage or second-stage or third-stage or fourth-stage Arhats who are certified Arhats.

Some people cultivate the Bodhisattva Way and benefit self and benefit others, enlighten themselves and enlighten others, take themselves across and take others across. Yet because they attach to the appearance of self and others, it becomes false and empty. This is why when I came to America I took as my motto, “Everything is Okay”. When the disciples scold me, it’s okay with me; when the teacher teaches me, it’s okay with me. When I encounter a living patriarch, that’s okay too.

Nine years ago a disciple who is here now participating in this session heard me bring up this motto of “everything is okay” and he had an opposing opinion. I don’t know if he still remembers this because it happened nine years ago. He said that if someone came to where you were and forced you to give them all your things, would that be okay? And this is what I said to him then.

I said, “He can take whatever he wants, he doesn’t have to use force; isn’t that okay?” Whatever he wants to take he can take, no need for him to force it away or steal it. If everything can really be okay with you then you’re really comfortable. You don’t have any problems, but it is really, really not easy. Whoever can have everything be okay will find all his problems solved. Okay.

* * * * *

According to the Small Vehicle, Buddhism is over 2500 years old. According to the Great Vehicle it is over 3000 years old. In Buddhism we find an attachment to the Great and Small

Vehicles, and much opposition between them. Those of Small Vehicle Buddhism won't admit there is a Great Vehicle. And in the Great Vehicle Buddhism, the attitude toward the Small Vehicle is condescending.

So, just within the Buddhadharma itself there arises this difficulty. You say I'm false and I say you're false; as a result, it's become the case that both are false, neither is true. That's because the Buddha's disciples didn't listen to the Buddha's instructions and made divisions of Great and Small.

An expression says one must enter as the master and come out as the slave. So if you are a Great Vehicle person, then the Great Vehicle is the master, the lord, and the Small Vehicle is the servant. And if you're of the Small Vehicle, then you say that the Small Vehicle is the master and the Great Vehicle is the servant. All this struggle occurs right in the basic substance of the Buddhadharma.

When I was in Los Angeles I said to a bhikku from Thailand, "The Small Vehicle should take a step forward and not be so attached. And the Great Vehicle should take a step back and not be so attached." When the two, the Great and the Small Vehicles, don't have any attachments, then they can become one. When they become one then they can obtain mutual benefit from one another, and not indulge in mutual slander.

In the Dharma-ending Age, all the Buddha's disciples do superficial work. They don't apply their work to the fundamental, actual places. And that's a very painful situation. Not only do people nowadays argue about Great Vehicle and Small Vehicle, but before in India there were two Bodhisattvas, Bodhisattva Asanga (non-attachment) and Bodhisattva Vasubandhu (heavenly relative). One of these Bodhisattvas studied the Great Vehicle, and the other one studied the Small Vehicle. The one who studied the Great Vehicle knew what the experiences were like for the one

who studied the Small Vehicle, but the one who studied the Small Vehicle could not fathom what the state of the Great Vehicle was like. He didn't know, because those of the Small Vehicle are not permitted to read the Great Vehicle sutras, even to the point that if you bring up the name of a Great Vehicle sutra you've broken a precept. That's how severe it is.

Now, Asanga was the older brother and Vasubandhu was the younger brother, and it was the older brother who studied the Great Vehicle Dharma. He studied the wonderful principles of the Avatamsaka. The younger brother studied the Small Vehicle, the sutras and the principles. Not only did he study the doctrines of the Small Vehicle, but he also wrote shastras which slandered the Great Vehicle. How many shastras did he write? He wrote 500 volumes--500 volumes of shastras which criticized the Great Vehicle, saying in what ways it was wrong, in what ways it was mistaken, and how the Buddha didn't speak the Great Vehicle Dharma.

Take a look at that; they were blood brothers and they took different roads, each thinking he was right, each thinking the other was wrong. Like fire and water. Although they were brothers, they were like fire and water; they weren't compatible. Asanga studied Great Vehicle principles of the Avatamsaka. He deeply entered the sutra store and had wisdom like the sea. And he thought, "My younger brother believes in the Small Vehicle Buddhadharma, that's too pitiful. I have to think of a way to convert him."

How was he going to convert such a stubborn brother who wouldn't listen to him? He thought up an expedient device. He wrote a letter to his younger brother and said, "I know that I am going to die soon. Before I die I would like to see you. I don't know if you can bring my wish to fulfillment." And the older brother wrote the younger brother the letter, but basically the younger brother didn't pay any attention to his older brother. He

never listened to what he told him. When he read the letter about how his older brother was about to die and that it might be the last time he would see him, he said, “Okay, I’ll go.” He’d go see his brother.

The two of them chatted a bit and the older brother said, “I’m about to die. There is a sutra that I haven’t finished reading and I haven’t any energy to recite the sutra. Could you help me out and finish reading the sutra to me?”

The younger brother said, “Welllll...sure I can do that.”

So he recited the Great Vehicle sutra out loud for his brother. And when he started reciting there was nothing special about it, but after he had recited for a while, he started to sweat and then he became really ashamed. He said, “Oh, the offenses I have committed are too many! I have been slandering the Great Vehicle sutras and then I come to find out the state of the Great Vehicle is this mysterious and wonderful! I’ve just been sitting in a well looking at the sky; trying to measure the sea with a calabash. I’ve made a grave mistake.” And then he pulled out his sword and pulled out his tongue with his hand and prepared to cut off his tongue. His older brother said, “Wait! What are you doing? Tell me about it first.”

His younger brother said, “Now that I have read the Great Vehicle sutras, I realize that in the past I’ve slandered the Great Vehicle and that it was a mistake. Since I’ve used my tongue to slander the Great Vehicle I want to cut out my tongue.”

His brother said, “Don’t be so stupid! Before you used your tongue to slander the Great Vehicle; now you know that was a mistake so use your tongue to praise the Great Vehicle. What in the world do you want to cut it out for? For instance, if somebody falls down, he pushes himself back up, he doesn’t just lay there.”

When his younger brother heard that, he saw it had a lot of principle so he didn’t cut out his tongue. He wrote the *Avatamsaka*

Shastra, all together 600 chapters, in praise of the *Avatamsaka Sutra*.

So it is not strange that people nowadays make discriminations between Great and Small Vehicles and say there are only Arhats, there aren't any Bodhisattvas or any Buddhas in the ten directions. They are still arguing ceaselessly and it's really too bad.

A few days ago, I said in Buddhism there shouldn't be any Great Vehicle and Small Vehicle, there is only the Buddha Vehicle. There is no other Vehicle. If you can look at it this way, then you won't be able to have so much attachment. Also, for the sake of the Dharma, you should forget yourself. For the sake of seeking the Buddhadharma, you should not spare body or life. So it is said that to the ends of space throughout the Dharma Realm, there isn't a place even as small as a speck of dust which is not a place where all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the past, the present, and the future have given up their lives.

All Buddhas and Bodhisattvas have renounced their lives for the sake of the Buddhadharma in order to seek true principle, to seek the unsurpassed Way.

The people today not only don't seek true principle, they also indulge in mutual slander of one another. The Small Vehicle slanders the Great Vehicle; the Great Vehicle slanders the Small Vehicle. Evolving in this way, the substance of Buddhism has grown into a lot of rights, wrongs, us and them, mine and yours--all these discriminations. They don't understand in the least that the practices which the past Buddhas cultivated had in them no sense of self and others, of right and wrong. They just cultivated many kinds of Dharma doors and did not criticize the dharma doors of any other people as being wrong.

Now I will give you an example of the way in which the Buddha forgot himself for the sake of the Dharma. Long ago,

prior to when Shakyamuni Buddha had become a Buddha, he cultivated all kinds of doors of conduct. Though he hadn't met a wise advisor to instruct him in the true principle, he was very sincere. And since he didn't have a good and wise advisor he used sincerity in seeking for one. And about that time a rakshasa ghost came along. It was a very, very ugly rakshasa ghost and when he got there he recited a verse. What did he say?

*All activities are impermanent,
characterized by production and extinction.*

Shakyamuni Buddha who was then in the causal ground long ago as a cultivator of the Way, heard him recite that much and recognized it as Buddhadharma. But the ghost had recited only half the verse. There was still another two lines. So he said to the ghost, "Please tell me what they are."

The rakshasa ghost said, "Tell you? Well, it's not as simple as that. I'm not going to tell you just like that, cause now I'm hungry. I don't have the energy to recite the last two lines of the verse. If you want to hear them, you should first renounce your life. I'll eat you and then we'll talk about it."

Shakyamuni Buddha in the causal ground said to him, "But if you eat me and then speak it, there won't be anybody to hear it. And then I won't have gotten any benefit and living beings won't have gotten any benefit. It would be better if you spoke it first and then ate me. If you speak it first and then eat me, then I'm agreed, that's okay with me."

The rakshasa ghost said, "Welll...Okay." So he, recited:

*All activities are impermanent,
characterized by production and extinction.
When production and extinction are ended,
still extinction is bliss.*

He finished speaking it and said, “Okay, I said it is already hard for me to bear my hunger. I want to eat you.”

Shakyamuni Buddha said, “Wait a minute.”

The rakshasa ghost said, “Wait for what? You aren’t going to keep your end of the bargain? That’s not fair. You can’t not keep your word. You told me if I said the end of the verse that you would renounce your life. You can’t back out. I won’t permit it.”

Shakyamuni Buddha said, “I’m not backing out. Wait a minute. I want to write that four line verse on a tree. And then later on when someone sees it and reads it, they will gain benefit from it.”

The rakshasa ghost said, “All right, write it on a tree.”

So Shakyamuni Buddha carved the words in the tree. When he finished, the rakshasa ghost said, “Okay, it’s time for me to eat you.”

Shakyamuni Buddha said, “It’s not sufficient just to write it on a tree, because after a long period of time the words will disappear. Then wind and rain will erode it. The words will fade away. Can you wait a minute while I carve the words on a rock? I will cut them in and then they will be there eternally. And living beings of the future will be able to see them. Wait a minute.”

The rakshasa ghost said, “Okay. If I have to wait, I’ll wait.”

And Shakyamuni Buddha carved the four lines into a rock. When he finished carving it he said, “Okay, now I’m inviting the rakshasa ghost to come and eat me.”

As soon as he had actually invited the rakshasa ghost to eat him, the rakshasa ghost ascended into empty space and turned into Shakra, the lord of the Heaven of the Thirty-three, who had come to test him to see how really sincere he was, to see if he could really renounce his body for the sake of the Dharma.

So if you can really give it up...

*If you don't give up death
then you can't avoid birth.
If you can't renounce the false
you won't realize the truth.*

So those of you who study the Buddhadharmā should truly renounce everything. If you have kindness, compassion, joy, and giving, the Four Boundless Minds, then you can work in response with the Way. Shakyamuni Buddha renounced his life for the sake of half a verse, for the sake of seeking the Buddhadharmā, for the sake of accomplishing the unsurpassed Way. But now cultivators of the Way can't put aside their thoughts of desire. All they know about is selfishness and benefiting themselves, of making a profit for themselves. They only know about themselves; they don't do it for the sake of the Dharma, or for the sake of the Buddha, or for the sake of the Sangha. But when they cultivate, they investigate Chan and sit in meditation, they do it all for their own sakes. They don't bring forth the heart of the Bodhisattva, they don't cultivate the Bodhisattva Way. They can't benefit themselves and benefit others, enlighten themselves and enlighten others, save themselves and save others. They can't do that and since they can't, they should at least save themselves, enlighten themselves, and benefit themselves in this session.

This matter of sessions has become the latest craze in America. Some people just come to take a look. Although it's a little bit bitter, they try it out to see if it has any flavor. But they're just going through the motions. In several years of having sessions, although there have been people who have attained benefit, they are few. Why? It is because the people who are here are in it for the experience. They aren't in it to really work at it, they aren't here for the sake of investigating Chan. It's not a case of forgetting their bodies for the sake of the Dharma. In

their minds the discriminations are very heavy. There are lots of distinctions being made. They sit here and if they aren't having this false thought, they are having that false thought. Sometimes they are running east, sometimes they are running west, south, north--they go everywhere.

So now this session will soon be over. In this last bit of time, if you work very well there's still a chance there will be a response. There's still hope. Hope for what? Hope that you will become enlightened a little sooner; that you will understand your mind and see your nature a little sooner; that you will recognize your original face a little sooner. Since I talk but can't really talk, and I explain things but can't really explain them, it would be better if I just didn't talk or explain. That would be better and all of you could run around and play some more and then sit and fight the battle a little more.

If You Just Keep Reciting

I see that people are not very clear about the Dharma-door of reciting the Buddha's name, and so they do the reciting very sloppily and don't perfect their skill. In cultivation, investigating Chan is just mindfulness of the Buddha, and mindfulness of the Buddha is investigating Chan. People who are able to investigate Chan are the ones who are able to be mindful of the Buddha, and being able to be mindful of the Buddha gives you the ability to investigate Chan. People who are mindful of the Buddha are the Buddha, whereas that cannot yet be said of those who investigate Chan. The reason is that when you are reciting the Buddha's name, "Namo Amita Buddha, Namo Amita Buddha," then the only thing in your mind is a Buddha, and eventually you will become a Buddha. The reason Amita Buddha comes to guide living beings is that living beings have already turned into Buddhas, and so he leads their true nature to the Land of Ultimate Bliss, and then:

The flower opens and one sees the Buddha.

But those who investigate Chan are still looking for the Buddha, wondering, "Who's reciting the Buddha's name?" They are searching, and don't dare admit they are the Buddha they are mindful of. Instead, they look into, "Who is mindful of the Buddha?" "Who is able to be mindful of the Buddha?" "Reciting the Buddha's name is who?" They keep looking and looking, running outside. But when you are mindful of the Buddha, the Buddha comes back into your nature and you don't have to search outside. Buddha recitations are held so that for an entire week you don't have any other false thoughts--you're just mindful of the Buddha, and then you can become one with the Buddha. If you

can do that, then you are sure to be reborn in the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss. So the Dharma-door of reciting the Buddha's name is especially fine.

“Well, what about investigating Chan?” you may ask. It's good too. But when you investigate Chan you have to suffer. First, there is the pain to put up with, and then you have to make sure at all times you're not having false thoughts. If you compare the two, Chan is harder than reciting Buddha which you can do any time and anywhere: “Namo Amita Buddha, Namo Amita Buddha.” If you are mindful of the Buddha, the Buddha will be mindful of you, and when the two mindfulness merge, you become a Buddha. This is a very wonderful Dharma-door! You haven't looked into it carefully, so you don't know its good points, and very few people attended when we held the session. It ended today, and now I'll tell you: You really missed a good chance. You missed it this year, but I hope that next year--this--year--you'll retrieve the chance and decide, “If there's another Buddha recitation session, no matter what, I'll take time off, however busy I am, and come recite ‘Namo Amita Buddha’.”

I'll tell you something else that is the absolute truth: What I like most is reciting Amita Buddha's name. When I'm asleep I recite, “Namo Amita Buddha”, and I recite it in my dreams. When I'm walking or if I'm standing, I'm reciting, “Namo Amita Buddha”. Walking, standing, sitting, and lying down are all done reciting, “Namo Amita Buddha”. Amita Buddha is standing all around me, because Amita Buddha wants to become one with me so there is no difference between us. Would you say that was wonderful or not? Is there anything that could be more wonderful?

Reciting the Buddha's name is the most wonderful of Dharma-doors. You haven't recited to the point that you have skill, so you don't know what I'm talking about. But when you

get to that point, then to the exhaustion of empty space and the Dharma realm everything turns into “Namo Amita Buddha”.

You may say, “What use is there in that?”

Well, what use is there in your not reciting? There’s nothing better than to be able to be with the Buddha every day. I’m not trying to give you regrets by saying this, but this year it’s really too sad that you missed the opportunity. Why do I say that? Several millions of years have gone by without our ever encountering a Dharma assembly for reciting the Buddha’s name, but this life we have managed to meet that wonderful Dharma and the conditions are about to ripen. All of you think it over: in this country how many places are there where Buddha recitation sessions are held? Not just in America, but in the entire Western Hemisphere, there are very few such places--for I’m constantly looking into history, and there aren’t any. But now that we have had the chance, we’ve missed it. So, next year if there’s another Buddha recitation session held, no matter what, don’t miss your chance! Cultivation has to be actually practiced, you really have to do it!

In investigating Chan, not only do you yourself fail to become a Buddha, you even lose yourself! See how you wonder, “Who recites the Buddha’s name?” Basically you’re the one reciting, but you fail to recognize who you are and wonder “Who?” What’s the point in losing yourself? That’s not so important, but you even lose the Buddha! For you have to look for the Buddha outside. You investigate, “Who is mindful of the Buddha?” Without it occurring to you to ask, “Who is it who is the Buddha?” “Who is being Buddha?” “Who becomes the Buddha?” Even if someone does investigate, “Who becomes a Buddha?” they are likely to figure, “Oh, it’s him; it isn’t me,” and get it wrong too. It’s very easy to take the wrong road, which is why Chan Master Yung-ming-Shou said:

*With Chan and with Pure Land,
One is like a tiger wearing horns.
This life a teacher of people,
In the future a Buddha--Patriarch.*

*With Chan but without Pure Land,
Nine out of ten take the wrong road.*

That happens because you start to have doubts like, “Oh, it’s not me who becomes a Buddha. I can’t become a Buddha.” Yet, even though it’s easy to go astray, there are lots of people who cultivate Chan, for if no one cultivates it, that Dharma won’t exist. I, too, investigate Chan, and I’ve been looking for a long time for who’s reciting the Buddha’s name, all over the place. Have I had any luck? Well, I’m not looking anymore. Why not? It’s because now I’m learning to be lazy, and smart. I’m not as dense as I was before.

You may say, “Oh, we can do that too!”

You can try if you want--it will work if you are able not to have any false thinking. But if you still have false thinking, you have to keep on looking. You have to employ the Dharma to stop false thinking. But once you’ve stopped the false thoughts, you no longer need to use the Dharma.

By saying this I’m causing people to have lots of false thoughts, such as, “It’s not my fault that I missed the chance to do the Buddha recitation session this year. It’s because the Abbot didn’t tell us clearly. If I had known before, I would have made sure not to miss the chance.”

I did tell you clearly, several million years ago; but you didn’t pay attention and forgot. So now I’ve told you again. There were people I caused to miss the chance, since they wanted to go home and visit their parents instead of doing the session and I

said okay.

Now you may wonder, “How can the Abbot do that, and make them miss such a chance?” I have my reasons. I thought, “It’s also a good thing for them to be filial. They can practice filial piety first, and cultivate afterwards.” So it was my fault. I know that if I had said, “No! No one is allowed to go on vacation! Everyone has to stay and do the session,” than lots of people would have participated. But I didn’t say that, though a time may come when I do. Actually, though, you can do what you want, and “everything’s okay!”

Endless Dharma Doors

The Chan School Dharma is apart from words and speech, and so it is not established from language--yet it is not really apart from words. Even the name, "Chan School," involves language. We who cultivate the Way should be cultivating non-attachment, whether it be to good and evil, fine or ugly, right or wrong, slight or important, great or small--none of that should be attached to. And we should cultivate and practice all 84,000 Dharma doors, for each is foremost. There aren't 84,000 second-rate ones or, for that matter, 84,000 important ones or unimportant ones. So when you cultivate the Way, if you cultivate even the seemingly most insignificant Dharma door to accomplishment, then it counts, and again it's your cultivation of it that counts if the Dharma door is as big as Mount Sumeru. It's not the case that the slight one is not important, while the one huge as Mount Sumeru is.

*From the small comes the great,
The near becomes the far,
Starting near goes to far.*

That's how one has success in cultivation. It's not to say, for example, "I'm not going to eat things I don't like the taste of, and I'll eat more of those foods that appeal to me more." People who cultivate the Way have to be heroically vigorous in cultivating whatever Dharma they are involved in. Although it may seem to be the most insignificant Dharma door, but if you are able to cultivate it, you can accomplish your Way karma. And it may be the most important Dharma, but you can't cultivate it, your Way karma won't be accomplished. If you fail to recognize an important Dharma, it becomes unimportant; an unimportant Dharma, if recognized, becomes important. It all depends on whether you

recognize it or not. For example, when you eat, do you know what the things you eat taste like? If you do, then you'll have feelings about whether they taste good or bad. But if you aren't aware of what they taste like, you won't know if they taste good or bad or what. As it is said:

*In the door of Buddha's work
Not one dharma is rejected.
In the substance of True Suchness,
Not one speck of dust is set.*

You can take any Dharma and cultivate it to accomplish Buddhahood. But in the self-nature of True Thusness, not even a dust mote can remain, which is why its light is all-pervasive.

The reason that one sits to cultivate the Dharma of investigating Chan is so one won't have any thoughts. It specified before that if only a single thought is not produced, that is called the Buddha. But can you go without producing a single thought? As you sit there, you think of all sorts of things you don't ordinarily think of, and remember a lot of long-forgotten circumstances that suddenly pop up again. Historical events from 700 and 800 years back now return to mind. Is that having a single thought arise? Of course not. How can you get there then? I'll tell you straight today: there isn't any way. There isn't any way to keep a single thought from arising--but you can get so that a single thought is not destroyed. For if it's destroyed, it can be produced, and if produced, it can be destroyed. But if you prevent its destruction you'll keep it from arising. How can you do it though? Well, take for example the one thought, "Who is mindful of the Buddha?" You can keep that "Who?" going non-stop. "Who?" It's searching for the "Who," not reciting "Who?" As long as you keep searching, that single thought isn't destroyed, and therefore it won't be produced. A single thought not being produced is the Buddha.

That's what the doctrine of the Chan School is all about. If

you can be such that not one thought is produced or destroyed, then the light of your wisdom will appear. It's not that you sit there and grit your teeth, square your eyes, and press all thoughts down with your fists so they can't get up. The more you try to do that, the more trouble you will have. Tell them not to arise and they'll insist on arising. You'll be holding mother thought down, but father thought will arise. Or father thought will stop, but older brother thought will come along, with younger brother holding up the rear. Pretty soon the whole family of six types of relations will be grabbing at you--seventh and eighth--the whole "kit and caboodle". "Seventh" is the seventh consciousness which will pull at you, and the eighth consciousness will drag you from the other side, a tug-of-war with you in the middle. The six types of close relatives are consciousnesses one through six. You'll be sitting there trying to investigate dhyana, and this one will want to chat with you, another to investigate a certain question. The eyes have visual questions, the ears auditory questions, the nose its nose questions and the tongue its tongue questions, the body has body questions, and the mind mental ones. The eyes will say to you, "Have you forgotten that beautiful form we saw today? So pretty! Did you like it or not?" The ears will say, "The music we heard today sounded so good, let's go listen to it again tomorrow." The nose will pose the question, "Evening in Paris smells so good, wouldn't you like to smell it again?" The tongue will propose, "There's not much point in just smelling the aroma of the best-tasting food. Only if it is tasted and eaten are its advantages obtained." The body will say, "I get the advantage, not you!" The mind says, "The feeling is entirely with me. None of the rest of you count." Those six types of relations hold a debate, and the seventh and eighth work at their tug-of-war. That really messes people up when they try to investigate Chan.

On Investigating The Hua T'ou (word head)

Now all of us have gathered together to investigate Chan. To investigate means to be single-minded. To be single-minded means that your mind does not wander off to one side, but that you concentrate on investigating your *hua t'ou*. As for the *hua t'ou*, any principle that can be pursued can be a *hua t'ou*. Right at the point when you are about to speak, but before you actually do so, is the location of the *hua t'ou* (literally, “word head”). After you’ve spoken, then it is no longer the word head, it has become the word tail. Before it is spoken, you carefully and exhaustively examine and drill into its principle and concentrate at every moment. Once you penetrate the entire principle, then you will open an enlightenment.

In regard to getting enlightened, there are great enlightenments and small ones, just as there are small pools, lakes, streams, rivers and the great sea. Upon opening a great enlightenment, you can completely understand everything, from how Buddhas are accomplished above to how living beings are brought into being below--you can understand it all. Above you can penetrate measureless kalpas and understand the ten thousand principles; below you can penetrate into the future realms without end, and understand all phenomena. Not only will you be able to comprehend the present, but in regard to the myriad things and principles of the universe, you will be able to read them like the palm of your own hand. At that point, you will not need to research or study, but will simply be able to understand these things naturally. You’ll have become a greatly wise person in the world.

Opening a great enlightenment is called “the Great Disclosure of Perfect Understanding.” It is immense, like the great sea which boundlessly, vastly encompasses all the tiny streams. Opening a small enlightenment is likened to a small pool of water; it is the attainment of some sort of pure state. By applying effort, you can obtain a sort of light ease. However, this light ease only comes about through incessant work and effort.

How does one apply effort? Be like the cat watching over the mouse-hole. Observe how a cat watches over a mouse-hole. He uses all his time and patience, waiting for the mouse to come out of its hole. As soon as the mouse emerges, the cat springs forward and grabs the mouse, and he never lets go. People who investigate Chan should be watchful and alert like that. Or you should be like the mother hen trying to hatch her eggs. The hen firmly believes that her brood will hatch, so she climbs on top of the eggs and sits...and sits...waiting for the chicks to hatch. She won't leave them even for a second, except sometimes to get a little something to eat or to relieve nature; but even then she'll go away only for a moment and immediately return to continue brooding on her eggs. At this point she is single-minded, totally focused in the here and now, using every bit of her patience to wait. Once the chicks hatch, the hen's job is accomplished. People who investigate Chan should be that way; you should look into your *hua t'ou* with just as much perseverance and concentration.

You should also be like the dragon nurturing its pearl. Every dragon has a precious pearl which it nurtures. It devotes its undivided attention to it and eventually the pearl becomes perfected. Therefore, investigators of Chan should not fear suffering or difficulty. Don't fear that your back aches or that your legs hurt. As it is said,

*Without enduring the cold that bites to the bone,
How can the plum blossom give off
such a heady fragrance?*

And further,

*If one can endure the suffering within suffering,
Then one will become a superior person.*

Investigating Chan is just laying down a foundation. After a firm foundation has been laid, a hundred-story skyscraper can be built on it. Skyscrapers start from the ground up, they don't emerge from empty space. You people who investigate Chan should in every moment singularly pick up your *hua t'ou* and never cease your investigation and drilling into it. "Investigating a *hua t'ou*" does not refer to the recitation of a phrase, but rather to drilling into it, boring through it, and examining it very closely--perhaps for five minutes, or ten minutes, or perhaps for an hour. If you are concentrated to the ultimate point, even if you investigate for an hour, it will seem like just a second has passed. Why? Because when you are concentrated, time and space are forgotten. If you can truly forget time and space and reach the ultimate point, then suddenly you'll break through and open a great enlightenment.

What No One Else Wants To Do

The aim of people who cultivate the Way is to become Buddhas

*Though confronted by a thousand demons,
they do not waver.
Though faced by ten thousand demons,
they do not retreat.*

They go forward in this way, all for the sake of the Unsurpassed Way. However, when Bodhisattvas get to the point where they could become Buddhas, they refrain from doing so; they choose to continue to accompany us living beings and forever cultivate the Way among us. They do not grasp at Proper Enlightenment. This vow-power of the Bodhisattvas transcends the selfishness of us living beings in infinite ways. Living beings are always looking out for themselves and are totally oblivious to other beings. Bodhisattvas have exactly the opposite attitude. No one likes to take a loss, but Bodhisattvas do. No one wants to benefit others, but Bodhisattvas do. Everyone wants to become a Buddha a little sooner, but Bodhisattvas want to yield the opportunity to become a Buddha to others. As long as living beings have not become Buddhas, Bodhisattvas do not grasp at Proper Enlightenment. The magnitude of their minds and the power of their vows should make us feel very ashamed. Every move we make is calculated to benefit ourselves. Everything we do is selfish.

We should pay close attention to what we have heard tonight

about this magnificent resolve of Bodhisattvas--that they do not grasp at Proper Enlightenment. Kuo Chen (Dharma Master Heng Sure) said that this was a great matter. Indeed, it is. Bodhisattvas want to do what no one else wants to do. Now we are studying the Buddhadharma and learning to be Bodhisattvas, so we should take the Bodhisattvas as models in our cultivation of the Way. With this in mind, go forth and apply effort to your practice of the Way.

But if you don't change your temper and cut off your afflictions, your cultivation will be of no great benefit. You can't just try to get out of work and say, "I won't talk, that way I won't have to do anything. I can be a self-ending Arhat and pay no attention to others and ignore everything else." Slow down, slow down--especially since you have just left the home-life. It is said,

*Go too fast, and you will trip.
Dally, and you'll fall behind.
Never rush and never dally
And you'll get there right on time.*

In cultivating,

*In the beginning it is easy to be vigorous,
But hard to maintain as you go along.*

You need to develop perseverance and become non-retreating.

Question: It is said that in Chan it is easy to catch a demon. What about this?

Answer: Some who cultivate are too selfish. Their view of self is too deeply rooted and they never forget themselves. They are

always selfish and self-seeking. Selfishness makes it easy to catch a demon. They don't truly practice the Bodhisattva Path. Real cultivation of the Bodhisattva Way is done without being anxious. One doesn't seek for quick ways to get enlightened and become an "instant" Buddha. So those who want to go so "fast" may catch a demon.

Some people who cultivate like to be special. They always want to stand above the crowd and be better than everyone else. They hope to obtain spiritual penetrations or some flashy states to make them stand apart from the herd. So it's easy for them to catch a demon. In Chan meditation, you just investigate Chan with one heart and have no other false thinking. If you can be like that, demons won't be able to get to you. This is because you won't be having a lot of false thinking or deviant views. People who investigate Chan and have no deviant knowledge and deviant views will not get possessed by demons. If you are public-spirited, open-minded, and unselfish--if you are not in a big hurry and trying to show everyone else up, but just turn your mind to one and work hard--then no demons can get you. It isn't that Chan leads to demonic possession or that it is in itself a dangerous practice. I mean, eating isn't dangerous, but if you eat way too much it can be. If you are greedy for flavors and over-eat, you can get sick. You abuse the purpose of eating. The same principle applies to Chan.

At The City Of Ten Thousand Buddhas...

The states which occur at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas are inconceivable, to the point that all the birds and beasts, all the flowers and grasses, all the trees and herbs exemplify the Dharma, speak the Dharma, and practice the Dharma. Although grasses, trees, and flowers don't actually speak, nonetheless they embody the ineffable wonder of the Buddhadharmā. They are,

*Apart from the mark of language and speech,
Apart from the mark of the mind's conditions,
Apart from the mark of the written word.*

In all four seasons--spring, summer, fall, and winter--they represent the Buddhadharmā.

*In the spring the white flowers bloom.
In the autumn the yellow leaves fall.*

If you can understand the principle behind the myriad transformations of nature, you will become enlightened. That is how Those Enlightened to Conditions awaken to the truth. They contemplate the Twelve Causal Conditions--all of which exemplify the Dharma.

All the creatures here at the City are speaking the Dharma. Black crows caw and white cranes call, each with its own sound. Black crows and white cranes--isn't that a matched couplet? Then there are the bluejays, who are the

thieves of the group. They're real bullies. Wherever there is something to eat, they just glare so no other birds dare make the first move. They all have to wait until the bluejays make off with the best of the food and only then are they allowed to pick over the remains. This is speaking the dharma of the "survival of the fittest"--those that are weak are eaten by the powerful ones. Is that taking life? Yes, they are speaking the dharma of taking life. The deer speak the dharma of deer, the rabbits speak the dharma of rabbits, the foxes speak the dharma of foxes...

Isn't it strange that before I made the announcement that everyone should take special care in protecting the wildlife here those foxes seldom showed themselves, but now that I've made that announcement, they are seen all the time in the most public places and don't seem the least bit afraid of people any more. If you walk past them, they will even parade before you. They'll greet you first! That's why it is said,

*All living beings have the Buddha-nature;
All can become Buddhas.*

They are here accompanying us in cultivating the Dharma. In every single dust mote here there are Buddhas and Bodhisattvas cultivating the Way. If you *did not have great good roots from past lives*, you wouldn't get to come and live here. *So don't take it for granted!*

When The Nature Is In Samadhi,
 The Demons Are Subdued,
 And One Is Peaceful Every Day

The “nature” refers to the self-nature inherent in us all. It also refers to the Buddha-nature and the kernel of humanity within us all. This kernel undergoes a thousand changes and a myriad transformations. You can’t explain it with just one theory. The nature can also be called “humaneness” (仁). The quality of the nature of plant-life is found in what we call its “kernel”. The nature of people is that quality which makes us humane. We refer to this quality in plants as the kernel, because vegetable life has no conscious awareness. However, people have conscious awareness, and so this quality in people is called “humaneness”. It has the function of continual change and transformation, being the force behind birth and change--the ongoing process of life itself. It is that which animates, that which causes everything to undergo birth after death and death after birth. Birth and death is the most major change that human nature undergoes. Therefore, the couplet begins, *When the nature is in samadhi ...* Why haven’t people become Buddhas? It is just because their natures are not in samadhi. This means that the nature is turned by whatever state it encounters, rather than controlling the state. If you can turn the states that arise, then you have samadhi. If you can’t be in control, then you turn and flow in birth and death. Without samadhi, you are turned by states. This specifically refers to the third of the Three Coarse Marks mentioned in the *Shurangama Sutra*.

- 1) The Mark of Karma
- 2) The Mark of Manifestation
- 3) The Mark of Turning

When the nature is not in samadhi, then the Mark of Karma gives rise to the Mark of Manifestation and that gives rise to the Mark of Turning. Because the nature is not in samadhi, the mountains, rivers, great earth, and all the things upon it become manifest. Forms and shapes manifest within the unfixed nature. If your nature is in samadhi, then forms are not forms and shapes are not shapes. Basically, it is just this way:

*All dharmas are swept away.
All marks are left behind.*

When the nature is not in samadhi, you turn in birth and death. When the nature is in samadhi, you enter Nirvana.

A lot can be said about this. If your nature is in samadhi, then the heavenly demons and those of externalist ways, as well as any ghosts, weird beings, demons, *li mei* and *wang liang* are all tamed. *The demons are subdued, and one is peaceful every day.* You are always happy. Why are you so unhappy? It's because your nature is not in samadhi, and so the demons are not subdued. The demons of birth and death are not subdued, the demons of afflictions are not subdued, the demons of karmic obstructions are not subdued, the heavenly demons and the human demons are not subdued. If your nature were in samadhi, then all would be in a state of unmoving Suchness. You would be comfortable and at ease, ultimately clear and always bright. That is the meaning of the first line of the couplet. Let's see how you match it.

If You Don't Make It Through The Gate

Today is the beginning of the New Year, so I wish you all “Happy New Year!” Basically this is a worldly custom, and we people who study transcendental dharmas should not continue to have such habits. On the other hand, we are all still here together in this world, and if we separate ourselves too far from the world, then we also become distant from people. So I still will use the worldly custom and wish you a Happy New Year.

New Year is a happy time, and by the same token, we should, in our investigation of Dhyana, obtain the bliss of Dhyana as our food. We should take investigation of Chan as our food and drink. So people who truly investigate Chan don't even remember if they have eaten or not. They don't even remember putting on their clothes. They forget whether they have slept or not. When one investigates Chan to the ultimate point, one is not aware of heaven above or the earth below. In the midst of this, one is also unaware of people. One unites with the great void. There are no people, no self, no living beings, and no lifespan. Since that's how it is, one does not fear the pain in one's legs or the ache in one's back.

One applies the skill of patience to all situations. With no self, no people, no living beings, and no lifespan, who hurts? Besides which, you have to pass through the gate of pain. Once you get through the gate, there won't be any more pain. But if you don't go through the gate, there will always be pain. Once you're through that gate, not only is there no pain, there is an exceptional comfort. You are extremely blissful. You feel that there is no

Dharma more wonderful than the investigation of Dhyana. It is then that you experience “taking the bliss of Dhyana as one’s food--and being filled with the happiness of Dharma.” That is why in times past, cultivators would sit for days on end investigating Chan. They wouldn’t even get up from their seats. Is it the case that their legs didn’t hurt? No. Their legs hurt just the same. But they knew how to be patient. They could bear what other people could not. They could endure what others could not endure. They had a kind of vigorous strength that propelled them forward and kept them from ever retreating. This is the investment that those who investigate Chan must make in order to get enlightened; they have to have the strength of patience. With that kind of capital behind you, your business is bound to prosper. Only with vigor can you get through that gate. Once you’re through it, then,

*The mountains are gone and the waters disappear.
There isn’t any road ahead.*

That’s what it’s like before you get through the gate.

*Beneath the dark willows and the bright flowers,
There is yet another village.*

That’s the way it is when you’ve gotten through the gate. In cultivating,

*If you can’t give up death,
you can’t exchange it for life.
If you don’t renounce what’s false,
you can’t accomplish what’s true.*

If you can’t give up your suffering, you won’t attain bliss. If you

can smash through the difficulties, then afterwards you'll attain some other kind of state. Since that's how it is, we don't come here to investigate Chan just to pass the time. You have to get hold of some genuine determination and true and actual patience. In this world you can't get something for nothing, no matter what it is. If you don't apply any effort at all, you won't be successful.

When you want to develop some worldly skill, you first have to go through a process of training and study before your ability is perfected. Studying transcendental dharmas is even more difficult than worldly skills. It requires even more effort, hard work and refinement before any success is possible. During a Chan session, the most important requisite is patience. This kind of patience is such that we are able to go forth and do things which we really don't want to do. We undergo suffering which is basically unendurable. It follows then that the things we want to do, we should even more want to do. The suffering we are able to endure, should even more so be endured by us. Pay attention to this point.

Before we went to Asia this time, I knew beforehand that there would be a lot of obstacles; there would be a lot of tests by demons. Why? I know that wherever I go, people get jealous of me, and try to obstruct me. But I have control of the situation, because the deviant cannot overcome the proper. The cow-ghosts and snake-spirits can try as they will with their jealousy and obstructiveness, but they cannot get at me. Why not? Because I deeply believe that the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas will protect my Dharma. Every place we went we encountered tremendous demonic obstacles, and yet no problems actually arose. Also, the people who wanted to see me every day were people with sicknesses. There are reasons why people get sick. The first is that their karmic obstacles are deep and heavy. If it weren't for karmic obstacles, they wouldn't get such weird diseases and strange

illnesses. Most of the people who came to see me were afflicted with such weird problems. People who get these kinds of illness are those who in their past lives tried to get off easy. They always looked for a bargain, a way to come out ahead. They never took a loss, but always looked out for themselves at every point. They were selfish and sought for self-benefit. So their karmic obstacles kept getting heavier and heavier until they ended up with strange diseases.

Another reason for their sicknesses is that for the most part, they were people who slandered the Triple Jewel. They slandered the Great Vehicle Sutras and so they fell into the hells. When they finally get out of the hells they become animals--birds or beasts. After they finish being animals, they have a lot of deficiencies. They may be blind or deaf, or mute, or crippled, or mentally retarded. They totally lack wisdom and have to spend their entire life being unable to understand anything at all. People like this created evil karma in the past and so they now undergo these kinds of retributions. Being in the midst of such retributions, they should bring forth a tremendous sense of shame and do all kinds of meritorious and virtuous deeds. That would be the correct thing for them to do. But these people who came to see me--who sought me out to cure their illnesses--still were hoping for a bargain. They wanted a free cure. Of course no one said anything about money to them, and no one charged them a fee, so after the healing was done, the most generous among them offered red envelopes. What would you guess was in them? Some had a dollar, some two, the most was four dollars or five--and this was in Malaysian and Singapore money. So there they were, still thinking to get a bargain at the expense of a left-home person. It apparently never occurred to them how much they would have to pay in fees if they wanted to be cured and went to a regular doctor. And so, since they had come to be healed by a Dharma Master,

they should at least have offered the same amount of money as the doctor's fees would have been. They couldn't bear to part with that much money and yet they expected to be cured. With karmic retributions like they were undergoing, they still were out to get a bargain. Why do I bother to tell you this? Because I hope that all of you will be very careful not to create evil karma. Don't slander the Triple Jewel from the inside. Don't remain within Buddhism and slander the Great Vehicle Sutras. Don't harbor fox-like doubts and be continually skeptical. By doing so you will create all kinds of karmic offenses, and in the future will fall so far that I will have no way to help you.

When practicing the Dharma of Chan you have to actually go forth and do it. You have to bow your head and shoulder the load. Progress with vigor and never retreat. The first requisite is to have patience. You have to bear what you cannot bear, endure what others cannot endure. When you sit in Chan your legs will hurt and your back will ache. It's something that's basically impossible to bear, but it's at that point that you must go ahead and bear it. If you want to become enlightened, and yet you are without patience, it will be impossible for you to do so. Patience includes enduring hunger and thirst, heat and cold, as well as pain. In order to have patience you first must break through your view of self.

*Contemplating the mind within,
you find there is no mind.
Contemplating external objects,
you find they too have disappeared.
Contemplating afar the material world,
You find all these things have disappeared as well.*

When inside there is no body and mind, and outside there is no

world, you are experiencing a kind of emptiness. But you also cannot become attached to that emptiness. As long as you hold on to emptiness, you still have an attachment. You have to dispense with emptiness as well. When there is no emptiness either, then you unite with the Dharma Realm. You become no different from emptiness itself. When you reach the ultimate understanding of the state of emptiness, you gain samadhi. In samadhi, you are not muddled or confused. You are clear and aware. You are in a state of unmoving suchness, and are always lucid and clear. It's not that you sit in meditation and are greedy for some state or other. Don't hope for "states". As the *Vajra Sutra* says, "Everything that has an appearance is empty and false. If you see all appearances as no appearances, then you see the Thus Come One." So people who investigate Chan cannot get attached to any state that might occur. Don't be greedy for spiritual penetrations, because if you do, you will walk into the fire and enter a demonic state. Don't be greedy for the flavor of Chan either. If you get interested in the flavor of Chan and are greedy for it, then you will wind up in the side doors and on the wrong forks of the road--the various heterodox cults and sects.

Why do beings end up as heavenly demons and those of externalist ways? It is because they are greedy. They are greedy to be "number one," greedy for phony reputation, greedy for false acclaim, greedy for vain and empty states. So they cultivate, but because of this greed, they end up as part of the retinue of a demon king. Do these people want to become demons? Basically, no, they don't. But their deviant knowledge and deviant views--their improper views of things--lead them in that direction. That is why people who investigate Chan must not be attached to anything or be greedy for anything. So we say,

When the Buddhas come, slice through them.

When the demons come, cut them down.

Don't be greedy for petty states and think that you've thereby obtained some skill. During the period of the session, the best is to forget about others and have no self. Forget about time and space as well.

*Sweep away all dharmas;
Separate from all appearances.*

Don't be attached to anything at all. If you can be this way, you can reach the Ground of Happiness of Being Apart from Production--the state of the First Dhyana. The First Dhyana represents the breakthrough of living beings' attachments and the attainment of dhyana bliss as food, so that one is filled with the happiness of Dharma. This is the function derived. In the First Dhyana, one's pulse stops but this doesn't mean one is dead. This brings a particular happiness which is unknown to those in the world.

The Second Dhyana is called the Ground of the Happiness of Giving Rise to Samadhi. In this dhyana one enters samadhi and is extremely happy. In the second dhyana, one's breath stops. There is no detectable breathing in and out, but at that time an inner breath takes over.

The Third Dhyana is the Ground of the Wonderful Joy of Separating from Happiness. One renounces the dhyana bliss as food and the happiness of Dharma that occurs in initial samadhi. One goes beyond that kind of happiness and reaches a sense of wonderful joy. It is something one has never known before, and is inexpressible in its subtlety, and is inconceivable.

At the level of the Third Dhyana, thoughts also stop. There is no active thought process--not a single thought arises.

*When not a single thought arises,
The entire substance manifests.
When the six sense organs suddenly move,
There is a covering of clouds.*

At the point when not even a single thought arises, the entire substance and great function are in evidence. But once your six sense organs suddenly move, then you are obscured. It just takes a slight movement by the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, or mind to cause this to happen. Then one is covered over by the clouds of the five skandhas.

The Fourth Dhyana is called the Pure Ground of Renouncing Thought. In the third dhyana, thoughts were stopped --held at bay--but they still had not been renounced altogether. In the heavens of the Fourth Dhyana, not only are thoughts stopped, they are done away with completely. There basically are no more thoughts and considerations. This state is extremely pure, subtly wonderful, and particularly blissful.

However, reaching the fourth dhyana is simply the most initial expedient state of the investigation of Chan. Having reached this state is of no use at all in itself. It is not certification to sagehood. You shouldn't make the mistake of thinking that reaching these four levels makes you somehow very special. It's of absolutely no use in and of itself. You've only experienced a bit of the flavor of Chan. Don't forget the ignorant Bhikshu who mistook the fourth dhyana for the fourth fruition of Arhatship. He later made a gross false claim, and as a result, fell into hell. People who cultivate the Way must take particular care not to become arrogant. Don't consider yourself higher than everyone. Don't think that your cultivation is much better than everyone else. As soon as you start thinking like that, it's for sure a crazy demon has taken possession of you. You've gone insane. When

that happens, you won't be able to progress with developing your skill. If you want to genuinely understand the principle of sitting Chan, investigate the Fifty Skandha Demon-States described in the *Shurangama Sutra*, (Volume VIII, IITBT, BTTS, 1983). If you make yourself familiar with these fifty states, you can avoid falling into the pits and developing deviant views. You won't walk into the fire and enter a demonic state. But if you don't even recognize these states and just make wild guesses about what's happening to you, thinking yourself to be "out-of-sight", then you are making a big mistake.

Chan is defined as "stilling one's considerations". It is also known as "cultivation pertaining to thought". "Stilling one's considerations" means constantly wiping clean so that no dust can alight. "Cultivation pertaining to thought" means bringing up your Chan topic--your *hua t'ou*. It means always keeping your mind on what you're doing, and never ever forgetting your topic. Day and night you stick with it. You apply your effort to yourself. You don't seek anything external. It's not that you listen for sounds and voices which send you messages. Sounds and voices like that are external states. They do not arise from your own self-nature. If you are turned by external states, it's very easy to go down the wrong road.

The Dharma of stilling considerations and cultivating thought is a skill that's developed invisibly, imperceptibly, and unceasingly. Developing this skill can be likened to a mother hen sitting on her brood of eggs. When the hen is incubating her eggs, she never leaves them. It is the warmth of her body that will hatch the eggs. When she has sat there long enough, the little chicks will hatch. Investigating one's *hua t'ou* is the same technique. When the old mother hen is sitting, she gets very upset if she has to leave the nest at all. So, when she eats, she does it in a rush and races right back to her eggs. When she goes to relieve nature,

it's the same way--she hurries right back to the nest. Her whole attention is centered on hatching those eggs. Cultivators must also have this type of sincerity.

Investigating Chan is also like a dragon guarding its pearl. The pearl is the dragon's most valuable possession. A dragon just loves its pearl, and takes care of it in the same way a hen sits on her nest. He's always got his mind on that pearl and in this way, makes it shinier and shinier, and more and more useful.

Investigating Chan is also like a cat stalking a mouse. The old cat sits outside the mouse-hole and waits. The moment the mouse scats out the hole, the cat is ready to pounce. The Dharma of Chan is the same way. You have to be patient and enduring, you have to be firm and constant. You must be firm, sincere, and constant. When you investigate Chan, don't think about what's in it for you. If you spend your time on that idea, you're just having false thinking, and false thoughts don't bring about any genuine ability. That is why people who investigate Chan must have patience. This means real patience that gets you through when things are unbearable. If you can be patient, in the future you will certainly accomplish some skill. But if you don't have patience, and can't take suffering, and won't undergo toil so that when you meet with something tough, you give in, then you won't have any success.

Investigating "Who is mindful of the Buddha?" is a Vajra Jeweled Sword. If you drill in with the word "Who?" investigating unceasingly "Who is mindful of the Buddha", then after awhile you'll have Chan. It's said,

*When you sit for a long time,
you have Chan.*

*When you dwell somewhere for a long time,
you set up conditions.*

After you sit for a period of time you will develop Chan and your skill will come forth. When that happens you will experience a sense of bliss. At that point, your temper will diminish, your moral character will improve, and your afflictions will decrease. You will understand principle, and have wisdom. All this will come about because of your single-minded intent in developing your skill. You will be able to totally clean up your greed, hatred, and stupidity. All that remains will be precepts, samadhi, and wisdom. Chan comes from patience. It is gotten in exchange for undergoing suffering. It's not that when you sit to the point that your legs hurt, you turn back and retreat, or that you admit defeat when you encounter a bit of difficulty. If you're like that there will never be a response. When you sit to the ultimate point, you attain light. It's said,

*When the stillness is ultimate,
the light is penetrating.*

When you become ultimately still, the light of your wisdom shines forth. At that point you have no thoughts of arrogance or pride. You are not overbearing, jealous or obstructive of others. You see that all living beings in the entire world have the Buddha-nature, and can become Buddhas. You don't obstruct other people in their cultivation. Your wisdom is in evidence at all times. Your stupidity is continually diminished. When we cultivate here in the Chan hall, we are also holding the precepts, cultivating samadhi, and developing wisdom. These three non-outflow studies are perfected in the Chan hall. In the Chan hall we don't talk, so we don't use harsh speech, loose speech nor do we lie or gossip. We shut our mouths, and so there is no way to commit the four evils of the mouth. When in your mind there is no greed, hatred, or stupidity, then the three evils of the mind are also gone. In the

Chan hall you won't kill, steal, or commit acts of lust, lie, or take intoxicants, so the five precepts are also held perfectly.

In the Chan hall you should cultivate while standing, sitting, walking, and lying down. You practice samadhi all the time. When your samadhi power comes into being, your wisdom power will also appear. So there is samadhi "when the stillness is ultimate", and there is wisdom when "the light is penetrating". We must cultivate to the point that we have wisdom. Don't get turned by the states of demons. Don't take a thief to be your own son. It's really no good to cultivate on the one hand, and get greedy on the other. You must free yourself of greed, as well as hatred and stupidity. That is why we cultivate precepts, samadhi, and wisdom, and try to become replete with these three non-outflow studies.

This time when we went to Malaysia, we encountered lots of people with weird illnesses. Prior to this I honestly never paid attention, so it never occurred to me that certain people who pass themselves off as Lamas also use *ku* poisoning to hex people. This time in Malaysia we encountered a lot of people who were victims of these phony Lamas, who wanted to control their lay disciples by laying hexes on them. They use voodoo on their Dharma protectors so that their own disciples get karmic-obstacle sicknesses. In this way the phony Lamas control these good men and faithful women. This kind of conduct is atrocious!

I knew that a certain fake Lama in Canada was a very unprincipled person, but it never occurred to me that Asia was also full of phony Lamas who manipulate people with their deviant tricks. Now I think that these kinds of Lamas are not limited to Asia, but that there are also many of them in America as well. So, in America, there are also many weird illnesses to be found. One young woman came here to study and before, she had studied under a phony Lama in America. She kept going insane and could not control herself. I believe now that she also had been hexed to

some extent by a deviant trick of that Lama. But as yet, the people in this world still haven't awakened and figured this out. They get confused and become enamored with the "Secret school", thinking that because it's "secret", there must be some wonderful Dharma which will quickly bring them benefit. But this a mistaken view. Basically I don't have time to discuss such questions, but if I don't say something, it's to be feared that people will wind up in a situation of the blind leading the blind and will end up going down a bad path. The phony Lamas apply their hexes to people with money. They don't bother with those who are not wealthy. So anyone who is wealthy should exercise extra precautions.

Our Chan session has carried us right into the New Year. So today I will speak a New Year's verse for you.

*Now we come to 1982.
Those of the ten directions
come together to investigate Chan.
Return the light and illumine within,
contemplate your own being.
At the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas,
sages and worthies are selected.*

This is 1982 and there are people here from the ten directions who have come together to investigate Chan. Each of you should return the light and shine it within to see if you are self-present or not. If you're "present", that means you are applying your skill. If you're "not present", it means you are here, but are having false thinking that takes you away from here.

In the Sagely City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, saints and sages are chosen. People who truly cultivate the Way are selected. People who come to the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, are those with great, good roots. If you didn't have those good roots, then

even if you wanted to come to the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, it wouldn't be easy for you to actually get here. Or you'd get here and be unable to take it, so you'd run away. The only Way place in the world right now where people work so hard is the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas. These people don't fear suffering, because they want to obtain some genuine wisdom. Anyone who comes to the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas has to maintain proper knowledge and proper views.

*When the nature is in samadhi,
and the demons are subdued,
everywhere is blissful.
When false thoughts do not arise,
everywhere is peaceful.*

When people are unhappy with what's going on around them, and with their environment in general, it's because their nature doesn't have any samadhi. Without samadhi, they seek to the east, seek to the west, seek to the north and south--always seeking outside. These are the tricks that greed plays. If we weren't greedy we wouldn't seek for anything. When we don't seek for anything, our natures are calm and our temperament is compliant. We are happy every day. But if we are never satisfied, getting upset about this and not being content with that, so that our false thoughts run away with us, and we never feel like we've got enough, we are in perpetual suffering and distress. If your nature is in samadhi you can subdue any demon, and every day is blissful for you. This kind of bliss is not external. It does not come from something outside yourself. It arises from within. If you don't give rise to false thoughts, then wherever you go you will find peace.

If we look at Buddhism in the West, it can be seen that the Sagely City of Ten Thousand Buddhas is the most

proper and comprehensive Bodhimanda to be found. Here, we work hardest at developing our skill and cultivating the Way. So the people within the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas must have virtuous conduct. People without virtuous conduct cannot remain here. Buddha sessions and Chan sessions are like big tests. During those periods we work non-stop without rest, applying effort to develop our skill. Even though the majority are that way, there are still those who are lazy and steal off for some rest. They like to take it easy. Lazy people are only cheating themselves. They don't want to get enlightened, they don't want to have any accomplishment. They think they've got a good deal, being lazy, and taking it easy. Actually, they are taking a great loss. It's like going to a mountain of jewels, and coming back empty-handed. You don't get anything at all from it. People who work at their skill have to be patient and endure suffering all the time. They have to work hard and endure the toil. They don't look for easy ways out. People who try to get off cheap in their cultivation can be said to be thieves among the virtuous. They cause others to feel very pained at heart. If everyone in the Bodhimanda were like these sorts of people, then there would be no way to make Buddhism grow. We people participating in this session have been lazy in the past throughout limitless kalpas, and that is why we still haven't accomplished our deeds in the Way. And to this very day we still haven't changed these bad habits. We haven't gotten rid of this fault. At this rate, how long do you think we'll have to wait before we can end birth and death? So we should not allow ourselves to be swayed by our own lazy habits. We're in such a good Way-Place where it's so convenient to cultivate, and if we still don't make the effort and seek the Dharma-door of ending birth and death, then I

ask you, how long do you intend to wait?

People who are developing their skill hold the Vajra Jeweled Sword at all times. That's our wisdom sword. The wisdom sword in turn, is just enlightenment. In order to become enlightened, you have to use the skill of contemplating and illuminating. We watch that thought of investigating Chan to be sure that it's functioning at all times. If we find that we are having false thoughts, then we should put those thoughts away. That's what's meant by,

When the thought arises, awaken to it.

When you awaken to it, it goes away.

Everybody has false thinking. To be without false thinking is to have your genuine wisdom manifest. Because we have been creating different kinds of karma throughout limitless aeons, the false thoughts which each of us have are accordingly different. What brings about false thinking? It comes from karma made throughout limitless kalpas. We start out like the ocean when it's calm, when there is no appearance of agitation on its surface. As soon as the false thoughts come upon us, however, it's just like waves arising on the sea. The waves are caused by the wind, so the first thing we must do is quiet the winds of our karma. In that way, we can decrease our false thinking.

How do we quiet the winds of karma? By not creating any further offenses.

Don't do any evil.

Offer up all good conduct.

By not doing any evil, you can get rid of the waves of false thinking. By offering up all good conduct, your wisdom will manifest. When

our wisdom manifests, we are able to break through all ignorance and false thinking. We can change our habits and get rid of our faults. What is cultivating about? Initially, it is changing our habits and faults. But if you don't even do that initial work of changing habits and faults, you will never be able to have a response with the Way. If you change your habits and faults you can unite with the Way, unite with Truth, and unite with enlightenment. So, as you cultivate, pay particular attention to changing your faults and stop your bad habits.

On what should we first focus our attention? First, take a look at the questions of food, clothing, and shelter. When we wear clothes, are we greedy for pretty ones? Do we like to look nice, and wear beautiful things? If so, it means we still have that habit. When we eat, are we always hoping for nourishing things? Do we always like to eat things that taste good? In other words, are we greedy for flavors? If so, that means we still haven't gotten rid of that habit either. Our aim is to not enter into forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tangible objects and dharmas. As to the place where we live and sleep, some people can't stand it if they have to go a day without sleep. But people who cultivate the Way learn to get along whether they sleep or not. They aren't attached to sleep. If you don't place a lot of importance on it, you will be able to change that habit as well. Someone who can really change their habits regarding food, clothing, and shelter, is truly a "person of the Way with no mind". People in the Chan hall are all supposed to be "people of the Way with no minds", so if you keep on using your mind all the time, then you're making a mistake.

In the *Sutra of Forty-two Sections* there is a passage which says,

Giving food to a hundred bad people does not equal giving food to a single good person. Giving food to a thousand good people does not equal giving food to one person who holds the five precepts. Giving good to ten thousand people who hold the five precepts does not equal giving food to a single First Stage Arhat. Giving food to a million First Stage Arhats does not equal giving food to a single Second Stage Arhat. Giving food to ten million Second Stage Arhats does not equal giving food to one Third Stage Arhat. Giving food to a hundred million Third Stage Arhats does not equal giving food to a single Fourth Stage Arhat. Giving food to ten billion Arhats... does not equal giving food to a single one who is without thoughts, without dwelling, without cultivation, and without accomplishment.

That's also referring to a "person of the Way with no mind". So, we who are in the Chan hall certainly should press forward and apply our efforts to cultivation. Don't let the time go by in vain.

In this country it is not at all easy to propagate the Buddhadharma. It's like growing a Lotus flower in the fire. It's as difficult as scaling a high mountain. But although that's the way it is, I still use all the patience I have and try to break ground in this country for a new Buddhist continent. I want to plant the seeds of the Buddhadharma in this country.

When I was young, prior to thirty years old, no one knew who I was. Wherever I went no one paid any attention to me. Although a lot of people knew about my cultivation of filiality beside my mother's grave, that was when I was a layperson. But after I left the home-life, no one connected that person with me. Wherever I went I kept my light to myself, besides which, I really

didn't have any light to speak of. I wasn't like some young people of today who want to get famous and make a name for themselves when they aren't even out of the cradle yet. I was absolutely the opposite.

In my thirties I went to Hong Kong, made myself a little hut and sat there applying my effort at cultivation. As it is said,

*I feel fortunate enough to stay alive
during such times of distress,
And have no wish to seek fame or wealth
among the affluent.*

I lived the life of a hermit. After being a recluse in Hong Kong for more than ten years, I came to America. For the first six years I was here, no one knew about me. It's only been since 1968 that gradually more and more people have come. Even to this day when we went to Asia, and so many people came and listened, it's certainly not because I lecture well, but rather because I speak the truth. I don't say phony things. In everything I do, I do it truly and actually. I use straight words and straight actions. I don't use any tricks or devices in doing anything. I can say what I want to say anywhere and at any time. I am not afraid of offending people. If I don't want to say something, I won't say it anywhere or at any time. I make a concerted effort to never tell a lie, or cheat anyone else. So we had such a big response in Asia. It could also be that because I live in America now, and was returning for a visit only, that a lot of people were interested.

I learned a lot of things in Asia this time. Before, I had a very favorable impression of Lamas. I thought they were also cultivators. I never would have guessed that there are many people who pretend to be Lamas, and who are capable of hexing people--poisoning them. And now many other so-called "Buddhist disciples" also use this technique to confuse people and cause them to lose their common sense. I think this is very, very strange. I'm

really taken aback! People enter into the study of secret dharmas hoping for some advantage, and who would have guessed that they'd end up getting harmed instead. People enter the study of the Buddhadharmas expecting it to be proper knowledge and proper views. Who would have guessed that they'd end up falling into a pit of deviant views. They become confused by these deviant people. This is evidence that the Dharma-ending Age is upon us. Everywhere you turn, there are manifestations of the Dharma's demise. Any Buddhist disciple who looks upon this state of affairs finds it painful indeed! So, in the future we must discriminate carefully about so-called Lamas, and "Buddhist disciples" and not just automatically suppose that they have virtue in the Way or Dharma magic. Keep your distance and be very careful.

If we are careful on the cause-ground not to plant bad causes, then in the future we will not have to reap bad results. We should plant pure causes. At all times we should single-mindedly regard the Way and not let ourselves give rise to defiled thoughts. At all times we should accord with the rules. We shouldn't always be making trouble and trying to stir things up. If you don't follow the rules while on the cause-ground, in the future when you have to undergo the retribution, it will be full of limitless pain and suffering. You will reap a bitter fruit.

Don't let the things I'm telling you right now just go in one ear and out the other. Some people have followed me for over ten years and yet they are still muddled and confused. They don't understand the least bit about cause and effect. They are not afraid of cause and effect. This is very dangerous, to be this way. Those who cultivate the Way must be especially careful. Don't make mistakes in cause and effect. If you're off by a bit in the beginning, you'll be off by thousands of miles in the end. Don't be a left-home person on the one hand and yet always be thinking of returning to laylife on the other. On the one hand you think you

want to cultivate the Way, but on the other, you cannot renounce the pleasure of the world. This will lead to a bitter future. You have to take stock of what you are doing. You can't spend day in and day out having unclean false thoughts. If you fail to believe what I'm saying right now, in the future when you regret it, it will be too late!

* * * * *

People in the world gravitate to their own kind. It's said,

*The good assemble together,
The bad form gangs,
People seek out their own kind.*

It's also said,

*People form gangs;
Creatures are divided into species.*

People who advocate virtue will not do things which are lacking in virtue. People who pay no regard to virtue will not be able to do virtuous things. So it is said,

*Virtue is the root,
Wealth is the branch-tip.*

So, people of like types get together in this world. Students get together with students and form close relationships. Farmers have close ties with other farmers. Laborers get together with laborers and make friends. Businessmen make their acquaintances among other businessmen. Government officials make friends with other government officials. That's the way things go among people. And among creatures? Horses end up with other horses; cows get together in herds; sheep form flocks; dogs run in packs. But the human race is the most efficacious of all the species. People's wisdom is loftier than any of the animal species. Why is that?

It's because animals have to pass through King Yama's chemical factory. When that happens their efficacious spirit gets divided. Since their efficacious nature is butchered and maimed, their wisdom decreases significantly.

What kind of division takes place? Let's start with a person. If that person has to become an animal, it's not the case that he or she becomes just one animal. One person might end up as ten or even twenty different animals. There's nothing fixed about it. One criterion that's considered is how much wisdom that person has. The more knowledge he is endowed with, the more divisions are possible. But of course the animals that person ends up becoming are not wise at all, because they each possess only a little of that person's efficacious spirit. People are whole and infinitely capable, whereas other animals are only endowed with partial ability. They may be capable in some ways, but they are deficient in others. They are laden with ignorance. Their wisdom has decreased, but their ignorance is just as heavy. They are obstinate and quick to fight. Just take chickens for example. When you get two roosters together, they square off, throw back their heads, dip their heads and then they're off and sparring. They don't have anything to fight with but their beaks and claws, but they still manage to have a go at it. All you have to do is look at them to know that when they were people--that part of them that was human--they liked to fight. They were always competing with others and so when they become animals they still retain this quarrelsomeness.

Dogs are stingy. So when they are eating, if any other dog comes near and tries to get a bite, a fight will break out for sure. Most other animals are the same way. They will fight over food. This just proves that when they were people they were too selfish. So, when they become animals they continue to be just as selfish. There's nothing else they are capable of getting but food, and so they display their selfishness in regard to food. If we people want

to learn to be like the worthies and sages, if we hope to be clear-minded people, the first thing we must learn is to not be selfish or seek for self-benefit. Thieves are out to benefit themselves, and in the process end up harming other people. We should be free of seeking for things. It's said that when one reaches the place of not seeking then one's character is lofty. Don't seek for anything! Just fulfill your responsibilities as if nothing were going on. If you are also not greedy, then the world will be free of wars. The whole reason there are wars in this world is because people's greed is too big; they have insatiable greed. When people don't get what they're greedy for, they start fighting. So we don't want to be greedy nor fight with anyone. If you can live like that, you will know genuine bliss. You will gain true and actual understanding. But if you don't understand this, then you'll just go along with the crowd, seeking name and profit just like everyone else.

In investigating Chan, the first requisite is not to fight. Don't fight to be number one, thinking, "Oh, my skill is 'out-of-sight!' I'm the best cultivator in America!" As soon as you have a thought like that, you wipe out any skill you might have had going. That's because you're indulging in arrogance and self-satisfaction. Anyone who is that arrogant is in fact a most stupid person. Such an attitude is not permissible within Buddhism. In Buddhism, we learn to yield and not contend. Don't investigate Chan only to come up with haughty and overweening pride, thinking yourself pretty special. If you have that kind of thinking you'll end up special all right--perhaps you'll end up growing two horns out of your head, because you've ended up being a bull. That's how bulls get to be bulls, you know; they thought they were something special. So be careful, don't have it end up that you go from being a person to being an animal.

Within Buddhism, it is necessary to become a true,

good, and beautiful person. To be “true” means not to see other people’s faults. True cultivators always look after themselves in every move they make. Walking, standing, sitting, and lying down, they never stray from the present moment. Don’t be like a mirror which is always reflecting other people, but cannot reflect itself. That’s because its reflections are all of external things. It cannot turn the light around and shine on itself. People who investigate Chan must shine the light within. Remember, it’s the third line of the Chan verse,

*Return the light and illumine within,
contemplate your own being.*

In investigating Chan we turn the light back and illumine within. We do not seek outside. Contemplate your own being. Are you in the ‘here and now’ or not? If you’re here, you’re not false thinking. If you’re not here, it is because you’re having false thinking. False thinking is not a state of comfort and ease. It’s very simple. So, are you really investigating Chan here? Investigating Chan is just turning the light back to illumine within. If you don’t have false thinking, then you are contemplating with comfort and ease. Whoever is able to return the light and illumine within will be selected as a worthy or a sage. Such a person will enter the flow of sagehood. But it takes real skill, it’s not just something you talk about. If you have real skill you will have some accomplishment. Without real skill, your vain talk is of no use.

*All living beings have the Buddha nature
and can become Buddhas.
But because of false thoughts and
attachments they can’t certify to it.*

We all have the Buddha-nature and we all can become Buddhas. But we turn our backs on enlightenment and mix with the dust. So we can't go home. Therefore we drift and flow within the Saha world of birth and death. We get born, we die and are reborn again. Doing good deeds in this life will bring wealth and honor in the next. If we do bad deeds in this life, the next one will find us poor and lowly. Being a person in this world is much like doing business. Those who know how to do business will make money, while others will take a loss. What is meant by knowing how to do business? If one knows how to do good, create merit and establish virtue, then one will "make money". But if one exclusively creates offenses, doing all sorts of evil things, and making all sorts of mistakes, then one will lose one's capital. This kind of transaction has been going on throughout measureless kalpas. Sometimes we make money, sometimes we lose it. After making a bit of money we feel satisfied and don't want to work hard. And then we end up losing our money. But once we lose money, if we are very careful about getting our act together again, eventually we will make some more money. Yet when things are good, we don't want to cultivate. As it's said,

*Those with wealth or in positions of honor
Don't want to cultivate the Way.*

It's only when things are bad and difficult that people want to cultivate. When one is affluent, one doesn't wish to cultivate. So sometimes we lose money and sometimes we make a profit. But all of this is just petty business dealings, and we never confront the big issue of birth and death--how to end the long flow of birth and death, how to calm the torrent of the revolving wheel.

Those who come to the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas to sit in meditation come for just this. To cut off the flow of birth and death, and to stop the cycle of the revolving wheel. You should really recognize that this world isn't 'fun and games'. It's not a

very peaceful place. There's danger at all times, and particularly now in the Nuclear Age. Once nuclear bombs are set off, the lives and wealth of people will be all gone. Why do such things manifest? It's just to teach us to see through it and put it down. Then we will be at ease and attain self-mastery.

All those who investigate Chan wish to see through it. However, the most pathetic and lamentable thing is that people can't see through it. And because they can't see through it, they can't put it down; they still want to run around on the revolving wheel. They've forgotten the suffering of birth and death and feel that cultivating the Way doesn't have much meaning. So those who have left the home life want to return to lay life, and those who are at home are thinking of getting married. Day and night they are having this type of false thinking. In investigating Chan this is what they are investigating, or else they are just lazy and goofing off, not wanting to apply any effort. However, what they don't realize is that they aren't cheating others; they are just cheating themselves. They don't have any self-respect. They themselves are headed for a fall. This is such a good Way place, yet they don't want to use effort to cultivate well. There are such favorable circumstances here, and yet they don't know how to cherish their own divine nature--the self-nature.

This Chan session has been going on for quite a few days now, and if anyone has had any special states or experiences they can bring them up and give a report to everyone. But be true about it; tell it like it is, and don't lie.

What Is Chan Meditation?

How Do I Do It?

Of those of you who have come here today, some have already heard the principles of sitting in Chan meditation discussed and have practiced meditation, and some of you are just beginners. Therefore, I will begin by explaining the prerequisites for investigating Chan for those who have never heard them before.

Three Requisites For Sitting in Chan

PATIENCE: What must you be patient with? You must learn to bear the pain in your back and the pain in your legs. When you first begin to sit in Chan meditation, you will experience pain in your back and legs because you are unaccustomed to sitting that way. In the beginning this pain may be hard to bear, so you have to be patient.

NO GREED: Those who cultivate the investigation of Chan should not hope for enlightenment. If you have the thought of hoping for enlightenment, then even if you were meant to get enlightened, that single thought will cover your enlightenment over and prevent it from happening.

Further, you should not, because of greed, seek speed in your practice. It's not that you can sit today and get enlightened tomorrow. So many of today's young people are turned upside down, and although they want to investigate Chan and study the Buddhadharma, they take speed, and other dope which they say is a means of bringing them enlightenment fast. This is a grave

mistake. Not only will such people not get enlightened, the more they study in this way, the more crazy, depraved and insane they become. Their heads become totally unclear because they are poisoned by the dope they take. All this happens because of greed. Those who resort to hard drugs like opium, end up totally wasting their lives. That kind of conduct is deplorable. Yet it is sad that some university professors are so lacking in good sense and moral guidelines that they actually encourage young people to take dope, and indulge in wanton emotional love. They profess this to be freedom. They advocate sexual freedom for the young. This is another grave mistake. Such ignorant counsel is harming young people, and even killing them, and yet they still don't realize it, and go on thinking, "Oh, this professor is really right." The young become infected with this "cancer" and cannot see clearly any longer. So they take dope to "get enlightened". If that were really the means of enlightenment, then what about Shakyamuni Buddha? He never took any dope. He stayed in the Ice Mountains for six years cultivating asceticism and then sat beneath the Bodhi tree until one night he saw a star and awakened to the Way. If taking dope is a requisite for enlightenment, then it follows that Shakyamuni Buddha shouldn't have gotten enlightened. Smart people should take care to distinguish right from wrong, and not just follow along with the crowd. Don't listen to professors who tell you that you can take dope and become enlightened. This current trend of taking dope is ruining young people, and it is extremely painful to witness.

However, those of you who have gathered here today have good roots, and have come to study the genuine principles of cultivation. Therefore, I stress to you: don't try to get off cheap. Don't try to do it fast. Don't think that without putting out any effort you can cash in on welfare. There is nothing of value obtained without doing some work for it.

PERSEVERANCE: You must be constant in your practice of Chan. This is the third requisite. The best is to sit in full-lotus. This posture is achieved by placing your left ankle on your right thigh, and then lifting your right ankle onto your left thigh. This posture can subdue demons and can quiet the mind. From it wisdom comes forth. It is another fundamental requisite of meditation. It is your foundation in sitting Chan. It is called the Lotus Posture and the Vajra Posture. You should train yourself to sit that way. Some of you protest,

“My legs are stiff and I can’t sit that way.”

Well, then, try “half” lotus, which is putting your left ankle on your right thigh.

“But I can’t even do that!” some may say.

Well, then you’ll just have to sit in a cross-legged position--in whatever way is possible for you. But you should be working to get into half-lotus and eventually into full-lotus. Full-lotus is the foundation of sitting in meditation. When you achieve it, then you can give rise to samadhi and from samadhi comes wisdom. Since it is fundamental, you should work to master it. If you try to build a house on the bare ground, the first big rain that comes along will wash it away. The first big wind that blows up will dismantle it. The same is true for meditation without a foundation. Full-lotus is the foundation of Buddhahood. If you want to become a Buddha, first master full-lotus.

Once your legs are in full-lotus, you should hold your body erect. Sit up straight and do not lean forward or backward, do not incline to the left or right. Keep your spine absolutely straight. Curl your tongue back against the roof of your mouth. Then if you secrete saliva, you can swallow it into your stomach. Therefore, people who cultivate Chan should not smoke cigarettes or dope, because they turn your saliva bitter. By curling the tongue back against the roof of your mouth, you unite the two meridians of *ren*

and *du*. Originally they are not hooked up, but if you can hook them up, then you can turn the Dharma Wheel. Once you can turn the Dharma Wheel, you can develop samadhi power, and wisdom power.

Your eyes are not necessarily open, and not necessarily closed. If you leave your eyes wide open while meditating, it is very easy to have false thinking about what you see. If you completely close your eyes while sitting, it is very easy to fall asleep. So keeping your eyes half open, and half closed is a good way to counteract both problems. That way you will be inclined to have less false thinking, and will not be as likely to fall asleep.

As to your mind--don't think of anything. Don't have any false thoughts. Don't think about what state you are experiencing or hope to experience, and don't think about how you want to get enlightened. The affairs of this world are not that simple. A thief who steals others' money ends up with wealth that is not his own. If you work and earn money, then the wealth you accumulate is your own. The same principle applies to Chan. Don't be greedy for speed, hoping to become enlightened fast. Don't be greedy to get a bargain. If in your cultivation you are greedy for small benefits, then you will never get the big ones.

As to experiencing states--at the level you are, any "state" you experience is simply a result of your false thinking. So don't get turned by them, and think something special is happening to you.

Chan is called a Dharma-door that leads upwards. But one's practice must be done with an utterly true mind. There are no easy roads to enlightenment. No tricks will work; no drugs will activate it. You have to actually and truly practice and go through the process until eventually you obtain a response with the Way and gain a little skill. I cannot predict

what that skill will be for each of you. I can't tell you in advance what kinds of states you will experience. I don't know what you will hear, see, and so forth. When it happens to you, you will know. If you use effort, you will have some accomplishment. If you don't use effort, you won't.

This month I have given you initial instruction. You can return to your homes and practice sitting. If any special things happen to you during the course of the coming month, you can tell about them next time we have class. Next time I will first ask what states you have experienced, and then I will be open to answering your questions. This time, it's too soon to talk about states, because you have just begun sitting in this class. Anything that happened to you before the beginning of this class is not material for discussion here. When you ask questions, make them brief and to the point. Don't talk from Pei-ching to Nan-ching, and all the way up Bear's Ear Mountain to watch them practicing their *kung fu* as they do *Shaolin*--in other words, don't write an essay when you ask a question.

Remember that full-lotus posture is the foundation of your sitting. Train yourself in it. Actually I have a lot I could say, but there's no use in saying too much right at the beginning. Just don't drink alcohol, don't smoke cigarettes, and don't take dope. Also it would be best not to eat meat. When you eat meat, you get really fat and blubbery. You should realize that there's no market value on human flesh, so why do you want to accumulate so much of it?

The Method Of Chan

When you cultivate the Way, you shouldn't renounce what is near and seek what is far, don't discard the roots and grasp at the branches.

*The Way is near, but one seeks it afar.
Things are basically easy,
but one tries to make them difficult.*

People create unnecessary trouble for themselves; so don't aim for what is lofty and far away, thinking that Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are found in some distant faraway places. The Buddhas and Bodhisattvas can't end your birth and death for you. You have to end your own birth and death.

*You eat to fill yourself.
You end your own birth and death.*

Control your rage, your deluded and crazy thoughts, your wild and reckless nature; change your habits! Restrain them so they don't arise.

*In every move, watch over yourself.
In walking, standing, sitting, and lying down,
Don't ever leave your home.*

Apply effort at the entrances of the six sense organs--the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind--and yet don't be separated from the six organs when you are applying that effort. Your eyes see forms, your ears hear sounds, your nose smells

fragrances, your tongue tastes flavors, your body feels sensations and your mind runs after dharmas. However, right within those states you should understand the function of the entrances to the six organs. The six sense organs are also called the “six thieves”. Make sure not to let the thieves rob your treasures. If your eyes like to see things, that is an outflow. If your ears like to listen to sounds, that’s an outflow. If your nose likes to smell fragrances, that’s an outflow. If your tongue likes to taste flavors, or your body craves pleasurable sensations, or your mind latches on to thoughts, all of those are outflows. Don’t spin around and around at the six entrances; rather, return the light and illumine within, gather back your light.

There are some people sitting in the Chan hall who are not investigating Chan (dhyana); they are just giving rise to false thinking. So you can change the word Chan to another word; “gluttony”, because they’re thinking about food. People who are meat eaters are thinking about steaks, pork chops, and lamb chops; people who are vegetarians are thinking about dumplings, bread and butter. Their false thoughts are very colorful indeed! Some people forget about eating, drinking, wearing clothes, and sleeping; they even forget about going to the toilet! At this stage,

*The wind can't blow through;
The rain can't seep in.*

They maintain the single thought, “Who?” without interruption or the slightest pause. Their concentration is indestructible and solid like vajra. At this time,

*Above, they do not know there is heaven;
Below, they do not know there is earth.
And in between they do not know there are people.*

They don't hang on to the four marks: the mark of self, the mark of others, the mark of living beings and the mark of a lifespan.

Someone says, "If I forget earth, heaven and people, won't I turn into a piece of wood or a brick?" No! At this stage they have already transcended those realms so that,

*All day long they eat their fill,
yet they haven't tasted a single grain of rice.
All day long they wear clothes,
but they haven't put on a single thread.*

When they become that focused and single-minded, how will they have time to entertain any false thoughts, such as thinking about drinking some milk, or tea, or having some honey? They won't have time; they won't want to waste even a single second.

In cultivating you cannot forget the matter of birth and death for even one moment; you can't afford to have false thinking even for a second. It says,

*Not having understood the great affair,
Is like losing one's parents.*

The great affair refers to ending birth and death. If you haven't seen through birth and death, that is like losing your father and mother. You have to pour all of your attention and energy into investigating this topic. When you use concentrated effort you will obtain a response; you may even get enlightened. Then,

*After having understood the great affair,
It's even more like losing one's parents.*

What does that mean? After you've become enlightened there's

even less time to flit around and waste time! You have to redouble your efforts. You can't be lazy. Since you know that it's not right to have false thinking, why do you still indulge in it? You should know that the time during a Chan session is very precious. We've put everything down in the Way Place to accommodate this session. We don't do morning and evening recitations, nor the meal offering, or recite before the meals; we skip all of this just so you can apply single-minded, concentrated effort to your meditation and give it everything you've got. If you casually while your time away, and chat and give rise to all kinds of false thinking, that's just too pathetic!

The space encompassing heaven, earth and all of creation, is a unified whole. Although that space cannot be divided, each being has its own orbit or path by which its energy travels. The situation is like that of electric currents, each of which has its own path. One wholesome or proper thought supplements the wholesome and righteous spirit between heaven and earth. Conversely, every time a person gets angry or afflicted he increases the toxic and bad vibrations within the universe. Every thought of greed, anger, and stupidity adds to the toxic energy within the universe. If you use greed, anger and stupidity to handle your affairs, the world will become filled with poisonous energy. If you use precepts, samadhi and wisdom, the auspicious energy in the world will increase. As it is with one person, so it is with many people. For those reasons, at places where evil people congregate, there are disasters and catastrophes. Therefore, all the auspiciousness and misfortune everywhere in the world is inextricably inter-connected with the forces mentioned above.

Now that we're having a Chan session, everyone needs to change from the evil to the good. Be careful not to create evil karma that is mixed up with the good; don't err in cause and effect. Don't deliberately create bad karma, knowing it to be wrong.

Produce one good thought, and heaven and earth are auspicious; give rise to one evil thought, and natural or man-made disasters will ensue--phenomena such as hurricanes, earthquakes, and so forth. Therefore, in a country where the citizens uphold the five precepts, it is bound to be peaceful. In countries where people kill, steal, commit sexual misconduct, lie and take intoxicants, there is sure to be much disaster.

Every day we investigate the Buddhadharma, but you have to do it, truly practice it. Investigating Chan is just holding the precepts. It is just not killing, not stealing, not engaging in sexual misconduct, not lying and not taking intoxicants. Once you're investigating Chan you won't have time to do anything else. You should be able to pick up your meditation topic, and put everything else down. Just investigate, "Who?"

When you meditate, you can turn the light around and illumine within. See how many evil thoughts you've produced, and how many good thoughts you have produced. If you haven't yet produced good thoughts, quickly bring forth wholesome thoughts. If you haven't given rise to evil thoughts, make sure that you don't; if you have already produced evil thoughts quickly get rid of them. If you've given rise to good thoughts, see to it they grow. Don't waste your time casually, and squander your life away. As to the false thoughts you're striking up, are they worth anything? Even if your false thoughts had some value to them, if you don't bring them to accomplishment, they're useless. People who are intent on cultivating and meditating apply their effort. What does this mean?

Amitabha! Each one for himself!

Mahasattva! Don't pay attention to the other person.

The Five Skandhas, that is--form, feeling, thought, activity

and consciousness--are like floating clouds that course about in the sky.

*The Five Skandhas are like clouds
that float back and forth in empty space.
The Three Poisons are like bubbles in the ocean.*

Cultivators have to break through these five skandhas; treat them like clouds passing by in the sky, let them come and go on their own, and don't pay attention to them. The Three Poisons are greed, anger, and stupidity; they are like bubbles in the ocean. They don't have any true substance. They don't belong to our nature; they came later. They are produced on their own, and they are destroyed on their own. If you aren't attached to them you won't have any problems. So, Great Master Yung Chia of the T'ang Dynasty said in his *Song of Enlightenment*,

*Certify to the actual mark,
which is without people or dharmas,
In a kshana, eradicate offenses of the Avici Hell.
If I'm lying to cheat living beings,
then I deserve to undergo
The Hell of Pulling Tongues,
throughout as many aeons as there
are grains of dust and sand.*

The "Actual Mark" is no mark, yet nothing is not marked by it. Once you've certified to this true mark and principle "Sweep away all dharmas, separate from all characteristics," then that is called, "returning to the origin and going back to the source". You've certified to the pure Dharma-body of your self-nature. In this state, people and dharmas are all seen as empty.

The view of self and others, which is the view of people and dharmas, are both annulled. At that time you won't have to add a head on top of a head. Then, "in a kshana," the shortest interval of time, the karma created from beginningless time meriting the "Avici Hell," is completely eradicated. Dharma Master Yung Chia says, "If I am lying to you, trying to pull the wool over your eyes, then I'm willing to forever fall into The Hell of Pulling Tongues and stay there for as many aeons as there are dust motes and sand grains."

Cultivators have to apply effort; don't let your thoughts run off to the north, south, east, and west, and waste your entire life away. You should cultivate the Way very realistically, like drawing silk. If you do it bit-by-bit, then you won't get the silk strands tangled. Don't look for scientific methods to become enlightened. If that would work scientists would have long ago become enlightened. Why aren't they enlightened? Why are they still groping around in the dark, worming into the tip of an ox's horn, hemming themselves into a dead end? Don't be too smart for yourself, trying to find an easy way out or a short-cut. You say, "My legs and back really hurt! I should find a way where my legs and back won't have to hurt so much." There are no such easy methods. Opening enlightenment is not that easy.

During the time of Awesome Sound King Buddha, people became enlightened on the spot and didn't need to be certified. After the passing of that Buddha, things deteriorated so that whenever people got enlightened they first had to be certified by the Buddhas and then by the Patriarchs. For example, in the *Shurangama Sutra* there is a section in which each of the Twenty-five Sages describes the individual organ by which he attained perfect penetration. Even before each one talked about his individual Dharma-door, he had already been enlightened, but the Buddha had not yet personally certified his enlightenment. So

the act of certification is most important. Certification is the core of the transmission of the Mind-seal Dharma from generation to generation.

The Great Master Yung Chia became enlightened while studying the *Nirvana Sutra*. Then he wrote the *Song of Enlightenment*; it contained songs that he sang. Although he had become enlightened, not many people could understand the deep principles he was expounding. Therefore, he put his songs together to describe some of his states. When he heard that the Sixth Patriarch was propagating the Mind Dharma at Ts'ao Hsi Monastery, he went to draw near to the Sixth Patriarch and to ask for his seal and certification. When he first arrived at Ts'ao Hsi, he circumambulated the Patriarch's seat three times, plunked his tin staff on the ground, and then stood erect to one side. He didn't even bow to the Patriarch. The Sixth Patriarch said,

“Shramanas adhere to three thousand awesome compartments and 80,000 subtle practices. Today you come in here and give rise to great arrogance. You don't have the first bit of good manners. What are you trying to prove?”

The Master Yung Chia said, “Birth and death are big affairs; impermanence comes quickly.” He was implying that the matter of birth and death was so important there was no time for things like courtesy.

The Sixth Patriarch said, “Why not embody non-production and understand that which is not quick?” The meaning here was “Why don't you get to the bottom of this and truly understand the principles of non-production and quickness?”

Dharma Master Yung Chia replied, “The body itself is not produced; fundamentally there is no quickness.” He had quick retorts to the Patriarch's questions. The Master understood that originally there is no birth and death. If there is not even birth and death how can impermanence come quickly? He had arrived at

the attainment wherein all dharmas are seen as neither produced nor destroyed, neither pure nor defiled, neither fast nor slow.

The Sixth Patriarch said, “So it is; so it is!” He couldn’t help praising Master Yung Chia saying, “Right! This is good work!”

Great Master Yung Chia then made obeisance with perfect awesome comportment. A short while later he announced that he was leaving, but the Sixth Patriarch entreated him to stay overnight. From this famous occasion Dharma Master Yung Chia was called, “The One Enlightened Overnight.” This was because he was certified to having obtained the Mind-Seal Dharma during his overnight stay at Ts’ao Hsi Monastery.

* * * * *

*When Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara was practicing
the profound Prajna Paramita,
He illuminated the Five Skandhas
and saw that they are all empty,
And went beyond all suffering and difficulty.*

The Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara is called, “One who Contemplates at Ease”, or “One Who Contemplates Self-Presence” (Guan-觀 Zi-自 Zai-在). This means that you contemplate whether you yourself are present or aware; it doesn’t mean you contemplate whether the other person is there or not. If you are self-present (always in the *here and now*), you are applying effort in investigating Chan. If you are not self-present, you’re having false thinking, and you’re flying off to New York, Italy, Australia, and so forth. Although your body is seated here in the Chan hall, your mind is rambling all over the place--you haven’t subdued your monkey; it latches on to external conditions at every passing moment. If you’re not contemplating self-presence you’re in the

heavens; if you're not contemplating self-presence you're in the hells. If you can contemplate self-presence and not run off, you can then "Practice the profound Prajna Paramita". This means to investigate continually and without interruption; that is considered a profound contemplation. "Prajna" is deep and great wisdom. With great wisdom you can arrive at the other shore. Moreover, you have to contemplate at all times, and not just for a moment. When investigating Chan, you have to do it day and night; you must do it today and every day, in order to dwell in the "Profound Prajna Paramita". You can't hope to savor the flavor of Chan in a short period of time; it comes from practice and saturation. When you have this skill you can "Illuminate the Five Skandhas and see that they are all empty." The five skandhas are also called the "five aggregates", "five heaps", or the "five shadows". They cover your light. They are like chains that bind people up. People are not free, because they are fettered by the Four Elements (earth, water, fire, and wind) and the five skandhas. The first skandha is the Form Skandha. Once the Form Skandha is seen through one arrives at the state where,

*One contemplates the mind inside,
and there is no mind.
One contemplates objects far away,
and there are no objects.
One contemplates appearances outside,
and there are no appearances.*

When the Form Skandha is seen through as empty, inside there is no mind, outside there are no appearances, and afar there are no objects. The Form Skandha takes obstruction as its essence; this includes anything that has shape and physical characteristics. If you haven't emptied the Form Skandha, whenever you look at

forms, you will be confused by the dust of forms. When you hear sounds, you'll be turned by the dust of sounds. The many colors and shapes of things will confuse you to the point that you will no longer be in control. So, Lao Tzu says,

The five colors blind the eyes.

The five sounds deafen the ears.

The five flavors numb the palate.

Objects that are hard to come by drive people crazy.

"The five colors blind the eyes." The five colors refers to all the colorful imagery in the world; it blurs people's vision so they are as if blind. They can't tell one form from another; they can't break through the eighty-eight categories of view delusion. View delusion is when upon seeing a state, one gives rise to greed and love. When you encounter a state, an external appearance of form, you get greedy and crave it. There are eighty-eight grades of this type of delusion.

"The five sounds deafen the ears." For example, take heavenly music. When you hear musical sounds that the gods play up in the heavens you become drunk and enter the samadhi of music; you forget everything else. When it says "deafen", it doesn't mean you are hard of hearing, but rather that when you listen to music you forget everything else. You don't get hungry even if you don't eat nor thirsty if you don't drink. Isn't that wonderful?

"The five flavors numb the palate." The five flavors are sour, sweet, bitter, hot, and salty. The mouth feels pleasure from savoring them. That's why people all crave delicious and tasty foods, but it numbs the palate.

"Objects that are hard to come by drive people crazy." This refers to objects that are rare and considered valuable, such

as antiques, artifacts, objects of art, paintings and so forth. For example, consider antiques from the Shang and Chou Dynasties; people are driven mad by their greed for those valuable objects.

Once you break through the Form Skandha, “all the mountains, rivers, and great earth are seen as empty.” Basically they aren’t even there. That’s the first skandha.

The second is the Feeling or Perception Skandha. A state arises and you perceive it; you feel it’s pleasurable. Eating good things, putting on a fine dress, feeling warm and being greatly delighted--those feelings of contentment, as well as feelings of displeasure and pain, are all grouped under the Feeling Skandha.

The third is the Thought Skandha. Thought refers to consideration, mental activity. From thought arises activity, which is the Fourth Skandha. Activity means that which constantly shifts and flows; it never stops, there is constant motion.

The last is the Consciousness Skandha, which takes discrimination as its substance. This is the most subtle and imperceptible skandha. Whenever a state arises, your mind immediately starts to discriminate. That’s the function of the Consciousness Skandha.

When you break through all five skandhas, and are no longer deluded by them, you can “cross beyond all suffering”. You can then put an end to all bitterness. So, seeing that the Five Skandhas are all empty is getting rid of the attachment to self. Whereas, crossing beyond all suffering and difficulty is getting rid of the attachment to dharmas. When the attachment to self and dharmas are both emptied, one is truly the Bodhisattva Who Contemplates Self-presence, Who Contemplates at Ease and with Self-mastery.

We people are like big bugs. Within our bodies are countless little bugs. The little bugs feed on the big bugs, and the big bugs feed on other forms of life outside such as animals or plants. Within the bodies of the little bugs are limitless tiny organisms. If

you think about it, within the body of every single person there are countless, boundless living beings. If you wish to cross over the living beings within your self-nature, it's not easy. For example, if you are very greedy, all the little bugs inside your body are also greedy; even the micro-organisms and viruses within your body are infected with greed. They like to eat your flesh and drink your blood. If you are angry, the big and little bugs inside your self-nature all learn to have great tempers; they like to fight and contend. If your body (the big bug) is full of stupidity, the little bugs all follow suit and become stupid as well. Your greed, anger, and stupidity directly influence the organisms within your self-nature. Moreover, those small organisms multiply into countless other minute organisms; they divide and multiply so that you have thousands of millions of myriads of transformation bodies. They are all replicas and photocopies of you (the big bug).

Therefore, cultivators must watch their every thought and action, and change their bad habits and faults; turn over a new leaf.

*A single thought of anger arises and
Eighty thousand doors open to obstruction.*

No matter how long you cultivate, if you don't cut off your thoughts of rage and hatred, in the future the organisms within your self-nature will transform into poisonous snakes and wild beasts that harm people.

For such reasons, cultivators must emulate Shakyamuni Buddha's kindness and compassion, his conduct and vows, and his patience; then, foster merit and virtue. This means giving good things to other people and saving the bad things for oneself. Merit and virtue are accumulated day-by-day, like saving money. You save money bit-by-bit until there's a lot. Pay foremost attention to

compassion and Way-virtue. No matter how rotten people are to you, be forgiving and don't fight with them or oppose them. Give yourself up for the sake of others; with a single-minded dedication propagate the Buddhadharma.

Chan Dharma Talks

At the one-week Chan Meditation Session, which followed the Recitation Session, participants arose at two-thirty in the morning to begin meditation and meditated without interruption until twelve midnight each day, with the exception of a one-half hour break for a meal at eleven a.m. Many participants remained sitting in the Ch'an Hall during the two and one-half hour rest period in the middle of the night. During this session the Venerable Master gave the following instructional talks.

Opening of Session: December 22, 1972

Hardships and difficulties refine you. Astronauts are now being trained to rocket into space, while we are in training to refine the Vajra Samadhi so that we may enter into the great enlightenment. The *Shurangama Sutra* says, "The void arises in the great enlightenment like a bubble arising on the sea." Therefore, enlightenment is vast and boundless.

During a dhyana session time is precious. Be especially attentive and do not waste a single second. If you waste your time, what will be the worth of the bitterness you have already undergone? Those of you who have endured the suffering without running should work hard, and those who couldn't take it and ran off can now return if they want to. Everyone should work hard.

Because we are conducting this Dhyana Session, the gods and the dragons and the rest of the eight-fold division of ghosts and spirits have come to protect the field of enlightenment and help us accomplish the karma of the Way. So don't look down on yourselves. Whoever becomes enlightened will end birth and

death and perfect his karma of the Way.

Don't waste your time like you did during the Buddha Recitation Session. Don't be like one disciple who had false thinking about stealing Ginseng tea. You don't have to steal it, I will give it to you to get rid of your false thinking. But once you drink it, you must work hard and seek to become enlightened.

That disciple is rather embarrassed that I have mentioned her false thinking, but if she is guilty, everyone should know about it; when everyone knows, she won't dare have such false thoughts again. Someone else has been thinking about the fourteen-week meditation session several years ago when he thought about eating cottage cheese, and now he thinks it would be fine to have some more. I grant you your wish, and will give you all cottage cheese and Ginseng tea, but you must work hard.

Now, to begin the Dhyana Session, the verse says,

*In Gold Mountain Monastery's Prajna Hall
We gather from the ten directions,
Here where the Buddhas are selected.
Whoever becomes enlightened will know
The face he had before his mother bore him,
And we'll grant that he is comfortable,
clear and cool.*

We will sit in meditation for one hour and then walk for twenty-five minutes. The movement stimulates our circulation and the stillness purifies us of our random thoughts. We must reach the genuine stillness, then we will be able to give forth genuine wisdom and liberate ourselves from birth and death. This is the very best Dharma to cultivate, so don't waste your time.

Day #1: December 23, 1972

If you've learned no other talent from your master than that of "I don't remember", you've done something wonderful! The Way lies simply in forgetting everything. Now, I have a story for you:

At T'ien T'ung Monastery, one of China's largest housing over five thousand monks, dhyana meditation is conducted during the winter months. It is said, "Dhyana in the winter and study in the summer." Why practice dhyana in the winter? The cold weather makes it difficult to sleep and helps you work hard. You have to turn on your own personal heater and fight the cold. Once you have turned on your own internal heater, not only will you not be cold, you'll perspire. So don't be afraid of the cold.

At T'ien T'ung Monastery, no one ate after noon. During the dhyana session, however, what with twenty hours of hard work, not eating after noon, and the cold weather, everyone was hungry and began to toy with the idea of stealing food. The deacon, who had spiritual powers, knew this, and while seated in the hall in meditation, would send out a body that would go enter the storeroom, steal the rice crust, and set a piece in each of the meditating monks' hands. Rice crust is the crisp layer of rice in the bottom of the pan which is saved and cooked with the next day's rice. When the bell rang at the end of the sitting period, the monks ate their rice crust with surprise and delight and settled down to work with no further thoughts of stealing food. The amount of rice crust, however, decreased daily until, when it was almost gone, the quartermaster and the cook became concerned and began to wonder who the culprit was.

When they reported the losses to the Abbot Mi Tsu, who also had spiritual powers, he passed it off. "Forget it," he said. "Maybe you've got mice in the pantry." When the Abbot looked into the matter more deeply, he discovered that the deacon had

stolen it.

The next day the Abbot went into the dhyana hall to meditate with the assembly, and sure enough, during the early evening sit the deacon went off to steal the rice crust. He didn't use his physical body, however, he used his spirit. While his spirit was in the storeroom, the Abbot stashed his physical body underneath the meditation bench. When the deacon returned, he couldn't find his body, and began to look everywhere for it. When he finally discovered it, he had great difficulty getting himself out from under the bench.

"What are you doing?" said the Abbot. "You're stealing the rice crust again, eh? That's a violation of the precepts. You'll have to leave."

The deacon replied, "I don't mind leaving, but these people are too hungry to work. I must request that the Master set up provisional regulations allowing them a little something to eat in the evening."

"That's none of your concern," said the Abbot.

"Perhaps not," said the deacon, "but unless you grant my request, I won't leave."

Because of this the Abbot allowed everyone two vegetarian dumplings each evening.

The deacon left T'ien T'ung Monastery and headed for Hangkow. He passed through the bustling city of Nanking where, by means of his spiritual powers, he stopped to watch an opera. Then, using his spiritual powers once again, he went to Hangkow's Kuei Yuan Monastery for lunch. The Abbot of Kuei Yuan also had spiritual powers. "Today," he said, "a bhikshu is coming for lunch. We will eat first and then hit the boards."

When the deacon arrived, he heard the boards being hit to signal lunch and went straight to the dining hall. But when he entered the hall he saw that everyone had already eaten. "Why

aren't you following the rules?" he demanded. "You are supposed to hit the boards first and then eat."

"And why did you stop off at Nanking to attend the opera?" countered the Abbot.

Speechless, the deacon left. He went directly to Szechwan where he sat beneath two cinnamon trees to meditate. Later he built a monastery there called "Twin Cinnamon Monastery" which is also very well-known. That is the account of the stolen rice crust. We have among us one shameless bhikshuni who wanted to steal some ginseng. Therefore I have given you all ginseng tea to drink in the morning and in the evening, even though originally ginseng is not taken until the fourth day of a dhyana session. I only hope that you will all work hard and seek enlightenment. If you don't, you'll disappoint me, and the tea will have gone to waste.

You should all sacrifice your small selves and perfect your great selves, like the deacon who stole food for everyone else, not just for himself. This is sacrificing the small self and perfecting the great. The small self is the physical body; the Buddha-nature is the great self, for it is the total substance with great function. Living beings are a part of the Buddha-nature and so they must return to the root and go back to the source, return the parts to the whole in order to realize the great function. This is to sacrifice the small in order to perfect the great.

There are twenty people attending this Dhyana Session, which is not bad. I hope that you all put forth a great effort, use your time well, and arrive at your aim; return to the root and go back to the source.

Day #2: December 24, 1972 (afternoon)

The primary aim of a dhyana session is to unite body and mind. The body must follow the rules when walking, standing,

sitting, and reclining. The mind must not fantasize or engage in thoughts of greed, hatred, or stupidity. You must single-mindedly investigate, “Who is mindful of the Buddha?” This investigation is like drilling a hole through a piece of wood. Prior to penetrating, there is the daily work of drilling. Our “Who is mindful of the Buddha?” is the drilling, and we must drill until we open enlightenment. Thus we investigate throughout the day, at every moment. When our investigation penetrates, everything which has not yet been understood will become clear.

In your investigation you should be like a cat stalking a mouse. The mouse is like one’s thoughts, and the recitation of “Who is reciting the Buddha’s name” while relentlessly guarding oneself against false thoughts, is like the cat.

Investigation is also like a dragon guarding its pearl. Always attentive to just his most precious possession, the dragon never strays from his gem. Again, investigation is like a hen brooding over her eggs, thinking about them day in and day out, until they finally hatch.

In our investigation of dhyana, we must investigate continually without fear of heat or cold. We should be as conscientious as that mother hen. We absolutely must get through to “Who is mindful of the Buddha?” “Who am I?” and find the “Who”, thereby accomplishing our work.

There are many topics which may be used to investigate dhyana. “Who was I before my parents bore me?” is one. “What in the world is not subject to production, dwelling, decay, and extinction?” is another. “Dried turd,” is another. Don’t laugh and call this a stinking topic, because it’s already dried out and has no odor! Besides, if you can investigate it you’ll come up with something that has a lot of “flavor” to it! Whichever topic you respond to is the best one for you.

From the Ch’ing Dynasty on, the topic most frequently

used has been “Who is mindful of the Buddha?” The word “Who?” is most important, since no one knows who is mindful of the Buddha. If you know, you are enlightened.

“But the one mindful of the Buddha is just me!” you may say. “How could I not know who that is?”

When you die and have been cremated to ashes, where have you gone? To find the “you” of your self-nature, which is mindful of the Buddha and which does not die, is the spiritual exercise of investigating dhyana. When your investigation reaches the point that the mountains are leveled, the seas disappear, and you doubt that there’s a way at all, then suddenly, there beyond the dark willows and, the bright flowers is another village. Although you felt there was no way, there is yet another world, another realm--the realm of light peace. Those who can investigate to the ultimate point can experience freedom, independence, and the bliss of both body and mind--a bliss which is incomparable.

In cultivation one must neither forget the work nor force it, a point which is well illustrated in the following story:

There was a man from Sung who noticed that the sprouts in his fields were growing very slowly. Determined to think of a way to help them grow fast, he went to his field one day and pulled each sprout straight up an inch or two higher than it had been. He then returned home and said to his family, “I’m exhausted! I’ve spent the entire day helping my sprouts grow.” His son, wondering what new scientific method his father had discovered, went to the fields only to find that all the sprouts had withered and died.

Cultivation of the Way is similar. You should not be like the man of Sung who forced his plants to grow. The element of the wonderful enters your cultivation at the point when you neither relax your cultivation nor force it. An ancient had said, “Don’t try to go too fast or you won’t reach your aim. Don’t be satisfied with small gains or you

will never accomplish great works.” Don’t be like one of my disciples who, after two years of cultivation wanted to know why she hadn’t become a Buddha. I asked her, “You lived at home for more than ten years. What advantage did you gain in all that time?”

*If it weren't for the chill that strikes to the bone,
How could the plum blossom be so fragrant?*

Plum trees bloom in the bitter cold and so their fragrance is especially sweet.

In investigating dhyana you should not fear pain or cold. Don’t sit during meditation waiting for the bell to ring like one of my disciples did when she first began to meditate. Her brain was clouded with a smog of thoughts then, but over the years she has gotten a little better. Her head is a little clearer, which indicates a bit of progress.

In general, when you first begin to investigate dhyana you will experience pain in your knees, ankles and back which makes you very uncomfortable. When people’s legs hurt, they stretch them out, and when their backs ache, they lean against the wall. But in the dhyana hall, one is beaten for stretching out his legs! And leaning against the wall is a violation of the rules. When there is pain you must be patient. Bear the pain, the hunger, and the fatigue. If Buddhist lay disciples can be like this, even more should those who have left the home life be like this! Resolve to break all pain barriers so that you may gain inner freedom and peace. Investigation of dhyana is basically a battle with the Demon King--birth and death. Since this is a battle of life and death, you should even more be able to resist a little pain. Will it kill you? No! So what is there to fear? One could speak forever about the advantages of investigating dhyana. I have spoken just

a little.

During a dhyana session time is extremely valuable. Each second holds the chance to become enlightened. Don't waste a minute! How do you know that in that very moment that you wasted you wouldn't have become enlightened?

"Perhaps," you may say. "But I don't want to become enlightened. What use is it?"

Then why did you come here to investigate dhyana? If you have that attitude you will leave Gold Mountain empty-handed. Wouldn't that be a shame?

When I participated in dhyana sessions, I never left the dhyana hall except to attend to essential matters. Do you remember two years ago when five of you went to Taiwan to take the complete precepts? In Hong Kong you met Bhikshu Ming Kuan who told you that he and I had sat together for ten consecutive weeks of meditation during which time we sat in the hall both day and night. If he hadn't mentioned that, I wouldn't have remembered it. Now, in following me, you are perfecting your ability to forget things. Not bad! Keep it up and you can obtain my robe and bowl and then even be able to forget them!

We have talked enough. We should investigate more. Investigate to the point of no-enlightenment. After all, didn't someone say earlier that enlightenment was useless?

Day #2 (Evening)

Meditation, like all cultivation, must be practiced daily without interruption.

"But when will I be enlightened?" you ask.

It all depends on how hard you work. If you investigate in the morning and in the evening, while walking, standing, sitting, and lying down, your skill will mature and you will certainly

become enlightened. For example, you can't see the trees grow, but everyday they become taller. Meditation is like the wild grass growing in the spring; you can't see it grow, but daily it becomes more profuse. If you don't work, you are like a whetstone which decreases imperceptibly day by day.

“But people aren't stone!” you say. “What decreases?”

What is lost is your inherent wisdom. Don't think that you will obtain the Way immediately. Of course, everyone wants to become enlightened quickly, but if you don't work how can you? When you went to school, you passed through grades from elementary school to high school to the University and then perhaps on to take a Master's or a Doctor's degree. It's much less easy to become a Buddha.

Someone has regrets, “Had I known it would be this difficult, I never would have attended the session.” It's too late now! Since you've already joined, you should finish what you began. I'll tell you frankly that it won't be a waste. When you attend one dhyana session, your Bodhi sprouts grow just that much taller; attend two sessions and they grow even taller. The day will certainly come when they bear fruit. So have no regrets. Not the slightest effort goes to waste, and the wisdom-life of your Dharma body will grow naturally. Even those who are not attending the session but who have just come to take a look, plant good roots. Strive mightily and have no regrets!

When investigating, “Who is mindful of the Buddha?” things may get vague. You investigate diligently, but you can't figure out “who” it is. If you can continue without stopping, however, you will give rise to a “feeling of doubt”. With great doubt there is great enlightenment; with a small doubt there is a small enlightenment; and with no doubt there is no enlightenment.

What is meant by “a feeling of doubt?” Beginning meditators may bring forth thoughts of doubt, but they can only be called “thoughts”. They don’t count as a “feeling” of doubt. They may think, “Who is mindful of the Buddha?” Then gradually the ghosts of the mad mind become collected and diminish until you gain control of the questioning thought of “Who?” This is called “investigation”, and is the “feeling of doubt”. When your skill is pure and ripe, even when you are not doubting, you will doubt without interruption. You will investigate the word “Who?” continuously for several hours with great clarity. At that time you won’t breathe, your pulse will have stopped, your thoughts will have stopped, and you will have attained profound and great enlightenment. Whether walking, standing, sitting, or lying down, you will be in samadhi, without entering or leaving it. Above there will be no heaven and below no earth; and in between there will be no people. Everything will be empty. Even empty space will have been obliterated. So the *Shurangama Sutra* says, “The void arises in the great enlightenment like a bubble arising on the sea. When the bubble bursts, emptiness basically does not exist, much less the three realms of existence.”

When empty space has been annihilated, what kind of state remains? When there is no emptiness, what confused thoughts can there be? At that time it is very easy to become enlightened, to return to the root and go back to the source, to understand your mind and see your nature. Understanding your mind and seeing your nature, there are no obstructions anywhere--no worries and no troubles. You are absolutely imperturbable. With samadhi like that, Mount T’ai could collapse in front of you and you wouldn’t be startled. A beautiful woman--or a handsome man--could stand in front of you, but you wouldn’t move at all. That is independence,

true independence!

Those who wish to become enlightened must not be lazy; all the Patriarchs and Buddhas of the past were heroically vigorous. Then they were able to realize the Way, perfect the three enlightenments, and complete the ten thousand conducts.

In the Chan Hall, the vigorous ones make progress. The Chan Hall is called the Prajna Hall and so the verse says,

*In Gold Mountain Monastery's Prajna Hall,
We gather from the ten directions,
Here, where Buddhas are selected.
Whoever becomes enlightened will know
The face he had before his mother bore him,
And we'll grant that he is comfortable,
clear, and cool.*

The Prajna Hall has been designed as a place for you to refine your wisdom. You should become smarter the more you study, not stupider.

“It’s too bitter,” you say. “I really can’t take it.”

If you can endure what you can’t endure and conquer all difficulties, you are an extraordinary person. Any person can do common things. You should strive to be one who stands above the crowd. Then you will be a person of honor and ability, one capable of great undertakings.

The Buddhas have gathered here from the ten directions in the hall where the Buddhas are selected. We, too, have assembled from the ten directions to cultivate and train together. Let’s see who can be the first to become enlightened and realize Buddhahood. Whoever can find his original face, the one he had before he was born, will obtain genuine independence, clarity and ease.

I hope that you will be able to find out “who” you were

before your mother gave birth to you. Not that face with the blue eyes, but the one you had before you were born--your original face. Search! We must find out “Who?”

Day #3: December 25, 1972 (Evening)

Here in the Buddha-selecting Hall, the assembly is undergoing an examination. The Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are the certifiers. If you pass the test you become a Buddha or a Bodhisattva. If you fail, you have to begin again. The topic is “collecting garbage”. Some time ago I gave one of my disciples the nickname “The Garbage Collector”. I gave him this name because he volunteered to pay the temple’s garbage bills. Now we are collecting the garbage. What garbage? The garbage in our brains--the lust, jealousy, afflictions, greed, anger and stupidity. Our investigation of dhyana is like using the vajra sword of wisdom to cut off our emotion and desires, ignorance and affliction.

When the Buddha was in the world he had a disciple named “Little Roadside” who had no memory whatsoever. Since he forgot everything, he was unable to cultivate. Shakyamuni Buddha taught him to recite, “sweep clean”, and by using this method he finally obtained the Way. Investigating dhyana is like sweeping. The “Who?” of “Who is mindful of the Buddha?” sweeps our minds and clears away all mixed-up thoughts and false notions. If you can investigate the word “Who?” the heavenly demons and outside ways have no way to snare you. You constantly grasp the wisdom sword to conquer all deviant beings, and use the white whisk to brush away the demons so they can’t find a place to worm their way in. If you forget the word “Who?” you have dropped your sword and whisk and the

demons may wriggle their way in. This is why it is essential to maintain single-minded concentration when meditating. Those who truly work are unaware of hunger, thirst, cold or heat. They reach the point where they know nothing at all and yet understand everything. No matter what, you must push it to the extreme, for it is at the extreme that the change will occur. At the ultimate, stillness is movement and movement is stillness.

Daytime is movement and nighttime is stillness. Arriving at the extremity of stillness, there is movement. When the darkest point of the night is reached, daytime begins. This cyclical pattern occurs over various lengths of time. For example, there is also the movement and stillness of the yearly cycle. The winter solstice is the beginning of yang, which is movement, and the summer solstice is the beginning of yin, which is stillness. In the daily cycle, stillness begins at noon, not at sunset. Movement begins, not at dawn, but at midnight when the first yang energies begin to rise. At noon, the yin energies arise. There are twelve divisions of time:

Rat	11-1 a.m. - rise of yang	horse	11-1 p.m. - rise of yin
ox	1-3	sheep	1-3
tiger	3-5	monkey	3-5
hare	5-7	cock	5-7
dragon	7-9	dog	7-9
snake	9-11	boar	9-11

You must return to unity. Only when single-minded concentration reaches its ultimate point will the change which brings benefit occur. The *I Ching* expresses this principle when it

says, “When things reach the extreme, there must be a change.” When extreme “Stagnation” occurs, as symbolized by the hexagram *P’i* (☰☷) changes begin which ultimately result in “Peace”, which is represented by the hexagram *T’ai* (☰☷), the exact opposite of the former.

The first two hexagrams in the *I Ching* are the Creative, *Ch’ien*, and the Receptive, *K’un*. The former symbolizes heaven, the latter, earth; each is an extreme. The former is totally yang (—) and the latter, yin (— —). When the limit of yang occurs, the power of darkness, yin, enters and ascends from below, while the power of light retreats above. The movement is outlined like this:

The heavens (☰) above the rising wind (☴)
bring about “Coming to Meet” (☰☴).

The heavens (☰) above ascending mountains (☶)
result in “Retreat” (☰☶).

The heavens (☰) ascending and the earth (☷)
descending result in “Stagnation” (☰☷).

The progression continues until the “Receptive” (☷☷)
is reached and half the cycle has been completed.

At the extremity there is a reversal and,

The earth (☷) above rising thunder (☳)
results in the “Turning Point” (☷☳).

The earth (☷) above the lake’s ascending moisture (☱)
results in “Approach” (☷☱).

The earth’s sources (☷) above heaven’s power (☰)
result in “Peace” (☷☰).

It is at its extreme limit that stagnation brings peace. When we who are meditating feel the pain in our legs, we should let it hurt, for when the pain reaches an extreme point, the pain barrier can be broken. If you sit a half hour and the pain comes, you should hold the thought of no pain, and then the pain will subside.

After another half hour or so when the pain comes on strong again you must be patient. Grit your teeth and the pain will behave itself. You will have been victorious over yet another barrier, and will attain to a liberation in which there is limitless freedom and comfort. You must not be like a child who cries at the first sign of pain, because this brings no benefit at all. You must be resolute! Embody the three fearlessnesses: no fear of suffering, no fear of pain, and no fear of difficulty. Only in this way will you break through the barrier.

Day #4: December 26, 1972

Without even realizing it, four days of the Session have passed. Some people have wasted them, others have made progress. Whether or not you've progressed, you must follow the rules. When the bell rings to end the sitting period you may go to the toilet, have a drink of water, or a cup of tea. But you must hurry back. The women's toilet is on the second floor and the men's on the third. A couple of minutes before each meditation period the proctor should go to the third floor and hit the boards three times to remind everyone to return to the hall. Then he can start the sitting period. Meditators should be responsible and return on time. Don't make the proctor wait for you.

Once the sit has begun, unless an extremely important matter comes up, no one is allowed to leave the hall. Not to speak of ordinary people, even Wei T'ou Bodhisattva has to stand still and protect the Dharma and isn't allowed to run around.

We walk for twenty minutes with a brief run at the end, and sit in dhyana for a full hour. The hours between five and seven in the afternoon are rest hours during which time you may relax and doze off. But you must not snore, because that obstructs others. The rest hours are necessary because we begin at 2:30 in the

morning and sit until midnight. It would be even better, however, if you didn't sleep during this time and continued to meditate. Because this period is longer than the others, many people get enlightened during this time.

Dhyana must be practiced for long periods of time. You can't say that because your legs hurt, you don't want to sit anymore and then just wait for the bell to end the sitting period. With that attitude you won't accomplish anything. Meditation is also a test to see if you have the strength to break through all obstructions.

When the sitting period ends, we run--an exercise which gets our circulation going. Sitting is cultivation of morality. You may only run in the dhyana hall, however; you can't run outside. This is not a foot race. If you take it as one you may run to the ends of the earth, but you won't answer the question, "Who?"

In the big halls in China they run in lines three or five abreast. But our place is smaller and so we should run in single file. To begin the period of movement, walk slowly for ten to twenty-five minutes at the most and then signal the end of the running, then take a turn or two around the hall at a brisk run. By that time your blood and breath will be stirred up. You don't have to run until you perspire and are all out of breath; that will only obstruct your work.

When you sit in dhyana, it's best to sit in the full lotus position, as it is easy to enter samadhi in this position. The gods and dragons and the entire eight-fold division will come to protect you and the heavenly demons won't dare attack. This is called the Buddha posture. If your legs get too stiff, you can switch to half lotus for a while, but it won't be as easy to enter samadhi. Haven't I told you before about the "Ghost Pressured Dhyana Master?" When he was meditating some ghosts came to annoy him. Because he was sitting in full-lotus, they saw him as a golden pagoda and bowed to him instead. When he took one leg

down and sat in half-lotus they saw him as a silver pagoda but continued to bow. When he uncrossed his legs altogether, they saw only a mud statue and proceeded to give him trouble.

Once your legs are crossed and you are comfortable, cover up your lap with a heavy cotton robe or a blanket. Your legs may become stiff if they get cold. But don't cover your head or the upper part of your body. If the upper part of your body is a little chilly it doesn't matter; it will just make it that much harder to fall asleep. Don't draw your legs up or stretch them out or let your head hang down in front of you. These are all violations of the rules. You can't just casually stretch your back, either. How can you cultivate if you do these things? You should be steady at all times, like vajra.

Not one of you is as strong as I am! Having come to America, I find people meditating, but looking like freaks. Basically, I think it's bad manners to mention this, but you are really extraordinarily peculiar. I have never sat in meditation with a blanket wrapped around my head nor worn a blanket around me when I ran. You might get away with this strange style in the mountains or the desert, but if you are afraid of the cold here, you should simply wear more clothes. In the high mountains of China no matter how cold it gets, meditators never wrap themselves in blankets. They all follow the rules, and at the most this entails wearing a thick cotton robe. They would never act as strangely as you do.

One of my disciples basically is not afraid of the cold, but whenever he sits in meditation he wraps himself up in a blanket so that I can't even recognize him. I am particularly fond of him though, and so I haven't said anything. But today I felt that this style doesn't fit and so I decided to mention it.

I myself am afraid of cold and heat, but in several decades

of meditation I have never wrapped myself in a blanket or covered my head. When I was in Hupei for several years, the winters were severely cold and snowy, but I still wore only three layers of cotton clothing. However, I smelled an especially fine and rare fragrance every day, not like anything of this world. But smells are just smells, and I paid no attention. Perhaps the gods took pity on me, a thin-robed bhikshu working in spite of the cold. I endured the cold winter snows in Manchuria for over twenty years, wearing only three layers of cotton clothing and sometimes even went barefoot in the snow.

I had no friends in Hupei. From morning to night no one paid any attention to me; everyone looked down on me as a totally useless individual. Who would have guessed that this useless person would now have come to America? If I had no friends, it was not because I acted aloof. I was always extremely respectful towards everyone and dwelt in harmony with them. I never thought, "How can you supervise me?" Anyone at all could order me around, even the young novices. If a novice told me to pick vegetables, I obeyed, picked them, washed them very carefully, and gave them to him. I worked as the cook, the janitor, and also carried water for them and tended the vegetable garden. I cleaned the excrement out of the pit toilets as well. We didn't have flush toilets like you do here in America. Pit toilets must be cleaned out or they stink to high heaven. The worms which live in them, however, think the toilets are not bad at all. As I cleaned the toilets I came to understand that jealousy, selfishness, self-seeking and eating good food without doing any work caused these beings to be reborn in the toilet, where they might really eat well. So I'm warning you not to be jealous, selfish, or self-seeking, because if you are, you will certainly turn into a dung beetle.

You should meditate with a level mind and a quiet air. Your eyes should watch your nose; your nose should watch your

mouth, and your mouth should watch over your heart. Place the tip of your tongue on the roof of your mouth so that you can swallow your saliva easily. Saliva is also called “the sweet dew of your own home”, or “the medicine of immortality”. It’s called sweet dew because after you meditate for a while your saliva will become sweet. If you drink all of it, your body will be strong and healthy. But this kind of skill can’t be obtained in a few days. You have to continue working for a long time, put everything else aside, and attend more dhyana sessions in order to obtain these advantages.

There are too many rules regarding the dhyana hall to mention them all now, and so I have given you a general description of the subject. I should have told you these things at the beginning of the session, but I thought you were all old-timers, and already knew them all. Now I’ve discovered that you still don’t understand them and so I have brought them up. Although they aren’t major rules, it’s just because you don’t follow the minor rules that you don’t accomplish the great enlightenment.

I know that several people have already reached the realm of no others and no self. This is called “light peace” and is the beginning of concentration. Now you should continue to work very hard and you will obtain genuine advantage. If you want to make progress you must not be lazy! Don’t cheat yourself, cheat others, or cheat on the time. Everyone will say, “Such a lazy ghost! What kind of meditation does he practice, anyway?”

Investigate with a level mind and a light air. Don’t be over-anxious or you’ll get over-heated. Don’t be sloppy or you won’t make progress. Grasp the Doctrine of the Mean:

*Go too fast and you’ll trip;
Dally and you’ll fall behind.
Never rush and never dally,
And you’ll get there right on time.*

Investigate happily and naturally; be at ease when walking, standing, sitting, and lying down. If you relax, you will make progress. You may not be able to find the “Who?” but nonetheless you won’t be able to lose track of the “Who?” You won’t recognize the “Who?” but you won’t leave it for even a second and will be one with it until you reach the state in which, even when you are eating, you won’t eat a single grain.

“Aren’t you lying?” you ask.

No. Not eating means that you are not attached to eating. When you eat, you eat; when you wear clothes, you wear clothes, but you aren’t attached to anything you do. Walking, standing, sitting, or lying down, you are intent on your work. If you’re not attached to eating or wearing clothes, other matters will be even less a problem to you. Is this anything but genuine freedom?

Day #5: December 27, 1972

Are there any questions?

Disciple: “I lost my vajra-indestructible resolve today. When the pain in my legs became severe, although I wanted to continue to work, the false thoughts about the pain kept welling up like waves until finally I lost control.”

Where did your false thoughts come from?

“Perhaps from my pride.”

Why did you cry?

“Because I was suffering too much. I have never undergone so much suffering. I was at once intent on controlling myself and yet unable to do so. My crying was probably a way to release the tension of my unhappy state.”

We investigate “Who is mindful of the Buddha?” so we can break our attachment to “self”. If you are able to make the effort to travel this road vigorously, you will have no other thought than the

investigation of the topic, “Who is mindful of the Buddha?” and the time will fly. When you apply maximum effort in meditation, you will have no more than sat down when you will hear the bell ring to end the sit. It is essential, however, not to brood over why you aren’t attaining any tangible results from your work, for with this additional thought, you lose the word, “Who?” Once that happens, there can be no response. Those who truly know how to work do not lose track of the topic, “Who?” Little by little, slicing through all other thoughts, they ceaselessly examine it, until body, mind and consciousness all vanish. Thoughts such as “My legs hurt,” or “I can’t stand it anymore,” are but distortions of the sixth consciousness. When body, mind and consciousness are smashed you cannot be turned by such thoughts and you will be unaware of pain and will attain genuine freedom and ease.

When a response is obtained, your wisdom will open and you may become enlightened in a flash. In an ancient text is the phrase: “If a person sits quietly for an instant, it is better than building pagodas of the seven jewels as many as the sands of the Ganges River.” Genuine entry into samadhi eradicates limitless kalpas of offenses bound in birth and death in an instant. If you can sit quietly for an instant and experience unity within yourself, if you can use your pure heart to illumine inwardly, you can leap out of the wearisome involvement with the objective world. Your body and mind will be healthy and at peace, free and crystal clear. That is why all the Patriarchs of the past have enjoyed meditating.

It is said that the merit from this work is greater than that derived from building as many pagodas of the seven precious gems as there are sand-grains in the Ganges River. This is because building pagodas and temples is merely making material offerings to the Buddha. Although such offerings can cause living beings who see the temples

to give rise to faith in the orthodox Dharma, the merit it brings is, nonetheless, only merit with outflows. If you can sit quietly, in one instant you establish true merit--the merit of the Buddha. Returning to your source you gain the light of wisdom which is genuine merit and virtue, free of outflows.

If the merit from just one instant is that great, think how much greater will be the merit from sitting pure, still, and clear without dozing off for an entire hour! By doing this, although you may not awaken to the Way, you will have truly planted a Bodhi-seed which will one day reach fruition.

When I meditated for ten weeks on K'ung Ch'ing Mountain, when the weeks had passed I felt that they had barely begun. This was because I was single-mindedly concentrated and did not pay attention to trivial matters. I sat in meditation all day without noticing the pain because I had broken the pain barrier. You need only sit for a long time and the pain will settle down and become obedient.

Those who have just begun to work experience all kinds of distress--their legs hurt, their back hurts, and they feel uncomfortable all over. Call on your patience, use your samadhi, and defeat all difficulties; that way you'll obtain benefit.

When sitting in meditation, it's best not to be moved by any state that you encounter. If you fantasize and are greedy for a vision of the Buddha, a vision of flowers, or any other vision, then the state is false. If you think about wanting to see something and then see it, it is false. For the state to be true it is essential that there are no thoughts prior to the state itself.

Actually, when you meditate it is best not to have

anything at all, only emptiness. Be without fear or joy, because fear and joy expose you to attacks from demons. This is discussed in the *Shurangama Sutra* in the section about the fifty skandha demons. Do not be turned by states.

It is said, “If the demon comes, beat him away; if the Buddha comes, smash him.” The most important thing is to remain unattached. Don’t become overjoyed upon seeing the Buddha, because that is not true joy. It is also said, “If you are fond of it, it is not genuine; if you are afraid of it, it is not genuine. If it makes you angry or confused, it is not genuine.” In a state of unmoving suchness, one does not give rise to distinctions or regard states as important. In this way, one avoids flowing along with them, becoming turned by them. If a state appears, let it be. If no state appears, don’t go looking for one. From limitless kalpas past until the present we have accumulated all kinds of states of mind within the field of our eighth consciousness. Sitting quietly allows these states to come forth in a way that they can be recognized, just like the moon’s reflection in water which is not evident when the water is turbulent and muddied, but appears clearly when the water is allowed to settle.

*The clear mind is like the moon in the water;
The mind in samadhi is like the cloudless sky.*

Don’t take states of mind as being true or false. Working hard is true. Many people don’t understand this and when they encounter a state they may think that they have become enlightened or have been attacked by demons. Be without fear or joy. Don’t be attached to anything and you will reach a state of real accomplishment.

Day #6: December 28, 1972

If you have any questions you may bring them up.

Disciple: “The Japanese Zen Master, Dogen, said, ‘All can become Buddhas,’ but I have doubts about that. Perhaps other people can become Buddhas, but not me, or at least that’s how I feel sometimes. However, listening to the Master’s instructions and to the events of his experiences while cultivating has moved me greatly and encouraged me to follow him vigorously. Yesterday the Master said that the merit and virtue obtained from sitting quietly in dhyana samadhi for even an instant surpasses that obtained from building pagodas of the seven gems as many as there are grains of sand in the Ganges. When I heard this, I realized that I had been ‘building pagodas’ instead of ‘building Buddhas’, and so I have not been able to enter samadhi. I wonder if, when my pagoda is finished, the Master will consent to live there?”

The Master continued: The phrase, “All beings can become Buddhas” was spoken by the Buddha, and later by Dhyana Master Dogen. Now, your miraculous thoughts have opened the heavens! Yesterday, when I spoke about the difference between sitting in samadhi and building pagodas, I did not mean that one should not build pagodas. If you want to build them, the more the better. But this does not refer to simply thinking about building them. You must actually do it. Don’t you think that the merit of building gemmed pagodas as many as there are Ganges sands would be inconceivable? Can you do it? However, this is an analogy. If you are truly able to enter samadhi for even an instant, to return the light to shine within, and be a person of the Way without a mind, then your merit and virtue surpasses that obtained from building pagodas. If you really want to build one, of course, the merit will be great. But you must actually do it, not just talk about it.

Today I have a story to tell about “sitting quietly for an

instant”. Long ago, in China, on Wei Mountain in Hunan Province, lived Dhyana Master Wei, “The Old Man of Mount Wei”. He cultivated on the mountain and after several years many people came to pay their respects. When the news reached Minister P’ei Hsiu, he, too, went to call on him and in their first exchange of words P’ei Hsiu felt that they hit it off very well. He believed in the Master and praised him as a lofty Sangha-member of great virtue. When he thought of the broken-down shack the old man lived in he decided to make an offering. “This is really too bitter,” he said. “I should build him a big temple so that he can teach the multitudes,” and he gave the Old Man three hundred ounces of silver. Silver was very valuable at that time--three hundred ounces could build ten temples the size of the one we are in now.

As the Old Man didn’t have a closet or trunk, P’ei Hsiu set the money outside the hut on the grass and left.

Three years later he returned to call on the Old Man and found him still living in the same shabby hut. Thinking this strange, he asked the Old Man, “Three years ago, I gave you three hundred ounces of silver. Why haven’t you built a temple? Just what have you done with the money?”

“Silver?” said the Old Man. “Where did you put it? Go look for it there.”

Sure enough, the three hundred ounces of silver hadn’t moved an inch; they were still sitting in the grass. Pe’i Hsiu admired the old Man’s lofty virtue even more, and decided to build the temple himself. He began that very day and built a temple big enough to house three thousand monks. When it was completed, many Dhyana Masters went to live there, cultivate, and work hard.

Seeing so many high masters living together, P’ei Hsiu was delighted and instructed his son to bow to the Old Man as his teacher and leave the home-life under him. His son was a Han

Lin, a high-ranking scholar, and when he left home the Old Man named him Fa Hai and said, "Since you have just left home you must practice austerities. I appoint you water carrier. You must haul water for us every day." The boy rose early and carried water all day until late at night without stopping to rest. He did nothing but carry water for several years and had no time to study Sutras or bow to the Buddha. His cultivation consisted solely of carrying water and reciting the Buddha's name.

One day Fa Hai thought, "I've been here for several years, but I've still not seen the inside of the meditation hall. I think I'll go take a look." It just so happened that when he stole a peek into the hall the monks were taking a nap and snoring up a storm. This made him very unhappy. "I'm a Han Lin," he said, "and I carry water for these people. I thought they were working hard, but they're only sleeping!"

As soon as he had that thought, the Abbot sent an attendant to get Fa Hai. In all these years he had not seen his teacher, and now the Old Man said, "Pack up your things and get out. We can't keep you here. You'll have to move."

"But what have I done?" Fa Hai said, "Why are you throwing me out?"

The Abbot said, "Did you or did you not have a thought about it being a waste of time to carry water for people who are sleeping in the dhyana hall?"

"Yes," said Fa Hai, "because I saw that they were all sleeping and weren't working."

The Old Man said, "When the Old Monk sits once in meditation he can digest ten thousand pounds of gold. But you, you snob of a Han Lin, what kind of cultivation do you do? You'll have to get out."

Fa Hai knelt and begged for forgiveness, saying that he should be pardoned because this was his first offense. But the Old

Man refused.

“Then where shall I go?” Fa Hai said.

The Old Man gave him eight and a half cents and said, “Dwell right where you happen to be when you have spent the last of this eight and a half cents.”

Fa Hai went down the mountain, begging for money as he travelled because he didn’t dare use the eight and a half cents. He went straight from Hunan to Nanking. As he crossed the river at Chenkiang, intending to climb the mountain on the other side, the ferryman asked for the fare--exactly eight and a half cents. Fa Hai paid him and went to dwell on the mountain.

The mountain wasn’t called Gold Mountain at the time, but late one night Fa Hai saw light shining out of a cave. In the cave he discovered two crocks full of gold which he used to build Gold Mountain Chiang T’ien Monastery.

All old-time meditators know about “Gold Mountain Legs”, and “Kao Min Incense”. If you want to sit at Gold Mountain, your legs must be well-trained for meditation, for you are not allowed to stretch them out during a sit, no matter how much they hurt. At Kao Min Monastery the sitting periods are measured by the length of time it takes a stick of incense to burn--they were particularly long and precisely timed.

Day #7: December 29, 1972

The Dhyana Session has passed quickly. Those who have had a response from their work should not be pleased with themselves; those who have had no response should not be distressed, but should continue to work hard. You now know the method for meditating, and so you can continue your work on your own. You should be mindful wherever you are. You should be concerned only with maintaining the investigation of your

topic. Become single-minded in your concentration and one day you will become enlightened. If you do not concentrate your efforts, then even if Shakyamuni Buddha came to teach you, you wouldn't become enlightened. This Dhyana Session has been a good one, and most of you worked very hard. Although some time was wasted after lunch when you did not return to the hall right away, it would be unfair to scold you for it. We are breaking new ground here, and in the beginning there is difficulty. We are digging the foundation of Buddhism now, and this is why you must nourish your Bodhi-seeds well. So I am not too severe with you. This year several people have obtained some advantages and realized small enlightenments. If you ask who they were, then one of them wasn't you! If you don't ask, then perhaps you had a share in it. At any rate, don't be nervous. There will be more chances in the future. Work well and don't waste your time. Find your original face, the one you had before your parents gave birth to you. As for right now, you're still here freezing in the icebox.

Do you have any questions?

Disciple: "May I ask the Master to point out the areas in which we don't measure up to dhyana sessions as they were conducted in Chinese monasteries?"

There are many differences. However, as Buddhism begins in the West we can retain the good points of Eastern Buddhism and discard the bad ones. This will rid it of all defects. In China, participants in dhyana sessions ate three times a day: rice gruel in the morning, a full meal at noon, and vegetable dumplings in the evening. We don't measure up here because we only eat one meal a day, before noon.

In China, all the participants got beaten, whether they deserved it or not. If you were good you were beaten, if you were bad you were beaten. The proctors rotated the beatings. The severity of the beatings was in direct proportion to the rigidity

of the monastery rules. Kao Min, for instance, was famous for its beatings. Sometimes they even broke the boards during the beatings. This year you haven't been beaten. This is another difference.

The High Monk at Kao Min struck terror into everyone's heart. He never smiled. Those who sat in the hall were like mice around a cat--they didn't dare move a muscle. Not only do I not hit you, but I entertain you all day.

Why should you undergo such suffering as you have this past week? Because this country is reaping the rewards of too many blessings. If you weren't exposed to a certain amount of bitterness, you wouldn't be able to make the great resolve to cultivate the Way. You don't wear fine clothes, eat fine food, or live in a grand house. You have voluntarily given up such things in order to come here and endure suffering. In this way you can free yourself of arrogance and bad habits and truly cultivate in order to end birth and death.

In Chinese meditation halls one is not allowed to stretch out one's legs. Those who do, get beaten, that's all there is to it. Even the proctor gets beaten if he breaks the rules. For instance, if he nods off and is discovered by a subordinate, the subordinate must kneel before the proctor with one knee on the ground and then hit him with the incense board. The protocol in beating varies with an individual's rank.

When tea is served there is a certain way to hold the bowl. Since the bowls don't have handles, the thumb holds the upper rim and the tips of one's fingers are placed underneath. Then one extends one's bowl and the one on duty pours the tea. When finished, one sets the bowl right in front of one and the bowls are then gathered and removed from the hall--all without a sound. Our methods vary a little, but this is not important. Besides, we don't want to follow the Chinese customs to the letter; we should

incorporate the customs of the West as well.

In China, during meditation periods no one left the hall to get tea, take a break, or stand around and talk. After the noon meal they returned to the hall immediately and continued walking, without wasting a second.

(The Master has a disciple in Hong Kong who wrote him a letter. He instructed another disciple to read it to the assembly. An excerpt from it reads: "...because as a lay person I would find myself entertaining and visiting with relatives and friends too much, I have made up my mind to leave the home-life and concentrate on recitation of the Buddha's name. My son has already agreed to this. Now would the Master consent to let me receive the precepts?")

The letter was written by my foremost Dharma protector in Hong Kong, Kuo Man. Before she met me she was afraid of monks. She first met me when I was at Fu Jung Mountain in Guan Yin Cave. She came one day while I was eating noodles and I invited her to join me. She wanted to but didn't dare. Finally she did eat some and she also drank some of the mountain spring water, which she found extremely sweet. She asked me if I had put sugar in it.

"No," I replied.

"Then why is it so sweet?" she asked.

"If you think it's sweet, then drink some more," I said.

She drank three or four more cups. She also noticed that my clothing was tattered and the next time she came she brought me two sets of sturdy clothing which she had made herself. They could have been worn for ten years without wearing thin. Each time she came she drank a lot of spring water.

After a time I went to Hsi Le Yuan (Western Bliss Gardens) Temple and she searched for me but couldn't find me. She asked

everywhere, but no one would tell her where I was. Finally, after two years she found me and brought her sons and daughters to Hsi Le Yuan to see me. Her whole family took refuge with the Triple Jewel.

Once when she came to attend a Dharma assembly she noticed that one of the trees in the courtyard was covered with bugs. Her two greatest fears were monks and insects. Paralyzed with fear, she said, "I'd really like to come here and bow to the Buddha, but those bugs frighten me out of my wits!"

I said, "When you come tomorrow there won't be any bugs." By the time she arrived the next day, the bugs had vanished--every last one of them. No one knew where they had gone. This caused her faith to deepen.

At that time the roof of Hsi Le Yuan leaked so badly that there were seven leaks in my room alone. "How can you stay here?" she said. "It would be better if I bought a flat in Happy Valley. You could move there. Okay?"

I said, "If you want to buy one, buy one."

She bought a flat there and then I, along with some other disciples, bought an additional flat. When I was at Hsi Le Yuan I was very thin; when I moved to Happy Valley I gained weight. Now, upon coming to America, I've gotten skinny again and have lost about twenty pounds.

When it was time to come to America I was ready to sell one of the flats to pay for my passage, but she said, "Don't sell it to someone else because if you decide to come back again, it will be hard to buy back. Why not let me buy it? Then if you return, I'll give it to you." Now I have been in America for more than ten years, and suddenly she writes that she wishes to leave home and receive the precepts from me. She has three sons, all of whom are very filial. Her decision to leave home makes me very happy. Because she

works hard reciting the Buddha's name and does not indulge in false thinking, she will be able to make progress.

The disciple who was told to read the letter asked me after meeting Kuo Man, why Kuo Man didn't leave home. I told her that when the time was right she would leave home. If the time were not right, even if she did leave home she might regret it, being unable to set aside emotional ties and feelings of love. She is over sixty now and the question of emotional love will not be a problem for her. But there are many children and grandchildren in her family, and her life is one of comfort and wealth; I had thought she wouldn't be able to leave home.

Once she was stricken with a disease which caused her to fear people and sounds, and especially to fear me. She also lost her temper very easily. After being under the care of Western and Chinese doctors for more than two months her condition had still not improved and she finally came to me to express her difficulty. "I had a lot of faith in you," she said, "Why am I so afraid of you now? And why am I afraid of noise? My heart is heavy and I am always on the verge of losing my temper. What is the matter with me?"

I said, "This is a karmic obstacle. You will soon get better. Be patient."

She returned after twenty days and I said, "Start bowing to the Buddha and be extremely sincere. Don't stop until I tell you to." She bowed for about an hour and then I said, "Kuo Man, your sickness is gone." She had recovered; her heart had been purified and she was no longer afraid.

This experience deepened her faith and she began to work harder for the Buddhadharma. Her strong point is that she doesn't use the money her children give her for herself, but always uses it to do good works for the Buddha. She asked me to return to Hong Kong so that she could receive the precepts from me, but I

don't know when I will return. If I don't go there, she can come to America and I will introduce her to all of you.

The Dhyana Session is now complete. I hope you will continue to work exactly as you have during the session and not slack off.

The Story Of The Venerable Hsu Yun's Enlightenment

When the ancients applied their effort they would renounce death and forget about life. They weren't afraid of toil. Every time they had a session, they weren't willing to allow even a single second go by in vain, not to speak of letting a whole hour or two-hour sit go by in vain. They wouldn't allow even a second to be wasted. When in the Way place they would only concentrate their minds, work hard, and hope that by using their effort in the right way they could one day recognize their original face and obliterate the wheel of birth and death.

The life of the Venerable Master Hsu Yun is a popular topic for discussion these days. Today I'll talk a little bit about the incidents surrounding the enlightenment of the Venerable Master.

When the Venerable Hsu Yun was residing in a thatched hut on Chung Nan Mountain, he heard that the cultivators at Kao Min Monastery were going to hold ten consecutive Chan Sessions. They were to begin on July 19th. So he concentrated his mind and left for Kao Min Monastery for the sake of ending birth and death. While he was descending Chou Hua Mountain, it began to rain, and it rained so hard that the roads were all submerged in water. He remembered that along the road there was a bridge but he didn't know that it had been wiped out by the torrential rain, and as he walked along that particular road, because the bridge had been wiped out, he slipped and fell into the river. For a day and a night--24 hours--he was tossed by the waves and bobbed up and down in the current. Now, think about this, everyone. Being

in the water for a day and a night should certainly have drowned him; there's no way that he should have made it out alive. He had made the resolve to renounce death and forget about life, and was on his way to participate in a ten-week Chan Session when he almost drowned. You should all ponder this: wasn't that really a case of taking a loss?

It so happened that there was a fisherman working along the river at that time who chanced upon the Venerable Hsu Yun, caught him in his net and pulled him out of the river. At first the fisherman thought that he'd caught a huge fish, but as soon as he pulled him out and took a closer look he realized that this was, in fact, a monk! The fisherman observed that the monk had taken in a lot of water, so he lifted him onto a large rock and proceeded to empty the water out of his lungs. Now it's reasonable to suppose that after being submerged in water for 24 hours like that, one could not possibly have survived. But the Venerable Hsu Yun came back to life. The fisherman next went to a local temple and told a monk there, "I caught a monk in my net while fishing," and the monk from the temple returned with the fisherman to the scene of the accident to take a look. When he saw the Venerable Master he exclaimed, "Oh, this is the Venerable Te Ch'ing!" So he took Venerable Hsu Yun back to his temple to rest there for a few days.

If the Venerable Master had been a person with no mind for the Way, he would have thought, "Oh, I was on my way to the session and just about drowned in the river, so I'm not going to that session now. I'm going to retreat. I'm going back to the mountain and stay there in my thatched hut." But he wasn't like that. He maintained his resolve to go on and participate in the session.

So he went off to Kao Min Monastery after a few days and registered as a participant. Because he had been in the water for a

day and a night he was seriously ill. In what way was he ill? His nine orifices constantly flowed with blood--his nose, his eyes, his ears, his mouth all constantly bled. And even his anus and urinary tracts flowed with blood and essence. But even though he was so sick, he still didn't retreat and say, "I'm resigning from this session!" He went to Kao Min Monastery, determined to do the session.

Now, no one at Kao Min Monastery was aware of the Venerable Master's condition, or that he had almost been drowned in the river. Nor did the Master bother to tell anyone. He was prepared to go into the Chan Hall to strike up the session. A preparatory session was held on July 15, and the actual session itself was to begin on October 15. Since the Abbot of Kao Min Monastery himself wanted to participate in the session, he requested that the Venerable Hsu Yun act as Abbot in his place so that he would be able to attend the session without having to be distracted by temple affairs. But Hsu Yun wouldn't agree to this. And so, according to the tradition of the Chan Hall, the Abbot had him beaten with an incense board and scolded him, saying things like, "You haven't brought forth the resolve of a Bodhisattva!" and gave him a big harangue.

By that time, the Venerable Hsu Yun was like a living dead person, to the extent that even when people beat him he didn't feel that it was painful. When people scolded him, he didn't even hear it. He endured insult in that way. He was able to endure it all. Shortly after that, the Abbot of the local temple where Hsu Yun had stayed after his accident showed up at Kao Min Monastery, and he explained to everyone there, "The Venerable High Monk, Te Ch'ing, descended Chou Hua Mountain and on his way to this session he fell into the river and remained for a day and a night--24 hours--and then he was fished out and revived--he came back to life." On hearing this bit of news, everyone knew that the

Venerable Hsu Yun was one who had truly forsaken death and forgotten about life, in order to participate in this session. Then everyone got together and discussed it among themselves. It was the custom that those who participated in a session took turns taking the incense board and going on meditation patrol. While everyone else was sitting, the one on meditation patrol would carry the incense board around the hall to see who was sleeping, and whoever was sleeping would get hit with the incense board. But because the Venerable Hsu Yun had forsaken death and forgotten about life in order to attend the session, everyone felt sympathetic toward his resolve and they all agreed among themselves and said to him, "You nearly drowned and you're really sick so you needn't take a turn on the meditation patrol." Thus he was relieved of his turn on the meditation patrol. Not having to do that, he was able to single-mindedly work hard. He concentrated with a single focus, day and night, without ever interrupting his effort. But his illness still raged. His nine orifices kept on bleeding and his essence flowed, even from his urinary tract. But in spite of that he didn't rest; he still worked hard just as always.

One evening, during the session, it came time for tea. Because Hsu Yun was wrapped up in investigating his *hua t'ou* (meditation topic), his eyes were closed. As he held out his cup--maybe the tea server was sleepy--the tea server accidentally poured hot tea all over Hsu Yun's hand and scald it, causing him to release the cup and let it drop to the floor. The cup fell to the floor with a crash and the sound prompted in him an instantaneous enlightenment. It was a far-reaching and profound awakening. At that moment, Hsu Yun wrote this verse:

*The cup crashed to the floor
 With a sound crisp and clear.
 Empty space broke apart,
 And the mad mind immediately came to a halt.*

When the cup smashed to the floor, his ignorance was smashed to bits, and he found his original face. He understood everything and immediately became enlightened; becoming enlightened, he immediately understood everything.

Everyone should ponder over this. The Venerable Hsu Yun was such a high and lofty Sanghan. He worked very hard and subsequently was able to open enlightenment. What class of people are we? If we are casual and sloppy and plan to open enlightenment and certify to the fruition that way--that's something which simply can't be done. During a session, do we go off to the toilet though we don't really need to and pretend that we are taking care of business when actually we are just taking a rest? Is it the case that we don't really need to drink tea but then run off and have some tea? I believe that the set-up here now is not as bad as it was in the past. Before, on both the women's and men's sides there were provisions made for fixing up coffee and tea, and this and that. It was like a businessmen's luncheon. If people wanted to eat some of this they'd eat some of this; if they wanted to drink some of that, they'd drink some of that. In Chung Kuo, Chan Sessions were held in the winter and so the phrase was coined, "investigating in the winter and studying in the summer." This is because the heat is unbearable in the summer, and if people try to meditate then they find it difficult to enter Samadhi. But when it's cold, people have to work really hard in order to get over their fear of the cold. If they didn't work hard they'd get so cold that they wouldn't be able to take it. So in Chung Kuo in the winter they investigated Chan, and in the summer they investigated the teachings. This was called, "Chan in winter and study in summer."

There are those of you here now who are thinking, "During this session I haven't obtained a single advantage." Well you should return the light and illumine within and ask yourself if you

have been constantly thinking about ways to be extremely lazy and of ways to get off cheap; in that case how could you possibly get enlightened?

*If you can't renounce death,
you will never obtain life.
If you can't renounce the false,
you won't obtain the true.
If you can't renounce suffering,
you won't obtain bliss.*

If you can't give up what's false, you will never obtain what's true. True appearance has no marks. But you must first get rid of your false appearance.

The session is ending tonight, and it is well if any one of you has obtained the benefits of Chan. If you haven't obtained any benefits, it won't hurt to wait for a future opportunity. There's ample time ahead; your day has not yet come. It's only to be feared that you won't actually produce the resolve for Bodhi and be vigorous and concentrate and work hard. But, if you are able to do that, you will certainly accomplish the four kinds of wisdom: the Great Perfect Mirror Wisdom; the Wonderful Contemplative Wisdom; the Wisdom of Success in What You Do; and the Level and Equal-Nature Wisdom. The Great Perfect Mirror Wisdom, the Three Bodies and Four Wisdoms, don't come from outside. They are something that you must personally work hard for and then you will arrive at that level of accomplishment. It isn't such an easy thing to become enlightened.

So, this session is ending tonight. When I told the public record of the Venerable Hsu Yun, some of you felt very regretful. You thought, "The Venerable Hsu Yun was so energetic in that session, but in this session I wasted my time and didn't really

work hard. I have truly lost a good opportunity by not working hard. Why didn't you tell us about the Venerable Hsu Yun on the very first day of the session, and then I wouldn't have been so lazy, and so remorseful now."

If I'd told you about this on the first day in order to "entice" you to work hard, it wouldn't have been purely your own idea. If I were to try to coerce you into working hard, to forsake death and forget about life, then it wouldn't be you yourself that would be working hard, it'd be because I was influencing you to work hard. However, you should know that becoming enlightened is returning to one's own home, rediscovering one's inherent scenery. It doesn't come from outside. I am only explaining the principles to you. Whether or not you bring forth the resolve is up to you.

You should never cheat yourself. Although this session is over now, you can continue to work hard. You can apply your effort at all times and in all places. Whether walking, standing, sitting, or lying down, don't separate from this. If you separate from this, it is a mistake. What's "this"? "This" is just the effort you are using. No matter whether you investigate Chan or recite the Buddha's name, or hold the precepts, or study the teachings--they are all fine, but you have to concentrate and not be scattered. Therefore, it's said, "When one is concentrated it's efficacious, but when one is scattered it just won't work." It really counts when you can concentrate and prod yourself on, exhort yourself to not be so lazy and muddled and produce the resolve for the Way. If you haven't obtained any benefits from this session, then it'll count as a practice session. After this, if you have another opportunity, then you should really work hard. Don't be as scattered as you were before and so unwilling to work hard, thinking that you could get off cheap. It's not the case that you can get off cheap. If you're really lazy just now, it's not so important, but because

you have been like this for limitless kalpas in the past, you have fallen. You've fallen in the past simply because you liked to be lazy and never liked to take a loss. You always wanted to get off cheap. As a result you've taken an even greater loss: you have lost your inherent true gems and haven't been able to find them. There's still a bit of time left to this session and then it will be over. Although this session is about to end soon, the true session is always going on, whether one is walking, standing, sitting, or lying down. One can always apply effort, and that means to do no false thinking.

I'll tell you a bit more about my own experiences. I never false think at all. Why don't I have any false thinking? Because I've seen through the five desires of wealth, fame, food, sex, and sleep to the point that I regard them as all empty. I'm not greedy for wealth, I am not greedy for sex, I am not greedy for fame, I am not greedy for good things to eat, nor am I greedy for sleep. If it was the case that I was greedy for wealth, then I wouldn't take the offerings made to me and give them away for the use of the great assembly. But since I'm not greedy, when people give me money, I just give it away to everyone to use. Some might think that this is taking a great loss, but it doesn't matter to me. With regard to sex, everyone probably knows that I don't even have the slightest false thoughts with regard to sex. I wouldn't dare actually claim that I've cut off thoughts of sexual desire, but they have, nevertheless, disappeared. With regard to fame, I don't want it at all. When I write essays I sign them "ant". Take a look. How good a name is "ant"? Basically, it's not even a name. I basically feel that I am the same as mosquitoes and ants. I don't feel arrogant toward even them, not to mention people. I don't want a good name or a good reputation at all. And as for food--everyone here is aware that recently I've wanted to go on a raw foods diet and eat only things like raw greens and fruit, but the Bowing Monks

requested that I eat some cooked food, so I've granted their wish. Therefore, now I eat some plain boiled vegetables, but I don't use salt or oil on them. Why don't I eat salt and oil? Is it the case that I can't eat them? Is it the case that if I were to eat them I would die? No. Even if that were the case, if I still wanted to eat them, I'd eat them anyway. But that's not the case at all. The truth is I don't want to enjoy tasty flavors. You shouldn't weep when you hear that I don't eat oil and salt, feeling that I'm taking a great loss. For, it's just because I am this way that I can merit being your teacher.

Tonight, when you all return home, you should no longer be greedy for good flavors. You shouldn't spend your whole day long being greedy to eat good things and then guzzle and carouse to your heart's content playing Ma Chong and gambling. You should abstain from all those things. If you don't gamble or go to see plays and movies, you can take the money you would have wasted to create some meritorious works instead. And then that will be enough. So those of you who gamble should abstain from it. Those who like to eat but are lazy about working should not be so gluttonous. You should correct your faults and change all of your bad habits. Change them. You can believe in what I'm telling you now. When I tell you that I don't eat good things, I just consider that my basic duty as a cultivator. I'm not greedy for sleep, either. I can go a few days without sleep. But when I sleep, I can sleep for a few days, or even months, being in a constant state of sleep! I am able to do that, too. Or, I can go a few months without sleep, I can do that, too. That's how I am. You're thinking, "Dharma Master, are you telling the truth or is this all false talk?" If you think I am cheating you, then I am; but then you should understand the reason for my cheating you. If I really wanted to cheat you, I could use other methods, so why should I do the dumb things I've been doing in order to cheat you? Why am I

like this? It's because I don't have any false thinking. So whether I sleep or don't sleep, it's all the same to me. Being asleep is just the same as being awake. And when I'm awake, it's as if I were asleep. Even to the point that when I'm awake yet sleeping I can get even more work done!

And so you ask, "What do you do there while you're sleeping? Get rid of mosquitoes and drive out ants?" Some people are thinking, "This talk is just too far from the truth." Well, then go off and find someone who is talking honest talk and listen to that!

Now I've told you how I regard wealth, fame, sex, food and sleep. Name and wealth are just like clouds in the sky to me. Because of this, although I have established the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, I don't false think about it. I just let it take its own natural course in developing. I never use tricks on people in order to get them to do this and that. Now that I've told you the public record of the Venerable Hsu Lao, you can investigate it deeply. Those who truly want to end birth and death should study it, and then afterwards use it as a mirror. Then you will no longer be lazy. If you didn't make a victory at this session, don't feel too bad. Maybe next time will prove successful for you. I've composed a gatha for the end of this session:

*On this day, at this time, we are ending this session.
 We should all continue to work hard.
 Vigor, vigor--be vigorous!
 And don't have any doubts.
 Cast away fox doubts.
 Just wait until a future time
 When the opportunity ripens.
 And then, Mahaprajnaparamita!*

Don't Push For Speed

No matter what method you use in applying your effort at cultivating the Way--whether it be reciting the Buddha's name, holding mantras, studying the teachings, holding precepts, meditating, cultivating the Pure Land School, the Teachings School, and so on--you shouldn't be greedy for quick results. If you are greedy for a quick accomplishment you will make a mistake. Greed for speedy success still boils down to having a greed-mind, and that will obstruct your wisdom on the causal ground. It will also obstruct the light of your self-nature, because the light of your self-nature doesn't have any greed in it. Never has there been an efficacious response founded on greed. If you retain a greedy mind while you cultivate the Way, it's like having a piece of gold and covering it up with dirt. So, don't be greedy for quantity or speed, don't try to get off easy without doing the requisite work. If you don't have a greedy mind, you can put things down; if you can put things down, you can obtain samadhi, and only after obtaining samadhi can you open great wisdom. All of you should very deeply understand this. Don't be greedy for speed. If you are crazed over the idea of getting there quickly, you won't arrive at your destination. For instance, if you want to go to New York and wish to get there fast but don't do the necessary things to get there--such as taking a plane, or a train, or a bus--but just figure, "I'll get there on my own two legs, and I'll get there quickly!" then you'll rush on and die of fatigue and not get there at all. Cultivating the Way is also like that. You do everything very naturally. You should apply your effort very naturally and you shouldn't think about whether or not it's being effective or whether you are obtaining any good results. Don't think about anything at all. Just go forward in applying your effort--continue

with your hard work.

Moreover, every day you should change your faults--this is really important. If in any single day you don't find any faults to correct, then for that day you won't have made any progress. People who want to work hard at their cultivation shouldn't think, "I have been reciting Earth Store Bodhisattva's name and petitioning him to do something for me." On the contrary, you should recite for everyone in the world so that the world won't have any calamities or disasters. You don't need to be reciting for yourself. Don't be like an opium smoker, greedy for the quick high so he smokes opium. Then, after he gets high, he comes down again and wants another fix. People can develop a similarly unhealthy attitude toward cultivating the Way. But if you don't have a greedy mind for results, just that is the manifestation of proper mindfulness, in which case you will truly be able to apply effort. Proper mindfulness is just the proper thought for cultivation --not having any greed. Not being greedy for the slightest ease in cultivation means not trying to get off cheap. You shouldn't have the thought that today you are going to cultivate the Way and tomorrow you will become a Buddha, because that principle doesn't exist anywhere. You can't dig a well in a single thrust.

The “Zero”

Among those of you who investigate Chan, there are some who already know how to use their skill and are already on the road. But then for those who have just started out, you need some direction in the beginning. For those of you who already have an inkling of what Chan is, everything that is said is false. “Whatever can be spoken doesn’t have any actual meaning.” But for those of you who have newly arrived, a few words must be spoken. It’s like using a key to unlock a door. These words open the lock inside of your mind. In applying skill, the first thing is that your thoughts must be brought to a single focus--you must be concentrated. So it’s said, “With concentration there is efficacy; once scattered, everything is ruined.” Regarding the One,

*When Heaven attains the One, it becomes pure;
When Earth gains the One, it becomes peaceful;
When a person attains the One,
he becomes a sage;
When the ten thousand things attain the One,
they all abide in their destiny.*

The “One” is very important. It’s the beginning of the myriad things. It’s the mother substance. “If you attain the One, the ten thousand things are all accomplished.” But if one has an attachment to the One, it’s very easy to fall into two or three--that is, one still becomes attached to shape and form and numbers. If there’s still a form to attach to, it’s not true emptiness. Well, what is true emptiness? True emptiness is just the Zero. This Zero is a numerical ‘0’, and it is also a circle. This Zero is not big nor small,

it has no inside or outside, no past or present, it’s not positive and it’s not negative. It doesn’t fall into the sphere of numbers and yet no number is apart from the Zero. Zero is the original substance of the One. Once the Zero is broken apart, it becomes a One. In cultivation we want to cultivate back from the One to the Zero.

“Well, it’s said that within the Zero there is nothing at all,” you say. That’s right, but there still is a Zero and right within that Zero boundless transformations occur. That Zero is true emptiness; it’s also wonderful existence:

*True emptiness does not obstruct
wonderful existence,
Wonderful existence does not obstruct
true emptiness.
True emptiness isn’t empty;
Wonderful existence doesn’t exist.
Because true emptiness isn’t empty,
it is therefore called wonderful existence;
Wonderful existence doesn’t exist,
and so it’s called true emptiness.*

That’s the foremost thing one must know when cultivating. What are we cultivating? We are just cultivating the Zero. Although it’s said that when you attain the One, the ten thousand things are accomplished; when you attain the Zero there’s not a single thing. Then, not a single Dharma is set up and the ten thousand thoughts are emptied. If you want to understand that principle, you must first concentrate your mind; that means to not have any false thinking. If you can manage to not have false thoughts, you will have a response. So when it says that with concentration there is efficacy, the efficacy is just a response, as in “the response and the Way intertwine”.

First of all, you must focus your mind into a single concentration, and that's not easy. And from the single concentration, to return to the Zero is even more difficult. But is it the case that since it's not easy we won't try? If you don't try, then you'll never get anywhere. Therefore we have to use effort in sitting in Chan. In sitting Chan the very first thing one must do is train oneself to sit still. If you have really stiff legs you can just sit in a way that is comfortable for you. But after you feel a bit more at ease and comfortable, then you should go on to half lotus. When you can sit in half lotus without it hurting any more then you can go on to full lotus. Only when you have trained yourself to the point that even when sitting in full lotus you no longer have any pain can you be considered to be truly investigating Chan. Investigating Chan is basically having nothing to do and finding something to do. You haven't got any work to do but you look for some work to do. And so it's a case of cultivators having some fun, playfully roaming in the human realm. You say "I don't want to play!" Then don't play. When you investigate Chan you look into a meditation topic, a word-head. "Word-head" means the head of a topic, before anything is even articulated, before the first stirring of the mind. It's like a prelude--before a single thought has arisen. Just when you are about to engage in a thought and before you have actually done so, right at that moment, is where you investigate the word-head. To do that you must have a topic to look into. For instance, "Who is mindful of the Buddha?"

To investigate means to drill into the topic as if you were using a chisel. It's like using a vajra drill, drilling into iron, to bore a hole. The investigating is just that process of drilling and boring a hole. When you bring up this topic, you say "Who" is mindful of the Buddha? It's the "Who" that you look into, savoring its flavor and looking deeper and deeper into it. You bore deeper and deeper in until you get a clue, and once you get an inkling of who

it is, you get an enlightenment. But you can't get to know this by using the ordinary thinking processes. You can't say, "I'll just take a guess at it." That's not it, either. It isn't something that you can arrive at through cognition, nor is it a matter of making an hypothesis. It's none of those. It belongs to a realm that you have never considered before. When you hit that point, suddenly you become enlightened. You smash through empty space and the five skandhas are all emptied. And that's what's meant when it says in the *Heart Sutra*,

When the Bodhisattva, Avalokiteshvara, was coursing in deep wisdom, he illuminated the five skandhas and saw that they are all empty...

Once you empty the five skandhas, you continue on to the next step: that is where Shariputra had his success, because he saw that form is not different from emptiness and emptiness is not different from form. Form is just emptiness, and emptiness is just form. Feeling, thought, and consciousness are just the same way. When you can empty the five skandhas, you will not be defiled by the six sense objects. That is the first step toward realizing Buddhahood. Then it could be said that you have “stepped beyond the threshold of the Buddha's household.” But you need to put in quite a bit of effort in order to reach this stage.

This time at Gold Mountain there were some laypeople from Malaysia. When they heard about investigating Chan--looking into the “Who” that is mindful of the Buddha over and over again, they thought it was the same as reciting “Namo Amita Fwo”, as if one's life depended on it. But when investigating Chan you don't do it in a frenzy. In order to investigate you must slow down and be very deliberate about it. You must take your time and maintain a calm and balanced state of mind. Then you can go on to investigate to enlightenment. The two words, “investigate-

enlighten” (參悟) make a compound. To “investigate” is just to become “enlightened”. To become “enlightened” is just to “investigate”. And so pondering over “Who” is mindful of the Buddha, and really going at it, is investigating Chan.

To have the thought “Who?” is still having a false thought. But this is a case of using poison to counteract poison. You use a single false thought to get rid of all the myriad other false thoughts. People who want to apply effort must understand this point first. Because if you don’t understand this point, then no matter how hard you work, it will be a waste of your time.

Now, back to the Zero. The Zero is just a “0”. You could say that people are equal to the Zero and that the Zero is just people. The “0” is the path to Buddhahood, the path to enlightenment. If you want to become enlightened, you have to understand the principle of the Zero. If you want to become a Buddha, you have to understand the principle of the Zero. At the level of common people, it’s the Zero; but when we become Buddhas, the Zero turns into the Great Perfect Mirror Wisdom: the Great Treasury of Bright Light. The Zero can give rise to all dharmas; it can also sweep away all dharmas. So you say, “0,” “0,” “0,” and there still isn’t anything much happening. But right within that “not anything much happening,” you find true emptiness.

But people seek outside and so they lose the fundamental, intrinsic Buddha-nature; they lose the original scenery of their mind ground and their inherent treasures. Instead, they forsake the root and grasp at the branches, they flow along with the current of birth and death and forget to return. They are unable to go against the flow of the six sense objects and return to the origin and go back to the source. If you want to return to the origin and go back to the source, you must begin at the place where there is absolutely nothing. If you want to become a Buddha, you have to start from the Zero, where there’s nothing at all. If you understand the Zero,

then you can count as someone who understands the Dharma. If you don't understand the Zero, then you don't understand the Dharma. Because “all dharmas are not apart from the Zero and all dharmas come into being from the Zero and return to the Zero”. As it is said,

*One root extends to ten thousand ramifications,
And ten thousand ramifications
return to the one root.*

But because we don't understand the principle of true emptiness, we forsake what is near and run after what is far away and grab for things outside and look for trouble. We add a head on top of a head. It's like riding in a car and looking for a car, riding in a plane and looking for a plane, riding in a rocket and looking for the rocket. That's really upside down, living as if drunk and dying as if in a dream, going against the Tao--and it's all because of having forgotten the Zero.

So you shouldn't think that this type of Dharma that has been discussed tonight is a small condition, because what I am telling you now is something that startles heaven and earth and makes the ghosts and spirits wail. I am basically disclosing to you the secrets of heaven and earth--bringing forth the original source of all Buddhas that has not been brought forth. After you hear it, if you understand, you can just use this method to go on and become Buddhas; but if you don't understand, then you will still fall into the hells.

Why do we say that if you understand the Zero you can become a Buddha--why is it so simple? And why do we say that if you don't understand the Zero you will fall into the hells? It's because becoming a Buddha comes from the Zero, and falling into hell is just because of not understanding Zero. Heavenly

demons and those of outside ways come about because they don't understand the Zero, too. Freaks and demonic creeps are that way because they don't understand the Zero. Also, fox spirits and weasel spirits, mountain essences and water freaks--whether it is a thing or a non-thing--all of that comes about from not understanding the Zero, and as a result a myriad shapes and forms materialize--they are all transformed from non-understanding. Although their shapes and forms are different, fundamentally they are just one--they are the same. That's why the Buddha said that all living beings have the Buddha-nature, and all living beings can become Buddhas. Whether it's a mountain essence or a water freak or any type of weird creature, *li mei* and *wang liang* ghosts, and so forth, it's just because they don't understand the Zero that they are the way they are. But all they have to do is return to the source and go back to the Zero, and instantaneously they will realize Buddhahood.

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In studying the Buddhadharma, the most important thing is to cut off one's bad habits and faults. It doesn't matter how many Sutras you have heard or how long you have studied the Buddhadharma, if you can't get rid of your bad habits and faults, it's of no help to you. So I tell you quite often, "It's easy to get by, but it's hard to get rid of one's anger." It's hard to transform your anger. You should get to the point where you don't get angry, that is, you don't get angry inside or outside. There are some who don't get angry on the outside, but they hold it in and get angry on the inside; there are others who don't hold it inside, but get angry on the outside. Here I am referring to not getting angry inside or outside, and that is to "obtain the priceless jewel". You don't vex others, or go around blaming heaven and faulting other people--

you don't bother others--and if things don't work out for you, you look for the reason within yourself. If something doesn't go your way, return the light and look within and seek the fullness within yourself. Don't seek outside. Instead you should study being modest and you should strive to ascend. And if you don't blame others and have no bad feelings toward others, then no matter what happens it'll be okay.

At all times you should cut off afflictions--as in the Bodhisattva vow, “Afflictions are inexhaustible, I vow to cut them off.” Basically, there are no afflictions that can't be cut off; if you don't produce them in the first place, what's there to be cut off? Why do you have afflictions? Because you have bad feelings. It's the karma from the bad feelings and ill-will you have that causes you to give rise to afflictions. So the verse says, “If afflictions are never brought forth, where can one find the offenses of bad feelings?” In that case, everything will be pure--the pure, original, wonderful, true Thus nature will appear.

“If you are always looking at others' faults, then you haven't put an end to your own suffering.” If you aren't looking for one person's faults, then you're looking for another person's faults. And if you don't feel that this isn't good, then you think that something else isn't quite right. If you are looking for other people's faults, you haven't put an end to your own suffering. But if you can keep from being that way, you will be truly studying the Buddhadharma. What counts is truly practicing the Buddhadharma--really doing it, being sincere and straightforward, not just talking about it. If you can really practice, you are a true disciple of the Buddha and you will be truly propagating the Buddhadharma. If you can't really, truly practice and you just flap your mouth and just drivel on with intellectual Chan “rap”, but you yourself still can't do it, it's totally useless.

No matter what Dharma you cultivate, if you cultivate it

to the extreme, just that is the Pure Land. Reciting the Buddha's name is fine; reciting mantras is effective, too. If you can clean up your mind, then even if you don't want to be born in the Land of Ultimate Bliss, you will still be born there. So whatever Dharma you cultivate, if you can single-mindedly cultivate it until it becomes magical, then you will have a response just the same.

Question: If one is born in the Land of Ultimate Bliss, even though they have offenses, is it the case that they have to return to the Saha World to exhaust those offenses, or are those offenses taken care of in the Pure Land?

Answer: Someone who gets reborn there is eternally apart from the Three Realms. One who is born in the Land of Ultimate Bliss has already exhausted his karma. If you want to be born in the Land of Ultimate Bliss, you must purify and cast out your emotions. When emotion is empty, just that is the Pure Land. When one's karma is made light, that is the Land of Ultimate Bliss, but when one's karma is confused, that's the Saha World.

Question: Of the forty-eight vast vows of Amita Buddha, one is that whoever recites Amita's name will be born in the Land of Ultimate Bliss; so why is it that there are still so many people who haven't been born there?

Answer: Is it the case that everyone has recited the Buddha's name? Can you make everyone recite the Buddha's name? If you can't do that, then why ask such a question? Can you teach everyone to recite the Buddha's name? If you can teach all people to recite the Buddha's name, can you teach all the gods to recite the Buddha's name? If you can teach all the gods, then can you teach all the animals to recite the Buddha's name? How about the hell beings? Can you cause hungry ghosts to become happy? How about the asuras? It's impossible! Since there are so few who recite the Buddha's name, there are equally few who are reborn in the Land of Ultimate Bliss. There are so many trillions upon trillions

of living beings in the Saha World. Not to mention all those who have not recited the Buddha’s name, there are many who haven’t even heard of the Buddha’s name. Do you understand?

Everyone should look within and investigate themselves. See what you are. Today someone asked what kind of a thing he was. This may sound like a meaningless question, but in fact that’s the way it is. You can’t really say that you are some kind of “thing”. What kind of “thing” can pervade empty space to the ends of the Dharma Realm? It’s our original wisdom, the Buddha-nature. If you can recognize your own Buddha-nature, then why would you want to seek outside for things? There’s no up or down, no self, others, living beings, or a lifespan. So what “thing” can you find? So you can’t say that people evolved from apes. The theory of evolution claims that people came from apes. Well, then, what did apes come from? You could say that apes came from mice. Is that right or not? Or maybe apes came from rabbits. Is there any principle to that? Rabbits can’t change into apes, so how is it the case that apes can become people? Well, even if I grant you that people came from apes, then why is it that in the present time there isn’t a single case of an ape that is changing into a person? Who now has seen an ape turning into a person? There is no foundation for this type of theory.

You say, “People were created by God.” Well, if people came from God, then who created God? You say, “God has always existed.” But, if God has always existed, then why is it that people haven’t always existed? What proof do you have that God has always existed? What proof do you have that in the beginning there weren’t any people? If there’s a God, then there are people; if there is no God, then there are no people. Why is that? It’s because people gave God his name. It isn’t that God said, “Well, I am God.” That would be like you yourself saying you are God. He would be a phony, trumped-up god. And so there is this God

who says, “Whoever believes in me can’t become a god. I’m the only one who can be God. I am always going to be God. Every day I’m the only God.” At all times you are God, but since you are always God, why do you need people to believe in you? In that case, whether or not they believe in you, you would still be God, so why do you need people to believe in you if that’s the case? Isn’t that totally lacking principle? Look into it. Why am I saving this? Because people are just too superstitious.

Now back to the theory of evolution which says that people descended from apes. What’s the basis for this theory? Well, you say, “There’s historical proof.” That’s your kind of evidence, but I don’t see it that way. Why? Because I haven’t seen it with my own eyes, so I don’t accept it. It’s a figment of the imagination, a groundless theory that is a product of fantasizing. It’s like writing a science fiction novel.

Ultimately, what’s it all about? People come from the Buddha-nature. Not only do people come from the Buddha-nature, but all living beings come from the Buddha-nature, and all can become Buddhas. Every living being can become a Buddha. It’s all equal. It’s not to say that only one person can be the Buddha. The Buddha is not the only one Buddha. And he doesn’t say, “As long as you believe in me, it doesn’t matter whether you have created offenses, you can still be born in the heavens.” If that were the case, then God could excuse everyone of their offenses. God would be like a harbinger of criminals, because they wouldn’t have had other places to go to hide and so he helped them out. And then he said, “If you don’t believe in me, even if you do good, you will still fall into the hells.” This doesn’t contain any public principle, so as a theory it doesn’t hold up.

People come from the Buddha-nature. And people make a further transformation and become animals. Animals come from people. That’s the truth. That just doesn’t mean that during the

life of a person he suddenly turns into an animal or any other kind of being. It happens after death. After one dies, if one has merit and virtue one can be born in the heavens or become an asura, or maybe a person again. People can go up and be autocrats and kings or they can go down and become beggars. It’s just a matter of one’s own merit and virtue and how many offenses one has made. If one creates offenses, one must fall. Maybe one falls into the hells, or becomes a hungry ghost or maybe one will become an animal. It’s not fixed.

Someone asked me, “Are there such things as ghosts?” and my answer was, “Are there people?” If you think there are people, why would you think there weren’t any ghosts? Ghosts just come from people. People fall and become ghosts. If people rise they become spirits or immortals, and if they go even higher, they become Buddhas or Bodhisattvas. So Buddhism and Taoism start out the same, but Buddhism is ultimate and gets to the very basis. It reaches to the ultimate point. Taoism stops about half way. That also goes for Catholicism and Protestantism, Mohammedanism, and so on. They are all just stops along the Way. If someone doesn’t have any perseverance he just goes as far as finishing high school and doesn’t go on to college. Cultivation is the same way. Taoists and so forth are those who just don’t wish to go on to college. Confucianism is comparable to elementary school, Taoism to high school, and Buddhism to college. That’s a very simple analogy. You can’t say that high school students aren’t really students, nor that elementary school students aren’t really students, and that only college students are really students. They are all students and they are all in the process of study. Those who study the Buddhadharma are likened to those who graduate from high school and go on to college to further study. But we can’t look down upon high school students. Those in high school can’t look down upon those in elementary school, either, because

that's just being arrogant. We want to encompass the ten thousand things, and with a compassionate and kind heart attract all and bring them all in.

Here at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas we want to become Buddhas. If you want to repay the kindness of the four-fold assembly, just don't get angry. The slightest bit of anger can burn up all your merit and virtue. So here's a Chan verse for this session:

*Within the Way place of the Ten Thousand Buddhas,
We select the ten thousand Buddhas.
The Mahayana is proclaimed all around,
above and below.
With one thought not produced,
the entire substance manifests.
But if the six organs move,
then one is covered by clouds.*

Everyone, investigate those four lines. Don't spend your time and effort involved in the six sense organs. Work on your mind ground. Don't renounce the root and go for the branches. You need to settle the basic question, the question of birth and death.

“Dreaming Within A Dream”

Now I will speak some crazy words, which are not in accord with any rules or regulations. What sort of crazy words? We are all living in a dream, we are all talking in dream-talk!

You run off to the east, you run off to the west, you run off to the south, you run off to the north, you run off to the upper direction, you run off to the lower direction--to the point that you run all over empty space and the Dharma Realm, seeking for what you believe you want. However, from the day of your birth to the moment of your death, whatever you may have sought after, whether or not you obtained it, is of no significance--you have just wasted your time.

If you get what you seek, temporarily you'll feel happy and satisfied. But after a certain amount of time, you'll start growing tired and bored with it, feeling that it has become meaningless and insipid. Huang You-chun, in his *Ode in the Orchid Pavilion*, put it very distinctly.

*People meet, gazing up and looking down
--that's how they spend their entire lives.
Perhaps they will meet in a room and
exchange their views.
Due to circumstances, they become very indulgent,
devoid of propriety.
When they behold that which they like,
momentarily they are infatuated and content,
And they do not notice the coming of old age.
By-and-by they grow tired, and their
sentiments change with the passing of events.*

*This causes them great remorse,
and then things take an unhappy turn.
They become sour, and many unpleasant
situations arise.
Isn't this worthy of regret?*

In the past people have behaved this way; people of the present behave this way; and people of the future will behave in the same way. So it is said,

*When those of the future regard the present,
It will be just like us of the present
when we regard the past.*

When contemplating this, you should ponder: “from the time of birth until the time of death, what are people chasing after?” It’s nothing but desire!! Desire. Some pursue the desire for leadership; some pursue the desire for wealth; some pursue the desire for sex; some pursue the desire for fame, recognition and benefit. To put it in a nutshell, although their variations may be many, they are all after the same thing.

Do we live in the world only in order to pursue those meaningless things? No! Then what are we living for? Our sole purpose on earth is to wake up from this dream we are in. Don’t dream on within a dream, lingering on in your dream, not willing to let go. You should awaken from it! Not only should you awaken yourself, but you should help everyone else wake from their dreams as well. After you wake up, you will no longer be so upside down. Before you awaken from your dream, if someone were to tell you, “Hey, do you know? You are living in a dream! No matter how much wealth you have, no matter what high official post you may have gained or how successful your

career has been, it’s all happened within a dream!” you would certainly not believe that person. But just wait until you wake up from your dream, then you will know, “Oh! Originally it was just a dream!”

What do I mean by “living in a dream”? If you weren’t living in a dream, then why have you forgotten everything about the past? Why can’t you foresee events of the future? Why can’t you make the present remain? You do not have a grasp on any of these things. Tell me, what in this world is ultimately yours?

Someone says, “My body belongs to me.”

Well, if your body really belongs to you, can you keep your eyes from becoming hazy? Can you stop your ears from growing deaf? Can you keep your teeth from falling out?

You say, “I can take care of all of that; no problem. If my eyes grow dim, I can put on a pair of contact lenses, and then I’ll be able to see.”

But that is borrowing from external conditions; they are not your own.

“If my ears grow deaf, I can use a hearing aid.” That’s also borrowing from external conditions and not using your own resources.

“If my teeth fall out, I can put on dentures.”

That is also borrowing from external conditions; none of those things belong to you. Only people who are spineless borrow from external conditions. People with back-bone stand on their own two feet, they try their best without cease, and they do not rely on outer conditions.

If this body really belongs to you, you will be able to tell your hair not to turn white, tell your feet not to hurt, tell your head not to ache, tell your body not to get sick--only that can be counted as having some control. But since you are not in control, you should realize that the body is just a false combination of the

four elements: earth, water, fire and wind. If it's all false anyway, why should you become so upside down because of it? Even if you become so upside down over it, in what way will it repay you? Tell me.

Therefore, we in this world should put down all of our attachments. Put down the false, take up the true--only then will our lives have some meaning to them. Do not dream on within a dream, taking your dream as real and not waking up from it.

After A While It Comes Naturally

Everything in this world has within it the true and the false. Within the true, there's some falseness and in the falseness, there's some truth. The same goes with each individual. Each person has some merit as well as some offenses. In the past we created both good and bad karma, and all of this good and bad karma has been stored in the field of our eighth consciousness. It's possible to either increase your merit or your offenses--there are no fixed dharmas. If you work hard, you earn more merit. If you don't work hard, you increase your offenses. If you cultivate vigorously, you don't need to go about it in any fixed way. Just now, when someone said that sometimes he sits for five minutes, sometimes for an hour, or sometimes not at all, that's all right, but if you're just starting out, it's easy to get lazy. People need to spur themselves on in order to get going and keep going. If you just do what you feel like doing, and don't discipline yourself, it's easy to fall into a pattern of advancing one step and retreating two. So there's a saying,

*In the beginning, it feels forced,
but after a while it comes naturally.*

When you first start out, you have to force yourself to do it. But after you've practiced for a while, you get better at it and it comes more easily and naturally for you. At that time, when you're walking, you're not aware of it; when you're sitting, you are not aware that you're sitting; when you're standing, you don't realize

you're standing; and when you're reclining, you don't know you're reclining. This is because you've gained freedom to do whatever you want in every respect. You're no longer hindered. When this happens, no matter what you do you'll always be cultivating--whether coming or going. Then, even if you're talking to people or hosting guests--no matter what you're doing--you'll still be working at your cultivation. At the point when everything comes together for you, this will happen.

So, in cultivation you must bear bitterness. I always say, "everything's okay". You can say that everything's okay, but it's really not easy to be that way. It's one thing to say it; it's another to experience it. Cultivation is not always easy; at times you have to force yourself. Things come up that you really can't see through, and you have to gather in all your energy to put things down, to let go of things. That's not easy at all; sometimes it's very, very difficult. In saying, "It's okay, it's okay," sometimes you may think, "Well, everything's okay," and it will be okay for a while in a certain respect, but then something else will come up that is not okay. And just when you get that one worked out so it's okay, something else comes up that's *VERY MUCH* not okay. So it's very easy to say "everything's okay," but it's very hard to be that way. When you cultivate, you have to be prepared to do so bit-by-bit. And when you do your work, you have to do that bit-by-bit as well. Everything is really "a dream, illusion, bubble, shadow..." It's not real. You shouldn't get caught up in it all and take it all too seriously. Because as the *Vajra Sutra* says,

*All conditioned dharmas are like
Dreams, illusions, bubbles, shadows,
Like dew and like lightning flashes.
Contemplate them thus.*

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Verse of Transference

May the merit and virtue accrued from this work,
Adorn the Buddhas' Pure Lands,
Repaying four kinds of kindness above,
And aiding those suffering in the paths below.

May those who see and hear of this,
All bring forth the resolve for Bodhi,
And when this retribution body is over,
Be born together in the Land of Ultimate Bliss.