Records of the Yihai Lectures (1935)

Master Wang Xianglu

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Explanatory Notes and Background

Explanatory Notes

I. This record of lectures is divided into three sections and consists of the teachings given by Lay Practitioner Wang Xianglu. The first is the Section on Inspiring Potential, taking the inspiration of great resolve and responsibility as its cause; the second is the Section on Right Cultivation, taking the transmission and actual cultivation of a practice suited to the recipient as its condition; and the third is the Section on Verification of Realization, taking awakening through practice and its confirmation through Mind-Seal as its fruition. We have respectfully selected and recorded its essential points for publication, for the benefit of fellow practitioners.

II. This association was originally called the Buddhist Studies Association and was later reorganized as Mind-Seal Vihara. Master Xiang taught the Dharma here for two years, giving more than four hundred lectures. He instructed students tirelessly and without interruption. Countless fellow refuge-takers realized the mind and recognized their own intrinsic nature. Regrettably, no records were preserved of the lectures given in the jiǎxū year (1934). This volume contains only the lectures given in the yǐhài year (1935), and is therefore entitled Records of the Yihai Lectures (1935).

III. In transmitting the Dharma, this association does not restrict itself to any one method. It is neither Pure Land, Esoteric Buddhism, nor Chan; teachings are transmitted according to the recipient's capacity. Yet precepts, samādhi, and wisdom are all naturally upheld. It takes recognizing one's own intrinsic nature through the dhāraṇī method as its essence, uses the prajñā method to inspire

expedient means as its function, and takes realization of perfect enlightenment through the Pure Land method as its ultimate destination. When speaking of precepts, it emphasizes the essence of the precepts and guards against pitfalls in observing them; when speaking of samādhi, it teaches right samādhi and eliminates erroneous views; when speaking of wisdom, it realizes the power of wisdom and guards against arrogance. Its essential meaning is fully contained in these lectures.

IV. This record of lectures must not be read cursorily. Its essential meaning lies wholly in its subtle and hidden places. If one carefully rereads it from beginning to end four or five times, while simultaneously practicing the method and investigating it, one will surely one day awaken suddenly. Otherwise, one will have only a textual understanding.

V. The passage on the Heart-of-Heart Dharma following the Section on Right Cultivation is especially important for beginners. Those practicing the method from afar may make use of this expedient means and should study it carefully while sitting in meditation.

Background

[Respectfully Recorded by Fellow Practitioners]

This association has been operating for some time and has transmitted the Dharma to several hundred people. Fortunately, all have practiced earnestly and devotedly, deeply understanding its essential points. Such causes and conditions are inconceivable. This year the association is continuing its work and has again invited me to lecture and transmit the great Dharma. I feel deeply unworthy.

May all of you who propagate the Dharma arouse the great vow to benefit living beings, strive to spread it widely, repay the four benefactions above, and relieve the three sufferings below. Let us jointly investigate the Dharma gates of Buddhist practice, benefiting ourselves and others, so that those who have not yet aroused the resolve may themselves enter the gate of arousing it; those who have already aroused the resolve may enter together upon the path of diligence; and those already diligent may proceed directly into the hall of cultivation and realization. These are the aspirations at three levels. Above, we rely on the Buddha's compassion; below, on the strength of the assembly. Together, let us shoulder unsurpassed bodhi and advance diligently without retreating. These few words may serve as our words of aspiration before the Buddha. I also wish this association immeasurable blessings and benefits in the future.

The association’s lectures on days designated “one, three, five,” and so on are intended to guide beginners. Much of the teaching repeats last year’s lectures, now supplemented with fresh explanations. Last year’s lectures followed no fixed

sequence: some were profound, others elementary. Buddhist students often struggle because they begin midway without clarifying the fundamentals. Their understanding remains half-formed, and difficulties gradually emerge.

Now, without wearying of what may seem elementary, we shall begin again from the start and provisionally establish a sequence. Those who have heard these teachings before may review the old and thereby know the new; those who have not heard them may correct themselves from the causal ground onward. This is of the greatest importance. Lay Practitioner Du Youqiao and others have again made the resolve to record and publish each lecture for circulation. Thus, those who hear the Dharma later may connect with the preceding text. Handouts will be distributed as the lectures proceed, then collected and bound into a volume, so that they may be passed on to benefit others and everyone may remain in accord. Those at a distance who wish to read the handouts may obtain them through fellow members.

The Buddhist Studies Association has the nature of a cooperative endeavor. Good roots belong to the practitioners themselves, while causes and conditions depend upon teachers and spiritual friends; when these are brought together, unsurpassed merit and virtue are accomplished. Thus, one cannot accomplish such adornment with merit and virtue through only slight good roots, blessings, and causes and conditions. At the outset, however, it depends upon the teacher's and spiritual friends' inspiring one's potential, and upon one's own faith.

First, one inspires the person's potential, observes which dharma gate accords with that person, and transmits the appropriate method; this is called the right Dharma. Further progress then depends on one's own devout cultivation: one must work diligently and steadfastly, relying only on perseverance. The teacher then serves as a guardian, constantly observing the practitioner's conduct, assessing mental states, guarding against mistaken views, and forestalling errors, so that the practitioner does not become wild or unrestrained and may arrive at clear awakening. This is called opening the eye of the true Dharma.

Further progress again depends upon one's diligent cultivation after awakening, without laziness. Yet when samādhi and wisdom are not balanced and essence and function are not integrated, the teacher must correct and instruct at every point, disciplining the practitioner and carefully examining the subtle and extremely subtle distinctions in mental states. At this time, whenever practitioners gain a somewhat superior experience, their speech becomes unrestrained and their spirit grows heedless. This is a stage that must be passed through.

It is like practicing sword dancing: one's strength gradually becomes ample, but one's technique is not yet complete. The slightest carelessness can cause harm on both sides. Therefore, cooperation must continue to the end. Those of superior

capacity may not relax until at least two years have passed. Yet the Dharma has no fixed method, for this teaching differs from Chan and Pure Land, and methods of practice vary accordingly. Moreover, each person's capacities also differ.

What we cultivate is the attainment of the fundamental; our aim is Mind-Seal and genuine benefit. This association is not engaged in the study of doctrinal theories and words, yet neither does it discard doctrinal teachings. We simply clarify those points that are concise and essential, using them to support further cultivation. Its method may be summarized as follows; this is also the Mind-Seal school's guiding principle:

I. Explain elementary teachings in a comprehensive way to inspire potential, strengthen faith, and set the causal ground aright.

II. Taking Mind-Seal as the core principle, prajñā as the function, dhāraṇī as the method, and the Pure Land as its ultimate destination.

III. First clarify the essence, then activate its function; verify the mind-ground and develop Buddha-wisdom. Enable practitioners to see directly the form of prajñā and attain accomplishment in this very life.

IV. Use emptiness to break through ignorance and gradually eliminate habitual tendencies, enabling sudden awakening followed by gradual cultivation. Apply the Buddha Dharma to conventional truth, eliminate emotional views, gain genuine benefit, and continue until one knows one's own mind as it truly is.

V. Cultivate the fundamental great precepts at the causal stage, and diligently practice the ten great vows of The Buddha-Heart Sutra .

VI. Break through all doubts and perplexities, transforming delusion, karma, and suffering into samādhi, wisdom, and emptiness.

Three Periods and Three Sections: These several points can certainly establish a foundation in this very life; therefore, they are divided into three periods.

The first is the period of explaining principle, the second the period of actual cultivation, and the third the period of verification. The lectures are likewise divided into three sections: first, the Section on Inspiring Potential; second, the Section on Right Cultivation; and third, the Section on Verification of Realization. Esoteric Dharma is a distinctive teaching. The Heart-of-Heart Dharma also differs from other esoteric practices. Do not discuss it with those who have neither practiced nor realized it. If this gives rise to their doubts or slander, that is our own fault, not theirs. Learning consists in knowing for oneself; do not rashly speculate about others' mental states or compare yourself with them in a contest of superiority. To claim attainment without having attained is to claim knowledge without knowing;

the error is equally grave. Because the Dharma is to be held in reverence, one must be cautious at the causal stage.

Section on Inspiring Potential

For the sake of Mind-Seal, and because the causal ground must be correct, we shall first explain the Section on Inspiring Potential. Qi means to inspire: to inspire the potential of the assembly, arouse in them faith, earnest resolve, and the courageous resolve to put the teaching into practice, so that they may accord with the sūtras and treatises taught by the Buddhas and bodhisattvas. Thus they turn delusion into awakening, cross beyond suffering and adversity, and transcend birth and death.

Further, this inspires each person's inherent roots and gives them the true Dharma according to whether their capacities are sharp or dull. Capacities may be sharp or dull, but there is no fixed Dharma; that which accords with one's capacity is correct. We therefore first expound the Dharma to inspire and guide them, and to test and observe them. This is the preliminary expedient before the transmission of Dharma in this assembly, enabling beginners first to understand how to arouse bodhicitta, the initial step in entering the Buddha's path.

Of all dharma gates, arousing the resolve is the foremost difficulty and the foremost essential matter. A sūtra says, “The moment one arouses the resolve, one becomes a Buddha.” This single thought is of immense and inconceivable consequence; practitioners must not dismiss it as merely an initial step. In every worldly undertaking, there must be a primary reason: “Why?”

Why have you all come to hear the Dharma? Before hearing it, each of you should ask yourself: Why have I come here to hear the Dharma? Now remain silent for one minute. In this single minute, your state of mind will already have advanced to the other shore. This is turning the question back upon your own intrinsic nature. For to ask oneself a question is to turn inward and contemplate one's own nature; to turn back is to reach the shore—this is the turning of a single thought.

To enter sagehood from the ordinary state requires only this one turn. For forty-nine years, the Buddha taught immeasurable wondrous Dharma only to teach sentient beings this one turn. Yet the Buddha's difficulty is that he cannot turn on another's behalf. People must question themselves, turn inward and contemplate their own nature, and themselves turn suffering into happiness and delusion into awakening. It is not that people cannot do so; it is that they do not do so. Thus the Buddha cannot make the crossing on anyone’s behalf. Each person must liberate themselves.

The wise seek the mind, not the Buddha; the foolish seek the Buddha, not the mind. For thousands of years, practitioners have undergone arduous cultivation for decades, taken the wrong path, and failed to reach the ultimate. The crucial point lies here. This point is the practitioner's initial causal ground. If the causal ground is not correct, the more one cultivates, the more confused one becomes. I have personally suffered in this way, and so I urge you all to examine yourselves and make the root clear. If the causal ground is correct, the ground of fruition will also be correct in the future. Never pass over this point lightly.

But some may say: if one does not seek the Buddha but seeks only oneself, why must the Buddha expound the Dharma, and why must I study Buddhism? This is an entirely valid question. Yet when the Buddha descends into the world, he comes as a physician; if sentient beings were not ill, the Buddha would have no use. It is precisely because sentient beings are ill that medicine is indispensable. Those who are ill should note three things: first, the patient; second, the physician; third, taking the medicine.

If one disregards the patient and does not ask about taking medicine, but seeks only the physician's blessing, what use is that? To say that one does not seek the Buddha does not mean discarding the physician and the medicine; to seek oneself does not mean leaving behind the physician and the medicine. Once the illness is cured, however, the physician and medicine are no longer needed. One may then transmit all dharma gates to other patients; this is benefiting oneself and benefiting others.

What, then, is the method of seeking oneself? Worldly people are deluded and do not understand how to consult a physician. Is not consulting a physician meant to cure illness? Yet surely one does not abandon the treatment of one's present illness and merely ask the physician to guarantee that one will not become ill in the future. Today's students of Buddhism devoutly worship the Buddha and seek future blessings, but do not remove their present suffering and habitual tendencies. How is their folly any different?

Worldly people seek future blessings precisely because of their present suffering. They do not know that relieving present suffering is itself a blessing; there is no need to wait for future blessings. Future matters have their own cause and effect and must not be reversed or confused. Those in the heavenly realms and those who enjoy wealth and rank among humans often refuse to cultivate. Precisely because their present blessings are so great, they indulge in ease and pleasure and do not know to reflect upon themselves; thus they mislead themselves. Therefore, to remedy all illnesses, one must distinguish cause and effect clearly and recognize the path clearly.

First, know the illness: one must first recognize where one's own illness lies. This illness concerns birth and death and is of the utmost gravity. Then one must courageously arouse the resolve, sincerely seek a physician, and honestly take the medicine. Second, understand the physician: one must recognize the physician's responsibility and its significance, and whether one can rely entirely on the physician without relying on oneself. Third, use the medicine: one must understand the medicine's nature, how it should be used, and what reactions it may produce as it removes the illness.

Sweating, vomiting, and purging are precisely the removal of illness; they are not the addition of illness. If one becomes doubtful because of them, that is a great mistake. These three levels are ordinary knowledge for patients; why can those who study Buddhism not be the same?

To know one's own illness is simply to know the suffering of human life. Worldly people do not understand the meaning of suffering. They think that lacking adequate clothing, food, and shelter is suffering. They do not know that this is merely apparent suffering, suffering judged by comparison, and not yet true suffering.

There are certainly people in the world whose clothing, food, and shelter are all sufficient, yet they remain anxious and unsettled; they may not even obtain a peaceful meal or a peaceful night's sleep. Why is this? In times of disorder, the wealthy suffer even more pain and fear. From this we know that suffering does not truly lie in such things. The fundamental suffering of human life lies in mistakenly taking this one lifetime to be all there is, believing that when this life ends, everything ends.

Thus those who indulge themselves end up creating karma and committing evil, indulging in licentious luxury and dissipation. As for what may follow death, they think, “I will see none of it,” and conclude that it does not exist. With this annihilationist view, what reckless deed would they not commit? The present world war, international conflicts, human cruelty, and even suicide all arise from this error of a single thought. It misleads oneself and others and grows ever more intense.

Therefore one must first understand the principle of cause and effect across the three periods of time. If there were no cause and effect, evil people need not receive retribution and good people would have no result; what kind of world could there then be? Therefore cause and effect is called a law; it is fundamentally unshakable. Cause and effect extend through the three periods of time. Everything in this life necessarily arises from prior causes and necessarily turns into later results. Of two children born to the same parents, one may become a thief and the other a sage.

Different fruits arise from different causal grounds. Causes include remote causes and immediate causes; results likewise include present results and later results. Cause and result succeed one another like a wheel, turning upward or downward, toward good or bad, according to what people themselves create. Therefore, not understanding the three periods of time is not understanding cause and effect. If cause and effect are not understood, there is no way to enter into faith in the Buddhadharma. Such a person will ultimately sink into the round of suffering and cannot be saved.

The hardships people undergo in this life all arise from karma created through prior causes. Evil karma from past lives is a remote cause; laziness and deceit are immediate causes. Although a poor person may suffer because of evil causes from past lives, if they can be diligent, prudent, and honest, they create another good cause and may thereby turn misfortune into good fortune, or transform what is heavy into what is light. This too is the law of the transformations of cause and effect; its power still rests in human hands.

People today fear that their clothing, food, and shelter will not be adequately provided for. The causes include difficult living conditions, demand exceeding supply, insufficient production, the pursuit of easy gains without work, advantages enjoyed by the powerful and the extravagant, lack of morality, and killing, theft, and sexual misconduct.

Such acts become habitual. Further causes include deluded attachment to greed, anger, and ignorance; shortsighted pursuit of immediate gain; failure to understand the three periods of time and cause and effect; lack of awareness; not hearing the true Dharma; being too busy to attend to these matters; and unmet needs for clothing, food, and shelter.

When people's clothing, food, and shelter have already been adequately provided for, the fears that bring future suffering likewise arise from no more than the following: the world's lack of peace; the abundance of thieves; the preponderance of evil over good among humankind; inequality between rich and poor; the greed and stinginess of human hearts; unwillingness to give; not understanding the three periods of time, cause and effect, and the principle of recompense for giving; lack of awakening; not hearing the true Dharma; being busy with no time for this; and being unsatisfied despite having adequate clothing, food, and shelter.

In brief, the suffering of sentient beings is entirely karma they create themselves; at root, it is due to lack of awakening. Because they are not awakened, they become greedy. Whether they crave wealth, fame, or profit, they all cling to the word “I.” Thus the self is the root of all suffering. Now, at the beginning of cultivation, the aim

is to use the Buddhadharma to remove the root of one's own illness. Therefore we must explain the Buddha, explain the Dharma, and explain the Saṅgha.

Having understood what these three are, we must then explain the self. To understand the basis of the self is to consult the physician, obtain a prescription, and remove the illness. Scholars in recent times often delight in what is lofty and profound and seek quick results. When they study Buddhism, they also enter by way of the middle rather than the beginning. Thus their roots are not firm and their foundation is unclear. Even after cultivating for many years, they cling rigidly to words, mix in views of self, and consequently cannot understand the meanings in an all-encompassing way. From this arise sectarian divisions, disputes over superiority and inferiority, doubt, slander, and regression. All of these belong to this illness. Therefore, one must be especially careful with the causal ground.

Explaining the Buddha

Buddha means great awakening. It is an honorific title established on the basis of his virtues, not the name of a particular individual. The Sanskrit word buddha was transliterated into Chinese in full as (Fótuó) and abbreviated as (Fó); it is one of the Tathāgata's ten epithets. It is also called wisdom-awakening: awakened oneself and awakening others. It refers to one whose awakening is complete and wondrous. It is also called all-knowing wisdom, for it knows clearly and distinctly the principle and phenomena of all dharmas, without any delusion; hence the name Buddha.

Ordinary beings are unawakened; those of the two vehicles awaken themselves but cannot awaken others; bodhisattvas awaken themselves and others, but their practice is not yet complete; the Buddha, however, has perfect enlightenment. The title Buddha has the same meaning as such words as sage and worthy. When it is said, "The Master is surely a sage," it means that Confucius's state of mind had entered the realm of sagehood. All people can become Yao or Shun, and all sentient beings can become Buddhas; this is the meaning.

A state of mind belongs to mind. Mind is called the ground, and also the field of intrinsic nature. A field possesses the wondrous capacity for unceasing growth; therefore intrinsic nature is called Buddha-land and Buddha-seed. Buddha-land does not refer only to the land of Śākyamuni Buddha's manifestation. There are two kinds of Buddha: causal Buddhas and fruition Buddhas. Fruition Buddhas include Śākyamuni Tathāgata and others who have already accomplished Buddhahood.

A causal Buddha means that my mind and all sentient beings, at the causal ground, can all become Buddhas. Thus it is said, "Mind, Buddha, and sentient beings—these three are without distinction." The nature of awakening is originally equal in all, and all can become Buddhas. Upon cultivating to the ground of awakening, it is also

called the Buddha-ground, opening Buddha-wisdom, opening the Buddha's knowledge and vision, and the Buddha-eye. The Buddha-eye is formed by combining the dharma eye, wisdom eye, heavenly eye, and physical eye.

The eye is mind. Sentient beings are collectively divided into ten realms, and the ten realms are mind alone. The Buddha is the highest among the ten realms. Only the Buddha is not called a sentient being; the other nine realms—bodhisattvas, pratyekabuddhas, śrāvakas, devas, humans, asuras, animals, ghosts, and hell beings—are all called sentient beings, because their afflictions have not been eliminated. To enter Buddhahood from the ordinary state, one should rely on the Dharma; this is called the Buddhadharma.

The Dharma is like a vehicle by which one crosses over; this is called the Buddha vehicle. It is divided into the lesser vehicle, the two vehicles, and the great vehicle. By this one understands the Way; it is called the Buddha Way and the Buddha Seal. The Way is the supreme treasure of the worldly and supramundane realms, beyond comparison; therefore it is called the Buddha Treasure. When Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha accord and seal one another, the Treasure appears. The three are one. Therefore everyone possesses Buddha-nature, and everyone can become a Buddha, just like Śākyamuni Buddha.

Becoming a Buddha does not mean emitting light, sitting upon a lotus, or changing one’s form. We bow to and revere the Buddha every day because we admire the virtues of Śākyamuni Buddha and wish to learn from and emulate him, attaining the same luminous perfect enlightenment. It is like revering Confucius: one willingly studies to become a sage, not to become Confucius; nor can Confucius make one into a sage.

Yet one cannot avoid relying on an image for contemplation and emulation; thus Buddhist images are established and used as mirrors. But if one has a mirror and cannot reflect upon oneself, it is ultimately of no benefit. Looking into a mirror without removing one’s defilements is likewise of no benefit. Only practitioners who cultivate sincerely and do not deceive themselves may be called children of the Buddha or children of the Dharma. The Tathāgata has many titles; they will now be briefly explained.

1. Tathāgata: this means that the mind comes from nowhere and goes nowhere; hence it is called the Tathāgata. 2. Worthy of Offerings: this means being worthy to receive offerings from all sentient beings. 3. Perfectly and Universally Knowing: this means being able to know all dharmas universally. Knowing all dharmas to be without distinction is called perfect knowing; wisdom that encompasses all without exception is called universal knowing.

4. Perfect in Knowledge and Conduct: this refers to knowledge of past lives, the heavenly eye, and the exhaustion of outflows, known as the three insights; it is so called because all are fully perfected. 5. Well Gone: this means ascending to the highest state and never returning again. 6. Knower of the World: this means being able to understand all the afflictions and purity of the world. 7. Unsurpassed One: this means that among dharmas, nirvāṇa is unsurpassed, and among sentient beings, the Buddha is unsurpassed; he may also be called a great being.

8. Tamer of Men: this means being able to regulate and guide all sentient beings. 9. Teacher of Humans and Devas: this means being the honored teacher among humans and devas. 10. Buddha: this means awakening—awakening oneself, awakening others, and perfecting awakening and conduct. 11. World-Honored One: this means possessing all the foregoing honored titles and being revered by all humans and devas in the world. 12. Bhagavān: this means possessing six honorable qualities: (1) sovereignty, (2) blazing splendor, (3) dignity, (4) renown, (5) auspiciousness, and (6) nobility. All the foregoing are alternate names for the World-Honored One and merely express his supreme virtues.

Explaining the Dharma

The Sanskrit term dharma is transcribed in Chinese as tanmo ( ); here it is said to extend to all things. Only the Buddha is called the Dharma King, for he penetrates all phenomena. Dharma also means a method, like a boat that ferries people out of danger; hence “Dharma raft” and “Dharma boat.” Our intrinsic nature gives rise to all phenomena, so it is called the Dharma body, or Dharma-nature. Through realizing the mind and seeing one’s true nature, one becomes a Dharma-body Buddha.

Understanding difficult Buddhist principles without being deluded by them is called dharma-patience. Understanding and realizing the principle of the unborn is called patience with the unborn dharmas. Being able to understand the true Dharma and use it to liberate others is called the dharma eye, also called the purified dharma eye. The sūtras and teachings spoken by Buddhas and bodhisattvas of the past and recorded in writing are called Dharma canons or Dharma maṇḍalas. Their divisions into categories are called dharma gates.

The Dharma has no fixed dharma; all may bring people to life, and thus it is called Dharma milk. When expressed from writing in speech and sound, it is called the Dharma sound; the Dharma sound reaches throughout the ten realms. Since all sentient beings share this same mind, there are ten dharma realms. Sentient beings cling rigidly to dharmas and do not understand transformation; their suffering is thereby multiplied ten thousandfold. This is called attachment to dharmas, also called dharma views and dharma bondage. One should seek a good spiritual friend

as one's teacher, who entrusts one with the true Dharma; such a person is called a Dharma teacher.

The teacher employs various expedient dharma gates to open up my wondrous Dharma lotus. The lotus is my mind, my essence; the wondrous Dharma is the wondrous functioning of my mind. This enables me to attain the unsurpassed wondrous truth, whose meaning is boundless; hence it is also called the flavor of the Dharma and Dharma food. Because its joy and delight are immeasurable, it is called Dharma joy and Dharma bliss. Today's gathering for study, common discussion, and mutual liberation is called a Dharma assembly.

To transmit the treasure of the One Vehicle Dharma from one person to another in order to liberate others, without allowing it to cease, is called the Dharma wheel's constant turning. Each of you possesses unsurpassed capacity, sufficient to shoulder the Tathāgata's anuttarā-samyak-saṃbodhi. This is to be a vessel of the Dharma, just as a vessel can hold things. In sum, the Dharma saves people's wisdom-life and is therefore called Dharma medicine. When the King of Physicians uses it to save the world, those able to enter this maṇḍala are said to have a Dharma affinity.

Yet all things are empty, and the Dharma too is borrowed for temporary use. Once an illness is cured, medicine must no longer be used; otherwise it becomes a disease of the Dharma. While medicine is now being used, one must cultivate until realizing the empty characteristics of all dharmas; only then may one relinquish the Dharma. Human life is impermanent, and opportunities are hard to encounter again. The time must not be lost.

Explaining the Saṅgha

Saṅgha means an assembly, an assembly of those with virtue. Just as one monk alone does not constitute a saṅgha, there must be at least four people for it to be called a saṅgha; there are saṅghas of ten and saṅghas of twenty, and they must be people of moral conduct. Even virtuous lay practitioners, when gathered together, may be called a saṅgha. Any monk who does not understand the Buddhadharma and does not understand the mind-ground cannot be called a treasure, for he has departed from the Buddhadharma. We revere the Three Treasures.

The Three Treasures are the Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha. Awakening to it is called Buddha; taking it as the norm is called Dharma; harmonizing with it is called Saṅgha. What does this refer to? What is this thing? It refers only to the treasure of the mind. The monastics who have broken the precepts, of whom the Buddha spoke in the past, were those who still possessed the substance of the precepts and dignified deportment; this does not refer to those today who observe not the slightest

precept. They lack even the substance of the precepts, and the outward marks of the precepts are also lost.

If persons of inferior wisdom hear this, they may think that, since there is such expediency, they need only aspire to become monastics who have broken the precepts. Would not the future of the Buddhadharma then be in danger? Moreover, once monks drift into business, it is only natural that they pursue what worldly people favor.

What worldly people favor is of such a low level; how could they then fail to deceive people with sūtra recitations and repentance rites? If the prevailing custom were changed, so that in performing meritorious deeds people did not emphasize outward form but instead invited virtuous elders to explain the meaning of the sūtras, valuing the gift of Dharma and then making offerings in return, they would naturally turn to studying the sūtras as well. This might enable monks to understand, at least somewhat, the principles of the Buddhadharma, and the merit and virtue would be inconceivable. Yet the degeneration of the saṅgha should not be blamed on the Buddhadharma; this must be clearly distinguished.

Explaining the Self

The self is what a person calls oneself. Once attachment to self is firm, self-love grows ever deeper. The hardest things to break are the view of self, the sense that "I am," and the mark of self. Over time these become habits and fixed dharmas; hence they are called the self-dharma. Not knowing that Buddhism distinguishes between the true self and the provisional self, people should first understand the three bodies if they wish to understand what the self is. The first is the form body: the physical body of skin, hair, bones, and flesh, possessing form and color.

The hard elements, such as bones and flesh, are earth; blood, bodily fluids, and moisture are water; warmth is fire; and breathing is wind. This body is compounded of earth, water, fire, and wind, and is merely borrowed from one's parents; it is also called the karmic-result body. One creates one's own causes and forms one's own results. Because the causal conditions of past lives differ, the resulting conditions of wisdom or foolishness, beauty or ugliness, early death or long life are unequal.

From childhood to maturity, one's childhood appearance has already changed and vanished; from maturity to old age, one's mature form has already changed and vanished; from old age to death, one's aged condition is completely transformed and gone. Death need not wait until the moment of dying: even before death, one is constantly changing and unreal, like a shimmering mirage, like a banana tree, like a bubble or a shadow.

It may also be compared to an electric light bulb: though the bulb has no true reality, electricity relies on it to emit light; thus it is the provisional self. The second is the Dharma body, the person's spiritual nature. That which does not move is called nature; when thoughts arise in response to circumstances, it is called mind. It is thus at the age of three, and remains thus at thirty, sixty, or even one hundred and sixty; its nature never changes or perishes.

Whether seeing red or tasting something delicious, the basic capacity is the same in young and old; it does not become two different natures because of age. Any difference caused by failing eyesight or other illness is a disorder of the faculties, not of the intrinsic nature within. This numinous capacity is inconceivable. All phenomena arise from it, hence the name Dharma body.

The Dharma body is neither existent nor nonexistent. If it is said to exist, it cannot be grasped and shown to others; if it is said not to exist, human beings are not wood or stone, and apart from it the provisional designation is death. Having it, one seems to live on without end, though in truth there is originally neither arising nor ceasing, and it is eternally unchanging. This is the true self. Only because the root of attachment gives rise to craving and clinging does one enter a mother's womb, receive a portion of the mother's physical substance, and come into being as a human; animals are the same.

This may again be compared to electricity. Without a light bulb, electricity has no means to emit light; the bulb may break and perish, but electricity never perishes. This is called the true self. The third is the manifestation body: when the form body and Dharma body unite, they give rise to all kinds of wondrous functions and unpredictable transformations. This is like lamp light, formed through the union of a lamp and electricity. Thus, the form body is the appearance, like the lamp; the Dharma body is the essence, like electricity; and the manifestation body is the function, like the light.

It is also all the affairs and things of the world. The three are distinct yet not separate; therefore the three bodies are nondual. Birth and death are merely provisional names, established by people through the view of self. Since my physical body is only a temporary combination of causes and conditions, when dispersed it becomes minute particles; how then can it be clung to as a self? And the so-called true self is also empty in nature. Mind is originally unborn, provisionally existing in dependence on circumstances; thus it is called the illusory mind.

All the evil we do, suffering we undergo, and habits we acquire arise from the mischief of this illusory mind. Therefore, to capture bandits, capture their king; without entering the tiger's den, how can one obtain its cub? Practitioners must begin with realizing the mind, with boundless courageous diligence; only then is

there a way out. Otherwise, they will forever sink in cyclic existence. There are also two kinds of self: the personal self and the dharma-self. The personal self is attachment to self; the dharma-self is attachment to dharmas.

Attachment to self is the coarse aspect of self; attachment to dharmas is its subtle aspect. Breaking attachment to self is still relatively easy, but breaking attachment to dharmas requires the great wisdom of Vajra prajñā. Vajra prajñā is complete in everyone and has been there from the beginning, but the treasure chest has not been opened: one has wealth yet cannot use it. Therefore one relies on the Three Treasures—the Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha—to open it and awaken one's potential. People differ in capacity—greater or lesser, sharp or dull.

For those of lesser capacity, first enable them to have faith in the Buddha, then guide them to have faith in themselves. For those of greater capacity, directly enable them to have faith in themselves; they will then resolutely undertake this without doubt. Afterward, urge them to cultivate in actual practice, and mind and Buddha will naturally become one. Those of lesser capacity are willing to practice but difficult to transform; those of greater capacity awaken easily but are indolent in practice. Those of lesser capacity are excessively rigid in observance—this is their habitual tendency; those of greater capacity are lax and arrogant—this is theirs.

Yet in treating the illness of those of lesser capacity, the difficulty lies in the illness; in treating the illness of those of greater capacity, the difficulty lies in the teacher. When persons of greater capacity develop doubt midway, if this is not decisively resolved for them, their faith becomes impure. Thereafter they retreat and cease practicing, or take their mistaken view to be correct and in turn mislead others, spreading the poison of non-Buddhist paths. Their original intention may also have been to arouse the resolve and do good, but their own capacity is insufficient; one blind person leading many blind people—the harm of this cannot be fully described. Therefore, a Dharma suited to the recipient is paramount; one must examine carefully at every moment and adapt it. There is absolutely no single dharma that can be universally applied. The Buddha taught eighty-four thousand methods precisely to counteract each different root of illness, because capacities differ.

Studying the Buddha's teaching is a matter of abandoning suffering and seeking happiness, an exceedingly joyful thing; it is certainly not something dry, desolate, or obscure. If, at the outset, one forces people to do what is difficult for them, this is contrary to human feeling. What does not accord with human feeling is not Buddhadharma. Buddhadharma places great importance on constantly accommodating sentient beings, using expedient means everywhere and gradually guiding them in. Once they themselves feel the terror of birth and death, they will naturally strive diligently.

Since beginningless time, worldly people have clung exclusively to the word “self.” If they are immediately taught no-self, and at the outset are lectured on the Heart Sūtra and Diamond Sūtra, it is like sending a child directly to university. To demand that they be without the mark of self and give without marks—is this not forcing people to do what is difficult for them? I, on the contrary, want people first to speak of having a self, first to develop knowledge of the self. Once they recognize the self, only then will they be willing to advance.

The trouble is that people do not understand this wonder. Everywhere they act as though there were no self, oppose themselves, and fight against themselves—even to the point of suicide. This is a total giving away, an extreme of “no self”; sadly, they remain confused even in death. All the causes and results of worldly suffering are thus of one’s own making, like a person in a frenzy who does not know their own mind or body. That is why I first teach people to acknowledge the self, but only the great self: enlarge it. This is the intention.

Human beings are one class of animals. Yet their number is small: the entire population of the earth is only two billion. In a spoonful of water from a summer ditch, however, the microorganisms are as countless as the sands of the Ganges. Thus, human birth is indeed difficult to obtain. Nevertheless, all sentient beings are endowed with spiritual awareness and all possess Buddha-nature; in essence, they are equal.

The reason they cannot function in the same way is that they create different causes and therefore obtain different fruits. Each has its wondrous functions and innate abilities: birds fly, beasts run, fish swim, and dragons soar. Each has its own strengths beyond human reach. What is precious in human beings is wisdom, which birds and beasts likewise cannot attain. Having obtained a human body is like having entered a university: in the blink of an eye one graduates, and with one step may leave the school. A human body is difficult to obtain and precious in this way; how then can there be no self?

Human beings and all sentient beings possess Buddha-nature, yet human beings alone can cultivate themselves to Buddhahood because the potential fruition contained within their causes differs. All sentient beings possess Buddha-nature, including human beings. This is like copper in a mine: although it is all copper, it is mixed with sand. Human beings alone have already been refined from copper ore into copper ingots, and from copper ingots melted into sheets of copper. With only a little polishing, they become copper mirrors. The others remain either ore or copper ingots and cannot yet be directly polished into mirrors. Therefore, their essence is the same but their functions differ. Human life is precious in this way; how then can there be no self?

Human beings are the most spiritually responsive of living things, and the mind is their sagely capacity; this is what is meant here by shengling (　), "sagely spiritual capacity." Wishing to succeed oneself, one helps others succeed; wishing to establish oneself, one helps others become established. The work of liberating beings throughout immeasurable three-thousandfold worlds can be shouldered only by human beings. With so great a responsibility, how could one dismiss the self?

The Buddhadharma is a tool for great initiative and great function. To shoulder the Tathāgata's unsurpassed bodhi—if not I, then who? If everyone were willing to be so active, transforming a family through oneself, extending this from a family to a nation, and advancing from a nation to the world, the responsibility would be so grave. How could one seek only one's own liberation, depart, and leave matters behind, abandoning one's parents, siblings, and spouse in this world to suffer while oneself leisurely enjoys ultimate bliss? How could such an inferior thought be the Buddha's original intention? Therefore, rebirth in the Western Pure Land is like entering a school to study: after graduating, one returns to save the world.

If the causal ground is not upright, one will instead achieve only one's own liberation. Yet the initiative of the Buddhadharma surpasses that of any other undertaking; how then can there be no self?

The self is boundless and immeasurable. If people can truly know the self, they will see the true self. Whether greed, anger, or ignorance; whether precepts, samādhi, or wisdom; whether sage, worthy, or human being; whether ghost, animal, or hell-being—all are freely chosen by oneself. The chooser is the mind. To understand this mind is the true self, the great self.

Whether one turns one's mind from delusion to awakening, from disorder to samādhi, and from foolishness to wisdom also lies within one's own power of judgment. For the sake of liberating the multitude of beings, one endures every hardship and suffering. This has always been the work of a great person, and it should indeed be so; this too lies within one's own power of judgment. If, at the slightest disappointment, minor setback, or failed romance, one becomes resentful and commits suicide, showing such lack of promise, how can one shoulder national calamities or undertake great affairs? Such people consider the Buddhadharma passive, yet they actively engage in this hopeless business. They are truly deluded upon deluded; the reason is that they do not understand the great self.

What, then, does it mean to understand the self? It means understanding the reason for human life: are other people and I one or two? One who penetrates the nonduality of self and others is called nengren. Ren consists of two persons, indicating that the two mutually communicate. To fulfill oneself is loyalty; to extend oneself to others is empathy. To fulfill loyalty and empathy is nengren. To penetrate

the nonduality of oneself and things—to know that all things are complete within oneself and that oneself communicates with all things—is called investigating things.

Thus, to be nengren and investigate things is to be a sage or worthy; to realize the mind is to be a bodhisattva or Buddha. All take the human being as their original ground. It is like obtaining precious jade as raw material and then carving it to make a Buddha. Carving is cultivation. The Buddha too was originally an ordinary being and had also been confused and inverted. He merely became aware early, awakened, turned back, and cultivated himself; thus he became greatly awakened.

Having obtained the qualifications to become a Buddha directly, how can one drift along and sit idly by, thereby missing the opportunity? Since one knows what it means to be human, one should immediately rise and pursue it directly. Life is impermanent; once lost, the opportunity is gone for ages. Yet practice must also advance in proper sequence: it cannot be too slow, nor can it be rushed. Blind cultivation and reckless training bring toil without accomplishment and will inevitably give rise to doubt and retreat.

First understand that the Three Jewels—Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha—are models for us. Next understand that I and the Buddha are originally nondual in essence. Ordinary beings are originally awakened; this is called original awakening. Because awakening seeks illumination, it turns into false awakening and loses what is original. Hearing the Buddhadharma and opening wisdom is called initial awakening. When one attains awakening, it is called awakening at the level of principle. When knowledge and practice are united, and principle and phenomena interpenetrate, it is called realized awakening. When habitual tendencies have been removed, awakened conduct perfected, and essence and function are suchness, it is called right awakening—that is, great awakening, wondrous awakening, and perfect enlightenment. The following table compares the similarities and differences in the nature-seeing of sages and ordinary beings.

Table of Similarities and Differences in the Essence and Function of Nature-Seeing in Sages and Ordinary Beings (= indicates similarity; − indicates difference)

Sages − Ordinary Beings

(Source) = (Source)

Essence = Essence

Electricity = Electricity

Light = Light

Function − Function

Illuminates the ten directions without obstruction − Obscured and blocked, unable to illuminate

Awareness − Ignorance

Awakening is enduring − Delusion is temporary

Consciousness = Consciousness

Discrimination = Discrimination

Transforms consciousness into wisdom − Is driven by consciousness

Transforms objects − Is transformed by objects

At ease − Bound

Master − Slave

Has the power of wisdom − Lacks the power of wisdom

Vajra prajñā is manifest − Vajra prajñā is hidden

Ever clearly aware − Now clear, now obscure

Transcends birth and death; birth and death and nirvāṇa are all empty − Does not transcend birth and death; does not know what birth and death are

Sober − Drunk

Drinks alcohol; drinks every day yet is never intoxicated − Is consumed by alcohol; drunk every day and bound by alcohol every day

Without habitual defilements − Entirely habituated to defilements

Merit and virtue − Karmic obstacles

Sense faculties and their objects fall away − Sense faculties and their objects become entangled

Mind and objects are both empty − Uses objects to bind the mind

Clearly understands cause and effect − Does not understand cause and effect

Awakening comes first − Awakening comes afterward

Illuminates beforehand − Regrets afterward

Sees all things as delusive − Sees all delusions as real

No self − Clings to self

Direct perception fully illuminates − Inferential understanding probes deeply

Outflows exhausted − With outflows

Empty − Not empty

Mind is unobtainable − Mind is everywhere

Has samādhi and wisdom − Lacks samādhi and wisdom

Understands worldly dharmas in order to comprehend the supramundane − Does not understand worldly dharmas yet seeks the supramundane

Samādhi − Agitation

Activity and stillness are both samādhi − Activity and stillness are both agitation

Penetrates the three divisions of time − Cares only for the present

At ease − Not at ease

Knows the dharma of suffering and happiness − Does not know suffering and happiness

Ultimate happiness − Utter suffering

Samādhi, wisdom, and emptiness − Delusion, karma, and suffering

Seeks for oneself − Seeks the Buddha

Spirit = Spirit

Able to penetrate all things − Unable to penetrate anything

Realizes samādhi − Merely holds emotional views

Original awakening = Original awakening

May suddenly become deluded midway = May suddenly become deluded midway

Awakens − Does not awaken

Refuses to become deluded again − Lets oneself drift in cyclic wandering

Seeks awakening − Does not seek awakening

Cultivates − Does not cultivate

Seeks the ultimate Dharma − Does not seek the ultimate

Attains great awakening − Remains forever deluded

Buddha-nature = Buddha-nature

Buddha at the stage of fruition − Buddha at the causal stage

Like water = Like water

Wet nature = Wet nature

Clear − Turbid

Able to perform all wondrous functions − Unable to perform wondrous functions

Already clarified − Not yet clarified

Returns to = Returns to

From the preceding table, one should know that sages and ordinary beings are originally nondual in essence. Only because ordinary beings are deluded do they create all kinds of karma and consequently undergo all kinds of suffering. Delusion and karma are suffering; without suffering, there is no delusion and karma. Those who do evil are, for the most part, people who suffer. Thus, to understand suffering is to know the illness; only upon knowing the illness will one be willing to seek a physician and take medicine.

Explaining Suffering

Human life has eight kinds of suffering: first, the suffering of birth; second, the suffering of aging; third, the suffering of illness; fourth, the suffering of death; fifth, the suffering of not obtaining what one seeks; sixth, the suffering of separation from those one loves; seventh, the suffering of meeting those one hates; and eighth, the suffering of the blazing of the five aggregates. There is also another suffering: the suffering of not hearing the Buddhadharma and not knowing suffering, called the suffering of suffering.

People also suffer the three calamities and eight difficulties. “Difficulties” are difficulties in advancing on the Way. Not being able to hear the Buddhadharma is the greatest hardship in human life. What are the eight difficulties? First, hell;

second, hungry ghosts; third, animals. Those who enter these three lower realms either undergo uninterrupted suffering or are ignorant and without understanding, and so cannot hear the Buddhadharma.

Fourth, being born in the northern continent of Uttarakuru, where people live for a thousand years, have sufficient clothing and food, suffer no illness or hardship, and have no wish to hear the Dharma. Fifth, being born in the long-life heavens—that is, the form realm and formless realm heavens—where one is likewise attached to joy and pleasure and does not wish to hear the Dharma. Sixth, being blind, deaf, mute, or otherwise unable to see or hear the supreme truth of the Buddhadharma. Seventh, possessing worldly wisdom and clever eloquence—that is, being self-confident, fond of contentious argument, and priding oneself on cleverness—which can also obstruct the Way. Eighth, being born before or after a Buddha, in an age when no Buddhadharma is available to be seen or heard. These are the eight difficulties. As for the three calamities, they are warfare, epidemics, and famine.

The general cause of all suffering begins with birth. The emergence of something from nonexistence is called birth. Between birth and death, one has already passed through many inverted causes, conditions, and results of suffering. The result in turn becomes a cause, and the cause again produces a result; suffering upon suffering never ceases. Since beginningless time, who knows how many thousands upon thousands of sufferings we have endured? The sufferings of old age, sickness, and death have already been determined at the time of birth and cannot be escaped.

From birth to death, one must pass through old age and sickness. The causes of old age and sickness are the following four kinds of suffering: first, the suffering of not obtaining what one seeks, which manifests in two ways: sound and activity.

Sound consists of the disputes of buying and selling, the cries of street vendors, the cries of children, and people's noisy quarrels and complaints. All arise because what is sought has not been attained. The more one wishes to achieve one's aim but cannot obtain it, the louder the clamor becomes. Activity consists of rushing about busily, pursuing and coming and going. Before what one seeks is obtained, one fears not obtaining it; once it has been obtained, one fears losing it again.

The two sufferings of separation from what one loves and meeting with what one hates then follow in succession. When the impulses of desire burn like fire, how can one avoid old age and sickness? Separation demonstrates that all things are impermanent and must not be grasped as real. They are originally only provisional combinations, so why take the false for true?

This applies not only to people but also to things. It is not only separation that is suffering: attachment even before separation occurs is suffering. Because of the

causes, conditions, and results of suffering, one can never avoid it. The wise do not wait until separation occurs; they have already seen through its causes. There is no other wondrous method: simply recognize that all is empty, false, and unreal. Then attachment has no ground in which to take root, and suffering has nothing on which to depend.

Meeting with what one hates is precisely the opposite side, yet its suffering is equal. One thing accords with my wishes, another does not; yet both are impermanent. When the seven sufferings torment one together, the anxious mind burns like fire. This is the blazing of the five aggregates. The five aggregates are form, feeling, perception, formations, and consciousness. When these five aggregates remain knotted together and cannot disperse, interlinked and unable to be released, they are called the five aggregates.

Form refers to the six sense faculties joining with the six sense objects; both alike are form, and both alike are illusory. Feeling is the arrival of contact, which I receive. Perception is the stirring of thought. Formations are the flow of the discriminating mind. Consciousness is the knowing that follows sensation and discrimination. The five aggregates arise simultaneously, and suffering and pleasure arrive simultaneously as well. Whether it is good or evil, gain or loss, the blazing fires of desire that sear us wave after wave are not thereby diminished in the least. All arise from the entanglement of form and mind. The eight sufferings cannot be separately analyzed; collectively, they are simply called unease.

Everything in the world belongs to the realm of opposites. Doing evil is certainly suffering, but doing good while expecting recompense also creates distinctions of gain and loss, abundance and scarcity, coming and going, self and others. If even one part is not commensurate, there is one part of suffering. If the recompense exceeds by one part what I have given, I may be satisfied for a time, but the other person will feel uneasy. Unease gives rise to the intention of seeking compensation from me, and I in turn become fearful.

Therefore worldly dharmas are not ultimate, and suffering can never finally be avoided. The origin of all worldly suffering is delusion. Delusion means confusion; actions performed out of confusion are called karma, and karma brings about the fruition of suffering.

All worldly evil arises from delusion. Out of delusion, people create evil karma, believing there is no cause and effect and that no one will know. They may even force their arguments, defend and conceal their faults, and invoke freedom as a pretext. Such people are deeply superstitious. Because you are deluded, the Buddhadharma asks you to have faith—faith in what is real, not faith in what is false. Through layer upon layer of analysis and every kind of demonstration, the causes of

delusion are made clear, and only then can one realize where the root of suffering lies.

Suffering has no fixed definition. For example, a house may be furnished only moderately. A wealthy person who sees it may feel extremely uncomfortable, whereas a poor person may consider it blissful. Spicy sauce is delicious to people from Sichuan and Yunnan, while a child may find it bitter; yet after becoming accustomed to it, the child may in turn find it pleasurable.

Thus the root of suffering lies in the mind's habits. The mind is enticed by external circumstances and needlessly creates this suffering for itself.

But how does the mind form these habits? They arise from discrimination and comparison. Discriminating good and bad, wholesome and unwholesome, favorable and adverse, right and wrong—all are assumptions established by one's own deluded views since beginningless time. Without asking whether they are right or wrong, one clings to them as right. The firmer this attachment, the less willing one is to relax it. Over time, it becomes a fixed pattern that one refuses to alter. This is the general cause of delusion.

Then, using habits that are not in accord with the Dharma to compare with other things, one sees everything as failing to accord with one's wishes and thus becomes miserable. The discriminating mind may be stronger or weaker, and suffering correspondingly deeper or shallower. According to whether the force of attachment is tight or loose, suffering lasts longer or shorter. For example, children have little experience of human affairs, so they discriminate less, cling less, and suffer less. But if a child is suddenly beaten or scolded and receives a severe shock, the child will not forget it, because the powers of attachment and discrimination are strong.

Since suffering has no fixed definition, it can be transformed into pleasure. What cannot be transformed is true suffering. How can it be transformed? First, one must know suffering. People in the world often do not believe that they themselves are suffering beings; thus, those willing to cultivate are all people who have already tasted hardship to the full. People also often do not believe in future suffering. For example, on a clear day they certainly do not believe that the roof will leak. Unless one possesses great wisdom, one will not prepare early. This is the suffering of not knowing suffering.

In teaching people the Dharma of suffering and pleasure, the Buddha first tells them that all things are impermanent. Precisely because they are impermanent, nothing can be relied upon. Second, he teaches the ultimate Dharma gate: because worldly dharmas are not ultimate, they must in the end return to suffering. If one can understand that all is impermanent, then one who ordinarily relies on wealth will

not become attached to it. Such a person is taught to give, so as to practice letting go until the conception of impermanence is thoroughly familiar.

If one has already let go of everything to which one clings, then when sudden suffering comes, one may have a method with which to withstand it. How, then, can one come to know and end suffering? One can only be urged to arouse the resolve. To arouse the resolve means to give rise to the resolve to realize the mind. One must truly put faith, vows, and practice into effect. If one does not understand that the root of suffering truly lies in the mind's lack of clarity—what is called delusion, karma, and suffering, whose root lies in delusion—then one cannot proceed. The appearance of the mind must indeed be understood. A sūtra says, “Know your own mind as it truly is.” In forty-nine years of teaching, the Buddha said only this one sentence.

Since we must realize the mind and know suffering, we cannot avoid investigating the appearance of the mind. One must question one's own mind, undergo suffering, and know suffering. Only after realizing the experience of going from suffering to happiness can one relieve the suffering of others. The method for overcoming suffering is: first, recognize suffering; second, endure it; third, understand it; fourth, train through it; fifth, realize its emptiness. The concrete practice will be explained in the following Section on Right Cultivation. The verse says:

To uproot suffering, one must uproot its root; to uproot its root, one must know the root.

To know the root requires thorough awakening; to awaken thoroughly, one must realize the mind.

Realizing the mind lies in attaining nothing; when nothing is attained, the root of suffering is exhausted.

If ordinary people do not enter into suffering, how can they understand the meaning of suffering?

To know suffering is already to transform it; once transformed, suffering falls away.

Suffering and pleasure are originally relative; worldly pleasure is itself suffering.

When unstained by either suffering or pleasure, this is called transcending birth and death.

How to Transcend Birth and Death

Once the root of suffering has been clarified, we may speak of transcending birth and death. Buddhist practitioners often do not understand what birth and death are. They generally take one as alive before death and dead only after one has died, and suppose that if one does not return after death, one has truly transcended birth and death. Such talk is truly like a blind person speaking of darkness; it does not even understand the principle of cause and effect and rebirth.

To understand the principle of birth and death, one must first understand what undergoes birth and death, and what the principle of that thing truly is. Only by understanding birth and death can one speak of the method for transcending birth and death. The reward body is the physical body. It is inherently subject to arising and ceasing and is impermanent. Though it exists, its existence is only temporary; ultimately it is illusory and unreal, and therefore it is called empty.

When it reaches the time of transformation and destruction, ordinary beings naturally regard it as death. But in the eye of wisdom, it was already dead before it died; before its transformation and destruction, it had already been transforming and perishing again and again. There is nothing remarkable about it.

As for the nature that is neither arising nor ceasing, it exists forever. Ordinary beings cannot see it and therefore cling to its nonexistence. Those with the eye of wisdom clearly see its nature and see that it is constant and unchanging, so there can be no question of birth and death. Hence it is said that nirvāṇa and birth and death are equally like flowers in empty space. For one has understood that the turning of birth and death is precisely the turning of the illusory mind.

The turning of the illusory mind is like a wheel, suddenly rising and falling in the dusty ocean of the six realms. This is called the ocean of birth and death. Its ceaseless revolutions are called the wheel of birth and death. This illusory mind spins a cocoon and binds itself, becoming ever more entangled and bound; this is called the bondage of birth and death. Like a dream from which one does not awaken, it is called the long night of birth and death. When the Buddha appears in the world to liberate sentient beings, he liberates only this illusory mind, turning it from delusion to awakening; this is called transcending birth and death.

“Transcending” means understanding: realization at the level of principle. It also means liberation, enabling one not to create causes and undergo results: realization in actual circumstances. This is life's one great matter; hence it is said that the matter of birth and death is great. Yet the physical reward body cannot truly be said to undergo birth and death, and the Dharma nature, being ever present, likewise cannot truly be said to undergo birth and death.

Only the illusory mind creates mischief. Through delusion, it takes the false for true, and thus there is the revolving cycle of birth and death. If one knows it to be flowers

in empty space and does not take it as real, there is no revolving cycle, nor is there any body or mind to undergo that birth and death.

It is not that a state without birth and death is artificially produced, for original nature is inherently without birth and death. But ordinary beings do not understand the principle of birth and death, so sages can only explain illusion in terms of illusion and provisionally posit birth and death. Those of poor capacity do not understand birth and death; they merely fear death. Those of limited capacity seek only to transcend birth and death, believing that there really is a birth and death to be transcended.

Those of great faculties know that birth and death do not lie in the physical body produced by karma, but only in the revolutions of the illusory mind; the illusory mind is birth and death. Those of the highest faculties recognize that the mind is unobtainable, that originally there is no birth and death and no nirvāṇa. Yet for the sake of sentient beings, they do not incline exclusively toward emptiness or abandon existence. They speak to them of transcending birth and death so that they may awaken for themselves and know that birth and death are their own deluded, illusory mind. To transcend birth and death, first transcend the illusory mind. When the mind knows itself to be illusory, its illusion is extinguished, and one has truly transcended birth and death.

Birth and death are provisionally named in two ways. The first is segmented birth and death: one relinquishes a particular segmented body and is reborn in another form. For example, when a person dies, they cast off the segmentation of this body and become an ox or sheep; when oxen or sheep die, they too relinquish their segmented bodies. Such ceaseless turning is called segmented birth and death. The second is transformational birth and death, which is transformation in one's state of mind. For example, one advances from an ordinary being to an arhat, and then becomes a bodhisattva. This is a transformation of mind, not a change of physical form. When one reaches the ground of eternal quiescence and immovability, transformational birth and death comes to an end; this is called complete illumination and profound quiescence, and one then ascends to the ground of Buddhahood.

In sum, the segmented body takes rebirth in accordance with the root of attachment: whatever realm one is attached to, one receives the body of that realm. Attachment arises from the illusory mind; when the illusory mind turns from delusion to awakening and does not cling to illusory circumstances, body and mind no longer undergo that birth and death. One must first transcend segmented birth and death, and then proceed to eliminate attachment to dharmas; this is to transcend transformational birth and death. In our cultivation, we must first realize the mind and see our true nature. After directly realizing fundamental wisdom, we

must diligently eliminate habitual tendencies; only then can we truly transcend birth and death.

The birth and death of ordinary beings first arises from birth itself. One first takes an object as one's basis. For example, when a person sees a pig, an image of a pig first arises in the mind and is impressed upon the brain. Morning and evening, it remains there. Once this has become habitual over time and causes, conditions, and fruition mature, they naturally converge, and the person becomes a pig.

If nothing at all is established and all images in the mind are extinguished, then even if various scenes appear, one already knows them to be illusory. They pass without remaining and leave no trace. Since external objects have nothing to which they can attach, the field of one's nature does not undergo transformation. The twelve links of dependent origination are nothing more than attachment and grasping leading into birth and death; their root lies in ignorance. To transform ignorance is awakening. If one understands how birth comes about, one can understand how death comes about.

If one does not understand birth, how can one understand death? Since birth itself does not truly exist, on what could death depend? If one understands that birth and death are produced by the illusory mind of ignorance, this is transcending birth and death at the level of principle. If one actually cultivates, seeking to realize the mind and free oneself from bondage, and painfully uproots one's own habitual tendencies, this is transcending birth and death in actual practice.

The matter of birth and death is indeed grave. This thing called birth and death is the movement and functioning of a single thought in the illusory mind of ignorance. It proceeds from subtle to coarse distinctions, becomes a firmly entrenched habit, and is habitually taken for granted without awareness; thus it is easy to enter but difficult to leave. Yet nothing in the world is difficult: a journey of a thousand li begins with a single step. If practitioners truly regard birth and death as fearful, they should uproot its root and first break through ignorance. But if one does not know what ignorance is, what can one do? It will be explained in detail below.

Explaining Ignorance

Ignorance means darkness and delusion; when one awakens, there is clarity. Ignorance refers to a dark and dull mind. In Sanskrit it is called avijñā, and it is formed from the six great root afflictions of greed, anger, ignorance, doubt, pride, and wrong views. Their habitual conditioning binds and entangles one, like smoke clouding the eyes and causing blindness.

In examining doctrinal categories, ignorance is said to have four kinds, five kinds, or even as many as fifteen kinds. Such excessively fine distinctions instead lead practitioners to suppose that ignorance is a truly existent entity and to think of ways to destroy it. They do not know that ignorance is simply the illusory mind's deluded attachment: it has no substantial entity and is not like an object that can be broken. If it could be broken, some form would remain after its breaking, just as fragments of a broken bowl remain.

But this is not so. Clarity and darkness are opposites and cannot coexist: where there is clarity, there is no darkness; where there is darkness, there is no clarity. It is also like a dark room: when light appears, it is bright; when the light departs, it is dark. Thus ignorance cannot properly be said to be broken; it should be said to be extinguished. When a deluded person turns toward awakening, delusion is extinguished and awakening appears; that person is no longer deluded. When someone enters a dream, one cannot call it waking; once they have awakened, one cannot call it a dream, for waking extinguishes the dream.

How could a dream be broken apart bit by bit? Therefore, when awakening opens, ignorance is extinguished. Before awakening, there is still ignorance and still birth and death. Yet sages and ordinary beings alike have thoughts, and their illusory minds arise in the same way. The difference is that ordinary beings do not recognize the illusory mind or know awakened illumination. Conditioned by objects, they bind themselves and thereby become deluded, create karma, undergo suffering, and fall into the sea of birth and death.

Sages know this to be the wondrous functioning of the illusory mind. As it arises, it is empty; it leaves not the slightest trace. Illusory objects and the illusory mind are both unobtainable; therefore, sages transcend to the other shore. If, when we encounter circumstances, we can remain without a clinging mind, letting them pass without retaining them, then the seeds in the store consciousness become empty and pure and cannot bear fruit. This is what is meant by the severing of the seeds of birth and death.

Thus the seven evil karmic actions of body and speech, such as killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct, begin with the three mental karmas of greed, anger, and ignorance, called the three poisons. These three poisons in turn begin with the seeds in the store consciousness. Such seeds are the illusory mind's attachments, mistakenly drawing external objects into the store consciousness through clinging. They accumulate and are nurtured over time. Though the seeds are innumerable, they do not go beyond three kinds: establishing a self, opposing others, and setting up dualities.

Thus good and evil, favorable and adverse, right and wrong, self and other, and all kinds of comparative judgments arise in succession as causes. Greed, anger, and ignorance form the conditions as the convergence of all seeds. Layer upon layer, they advance until they culminate in killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct—the full collection of evils—and the bondage of birth and death turns like a wheel as its result.

If one knows that all is illusory, then at the causal stage both mind and objects are empty, and one will not cling to circumstances and draw them into the store consciousness. With no seeds within and no conditions without, how could anything arise? It is like making firecrackers: if there is no gunpowder inside, then even with a fuse, they can scarcely explode. The reason the illusory mind clings to objects and draws them in is truly delusion and unawareness: it mistakes the false for the real and is wrongfully deceived. This is called ignorance. The Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra says, “Ignorance is the father and attachment is the mother.” This means that they are the root of birth and death and the source from which all seeds arise; therefore, they must be eradicated.

Explaining Karmic Obstacles

Someone may say, “Ignorance certainly should be eradicated, but what if one’s karmic obstacles are deep and heavy?” One should ask in return, “What exactly are karmic obstacles?” If such a thing truly existed, it should be brought forth; the person would surely be at a loss. For those of sharp faculties, this alone may bring awakening. But those of dull faculties are not yet ready for this, so it must be explained in detail.

Karmic obstacles are precisely your habitual tendencies. A lazy person who enjoys ease and comfort has such a habitual tendency, and therefore cannot advance on the Way. A person who practices austerities may be too rigid and unable to function freely; this too is a habitual tendency and likewise prevents progress on the Way. Or someone may be excessively doubtful and given to speculation, with views of self continually arising; this is also a habitual tendency and still more prevents progress on the Way. All these are unwholesome karma that can obstruct the Way; hence they are called karmic obstacles.

But karma is not necessarily evil. Pure karma, the ten wholesome deeds, and the like are all wholesome karma. Karma means intentional action; in Sanskrit it is called karma, meaning the work that one does. There are three kinds: bodily karma, verbal karma, and mental karma.

Of these three kinds of karma, those directed toward good are called white karma, and those tending toward evil are called black karma. Cultivating worldly dharmas

produces defiled karma, while supramundane dharmas produce undefiled karma. Karma that is neither wholesome nor unwholesome is called indeterminate karma. For those cultivating the six realms, there is also deva karma, human karma, ghost karma, and so forth. From cause to fruition, when conditions are complete, fruition ripens. When habitual tendencies are deep and their force is strong beyond control, this is karmic conditions and karmic power.

What cannot be escaped is called karmic fruition, karmic suffering, and karmic retribution. That in which one sinks and from which it is difficult to emerge is called the sea of karma. Being bound by habitual tendencies without release is called karmic bondage. The ceaseless turning that follows from this is called the wheel of karma. When, at death, a moonlike disk suddenly appears, illuminating the good and evil of one's lifetime and giving rise to a multitude of thoughts, this is called the karmic mirror. Yet all these are fixed karma created by one's own mind. Only those who have realized the mind-ground understand that karma is established by the mind. Knowing the mind to be illusory, they know karma too is not existent. With a single turn, it is empty; this is inconceivable power. Karma that obstructs the Way is called karmic obstruction. There are five kinds of obstruction; these are treated in the Section on Right Cultivation, so the details are omitted here.

Methods for Eliminating Karmic Obstacles

The root lies in extinguishing ignorance. When ignorance is extinguished, karmic obstacles dissolve of themselves without needing to be eliminated. The coarse aspects of karmic obstacles can be seen, but their subtle aspects are not easily perceived. In Buddhadharma there is no distinction between great and small: if a thought of killing arises, even though one has not killed, it is as if one had killed. Yet when this thought of killing turns, it is empty; emptiness is purity. The only difficulty is being unable to turn it. Therefore, whenever a thought arises that contains views of self or emotional attachment, whether great or small, it is a karmic obstacle.

But eliminating thoughts does not mean cutting off or extinguishing thoughts; it simply means turning thoughts. Without turning, there is attachment; attachment is bondage. From the intention to kill to the act of killing, all comes from lacking the strength to turn, and thus one follows the current downstream, unable to recover. This is the root of birth and death and is called emotional attachment; all of it can obstruct the Way.

The depth or shallowness of karmic obstacles is simply the depth or shallowness of one's accumulated habits. What is easily removed is a shallow karmic obstacle; what is difficult to remove is a deep karmic obstacle. Moreover, when thoughts can be let go, turned quickly, and become empty with a single illumination, they are shallow. If

they cannot be let go, cannot be turned, and cannot be brought under illumination, they are deep.

Nevertheless, to state the essential point, one cannot eliminate karmic obstacles without understanding cause and effect. To understand that the causal ground of karmic obstacles is originally empty in nature is the Buddha's realm. People of inferior and dull faculties cannot be told this, for they may fail to understand cause and effect or the ultimate truth, mistake emptiness, and fall into an evil path. Therefore, they must first be guided by ritual forms.

Instruct them to keep the precepts and not indulge themselves; gradually open for them the path of prajñā; encourage them to change their temperaments and habits. When their capacity matures, directly point it out to them in accordance with their potential, enabling them to awaken with open clarity. As for rebirth while carrying karma in the Western Pure Land, this karma refers to the afflictions of views and thoughts that have not yet been severed. Upon seeing the sublime realm of the West and yearning for it, one is still subject to such afflictions.

But at death, when one's own strength is insufficient and one has no assurance at all, the aid of this right mindfulness can provide considerable support. One will naturally rise beyond the three lower realms. Without attachment to this world and with one-pointedness of mind without distraction, one attains rebirth.

After attaining rebirth, one's old habitual karmic powers have not yet been eliminated. Thereafter, one receives conditioning in the West. In time, when maturity is reached, one again awakens to the fact that the nature of sin and merit is empty, originally without arising or ceasing. The flower of wisdom opens, and one sees the Buddha of one's own nature. If karma itself does not exist, how can one speak of eliminating it?

Those who do not understand the mind-ground or cause and effect speak one-sidedly of eliminating karma rather than explaining it in terms of karma itself. They take karmic obstacles to be something truly existent. Therefore, without relying on prajñā, there is no way to eliminate karmic obstacles. Strive, strive; prepare early, and do not panic at the last moment. Human birth is difficult to obtain—how could one enter an evil realm again? Since practitioners understand the suffering of birth and death, with ignorance as its cause, karmic obstacles as its condition, and suffering as its result, they should seek a means of liberation. Yet the meaning of liberation remains to be explained.

Explaining Liberation

Liberation has two meanings. First, it means explanation: explaining in order to remove doubt. Second, it means understanding: understanding the principle in order to free the mind. In Sanskrit it is called mokṣa, meaning freedom from bondage and the attainment of ease. To free oneself from the bondage of delusion and karma and escape the suffering of the three realms is called liberation. This bondage is self-created, unlike bondage imposed by others. The latter is bondage by another; this is self-bondage. The former is bondage with form; this is formless bondage.

The other binds me to the body; this self-bondage binds the mind. The other has only one or two kinds of bondage; this has as many as eighty-four thousand kinds. The other is released by the hand; this is released by wisdom. For release from the other, one seeks another person; for this release, one seeks oneself. The other bondage must be untied before one is freed; this bondage is freed without being untied. Yet this is not truly without untying: those with the eye of wisdom see that its root is already empty. Since there was originally no bondage, how could there be any release?

It is only for those of dull faculties that one cannot avoid speaking of so many technical terms. Those who seek liberation resemble prisoners seeking release because they lack freedom, yet this is not so, for originally there is no bondage. But sentient beings do not understand this. Those today who bustle after fame and profit are either bound by fame, bound by profit, or bound by both. They are exerting themselves to scheme and pursue them ever more deeply, with no time to spare; how could they be willing to relax and seek liberation?

Only when they experience suffering do they begin to realize such truths as suffering, emptiness, and impermanence. Yet before they become aware of it, they are already suffering in countless ways. Deluded by hopes and expectations, they fail to recognize their suffering, still imagining that, once their hopes are fulfilled, all suffering will be dispelled. They do not know that human affairs are impermanent and that it is exceedingly difficult for things to turn out as one wishes.

For example, a lottery has a top prize of five hundred thousand, while perhaps a million people desire it. In the end, only one person obtains what they hoped for, while the number of disappointed people runs into countless tens of thousands. Before the drawing, the burning unease of desire is as indescribable as the distress, resentment, and vexation of disappointment afterward. Thus, it is true that there is originally no bondage, yet the present unease is not unreal. Simply because they fail to recognize this, people needlessly bind themselves. The one who tied the bell must untie it: since one is bound in the mind, one must also be liberated in the mind. To be liberated in the mind, one must first understand the principles of cause and effect and of the coming together of conditions.

On Cause and Effect

Cause is the originating cause, and fruition is the fully developed result. Between cause and fruition there must be conditions; if the conditions are insufficient, the fruition will not be complete. The so-called four conditions are: first, causal conditions; second, object conditions; third, immediately preceding conditions; and fourth, dominant conditions. Within conditions there are also countless minor causes and minor results. For example, thirst gives rise to thoughts of tea: this is a causal condition. Thinking of tea leads one to brew tea: this is an object condition.

From being thirsty, to thinking of tea, brewing tea, steeping tea, drinking tea, and quenching thirst, the sequence cannot be disordered; this is the immediately preceding condition. From thirst to thirst being quenched, there are many intervening processes, each progressively advancing; this is the dominant condition. Layer upon layer, there are causes and effects; everywhere, conditions can be transformed. Whether good or bad, none falls outside these four principles.

If, in brewing tea, one scalds one's finger, becomes angry, resents another person, and then quarrels, this transforms yet another causal condition into a different result. Cause and effect may extend across the three divisions of time, or, more immediately, exist right before us. Each instant is itself a cause and effect. No matter how great or small an affair, it cannot escape the law of cause and effect. All science is inseparable from cause and effect in every respect, with various conditions assisting in bringing results to completion.

The arising of causes and the ripening of results are both called birth. For example, in planting a tree, sowing the seed is the cause; watering, fertilizer, and sunlight are the conditions; and sprouting branches, flowering, bearing fruit, and producing seeds are the result. This is birth. Then the living tree is the cause; the yellowing, falling, and withering of its leaves, and its being cut down by an axe, are the conditions; and its branches and trunk becoming firewood, being burned, and turning into ashes are the result. This is cessation.

This is one birth and one cessation. Birth is conditionally arisen, and cessation is conditionally arisen; therefore, they do not arise and cease of themselves, for a single seed cannot by itself become a tree, bear fruit, and become firewood. Nor do they arise and cease from another, for even if other conditions come together, without a seed there can ultimately be no tree, firewood, ashes, and so forth.

Nor do they arise and cease jointly, for in a joint arising there is no primary subject and no inherent nature; ultimately, for whom would it be? It cannot be found. Therefore it is said that what arises through conditions is empty of inherent nature: though present, it cannot be grasped. Nor do they arise and cease without cause,

for this birth and cessation are both results; if there were originally no cause, there could certainly be no result of birth and cessation.

The mind is also thus: it does not arise of itself, from another, jointly, or without cause. Indeed, all things arise and cease through conditions in this way. Thus, the mind arises through causes and conditions and ceases through causes and conditions; it illusorily arises and illusorily ceases, and ultimately cannot be grasped. The various sufferings and vexations of today are likewise bondage through causes and conditions and liberation through causes and conditions. Because the mind is deluded, it takes external circumstances as conditions and binds itself.

Because the mind is clear, it takes awakened contemplation as its condition and is liberated. Yet all conditions are empty and cannot be grasped. Ordinary beings are foolish and do not understand cause and effect. They fear only results, not causes, because causes cannot be seen while results are right before their eyes. Cause and effect are easy to enter but difficult to escape, yet people continually take them lightly. The two vehicles fear causes and refuse to create them; this too is fearing results.

Bodhisattvas are not ignorant of cause and effect, while Buddhas understand cause and effect with clear, ever-present knowing. Since there were prior causes, there must now be results; one undergoes the results without being bound by them. There is no question of favorable or adverse circumstances. As for future matters, prior causes bring later results: such cause, such conditions, such result, such retribution, such experience.

Before acting, one is already clearly aware and discerning, and thus naturally does not lightly create causes and undergo their later results. Therefore, realizing the mind is the master key to every undertaking. Using mind to illuminate mind is prajñā; yet only by understanding the essence of mind can one activate the function of prajñā. This is the most essential point in the Section on Inspiring Potential. From this, some suddenly open prajñā; from this, some decisively resolve their doubts; and from this, some plant wholesome roots. This is the subtle meaning of liberating the sentient beings of one's own nature at the causal stage.

Discerning Mind and Intrinsic Nature

What is mind? Mind is that which arises through the coming together of things, as when the eye and visual forms come together, or the ear and sounds come together. The inner six sense faculties are the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind; the outer six sense objects are visual forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tactile objects, and dharmas. When faculties and objects come together, cognition arises; thus there are the six consciousnesses, and this is called the conscious mind.

Therefore, that which arises in dependence on external circumstances is thought; that which measures and assesses in accordance with thought is mind; that which discriminates on the basis of such assessment is consciousness; that which pursues and investigates is ideation; that which decides on the basis of consciousness is the view of self; and that which firmly holds this view and refuses to change is emotional attachment. Using the power of wisdom-light to direct this ideation, mind, thought, consciousness, and view, and thereby transform them, is awakened contemplation.

To realize that wisdom too is empty, and to be able to relinquish greatly and abide nowhere, is the wondrous function of prajñā. In truth, all these are the mind's illusory arising and illusory ceasing. Each arising and ceasing is a birth and a death, a cause and a result, a single cycle of turning. To abide in this is bondage; not to abide is liberation.

Yet mind neither enters nor leaves, neither comes nor goes, and still less has birth and death. Originally it is not deluded; it is originally unobtainable. From where, then, can liberation be spoken of? The answer is that mind is originally awakened, yet now there plainly appears to be delusion—what is to be done? It is like a person who was originally not ill, for whom medicine would not even be discussed. But if the person has in fact fallen ill, with fever and headache, one cannot cling to the illness as illusory and insist that it does not exist.

Though one clearly knows that after the illness is cured, nothing can be grasped, one must still use illusion to dispel illusion. Again, compare a drunk person with a sober person: although in every respect they are completely nondual, the drunk person's actions are wild and disordered, and cannot be said not to exist. The difference between ourselves and the Buddha is likewise only that between drunkenness and sobriety.

People in the world often divide realizing the mind and seeing one's true nature into two separate matters; nor can they distinguish mind from nature. This is why it is difficult to inspire their potential. Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism all speak of nature in the same way, representing it by a circle. In Confucianism it is called humaneness, the great Way, the highest good, the Mandate of Heaven, luminous virtue, the vast and flowing qi, the imperial norm, heavenly principle, the ever-abiding, mind-nature, and the primal origin.

In Buddhism it is called the tathāgata-garbha, suchness, great perfect mirror wisdom, wisdom of the essential nature of the dharma realm, perfect enlightenment, bodhi, Vairocana, dharma-nature, dharmakāya, the Buddha Way, wondrous mind, nirvāṇa, vajra prajñā conscious mind, ālaya, the five wisdoms, the ninth consciousness, the boundless body, and return to the origin. In Daoism it is called the mysterious, the golden elixir, the valley spirit, the supreme purity, the

limitless, deathlessness, the great Way, and so forth. All three traditions establish provisional names, too numerous to count; but the thing itself is one, and these merely indicate this empty nature.

Now, let the clear quiescence and immovability of nature be compared to water. When, in response to circumstances, a thought moves, that thought is mind, comparable to waves stirred up by wind. Water has the potential to form waves, but waves are not actually inherent in water. Since the waves exist because of wind, this is called illusory arising. When the wind stops and the waves cease, their cessation returns to water; this is called illusory cessation. Because they illusorily arise and illusorily cease, they cannot be grasped; because they lack inherent nature, they are empty.

Water and waves are two yet one. Nature alone originally has neither arising nor ceasing; though a thousand myriad ages pass, it undergoes no change. Because it cannot be seen yet is not empty, it is called true emptiness that is not mere nothingness. Because its presence cannot be seen, yet its wondrous functioning is as inexhaustible as the sands of the Ganges, it is called wondrous presence without substantial existence. This is neither born nor extinguished, neither defiled nor pure; therefore, that which is clear, quiescent, and unmoving is nature.

This immovability is not like the immovability of wood or stone. It remains vibrant and alive: when it encounters circumstances, thoughts arise, illusorily arising and ceasing, yet ultimately unobtainable—this is mind. Mind arises from intrinsic nature. The character consists of , “mind,” and , “arise,” indicating that intrinsic nature is that from which mind arises.

When mind ceases, its cessation returns to nature. Therefore, its point of arising cannot be seen: whence it comes cannot be known. If it is said to arise in dependence on circumstances, then it should arise from those circumstances and not be connected with anything inherent; nature would seem to have no part in it. If it is said to arise in dependence on nature, then without circumstances how could a thought arise? In nature, a thought cannot arise from nothing.

Therefore, know that it exists through the provisional conjunction of causes and conditions. Just as a bell sounds because it is struck, the emergence of sound is also provisionally present through the conjunction of various causes and conditions. This is why its point of arising cannot be grasped.

When it ceases, where does it go? This cannot be known. If it is said to cease in circumstances, no increase is seen in those circumstances. If it is said to return and cease in nature, then when mind arises no diminution is seen in nature, and when mind ceases no increase is seen in nature. It is precisely like water: when there are

waves, the water need not decrease; when waves cease in water, the water need not increase. Moving yet unmoving—this is why its point of cessation cannot be grasped.

Because it cannot be grasped, it does not arise; because it does not arise, there is nothing that can cease. This is what is meant by neither arising nor ceasing. From this we know that arising is illusory arising and cessation is illusory cessation; both are merely provisional names. What does illusory arising mean? It means arising in dependence on others, according to the Dharma Characteristics School. Nature originally has three aspects: first, the nature of dependence on others; second, the nature of pervasive discrimination and attachment; third, the nature of absolute reality and perfection.

The nature of absolute reality and perfection means the true aspect that is originally complete and originally accomplished. Suddenly enticed by external objects, one gives rise to thoughts in dependence on others. Failing to awaken to this, one takes it as illusory, then pervasively calculates and clings to it. The problem does not lie in arising in dependence on others, but in attachment. The fault in attachment does not lie in pervasive calculation, but in firmly clinging to it. Thus one's intrinsic nature becomes confused. Yet this confusion is only temporary; intrinsic nature can never increase or diminish. Therefore it is called the eternally unchanging nature of the tathāgata-garbha.

Non-Duality of Nature and Mind

If nature is the essence and mind is the function, essence and function are nondual. When a thought arises, wind forms waves. Whether it is good or evil, with a single turn it is empty; in its very substance it vanishes. The distinction between sages and ordinary beings also lies in this single turn. Turning away from evil and toward good lies in this single turn. To transcend the ordinary and enter sagehood is fundamentally very easy.

Yet mind is both the most alive and the most dead. People always refuse to turn this mind toward goodness. Even with the strength of nine oxen and two tigers, it will not move in the slightest. This is because the karmic force of the obstinate mind is strong; it is difficult to tame and subdue. Even the Buddha can do nothing about it. Without one's own initiative, it cannot turn.

But how can it turn? One need only awaken; awakening itself is turning. The intrinsic nature of ordinary people is originally complete and lacks nothing, and is therefore called fundamental awakening. It is originally wondrous, and is therefore also called the wondrous mind of perfect enlightenment. Unfortunately, they are drunk as though mad. Though all are equally drunk, drunkenness has degrees; yet a drunk person is no different in nature from a good person.

Those who have awakened first go to rescue those who have not yet awakened. This is called practicing the bodhisattva path: impartially and compassionately liberating all. Though a drunk person may be wild, one must not despise him, for his original nature has not been damaged in the slightest. He is merely confused for the moment and unable to be clear-minded. Once he awakens, he is no different at all from a good person. Thus afflictions and bodhi are in truth nondual.

Both are empty in nature and unobtainable; therefore they are said to be identical.

Long ago, someone asked what it meant to say that afflictions are themselves bodhi. I asked him to raise his hand, then asked him to put it down. I then asked, “Did you raise your hand once and lower it once?” He said, “Yes.” I asked again, “Were that raising and lowering performed by two hands, or by this same hand?” He said, “The same hand.” I then asked, “Are raising and lowering two?” He said, “Two.” I asked, “Is the hand one?” He said, “One.” He suddenly awakened to this principle and departed joyfully.

Thus drunkenness and sobriety, too, are nondual; this is originally so. Yet people refuse to let go and make this turn—what can be done? When they enter the gate of practice, their greed and laziness all arise, and they rely entirely on the Buddha, wanting the Buddha to let go of this hand for them and to awaken for them. What can be done? What can be done? Tracing the matter to its source, the reason is that they have never understood the character of mind and intrinsic nature.

Interacting Faculties and Objects

One cannot help seeing and hearing. To force oneself not to see or hear is the annihilationism of non-Buddhist paths. Forcefully suppressing one’s practice will inevitably produce serious illness: one either falls into a dead sea or turns into a mad demon.

If one follows seeing and hearing as they flow and turn, this is the grasping after conditions of ordinary beings. Such grasping means being passively carried along by delusion and karma, losing one’s mastery. Therefore one must still maintain clear, ever-present knowing in all things, adding the practice of seeing clearly. Know them to be flowers in empty space, and there will be no further turning in the cycle. This is a principal passage of the Sūtra of Perfect Enlightenment. Its difficulty lies in the single word “knowing,” which encompasses such states as awareness and illumination, realization of emptiness, freedom from delusion, and immovability. Without cultivation and realization, one simply does not know.

Mind as the Treasury

What is meant by “treasury”? It refers to the storehouse consciousness. Consciousness is further divided into the fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth consciousnesses, which will now be explained separately.

The fifth consciousnesses are the first five consciousnesses: eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body consciousness. They arise in relation to forms, sounds, odors, tastes, and tactile objects. They are like attendants at a doorway who receive messengers and goods into a warehouse; they store what has not yet entered the warehouse.

The sixth consciousness is mental consciousness: the thoughts aroused by the preceding five consciousnesses. It is like a special agent who receives and carries goods into the warehouse.

The seventh consciousness is consciousness that discriminates through inference. It distinguishes what is good, evil, or indeterminate, and clings obstinately without relaxing its hold. It is the storehouse of attachment to self. It is like a person who inspects goods and determines their quality. It is the general cause of suffering and the ancestor of afflictions; in Sanskrit, it is called manas consciousness.

The eighth consciousness is the storehouse consciousness. “Store” has three senses: the capacity to store, encompassing storage, and storage grasped through attachment to self. The capacity to store means having the ability to store: once something is stored, it does not emerge again; no matter how many years pass, not the slightest bit can be removed. Encompassing storage means that its scope can contain everything: things as great as mountains, rivers, the sun, moon, and earth, and as small as mustard seeds, grains of rice, and tiny insects, are all contained within it. It is like a great warehouse, in which all things—large and small, good and bad, impure and pure—are stored. In Sanskrit, it is called ālaya consciousness.

The ninth consciousness is the empty and pure aspect of the eighth consciousness. Although the eighth consciousness is likened to a warehouse, it is originally empty and pure. Though goods are carried in and out, coming and going in confusion, the warehouse itself does not move because of this. It is neither defiled nor pure, neither comes nor goes, and is originally spotless and immaculate. It is therefore separately called the ninth consciousness. The ninth consciousness is called the pure consciousness; in Sanskrit, it is called amalavijñāna.

All these consciousnesses are fundamentally of one essence; none has inherent reality. These provisional names are established merely to awaken people’s understanding, to explain how the mind gives rise to causes and thereby creates karma.

When worldly people create karma through their causal actions, they fall into cause and effect and are not easily rescued. This is why the three karmas of body, speech,

and mind are not easily purified. What is bodily karma? Killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct. What is verbal karma? Divisive speech, harsh speech, false speech, and frivolous speech. What is mental karma? Greed, anger, and ignorance. These three are the three poisons. Together with the bodily and verbal acts listed above, they are collectively called the ten unwholesome acts. Add the word “not”—not killing, not stealing, not engaging in sexual misconduct, and so forth—and they become the ten wholesome acts.

Mental karma is primary, the cause; verbal karma provides the impetus, the condition; bodily karma is the completion, the fruition. If one does not address the root at the causal stage, but merely makes amends at the level of result, there will ultimately be no benefit. In this assembly, we cultivate the precepts by beginning with samādhi and wisdom. Samādhi and wisdom are themselves precepts—the precepts of mind, the so-called fundamental great precepts—though this does not dispense with the forms and deportment of the precepts.

Practice begins with cultivating the mind and working at the root. This is the Heart-of-Heart Dharma, in which function arises from essence. Therefore, in speaking of the dependent arising of mental karma, I do not tire of repetition. People suffer because they do not recognize their own illness. The Buddha therefore described the various habitual tendencies. There are one hundred and sixty types of mind; the Mahāvairocana Sūtra condenses them into sixty types, so that practitioners may each turn the light inward and examine themselves.

Zengzi spoke of examining himself each day. The “three” in his words must not, in this interpretation, mean merely three separate occasions: examining oneself only three times a day would be like warming something for one day and leaving it cold for ten. Rather, it refers to the beginning, middle, and end of the day—in other words, constant self-examination. Continue day after day and month after month, and it becomes familiar; then one is not far from going three months without departing from benevolence. Mental ailments are habitual tendencies rooted in the mutual bondage of faculties and objects, form and mind. A mirror displays an image when an object is before it; without an object, it is empty. Yet the analogy has its limits.

1. When a mirror faces an object, an image appears; when the object goes, the image vanishes. When the mind encounters an object, a thought arises; when the object goes, the image remains, because of grasping after conditions.

2. When an object outside a mirror is gone, there is no image. But when an external object of the mind has vanished, the thought still remains, because the mind grasps after conditions out of thin air and establishes all kinds of images.

3. A mirror necessarily retains an image when facing an object, but when the mind encounters an object, it need not retain one—for example, seeing without seeing, or not binding the mind to anything. Moreover, one endowed with wisdom, whose direct perception is complete, can also cut off everything.

4. A mirror retains only one image when facing an object and cannot transform it. When the mind encounters an object, however, it may not only retain an image but also transform it, producing limitless illusions. With wisdom, it can further turn toward another mental state.

From this we can see that mastery truly lies in our own hands. Fools do not recognize the master within; they allow themselves to be carried along in the flow. Unable to transform things, they are transformed by things. They may even be turned by the sūtras they read, forming a dead understanding that cannot function.

Sages establish teachings with realizing the mind and seeing one's true nature as the primary aim, wishing people to realize bodhi. Bodhi is without form or name; it is the unobtainable, perfectly wondrous, clear, and aware mind. Worldly people mistakenly take bodhicitta to mean a good or compassionate mind, believing that refraining from evil is the manifestation of bodhi. This is truly insufficiently clear: if the causal ground is not understood, how can fruition be perfected? Moreover, bodhicitta is provisionally given five names:

1. Bodhi of arousing the resolve: knowing delusion and seeking awakening, one arouses the resolve and begins practice. This means arousing the resolve to realize bodhicitta.

2. Bodhi of subduing the mind: knowing how to use mind to restrain mind and subdue its coarse and weighty accumulated habits. Yet suppression is not ultimate; since the mind has not yet become empty, this cannot be called bodhi.

3. Bodhi of realizing the mind: clearly knowing the true character of one's mind as it really is and realizing its empty and pure ground.

4. Bodhi of arriving beyond: leaving this shore of birth and death and reaching the other shore of nirvāṇa. At this point, one has still not left behind deliberate effort.

5. Unsurpassed bodhi: having entered the state of all-pervading perfection and reality, one attains great accomplishment. This is true bodhi.

Therefore, at the level of principle, one can understand that intrinsic nature is originally perfect bodhi and that Buddha-nature is equal in all; this is becoming a Buddha in the dharmakāya. At the level of phenomena, one cultivates and realizes samādhi, sees the true marks of reality, and realizes the mind and sees one's true nature; this is becoming a Buddha in the sambhogakāya. As for becoming a Buddha

in the nirmāṇakāya through the nonobstruction of principle and phenomena, the complete removal of habitual tendencies, and the development of spiritual powers, this cannot be accomplished in a single lifetime; it requires an inexpressible length of time.

Time here is measured in kalpas; the expression is asaṃkhyeya kalpas. Here, a is glossed as “without” and saṃkhyeya as “a large quantity,” yielding the sense of immeasurably many kalpas: there is no fixed period of time. It may be accomplished in one lifetime, or in tens of millions of lifetimes. The wise seek the mind and transcend in an instant; fools seek externally and cannot realize it even in tens of millions of lifetimes. What practice, then, can be called transcendent? Apart from the Mind-Ground Dharma Gate, there is no other method.

Within the three realms, mind is primary. Mind is called the ground; through this Dharma of mind one enters the dharma realm, and therefore it is called a dharma gate. Those able to contemplate the mind attain ultimate liberation; those unable to contemplate it sink at once.

In the Contemplation of the Mind chapter of the Mahāyāna Birth Stories Sūtra on Contemplation of the Mind-Ground, Mañjuśrī, the Dharma Prince, said: “This dharma gate is the supreme secret Mind-Ground Dharma Gate of the Tathāgatas of the ten directions. This dharma gate is the gate through which all ordinary beings enter the Tathāgata’s sudden awakening. This dharma gate is the true and correct path by which all bodhisattvas proceed toward great bodhi. This dharma gate is the subtle jewel palace of Dharma bliss personally enjoyed by the Buddhas of the three times. This dharma gate is the inexhaustible treasury that benefits all sentient beings. This dharma gate can lead all bodhisattvas to the realm of sovereign wisdom at the summit of the form realm. This dharma gate can liberate all sentient beings from the perils of birth and death.”

These few passages all point to the gate of prajñāpāramitā: directly realize the mind-ground and know one’s own mind as it truly is. This is called the Mind-Ground Dharma Gate. In the Mahāvairocana Sūtra, “Lord of Secrets” is explained here as the master of the mind’s mystery. One enters through the equal, secret empowerment of body, speech, and mind: the body’s secret mudrās, speech’s mantras, and the mind’s wondrous contemplation.

Through these three expedient means, this enjoyment body is empowered; it is the all-pervading dharmakāya of Vairocana. This signifies the perfection of the bodhisattva’s practices and is therefore given this name. In truth, it is the inconceivable mind of the equal dharmatā of all sentient beings. The sūtra says, “Relying on this dharma gate,” and so forth; the gate is precisely this gate. Therefore, apart from prajñā, the provisions for learning the Buddha’s teaching are cut off.

Dharmas arise from mind; names are established on the basis of dharmas. The mind that gives rise to them has no location, and the dharmas that arise likewise have none. Mind and objects are both empty and without location. Thus, without mind, there are no names at all. Since the mind responds to things in accordance with conditions, all belong to the emptiness of conditions.

For forty-nine years the Buddha taught the Dharma for no purpose other than liberating the minds of sentient beings and bringing them peace and happiness. No sentient being fails to seek peace and happiness; their struggles, killings, cunning pursuits, and deceitful acquisitions all arise from seeking their own happiness. Yet they do not know that this happiness is not ultimate. Worldly happiness stands in opposition to and dependence upon suffering; it all arises from habitual comparison.

Today's happiness is tomorrow's suffering; the happiness of having is the suffering of lacking. Therefore it is not ultimate, and such happiness is temporary and difficult to preserve for long. Moreover, as the mind races outward, people forget the root, believing that suffering and happiness lie in the body's toil and rest. The Buddha wishes them to awaken to what Dharma can truly bring ultimate peace to the mind.

People of the world do not even know their own minds, much less how to bring them peace. Thus disputes proliferate, and even after hundreds and thousands of years no final conclusion has been reached. People spend their entire lives rushing about for no reason other than to find a way to attain peace. Yet how peace is to be attained so that one's wishes are fulfilled has never truly touched upon the mind itself. When people seek wealth and emolument, they ask themselves how they may make their minds content. This shows that what they hope for is still the mind's own fulfillment and peace. But human affairs are impermanent, and the eight sufferings press in from every side. There is no true happiness, only the suffering of many kinds. Unable to illuminate this with wisdom, people are therefore called deluded.

From youth and vigor through old age and death, human life never departs from the eight sufferings mentioned above. Yet what people fail to recognize is the suffering of the blazing five aggregates. Most terrifying is the suffering of death. First, people mistakenly suppose that with a single death they will be annihilated forever. Second, they grieve that the property, wife, and children acquired through a lifetime of labor must soon be left behind. Third, they wonder what destination awaits them after death.

Because these doubts remain unresolved, fear arises. The more afraid they are, the less willing they are to let go; and the less they let go, the less willing the mind is to release its hold. Thus, at death, they undergo indescribable confusion and suffering. Seeing this, people instead suppose that such is inevitably the condition at death;

the seed of their fear of death has already been planted. The root of this is failure to understand the mind-ground. Without clarity regarding the mind-ground, there is no way even to begin the method of settling the mind.

All who possess wisdom seek liberation from this, yet do not obtain the method. Bodhisattvas employ compassion and wisdom together to liberate them, teaching them the method of settling the mind. But they do not begin by speaking of peace; they first speak of mind, so that people may understand ultimately that there is originally no birth and death, that mind cannot be grasped, and that suffering and happiness therefore have nothing on which to depend.

To depend means to abide. Abiding in attachment means that mind and objects stand opposed to each other and cannot both be empty; calculation and discrimination arise in dependence on conditions, and suffering and happiness are born because the mind has attachments in which it abides. Yet non-abiding does not mean a stubborn emptiness, like the insentience of wood or stone. It is precisely clear, ever-present knowing without attachment; this is called non-abiding. It does not mean that there is no attachment because there is sheer nothingness.

The sūtra says, “One should give rise to a mind that abides nowhere.” One must not only refrain from abiding in suffering, but also refrain from abiding in happiness; even non-abiding itself must not be abided in. Yet one abides in this place of no abiding. This is the true mind that ever abides, and thus it is called the Pure Land and called Ultimate Bliss. What is called ultimate bliss is the utmost peace. Do not discuss peace and unrest as opposites. This word peace means true and ultimate peace, a peace beyond all naming and description.

When one understands this wondrous mind of perfect enlightenment, one sees that, being fundamentally neither arising nor ceasing, it is neither pure nor defiled, neither hidden nor manifest. The Second Patriarch could not find his mind; the First Patriarch then acknowledged that his mind had been settled. Thus the root of all birth and death and the eight sufferings was shattered. This depends on investigating one’s own mind; there is no Dharma to be transmitted. It is only that one’s strength in ordinary times is insufficient and the path is still unfamiliar, so you are taught to practice earnestly for yourself. Practice is not the pursuit of spiritual powers; it is the pursuit of samādhi giving rise to wisdom, so that by the power of prajñā all bonds are broken. This is nothing other than settling the mind. Yet among all the greatest spiritual powers under heaven, is there any greater than settling the mind?

Because people of the world do not understand the method of settling the mind, they take the pursuit of wealth and fame and the satisfaction of desire to be peace of mind. In the end, they become ever more confused, adding suffering upon

suffering; nothing need be said of the rest. Even practitioners of the Way who have obtained the essential method of settling the mind still do not dare trust themselves. They often say that their karmic obstacles are profound and that they have no means of freeing themselves. This is due to not understanding karmic obstacles.

As stated earlier, if one wishes to eliminate karmic obstacles, the first thing is to understand clearly what karmic obstacles are. Once this is understood, they dissolve of themselves without needing to be eliminated. Thus, before the mind-ground is clear, every stirring of mind and movement of thought is a karmic obstacle; one's temper and habitual tendencies are karmic obstacles. Karmic obstacles are unlike a criminal case on file, where the case may be dismissed and the offense pardoned. They are bonds tied within the mind.

For example, when someone kills another person and flees, the act of killing is an impulse of karmic force, and fleeing is likewise an impulse of karmic force. Even if the authorities do not investigate, the victim's family does not pursue the matter, or a pardon is granted, the terror in that person's conscience and the confusion at the time of death are precisely past karma that has not been resolved.

Again, in killing bandits or enemies, one may have no choice but to use armed force. If one does not seek personal emolument, rank, or territory, but, like King Wen, becomes angry once and brings peace to the realm, then one may remain at ease in body and mind. What karmic obstacle could there be? Still more so when greed, anger, and ignorance do not mingle in the mind. This is what is meant by: when principle is understood, the mind is at peace.

Unease is precisely delusion, karma, and suffering. To break through delusion, karma, and suffering is nothing beyond samādhi, wisdom, and emptiness. Samādhi gives rise to wisdom; wisdom realizes emptiness; and in emptiness, without being fixed, there is samādhi. Wisdom means intelligence; the wise are not deluded. People of the world are deluded because they lack wisdom. Lacking wisdom, they cannot distinguish true from false, and instead recognize what is false as true. If one can empty all that one possesses, one naturally understands that worldly dharmas are all insubstantial.

What is called defiled is like a leaking cup: it may at first be full of water, but before long the water leaks away, and therefore it is called defiled. Buddhadharma is a supramundane dharma, a truth of ultimate reality. Truth means that it cannot be shaken. It is like a cup without leaks, whose water never drains away, and is therefore called undefiled. Buddhadharma is that by which worldly dharmas are understood. Once worldly dharmas are understood, that itself is Buddhadharma. Apart from worldly dharmas, there is no Buddhadharma.

Therefore, Buddhadharma is enlightenment inseparable from the world. When one thoroughly understands without obstruction the defiled worldly dharmas and the undefiled supramundane dharmas, and the two kinds of defilement are utterly purified without remainder, this is called the supernormal power of the exhaustion of defilements. This is the sixth supernormal power, the highest dharma gate, absent from non-Buddhist paths and unique to the Buddha Way. It is absent from all other religions and unique to Buddhism.

For those studying Buddhism, this must be given foremost priority. Thus opening prajñā-wisdom is the fundamental provision for attaining Buddhahood and the first crucial key to realizing the mind and seeing one's true nature; there is no second path by which one may pass through. The Benevolent Kings Sūtra says: "All rely on this gate to attain perfect enlightenment. For one to become a Buddha by going beyond it, there is no such possibility."

This is because the root illness of sentient beings is simply delusion and unawareness, and there is likewise only this one path among all Dharma gates for treating it. Though throughout immeasurable hundreds of millions of kalpas Buddhas appear in the world in every kalpa, the way of every Buddha is the same: this one Dharma. Only its application differs, adapting in response to the capacities of beings. Yet when one returns to unsurpassed bodhi and realizes entry into the ocean of Vairocana's nature, there has never been a second way. As for its names, the various sūtras differ slightly. A brief list follows:

1. the ever-constant and unchanging nature of the Tathāgata-garbha; 2. storehouse consciousness; 3. Tathāgata-garbha; 4. the wondrous mind of perfect enlightenment; 5. the wondrous, still, luminous mind; 6. return to the origin; 7. the ocean of Vairocana's nature; 8. great perfect mirror wisdom; 9. dharmakāya; 10. mind-ground; 11. field of nature; 12. mind-treasure; 13. bodhicitta; 14. the gate of pure bodhicitta; 15. vajra prajñā;

16. true reality; 17. suchness; 18. treasure storehouse; 19. Buddha-nature; 20. true child; 21. secret treasury; 22. the ocean of sarvajñā; 23. mind-king; 24. vajra secret traces; 25. the master of the house; 26. the single eye; 27. the mani jewel; 28. the primordial constant; 29. the great self; 30. .

Although the names differ in the various sūtras, their meaning is not two. This is also called the great secret of all Buddhas, and is also called the supreme Mahāyāna. The supreme Mahāyāna is not what non-Buddhist paths can know. What is meant by great is mahā, which has seven meanings:

1. Great Dharma: this means the vast, profound, and secret treasury of all Buddhas. Vairocana pervades all places, and this vehicle is only for great persons.

2. Great arousing of the resolve: this means single-mindedly aspiring to equal great wisdom, giving rise to inexhaustible vows of compassion, and vowing to bestow the Dharma universally upon sentient beings throughout the dharma realm.

3. Great faith and understanding: this means that when one first sees one's nature and clearly realizes the Way, one possesses immeasurable merit and virtue, can reach Buddha-lands as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, and brings sentient beings to accomplishment through great causes and conditions.

4. Great nature: this means the intrinsically pure mind, the vajra treasure storehouse, which lacks nothing and is shared by all sentient beings.

5. Great reliance: this means the great support of sentient beings in the dharma realm, like a hundred rivers flowing toward the sea, and grasses and trees growing in reliance upon the great earth.

6. Great time: this means a lifespan vast and long, extending beyond the three divisions of time. The secret function of the lion's vigorous leap of spiritual powers has never ceased.

7. Great wisdom: this means that all dharmas are boundless, equal to empty space, and the mind's natural wondrous wisdom is likewise boundless. Because of these seven causes and conditions, among all Mahāyāna Dharma gates it is like clarified butter; therefore it is called the supreme Mahāyāna. The sūtra says, "Its nature is ever firm and solid, immeasurable as empty space." This precisely expresses the supreme virtue of this wondrous mind.

At the Lotus Dharma assembly, the Buddha caused all sentient beings to open, reveal, awaken to, and enter the Buddha's knowledge and vision. Bodhidharma, the First Patriarch, directly pointed to the human mind: see one's nature and attain Buddhahood. Yet sentient beings' minds are turned by things; they crave sounds and cling to forms, are bound by sensual desires, and are shaken by the eight worldly winds.

If people understand that all worldly phenomena are impermanent, like illusions and dreams, like lightning and dew, and understand this principle so that they no longer crave or remain deluded, then the substance of this mind remains thusness, unmoving. All dharmas are without intrinsic nature; because they are without intrinsic nature, all can become Buddhas.

Therefore, the Diamond Sūtra says: "All conditioned dharmas are like dreams, illusions, bubbles, and shadows; like dew and also like lightning. One should contemplate them thus." This is to contemplate the principle that all dharmas are without intrinsic nature.

What is meant by being without intrinsic nature? Without what sort of nature? It means without the nature of characteristics, without the nature of exhaustion, without the nature of arising, without the nature of ceasing, without the nature of self, without the nature of non-self; indeed, without the nature of bodhi, without the nature of the dharma realm, and without the nature of empty space. Knowing that all dharmas are without intrinsic nature, one can know all wisdom, attain all wisdom, see one's nature, and become a Buddha.

Buddhadharma is not passive. Therefore, the two vehicles, which seek liberation for themselves without liberating sentient beings, are reproved by the Buddha, who calls such persons scorched sprouts and rotten seeds. Such people cannot attain Buddhahood; thus it is better to fall into hell than enter the two vehicles. Those who cultivate Mahāyāna Dharma must arouse Great Vows, sustain great compassion, realize great wisdom, and establish great conduct.

To arouse Great Vows is to vow that throughout life after life one will generate bodhicitta, relinquish one's body, life, and possessions, and rescue sentient beings—not only enabling them to attain peace and happiness, but also enabling them to understand clearly the nature of mind, so that they may become Buddhas. To sustain great compassion is to take the mind of great compassion as one's foundation, pitying sentient beings who do not understand true principle and suffer anguish in vain, and vowing to rescue them and bring them peace and happiness.

To establish great conduct is to practice the six pāramitās, benefiting oneself and others. To realize great wisdom is to realize the wisdom of the fundamental nature of the dharma realm and accomplish fundamental wisdom, so that one knows without exception the principles of the dharma realms in the ten directions; this is called the wisdom of all wisdom. What is called great is the nature of sentient beings' minds: in its utmost smallness, it has no inside, so that not a mote of dust can enter it; in its utmost greatness, it has no outside, so that there is not a single dharma it does not encompass.

What is called a vehicle has the meaning of carrying. It can carry people onward directly to the ocean of sarvajñā. The ocean of sarvajñā is the ground of all-knowing wisdom. This ocean is within the nature of sentient beings' minds; thus one knows that this ocean is not far away and that the mind-treasure is ever present. Compared with the mind-treasure, worldly treasures are no treasures: the jade disc of Zhao is not a treasure, and the pearl of Sui is not precious enough. If one can realize the mind and see one's true nature, external things cannot move one's mind. In a single instant, this treasure manifests of itself. When one personally awakens to it, it is truly not attained from another; this is seeing one's nature and attaining Buddhahood.

Sentient beings differ in wisdom or foolishness solely because of differences in where the power of their minds is directed. Discrimination thus gives rise to wisdom and foolishness; yet all equally possess this wisdom of fundamental reality. Covered over by deluded emotional attachments and inverted views, they cannot manifest or perceive it. It is like an eye obscured by a film, or a hand rendered disabled and unable to function, though its inherent capacity has not been lost.

People possess wisdom without manifesting it, just as someone may possess treasure yet suffer poverty. Is this not tragic? Let us cite a passage from the "Chapter on the Manifestation of the Tathāgata" in the Avataṃsaka Sūtra to explain its meaning. The general sense of the sūtra passage is this: Suppose there were a great scripture as vast as three thousand worlds, recording in full all the affairs within a great trichiliocosm. Although this great scripture is so vast, it is entirely contained within a single mote of dust. Nor is this true of only one mote of dust: each and every one of innumerable motes of dust is likewise so.

Then there is a person of lucid and penetrating wisdom, endowed with the heavenly eye, who sees this scripture within the motes of dust and realizes that it brings no benefit at all to sentient beings. He then thinks: "I shall break open these motes of dust, bring forth this scripture, and enable sentient beings to benefit from it."

This is like the Tathāgata, who, with the pure eye of wisdom, universally observes all sentient beings and says: "Wondrous indeed, wondrous indeed! How is it that these sentient beings fully possess the wisdom of the Tathāgata, yet remain foolish and deluded? I shall teach them the noble path, enabling them forever to leave behind deluded thoughts and attachments, so that within themselves they may see vast wisdom no different from that of the Buddha," bringing benefit, peace, and happiness, and so forth.

The explanation is as follows: the great trichiliocosm-sized scripture represents the wisdom of the Tathāgata; its presence within every mote of dust means that it is within the minds of all sentient beings. That every mote of dust is thus endowed means that all sentient beings possess vast wisdom. Yet although sentient beings possess such wisdom, it is covered by deluded emotional attachments, and they cannot turn inward and illuminate it. It is like a great treasury of gold lying buried in the ground: without the guidance of one endowed with the heavenly eye, how could it be discovered?

Therefore, one must hear the principles taught in the sūtras and teachings, understand that everyone possesses vast wisdom within the mind, and consider how to awaken it. Then one may obtain the unsurpassed treasure and bring benefit to beings without end. It is regrettable only that people do not know this. If one understands this principle, one will make no distinctions of honor or lowliness,

nobility or poverty, superiority or inferiority among all sentient beings; the light of impartial wisdom will naturally reveal itself.

The mind's numinous wonder is inconceivable. The subtler the substance, the greater its force; the heavier the substance, the weaker its force. Thus the force of earth is inferior to that of water, the force of water to that of fire, the force of fire to that of wind, and the force of wind to that of mind. The force of mind is formless and is supreme among forces. Spiritual powers and transformations that enter the inconceivable are the power of mind. I shall briefly cite several passages to explain the mind:

1. The Commentary on the Awakening of Faith says: "It is easy to believe that Śākyamuni was in the past and Maitreya will come in the future. But to lead people to believe that suchness within the minds of sentient beings is the common basis of ordinary beings and sages alike—that when deluded, it gives rise to the endless six realms, and when awakened, to the unceasing Three Jewels—this is rare indeed."

2. The Sūtra of Mindfulness of the True Dharma says: "Devas, asuras, hell beings, hungry ghosts, and animals are ever guided by the mind as their chief."

3. The "Chapter on Contemplating the Mind" in the Mahāyāna Sūtra of the Mind-Ground of Original Birth says: "What is mind? What is ground?" Mañjuśrī replied: "Within the three realms, mind is the chief; mind is called the ground. Those who can contemplate the mind ultimately attain liberation; those who cannot ultimately sink into saṃsāra."

4. The Sūtra of the Irreversible Dharma Wheel says: "At that time, three bodhisattvas, having offered māṇḍārava flowers to the Buddha before the World-Honored One, spoke thus: 'We have developed profound faith and understanding in this Dharma and are free of all doubt.'"

5. The Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra says: "The World-Honored One said to Vajramati: 'Good man, with the Buddha eye I observe all sentient beings. Amid the afflictions of craving, anger, and ignorance, they possess the wisdom of the Tathāgata, the eye of the Tathāgata, and the body of the Tathāgata, seated cross-legged in full lotus posture, dignified and unmoving. Good man, although all sentient beings are within the various realms and embodied in afflictions, they possess the tathāgatagarbha, ever undefiled and fully endowed with virtuous marks, no different from myself.'"

6. The Yanye Sūtra says: "The bhikṣus told Śāriputra, 'The Buddha is not our superior. Why? I am not apart from the Buddha, and the Buddha is not apart from me.'"

7. Before Dīpaṅkara Buddha, the Buddha offered five lotus blossoms, signifying that the five aggregates are empty in nature. His mind had no attachment, and he suddenly entered the gate of nonobstruction; thus he received the prophecy and the name Śākyamuni.

8. The Diamond Sūtra's Elucidation of Its Tenet says: "The Diamond Sūtra is the gate through which all Tathāgatas awaken to the mind. To recognize the deluded mind of ignorance is the true mind of wondrous wisdom; therefore it is called awakening to the mind." It also says: "Among the lands of the ten directions, the supreme, foremost, and rarest Dharma is the One Vehicle Dharma alone. It is simply the one mind: mind is Dharma, and Dharma is mind. What further dharma could one abide in? Therefore it speaks of non-abiding. If, apart from mind, one believes there is another dharma to be obtained, attachment arises in the mind; to abide in dharma-marks is to be like a person without eyes."

9. The Treatise on the Treasury says: "To know that existence is subject to decay, and to know that nonexistence does not perish—this is true knowing. Not reckoning existence and nonexistence is precisely not reckoning either existence or nonexistence; it is the non-discriminating knowing of intrinsic nature."

10. Chan Master Shuimian said: "The single word 'knowing' is the gateway to all wonders. The mind of numinous knowing is true nature itself and is no different from the Buddha."

11. The Avataṃsaka Sūtra says: "Excellent, excellent! How is it that the Tathāgata is within the body, yet one does not realize it?"

12. A treatise says: "The Buddha teaches all dharmas in order to liberate all minds. If I have no mind at all, what use are all dharmas to me?"

From the passages listed above, we can see that throughout the Buddha's forty-nine years of teaching, he spoke only one sentence: the mind is unobtainable. Although the Buddha taught, it was as though he had never taught, because dharmas are originally empty. If the mind does not arise, the myriad dharmas do not arise. Mind pervades every place, and every place pervades mind. Once this is understood, one immediately enters one's own tradition. Those who do not realize that mind pervades every place mistakenly imagine that dharmas exist outside the mind; all is then inverted.

If one does not understand that the formless is precisely form, one is an ordinary being attached to marks. If one understands that form is precisely formlessness, one becomes greatly awakened to mind-only. Therefore, one must not seek awakening by grasping at marks, nor realize truth by abandoning marks. Neither clinging to nor departing from them, the nature of awakening reveals itself.

Conclusion: The Dharma gates for inspiring potential cannot be exhausted. Here they have been discussed only in outline, so that everyone may gain a general understanding. First arouse great vows, establish the core principle, and clarify the origins of learning Buddhism. Learning Buddhism further divides into three phases: first, the phase of inspiring potential; second, the phase of right cultivation; and third, the phase of verification. This is the first phase. But why does one wish to learn Buddhism? One should ask oneself: Do I seek myself, or do I seek the Buddha? Which is more important?

Only after recognizing the fundamental place of one's own delusion and error can one sincerely and urgently seek medicine. The medicine is the Three Jewels. But what are Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha, and what makes them treasures? Once the Three Jewels are understood, we may proceed to explain the self. First begin from the existence of self, without falling into empty annihilation; then attain selflessness, without falling into emotional views and birth and death. One then knows that emotional views and birth and death are nothing but suffering.

We then explain suffering. Once the meaning of suffering is understood, one fears birth and death and seeks liberation from them. Yet one must understand how one is drawn into birth and death; at the root lies ignorance. Therefore we explain ignorance. This ignorance vainly creates all kinds of karma, and so we explain karmic obstacles. How are karmic obstacles eliminated? Only through liberation; therefore we discuss liberation. But without understanding the causes, one cannot attain the true reality; therefore we discuss cause and effect.

The arising and ceasing of cause and effect is the circulation of the illusory mind. Thus we discern mind and intrinsic nature, so as to know the marks of mind and what intrinsic nature is, and directly realize bodhi; therefore we discuss bodhi. This echoes the Mind-Seal school's core principle on page four: "prajñā as the function." It emphatically states that without prajñā, the provisions for learning Buddhism are cut off, just as a worker who loses the proper tools, though possessing great strength, can scarcely put it to use.

Inspiring potential means inspiring the capacity for prajñā. This prajñā is not possessed by the Buddha alone; everyone possesses it fully. Prajñā, rendered in Chinese as "great wisdom," still does not fully convey its meaning. It should be called "the great wisdom that thoroughly comprehends the principles and phenomena of worldly and supramundane dharmas, perfectly integrating them without obstruction." Only these sixteen Chinese characters can suggest even a fraction of its meaning. If one asks how this prajñā may be awakened, one must enter the path of right cultivation.

Section on Right Cultivation

The True Intent of Practice

Many practitioners do not understand why they practice, what they seek through it, or what their conduct means. Though they advertise themselves as practitioners, their conduct contradicts their cultivation; the correctness of their methods is then scarcely worth discussing. At the outset, be absolutely clear about why and how you practice. Do not deceive yourselves through pretense, thereby misleading others and adding to your faults. This is what it means first to set the causal ground right.

Filial piety, fraternal respect, loyalty, trustworthiness, and the like are the foundations on which a person stands in the world. It is precisely because people are not filial and respectful to their elders that they must cultivate filial piety and fraternal respect. These two terms were originally used to instruct and reform the degenerate among humankind. If people truly were not animals, filial piety and fraternal respect would have no use; if people truly were free of afflictions such as greed, anger, and ignorance, there would be no need to cultivate through the Buddhadharma. Therefore, before practicing, first ask yourself: Is your mind truly at peace? Have you truly eliminated greed, anger, and ignorance? If not, then you cannot simply dismiss practice as superstition and abandon it.

People in the world become so accustomed to falsehood that it seems natural to them. They do not realize that they may deceive others, but how can they deceive themselves? They may speak falsely, but how can they do so when an event actually arises? They may be false in ordinary times, but how can they be false at death? Thus, although everything else may be feigned, practice cannot be feigned. One originally practices in order to cast off falsity and cultivate truth; if one seeks falsehood again through practice, it is like a sick person seeking counterfeit medicine and thereby seeking death. How foolish! Practitioners must not go astray at this point.

People originally need not practice; it is precisely because their conduct is not in accord that they need to practice. Dharma in itself is neither wrong nor right; that which accords with one's conduct is right. Methods of practice likewise are neither right nor wrong in themselves; that which suits the recipient and accords with the conditions is right. Dharma is like medicine: when a dharma is suited to the recipient, it is called right practice.

Human beings naturally possess an inherent nature; therefore it is said, "What Heaven decrees is called nature." To act in accordance with one's nature is called the Way; therefore it is said, "Following one's nature is called the Way." Yet, having lost

one's original state, one relies on Dharma in order to restore it; therefore it is said, "Cultivating the Way is called teaching." Teaching is the gift of Dharma. Nature is the essence, and the Way is its function. To speak of nature and the Way of Heaven is to speak of the Original Face.

To see the Original Face, one must first remove the karmic obstacles of ignorance and illuminate one's luminous virtue; that is, one restores one's original virtue through practice. But what is the appearance of this original virtue? It is originally pure, originally neither arising nor ceasing, originally capable of all things, with essence and function such as they are. It is originally luminous and nondual with the Buddha; only because of obscurations is it unseen in delusion. It is just like a drunkard: nothing whatsoever is lacking, but he is confused and inverted; once the wine wears off, he recovers. There is truly no difference. Though easy to say, this is very difficult for people to believe. Therefore, faith is the mother of practice.

The Buddha said that during the final forty years of the Dharma-ending age, explaining the nature of the Tathāgata-garbha to people would be the most difficult of all difficulties. Making the water of the great ocean dry by dripping feathers into it would still be easier; this, he said, would be more difficult still. It is not that giving the Dharma is difficult; rather, it is difficult for sentient beings to believe that they themselves are Buddhas.

For the moment, let us not speak of this profound Buddhadharma. Even when one merely says that human life is suffering, people still do not believe it. They plainly suffer and remain confused and inverted; all things are plainly impermanent, yet they delight in them without weariness. How could they be willing to believe? Only after receiving a severe blow do they awaken to the emptiness and suffering of impermanence; such people are already of superior capacity. Still others do not awaken even at death. As it is said, there are eight kinds of people with whom even the Buddha can do nothing.

First are mute people: this also refers to those whose mouths can speak but who do not speak of the true path. Second are deaf people: this also refers to those whose ears can hear but who cannot hear the truth. Third are people in hell: when people are covered by ignorance and commit evil, they are people in hell. Fourth are people among hungry ghosts: this refers to those who seek greedily without satiation and cling miserly to what they possess. Fifth are people among animals: this refers to those who do not understand principle and righteousness.

Sixth are people in borderlands: this refers to those who give rise to wrong views and believe that people are annihilated after death. Seventh are people in the long-life heavens: this also refers to those who eat their fill all day and apply their minds to nothing. Eighth are those who receive the Dharma but do not diligently put it into

practice. Though the Buddha has a compassionate heart, even he can do nothing for these eight kinds of people. People in the world are deluded, taking whatever cannot be seen with their eyes as unreal; this is why they are difficult to persuade and transform.

For example, consider a large piece of wood with a nail driven into it. When the nail is first driven in, half of it remains outside, so it is still easy to know of it. But as it is gradually driven fully into the wood, then over a long time becomes sealed beneath dust and mud, perhaps with glue and lacquer added, the surface becomes smooth and no trace can be seen. Even if one tells them, “There is a nail inside,” they will surely not believe it. This is the first difficulty in believing the Dharma.

If one then tells them that this nail must be pulled out, or else the wood will gradually rot and be damaged, they will surely not believe it. This is the second difficulty in believing the Dharma. Once they do believe, if one tells them that the nail is in a certain place and direction, and that they need only investigate deeply through one gate rather than searching in many places, they will surely not believe it. This is the third difficulty in believing the Dharma.

Once they have deep faith without doubt, remove the obscurations of glue and lacquer, and discover the nail head, one tells them that it certainly can be extracted. Yet they again fear the difficulty and do not believe. This is the fourth difficulty in believing the Dharma. If one tells them that there are various implements and skillful means—drills, pliers, and the like—they rely on themselves and their own strength, place no trust in others, and do not heed the instruction given. This is the fifth difficulty in believing the Dharma.

Once they have begun, one further instructs them in the method of extraction: first tighten it, then loosen it; shake it to make it move; remove the coarse part first, then the subtle part. Yet they again become confused and do not believe. This is the sixth difficulty in believing the Dharma.

When one formally tells them that this nail and the wood were originally unrelated, that it was wrongly driven in, and that this mind is ultimately unlike a nail—not an object possessing form—then, if they simply recognize that originally there is no nail and that the very substance is empty, it will disappear of itself without being pulled out, they find it even more difficult to believe deeply. This truly is the most difficult of all difficulties: the seventh difficulty in believing the Dharma.

Today I tell you directly where the nail is and the principle by which it disappears of itself without being pulled out. Unless one has deep faith, how can one’s faith remain free of resistance? This is why the Heart-of-Heart Dharma is so lofty that few can respond to it. Some practice for one or two thousand meditation sessions and still do not know how to apply it. In truth, they have not heard the essential meaning

or understood the standpoint of this Dharma; instead, they doubt the Dharma and slander the teacher. Alas! What more can be said?

At the beginning of practice, one must first establish the main threads and nuances of practice. Once there is an outline, everything can proceed in an orderly way. Those who become doubtful and retreat midway all do so because the foundation has not been understood; they still act from emotional views. Within the section on right cultivation, faith, vows, and practice are set forth as the three great outlines, while realization belongs to the section on verification. First decide what to believe, then make vows. Once true vows have been made, one cannot fail to put them sincerely into practice. Thus, how to have faith in Dharma, how to make vows regarding Dharma, and how to practice Dharma are each divided into categories and explained one by one. Let us first discuss faith.

Right Faith

The Buddha taught the Dharma for forty-nine years; the Tripiṭaka and the twelve divisions of scripture, with their thousands of words and myriad sayings, seek only to lead people to recognize the Original Face and believe that they are originally awakened rather than deluded. But why are they deluded? One must investigate this until one understands the reason; only then will one be willing to fear suffering and arouse the resolve.

The strength of one's resolve varies according to whether one's investigation is clear or unclear. Some people know absolutely nothing of suffering, and naturally they are wholly unwilling to arouse the resolve. Others have already aroused the resolve but are complacent and lax, half clear and half obscured; therefore, their resolve lacks urgency.

Still others, though earnest in their efforts, progress very slowly and do not gain intimate benefit from practice. This is because their understanding is not thorough: their faith is present but not firm, their vows have been made but are not great, and their practice is maintained but not constant.

The sūtras say that arousing the resolve is the first great difficulty. To arouse the resolve is to arouse the resolve of faith, vows, and practice. Believe that you are originally a Buddha, becoming unaware only because of delusion. Now that you understand why, so long as you are willing to practice and turn back, in this very life you can certainly see your true nature and attain Buddhahood. Resolving never to give up on yourself is called faith.

Having understood this principle and seen the suffering of sinking in saṃsāra and the happiness of the other shore, one naturally wishes to attain Buddhahood in this

very life, without again wasting time through complacency. This is called vow. Having made the vow, one must put it into practice in one's affairs. This is called practice. The foregoing is principle; this is phenomena. When principle and phenomena accord, faith, vows, and practice are united as one.

The state of such unity has degrees of depth, and therefore the realization attained also has degrees of depth. Others cannot measure it; only one oneself knows. Those who know the Original Face and cherish vows to benefit themselves and others should determine a right path for people.

First set the causal ground right, so that they understand cause and effect and understand that, on the causal ground, they originally lack nothing and are not in the slightest different from the Buddha. They fail to attain the result only because they are unwilling to bring this forth. Since we bear this responsibility of exhortation, we must teach them to believe fully, greatly, and earnestly; otherwise, we will mislead others and harm their wisdom-life. The crucial point lies here. How can we not be cautious?

Faith means decisiveness without doubt. If even one or two hesitations remain, it is not faith. What does it mean to have complete faith? It means faith in principle and faith in phenomena, faith that is complete and whole, neither one-sidedly attached nor confused. Those who arouse faith should do as follows:

1. Believe that cause and effect are nondual: where there is a cause, there is a result. The Buddhas who have already attained fruition include Śākyamuni, Amitābha, and Bhaiṣajyaguru. Before all fruition Buddhas became Buddhas, their Buddha-nature on the causal ground was originally complete. They too had once been confused and inverted; they turned from delusion to awakening, from awakening to practice, and from practice to realization. The process they passed through in the past is no different from ours today.

2. Believe that my present fundamental essence is originally innate awakening; the land is precisely mind, and originally it is a Pure Land. Only because of delusion have I become confused and inverted. Yet Buddha-nature is never destroyed and lacks not the slightest thing; on the causal ground, one can completely attain Buddhahood.

For example, two pieces of jade can equally be carved into Buddhas. One has already been carved, while the other has not. The uncarved one must certainly be carved with the same majesty and lifelike perfection as the one already carved; only then does it accord with the right path. If one harbors an inferior and self-deprecating attitude, does not dare to accept that one is the same as the Buddha, and for the present leaves a little unlike the Buddha, intending to carve it only in a

future life; if one mistakes the meaning of accepting one's rightful responsibility for arrogant self-conceit, then one's faith is incomplete.

3. Believe that not only am I thus, but that all classes of sentient beings equally possess Buddha-nature, and that I respect them as I respect the Buddha. Someone may unfortunately be a cat in this life while I am a human being; in another life I may become a cat, while that cat becomes a human. It may practice first, attain accomplishment, and come first to liberate me. How then could I slight or look down upon it?

Therefore, students of Buddhism should consider the three periods of time and must not judge the depth or shallowness of another's practice by the length of time they have practiced in this life. Only with such faith will one avoid falling into arrogance and self-conceit or looking down on later learners; nor will later learners abandon themselves because of this. Therefore it is said, "Mind, Buddha, and sentient beings are without distinction." To understand principle but not penetrate phenomena is not complete faith.

4. Believe that the Dharma taught by the Buddha must not be rigidly grasped without flexibility. There are definitive teachings and nondefinitive teachings. Rely on the meaning, not on the words; do not cling to individual sentences or characters. When the Buddha teaches Dharma, a few words often explain many meanings. Never use emotional views to measure the intent of sages, clinging rigidly to the ancient and making faith dead rather than living. Take, for example, faith in the Land of Ultimate Bliss.

Do not rigidly cling to the West as the Land of Ultimate Bliss and suppose that the East must therefore be a land of suffering. You should know that, after describing all the adornments of the Western Land, the Amitābha Sūtra makes clear that there are Buddha lands throughout the ten directions. It plainly speaks of Pure Lands in the ten directions. Only because sentient beings are too changeable in temperament, vacillating and unable to practice single-mindedly, was the Western Land provisionally introduced. It is further explained that "west" is spoken of only when reckoning from the Sahā world; it is designated as west merely by convention, so that one will not become attached to it. Such flexible faith alone is great faith.

V. Believe that, although one's Buddha-nature is complete, it is covered over by beginningless habitual tendencies. One's own efforts are by no means sufficient to cut them off; one must rely on the Buddha's power and the blessings of the Three Mysteries, so that results may be seen more swiftly. The more earnest one's faith, the firmer one's practice.

VI. Believe that every form of cultivation will inevitably encounter all kinds of māras and hardships. Only by remaining constant over a long time can one achieve

accomplishment. Constancy over time means steadfastness; remaining unchanged means sincerity. Only through steadfast and sincere practice does faith become genuine and earnest.

VII. Believe that the transmission from master to master is itself the transmission of the Buddha. A spiritual friend is nondual with the Buddha. With complete reverence comes complete intimacy, and with complete intimacy comes complete benefit.

VIII. Believe that all dharmas are unsurpassed, for all were taught by the Buddha. It is only because times differ and sentient beings differ in capacity that there is no fixed dharma: teachings change in accordance with capacity. The Buddha has not entered nirvāṇa; the Dharma wheel constantly turns. To slander the Dharma is thus no different from slandering the Buddha.

IX. Believe that every kind of dharma gate has its own stages, and that these differ from one another. Each person's realization also differs. Do not rashly speculate about another's state, thereby forgetting your own practice and attainment.

X. Believe that even in the age of the decline of the Dharma there are people of sharp faculties. Buddhas and bodhisattvas cannot be apprehended through physical form; they cannot be sought through appearances or sounds.

XI. Believe that claiming attainment when one has not attained, or claiming realization when one has not realized, is false. Yet conjecturing by one's own thoughts is also false: to call what one does not know knowledge is equally unreal and equally a great delusion.

XII. Believe that to see one's nature is to become a Buddha. One should directly undertake this here and now: the Buddha does not deceive us, and in this life we can certainly realize the mind and see our true nature. This is sudden awakening and Buddhahood. Yet beginningless accumulated habits have not been eliminated and cannot be wholly swept away in this single life. The manifestation of supernormal powers and Buddhahood are in fact two different matters.

XIII. Non-Buddhist paths may also possess the five supernormal powers, but these differ from Buddhist realization. In Buddhism, one first seeks to open great wisdom; only after realizing the power of exhausting the outflows do the five supernormal powers arise. Then one will not be carried away by circumstances and fall into decline.

XIV. Believe that the cause of human suffering is simply the bondage of mental states and habitual tendencies. Once one knows to cut off habitual tendencies, one enters the proper path of cultivation and cuts off all suffering.

XV. Believe that all karmic obstacles and the cycling through the six realms are merely the activity of a mind of habitual tendencies. Heavy habits produce heavy karma; light habits produce light karma. To remove all karmic obstacles, one should investigate the Mind-Ground Dharma Gate.

XVI. Believe that in this age of decline, the Buddhadharma is waning, each generation worse than the last. If I do not resolve the matter in this very life, when shall I wait? If you encounter a spiritual friend, do not pass empty-handed through a mountain of treasure. Time will not return. You must not retain even the slightest thought of waiting. Only such faith is genuine and earnest.

Great Vows

Faith is the mother of the myriad practices, and vows are foremost among all undertakings. Whether an undertaking is good or evil, before it is done there must first be an aspiration. A vow is itself practice; practice and vows constitute true faith. To practice without a vow cannot be called faith; to make a vow without practicing cannot be called faith and vows. When faith is firm, practice has strength; when vows are great, one's undertakings are vast. As the causal ground is, so too is the ground of fruition. Therefore, one's vows must be vast.

Vast in what regard? It means setting one's aspiration high; this is the great vow. Buddhism is active: one should make the vow to rescue and liberate innumerable sentient beings throughout the great thousandfold worlds, and to eradicate such afflictions as greed, anger, ignorance, doubt, pride, and wrong views. In brief, one must actively turn from wrong to right, from the ordinary to the noble, from seeking one's own liberation to benefiting others, and from afflictions to bodhi.

The Avataṃsaka Sūtra says: "This sūtra is not entrusted to the hands of ordinary sentient beings, nor even to bodhisattvas of the provisional vehicles; it is entrusted to great-resolve ordinary beings," and so forth. Great-resolve ordinary beings are those who, before practicing, first arouse correct and great vows.

The sūtra also says, "Upon first arousing the mind, one immediately becomes a Buddha." Such is the power of vows. One should therefore not yield when righteousness calls. Not yielding does not mean contending greedily with others; it means not placing one's vows behind those of others, and courageously acting when one sees what is right. It also comes from firm and earnest faith, from which vows naturally arise. The sūtra says, "Relying on sentient beings, great compassion arises; relying on great compassion, bodhicitta is aroused; relying on bodhicitta, one attains perfect and complete awakening." Thus great vows give rise to great practice and lead one into the Mahāyāna stage. Therefore, vows must be vast, urgent, true, and not empty. Let us now speak further of vows.

I. Vow to see one's nature and become a Buddha in this very life. Do not hesitate.

II. Vow to enter the proper path of cultivation through right view, to cut off the views of sentient beings, and to open the Buddha's view.

III. Vow not to give rise to inferior wisdom or petty vows, thereby failing the compassionate blessings and expectations of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas.

IV. In order to repay the four debts of gratitude, vow to liberate all sentient beings so that they all become Buddhas. I will skillfully guide them through what I have realized.

V. Vow to rely on the fourteen stages of forbearance in the Benevolent Kings Prajñā Sūtra, cultivate diligently and vigorously, and never retreat from my original vows.

VI. Vow that, when this life of karmic retribution comes to its end, I may be reborn according to conditions in whatever land is appropriate—for example, in the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss, the Eastern Lapis Lazuli Buddha Land, or, after attaining accomplishment, return to the Sahā world to liberate sentient beings.

VII. Vow to arouse the four immeasurable minds, not to slight later learners, not to be arrogant or conceited, and to liberate all equally with compassion.

VIII. Vow to follow Samantabhadra's Ten Great Vows, benefiting oneself and others, and dedicate the merit to the innumerable lands and innumerable sentient beings of the dharma realm.

If one takes the highest standard as one's model, one attains only the middle; how much less if one takes a lower standard as one's model. Therefore, the first requirement in making vows is that they be great. Buddhas and bodhisattvas will certainly not regard you as arrogant because your vows are great. Everyone can become a Yao or a Shun; do not yield when righteousness calls—this is an ancient and clear teaching. Yet empty vows without practice are no different from falsehood. We shall next discuss practice.

Putting into Practice

Practice means actual implementation: proceeding from principle to realization in concrete affairs. This is the most important part of the Section on Right Cultivation. Sentient beings suffer because they meet obstacles everywhere. Not understanding why is obstruction in principle; incurring fault whenever they act is obstruction in phenomena. Genuine faith in Buddhist principle, without doubt, is nonobstruction in principle. Realization through practice is nonobstruction in phenomena. When principle and phenomena interfuse, one enters nonduality: the nonobstruction of

principle and phenomena. When essence and function are one in suchness and one attains great freedom, this is the nonobstruction among phenomena. None of this can be realized without actual practice. Let us therefore discuss practice further.

I. The foremost principle of practice is not deceiving oneself. One must be earnest, urgent, and real. Without actual practice, one cannot attain realization or receive its benefit.

II. The aim of practice is steadfastness. Advance diligently and do not retreat. “Diligent” means single-minded; “advance” means not retreating, so that one benefits day by day.

III. The foremost principle of practice is not being self-righteous, lest views of self arise midway and lead to doubt and retreat.

IV. In practice, one should choose a dharma appropriate to one’s capacity. For someone in the twilight of life, one should seek only simple cultivation and need not pursue profound textual research. Study of the Dharma Characteristics School would merely be labor without benefit. One must make one’s own decision.

V. In practice, one should constantly keep faith and vows in mind, as though someone were behind one urging one onward, so that one does not retreat.

VI. Practice must be flexible; one must not rigidly cling to dead methods. If for a time there is no spiritual friend to determine the matter for me, I should assess my own position and circumstances. What I cultivate should proceed from broad to focused, advancing stage by stage, until I certainly reach an ultimate teaching. It is like entering a school with graduation as one’s goal: one should progress and advance a grade each year. How could remaining in the same grade be considered fidelity to one’s original vow? The vow to study immeasurable dharma gates is intended to prevent the fault of obstinate inflexibility; it does not mean greedily pursuing too much without practical application. Therefore, one should seek out and draw near to a spiritual friend.

VII. In practice, rely on the Dharma, not on persons. If one is swayed by personal feelings, one is placing one’s very life in the hands of personal feelings. If a dharma is appropriate to one’s capacity, one must never doubt the Dharma because of a person and thereby mislead oneself.

VIII. In practice, diligent effort is ascetic cultivation; it does not mean entering deep mountains and wearing poor clothing or eating poor food. All dharmas are remedies. Those who are indulgent and crave comfort must be made to accustom themselves to hardship in order to remove accumulated habits. But if one becomes

rigidly attached to hardship, one will inevitably retreat midway or become false. This too depends upon flexible application.

IX. In practice, do not seek quick results. Haste prevents arrival. One should persevere constantly, as in accumulating wealth: over time it becomes abundant. If one removes the fault of craving quick results, meditative stability will also arise from this.

X. In practice, one must guard in advance against māras and hardships. Without encountering māras, one cannot become a Buddha. If doubt and retreat arise along the way, that is a māra of the mind. One need only persist without slackening—neither hasty nor slow, neither grasping nor rejecting. If a slightly superior state appears, never become self-satisfied; guard against the māra of delight taking advantage of an opening. Therefore, do not seek visions of light or Buddhas, nor seek supernormal powers beforehand.

XI. In practice, one must choose a path. Since methods of cultivation differ from one another, they cannot all be discussed on the same level. Some begin with the Pure Land, some with Chan or Esoteric Buddhism; some cultivate beginning with ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna), some beginning with the sixth and seventh consciousnesses; some rely on their own power, while others rely on the Buddha's power. One should not rigidly adhere to a single method, but apply the teaching according to capacity and choose a suitable path, so as not to enter a wrong road. (Therefore, the responsibility for transmitting a teaching lies with the master.)

XII. In practice, one must trust and take refuge in a spiritual friend. A spiritual friend does not simply mean someone who is learned; what is valuable is one who skillfully knows my capacity, recognizes my illness, gives the correct Dharma, and leads me onto a swift path. For example, another may be an eminent Chan master who thoroughly understands the essentials of the Dharma, while my capacity permits only Pure Land Buddha-remembrance. If he nevertheless guides me by the huatou method, causing me to practice for a long time without response, he is not a spiritual friend. Thus, although a sick person cannot do without relying on a physician, one must also have the capacity to make one's own decision.

XIII. Practice places importance on one's own cultivation. Do not draw in the mental states of others and forcibly compare or reconcile them with your own. This will inevitably produce doubt and confusion, or give rise to jealousy, thereby misleading oneself.

Realization means that one's intrinsic nature accords with the Buddha. Since it belongs to the section on verification of realization, it will be discussed only briefly here. Practitioners must not divide faith, vows, practice, and realization into four separate matters. When faith is great, vows are great; when faith and vows are

united, this is the first step of practice. Practice is the journey toward fulfilling the purpose of faith and vows, gradually bringing realization. Thus, with each step of practice, faith and vows are realized to that extent. When practice is complete, faith and vows are complete, and realization is complete as well.

Practice turns in accordance with faith and vows; realization is perfected in accordance with all three. One is all, and one pervades all. The foolish forcibly divide them into four; the wise certainly know them to be one. Yet when actual realization is reached, even the one cannot be found. Though it cannot be found, one continues thought after thought without weariness or disgust. Thus know that one's effort cannot borrow even the slightest thing falsely from another; above all, do not deceive yourself.

Master Yangming spoke of the unity of knowing and acting, but regrettably did not explain the method. In fact, it is the same principle. The first step is intellectual understanding, in which there is no obstacle at the level of principle. The second step is knowing through practice: with each step one practices, one knows one step, and there is no obstacle in phenomena. The third step is realized knowing, the unity of knowing and acting—what is called the nonobstruction of principle and phenomena, and so forth.

The foregoing is only a general outline. We first draw forth faith and vows as the initial step of practice, to help sustain it. For if one practices without constancy, one cannot attain realization. Although the extent of one's practice and the completeness of one's accomplishment depend on the firmness of one's own faith and the greatness of one's vows, they also rely on the responsibility of the guiding teacher.

To leave sentient beings with great aspirations afraid to arouse them is to mislead them and impair their wisdom-life. We know that in the Dharma-ending age, people of great capacity are few; yet they are not altogether absent. How could one abandon medicine merely because there is no illness? Practitioners are guided by what they first receive; from the outset, they should be urged to arouse a great resolve. If they truly cannot arouse one, nothing can be done about it; nevertheless, the seed has already been planted, and in the end it will become a wholesome root.

The key to studying Buddhism is, first, that one's causal ground be right. To make the causal ground right, one must clearly recognize faith, vows, and practice, and carry them out with both feet firmly on the ground; then one will surely attain realization. Realization is realized by oneself; others cannot know it. Thus, when one practices for oneself, one alone knows it. Do not seek recognition from others, nor need one seek to know and compare oneself with others' states. Comparison falls

into inferior views; it is the discriminating view of sentient beings in the three realms and must never be entertained.

Discerning Main Threads and Nuances

At the beginning of practice, one should first lay out the main threads and nuances. Take faith, vows, and practice as the guiding outline and main thread, and then divide the particulars into subsidiary headings and nuances. The headings of practice are: A. What is to be cultivated? B. What is used to cultivate it? C. What Dharma is used to cultivate it? D. What is the method of cultivation? E. What constitutes ultimate completion in cultivation? F. What are the stages of cultivation? Each of these six divisions, moreover, has its own sequence.

Yet empty talk is useless; what is precious is personal practice. Merely listening to lectures without practicing is only intellectual understanding, not realization in actual experience. A painted cake cannot satisfy hunger and is ultimately of no use. Worldly people fear poverty and greedily seek wealth and possessions, not knowing that to lack the Way is true poverty—the poverty of life after life. Moreover, the wealth, fortune, and blessings of this life are also cultivated over former lives. It is regrettable that this cultivation was not thorough, and so one receives only a small recompense rather than a great reward. Therefore, those who hear the true Dharma and practice it are people of truly great wealth and nobility. It is lamentable that worldly people cannot distinguish the genuine from the false.

A. What Is to Be Cultivated?

Having read the Section on Inspiring Potential, practitioners should naturally have no doubt and know for themselves that what they cultivate is Buddhahood. But what is a Buddha? The answer is that a Buddha is one who is greatly awakened. Sentient beings are inverted and confused because they are not awakened, and thus fall into the fruition of suffering. Therefore, in this life one must cultivate the Buddha at the causal stage and attain accomplishment in this very life. It is like shooting an arrow at a target: this is not blind or misguided cultivation. Thus one should constantly arouse great vows, vowing swiftly to open awakened wisdom, attain Buddhahood in this very life, and liberate sentient beings. Therefore, beyond taking refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Saṅgha, one must take refuge in one's own great bodhicitta. This is the first goal of practice.

B. What Is Used to Cultivate It?

Having heard the Dharma many times, practitioners naturally understand that cultivation means cultivating the mind. Yet if the mind cannot be obtained, what is there to cultivate with? The answer is: precisely use the mind to cultivate the mind,

and cultivate until one realizes that the mind cannot be obtained. Only when one truly realizes that there is no wisdom and no attainment is there genuine attainment. As the sūtra says, to attain anuttarā-samyak-saṃbodhi is to realize the unborn; it is simply to know that nothing can be obtained.

C. What Dharma Is Used to Cultivate It?

The Dharma upon which one relies for practice is a most important question, yet it depends not on the Dharma but on the person. Simply put, one applies whatever medicine is appropriate to a person's illness; there is no fixed Dharma. The saying, "Rely on the Dharma, not on the person," is addressed to teachers. In relation to practitioners, it should be said, "Rely on the person, not on the Dharma." People are not all alike; no single Dharma can be rigidly applied to everyone.

The saying, "Rely on the meaning, not on the words," is addressed to those who rigidly cling to language. They do not understand what distinction there truly is between words and meaning: words express meaning, and this too is a Dharma. But since there is no fixed Dharma, one takes meaning as living and flexible. In truth, all dharmas are empty; who is there to rely upon? The saying, "Rely on wisdom, not on consciousness," emphasizes wisdom; it does not discard consciousness. Apart from consciousness there is no wisdom. Transforming consciousness into wisdom is also a Dharma.

The saying, "Rely on definitive meaning, not on nondefinitive meaning," means that one should seek what is ultimate. But what is ultimate, and what is not? One should employ expedient means with perfect adaptability: neither Dharma nor non-Dharma is precisely definitive meaning; this too means that there is no fixed Dharma. In short, one must be alive and flexible, not rigidly attached. Yet there are also fixed dharmas. Is this not contradictory? There are, however, words that can reconcile it.

Sentient beings suffer and wander through birth and death. They are like blind people entering the mountains: at every movement they stumble and fall. Having no eyes is their fundamental suffering; opening their eyes is the sole gateway to ending suffering. The true intent of studying Buddhism is to dispel delusion and turn toward awakening, to open the Buddha's knowledge and vision. Only by relying on the Dharma gate of prajñā can one ascend to the other shore.

The Heart Sūtra says that bodhisattvas and even the Buddhas of the three periods of time all rely on prajñāpāramitā. This meaning must never be shaken; even if sages were to arise again, they could not alter what I say. This is a fixed Dharma. Yet the blindness of blind people varies in depth, and karmic obstacles vary in heaviness. Accordingly, the methods used to open prajñā differ. Awakening wisdom and becoming a Buddha is the destination; whether one travels by boat or cart to reach it, there is no fixed method of conveyance. As for those who rigidly cling to a single

Dharma and cannot adapt, while considering themselves diligent, one can only leave them to it.

The Mahāyāna and the two vehicles are merely provisional names. Because sentient beings have different causes and conditions, and their faculties are sharp or dull, the teachings are divided into greater and lesser vehicles. In truth, Buddha-nature is equal: there is only the One Vehicle, with no other vehicle. As the sūtra says, “This Dharma is equal, without high or low.” When worldly people mistakenly cling to one Dharma as superior or another as inferior, how are they different from passing judgment on the Buddha?

To distinguish one teacher’s practice as profound and another’s as shallow is likewise no different from examining and grading teachers; it becomes a great delusion. Practitioners should know that every Dharma is unsurpassed and every gate is foremost. The teacher’s responsibility is to offer the Dharma most suited to the recipient’s capacity; otherwise, the teacher misleads others and impairs their wisdom-life. The practitioner’s responsibility is to penetrate deeply into one gate; otherwise, craving many teachings brings no benefit, wastes one’s time, and is most regrettable.

I shall now briefly discuss the various schools as follows:

I. Chan School

When Buddhism came to China, the capacities of the people of Zhendan were extraordinary. The Hīnayāna teachings gradually declined, while the Chan school became the most powerful underlying influence. Regardless of gender, age, social status, literacy, Buddhist or non-Buddhist affiliation, all delighted in reading the Diamond Sūtra and the Heart Sūtra. Even a person guilty of the ten evil deeds could turn around and suddenly awaken, entering the gate.

The character of the Chinese people is unlike that of any other people: commoners disdain princes and nobles; they esteem righteousness and admire chivalry; they do not sharply distinguish between self and others in matters of money; and they can yield when at a disadvantage. Although they fall short of complete refinement and are somewhat lacking in orderly method in worldly affairs, their spirit is bold, free, and expansive, delighting in freedom and ease. Without Chan potential cultivated in former lives, this could never be so.

Moreover, anyone capable of committing great evil possesses sharp faculties. Once such a person turns around, lays down the butcher's knife, and becomes a Buddha on the spot, it shows that this person’s roots from former lives are close to Chan. As for the other Dharma gates, all take return to the source as ultimate. The various

teachings are all called such-and-such a school, with a name placed before “school”; Chan alone is directly called the school, for it is the school of all schools.

Chan is only an empty name; in this sense, every Dharma is Chan. It is only because capacities differ that some enter Chan directly. Such people are of the highest capacity, but they are now exceedingly rare. Moreover, there is a lack of qualified teachers. Chan relies upon one’s own power, and without ten or twenty years one cannot penetrate the three barriers and directly see true reality. In the present age it seems unsuited to most people, and widespread application is difficult. One can only use an indirect route to reach it: enter Chan through the Pure Land, or confirm Chan realization through esoteric practice. By borrowing the Buddha’s power and combining it with one’s own power, accomplishment can be attained more swiftly. This is the intent of our Mind-Seal school: to return to the source through Esoteric Buddhism.

II. Vinaya School

This is the school of precepts and discipline. The Vinaya was established by the Buddha; precepts are observed by practitioners. Confucianism has the three things to revere, the three reflections, and vigilance in solitude; all these are precepts. Daoism establishes registers of merits and demerits; these too are precepts. In Buddhism, the ordinary foundation is the five precepts: abstaining from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, false speech, and intoxicants.

There are also the eight precepts; the bodhisattva precepts comprise ten major precepts and forty-eight minor precepts; bhikṣus have two hundred and fifty precepts, and bhikṣuṇīs five hundred. In truth, there are eighty-four thousand precepts, expressing the prohibition of evil thoughts in every situation and every state of mind. Thus, precepts have the meaning of prohibition, and this itself is cultivation. The visible aspects of precepts are called their marks and observances, such as the three thousand dignified deportments and eighty thousand subtle practices.

The invisible aspects are called the virtue of precepts, the qualities of precepts, the mind of precepts, and the fragrance of precepts. Taking the fragrance of mind as precepts does not depart from the essence of precepts; here, attaining the precepts means realizing the empty mind. The former precepts restrain the ten evil deeds; these restrain the roots of the ten evil deeds. Receiving precepts is merely a ritual formality; what matters is observing them in everyday life. To possess only the marks of precepts without their essence is to violate the fundamental great precepts and is called a great falsehood.

Therefore, one first speaks of precepts, learns precepts, and attains precepts, and only then confers precepts; originally, there is such a sequence. But for beginners,

when explaining precepts, one first teaches abstention from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, and so forth. This remedies the result. Advancing further, one restrains greed, anger, and ignorance. This remedies the cause—that is, the mind. Advancing further still, one restrains the point from which greed, anger, and ignorance arise, realizes the empty mind, and uproots their source. This is truly attaining the precepts: it remedies the cause within the cause, the mind within the mind.

All schools cultivate precepts. The Chan school upholds precepts without deliberate observance, maintaining the highest discipline—something ordinary people cannot even dream of. Esoteric Buddhism employs the empowerment of the three mysteries: the three forms of karmic activity are restrained as though locked. When the hands form mudrās, bodily karma has no way to arise. When the mouth recites mantras, verbal karma has no way to arise. When the mind abides nowhere, mental karma has no way to arise. These precepts arise naturally; they are not empty words. This is the intent of our Mind-Seal school: to cultivate precepts through Esoteric Buddhism.

III. Tiantai School

This school takes the practice of calming and contemplation as its core. It is to contemplate mind with mind; when contemplation reaches the ultimate ground, emptiness, provisional existence, and the middle are all not established. Yet relying on one's own power, it is not easy to reach ultimate completion. Nowadays, the Tiantai school only lectures on calming and contemplation without actual practice. In the Mind-Seal school's practice on the meditation cushion, cultivating and realizing samādhi is the cultivation of calming; off the cushion, constantly maintaining awareness and contemplating emptiness is the activation of contemplation. Yet because it relies on the Buddha's empowering blessings, its realization differs. This is the intent of our Mind-Seal school: to cultivate calming and contemplation through Esoteric Buddhism.

IV. Dharma Characteristics School

This is the Consciousness-Only school. Its purpose is that worldly people cling firmly to appearances; therefore, it has no choice but to discuss appearances in order to dismantle them, ultimately leading to the word emptiness. If people had sharp faculties and directly broke through appearances, there would be no need for such labor. The four-line verse of the Diamond Sūtra could at once sweep everything clean away. Yet people now merely discuss Consciousness-Only without practicing it, thereby losing its original intent.

The division into the schools of nature and characteristics has existed for a long time. The Buddha's intention was to enable everyone to break through appearances, remove afflictions, and take realization of the mind-ground as fundamental. Yet the

opposite has occurred: Buddhist learning has instead been treated as an object of scientific research. If one could truly investigate it and realize emptiness, one could also attain liberation.

Yet some enter the sea to count its sands, thinking they have found a sound approach. They add fetter upon fetter, forcibly dividing hearing, contemplation, and cultivation into three separate stages. Mistakenly believing that in this life one may only hear, that one may not yet contemplate, much less cultivate, they do not realize that what is taught is principle, while verification in actual practice lies in cultivation. To proceed from hearing to contemplation is itself right cultivation; if one does not contemplate, it is equivalent to not having heard. The Heart-of-Heart Dharma does not grasp at appearances. During meditation, one is not permitted to seek visions of light or Buddhas; everything is to be shattered. This is the principle by which our Mind-Seal school uses esoteric practice to break attachment to appearances.

V. The Pure Land School

Pure Land means that the mind is free of defiled attachment. Returning to the original source, it pervades the ten directions; the path of language is cut off, and the activity of mind comes to an end. Defilement cannot be established, nor does purity exist. This is the truly unsurpassable Pure Land. Yet sentient beings are by nature too restless to concentrate on one thing. Therefore, the Buddha specifically taught of a single Western Land in order to strengthen their faith and vows; later generations accordingly established it as a school.

Pure Land and Chan were originally not separate schools. This Dharma universally embraces practitioners of all three capacities. Practitioners of middling and lesser faculties have the Western Pure Land as a destination toward which to gather their minds, while those of superior faculties directly realize the Pure Land as mind-only. They may both plant causes and attain fruition; flower and fruit occur simultaneously, as with the lotus. Therefore, it is also called the Lotus school. Those who practice the fourth mudrā of the Heart-of-Heart Dharma may be reborn in the Western Pure Land. From this, one may know that Pure Land and Esoteric Buddhism are likewise not separate.

In Esoteric Buddhism, the great Amitābha practice is cultivated together with longevity practices; the principle is the same. Yet the Pure Land is exceedingly subtle and wondrous. Those who do not understand the mind-ground do not know its wonder; they either regard it as roundabout and remote or find it insipid. I have often compared it to clear water from a pure spring: only one who can savor its clarity and subtlety has genuine skill. Now that I study esoteric practice, I understand the wondrousness of the Pure Land. This, too, is the principle by which our Mind-Seal school returns to the Pure Land through esoteric practice.

VI. Esoteric Buddhism

It is also called the Mantra school. Mantras are the language of the dharmakāya Tathāgata. Because they reveal the true characteristics of all dharmas and accord with reality as it is, they are also called dhāraṇīs, meaning comprehensive retention: they encompass all dharmas and retain immeasurable meanings. As Master Kōbō said, a single character contains a thousand principles. They are also called "brightness," referring to the radiant wheel of the Tathāgata's wisdom, which manifests the pure and perfect luminosity of its own essence.

When they are recited, they can eliminate the karmic obstacles of ignorance. They are also called "secret," meaning subtle, hidden, and comprehensive, because mantras are expressions inwardly realized by the dharmakāya Tathāgata. Thus Nāgārjuna Bodhisattva compared them to secret passwords in an army. They are also called yoga, meaning the correspondence of the three mysteries of body, speech, and mind. Through the empowerment of the three mysteries, one will certainly attain Buddhahood in this very body—a supreme benefit unknown even to those at equal enlightenment and the tenth bhūmi.

Maṇḍala is a Sanskrit term meaning cyclical, complete, and fully endowed. There are four kinds, each inseparable from the others, representing the perfect adornment of the myriad virtues of the dharmakāya Tathāgata. What are these four?

1. The Great Maṇḍala: the forms and excellent marks of Buddhas and bodhisattvas as depicted in colored paintings. (All sentient beings in the dharma realm.)

2. The Samaya Maṇḍala: the vajras, lotuses, swords, wheels, jewels, and various mudrās held by the deities. (The world of material objects.)

3. The Dharma Maṇḍala: the seed syllables and mantras of each Buddha, bodhisattva, and deity. (Written mantras.)

4. The Karma Maṇḍala: the postures, standing and sitting, joyful and wrathful expressions, dignified bearing, and activities of the deities. (All ritual actions and undertakings are karma.)

Esoteric Buddhism has two divisions: doctrinal forms and practical forms. Doctrinal forms concern the scope and distinctions of the teachings and principles. In summary, there are two: first, the gate of distinguishing Exoteric and Esoteric teachings, which differentiates the superiority and inferiority of the two teachings, assesses the relative depth of the ten stages of abiding, and clarifies the unsurpassable true meaning of Esoteric Buddhism; second, the gate of what is distinctive to one's own school, which concerns the names and meanings of its various subtle principles, limited to this school and beyond the reach of other

schools. Its two great scriptures are the Mahāvairocana Sūtra and the Vajraśekhara Sūtra. Therefore, its teachings and principles are explained through the true meanings of such letters as a and ha; collectively, this is called doctrinal forms. Practical forms, by contrast, concern the rules of cultivation. There are four kinds, called the four secret methods:

1. Pacification: eliminating the offenses, karmic obstacles, and inauspicious matters of oneself and others.

2. Increase: removing suffering, extending life, and gathering supramundane merit and virtue.

3. Subjugation: subduing one's own ignorance and disturbances, and counteracting a nation's enemies.

4. Attraction: receiving others' respect and affection, and giving rise to a great, unobstructed, impartial mind of compassion.

Wherein lies the ultimate difference between Exoteric and Esoteric Buddhism? The exoteric is expedient; the esoteric is true and real. Although the two teachings differ in speed, slowness, superiority, and inferiority, their ultimate destination in attaining unsurpassable bodhi is one. In Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna, Aśvaghoṣa Bodhisattva generally indicates that attaining Buddhahood through Exoteric Buddhism necessarily requires three great asaṃkhyeya kalpas. Mantra Esoteric Buddhism alone specifically expounds the principle of attaining Buddhahood in this very body.

Through the cultivation of a single thought, a single lifetime, and a single moment, one fully possesses immeasurable merit and wisdom, transforming the defiled physical body of an ordinary being into the unsurpassable fruition and virtue of Mahāvairocana's dharmakāya. Therefore, the Great Wonderful Vajra Sūtra says: "Without transforming the dharmakāya, one attains the undefiled fruit." This is the profound principle distinctive to this school.

Moreover, Esoteric Buddhism begins cultivation from ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna), seeking the cause on the basis of the fruition. Such schools as Pure Land, Dharma Characteristics, and Tiantai all begin cultivation from the sixth consciousness, seeking the fruition on the basis of the cause; therefore, they differ in speed. Esoteric Buddhism relies upon the empowering strength of Vairocana's majestic virtue to realize immeasurable samayas in an instant. Through inconceivable methods, it can transform the innate seeds of attachment to self in practitioners and give rise to vajra seeds.

This is the fundamental point in which it differs from other schools. How could those who have not cultivated Esoteric Buddhism measure the Buddha's intent by the views and perceptions of ordinary beings? Esoteric Buddhism includes East Asian Esoteric Buddhism and Tibetan Esoteric Buddhism.

During the Tang dynasty, Japanese students came to study in China and honored Master Kōbō as their patriarch. Tibetan Esoteric Buddhism is the esoteric tradition transmitted in Tibet. First there was the Red school; later Tsongkhapa appeared and separately established the Yellow school. Their methods are largely similar, with minor differences. The Yellow school proceeds step by step according to a fixed sequence and tends more toward form-based practice, whereas the Red school also cultivates formless Esoteric Buddhism.

In former times, Bodhidharma, the First Patriarch, transmitted the Chan school in the Eastern Land and the formless esoteric vehicle in Tibet. Living Buddha Nona explained this in great detail. Among the recently transmitted teachings of the Great Seal, the essential gateway of the Mahāyāna path, is an essential gateway for sudden entry into true wisdom; it speaks extensively of the principle of dharmakāya meditation. But in the beginning, the Red school transmitted its teachings to unsuitable persons, and thus the harmful tendency toward biased emptiness became widespread; some even committed evil deeds. This did not suit the capacities of the Tibetan people, and this was why Tsongkhapa emerged.

East Asian and Tibetan Esoteric Buddhism both cultivate the return of the myriad dharmas to the One, using the one characteristic to eliminate all characteristics. Yet they have not reached the principle of asking where the One returns. Only the Chan school directly points to the mind-ground and does not proceed through stages. Among recent transmissions, only the Dharma transmitted by Living Buddha Nona has somewhat incorporated Chan, with which it accords. He repeatedly praised the Heart-of-Heart Dharma as the unsurpassable esoteric vehicle.

As for the founding patriarch of the Mind-Seal school, Master Dayu was truly its patriarch. He first left home on Mount Lu and cultivated Pure Land practice. Later, while paying homage to the sūtras, he became gravely ill and nearly died; he later encountered bandits and again nearly died. Thereafter, in samādhi, he saw the Venerable Samantabhadra, who conferred empowerment upon him and transmitted the great Heart-of-Heart Dharma, together with various secret mudrās and mantras. After seven years of arduous cultivation, he attained realization, descended the mountain, and opened the Mind-Seal Dharma gate, becoming the patriarch of the Mind-Seal school.

This Dharma penetrates all schools, verifies the mind-ground, and opens a new field beyond Esoteric Buddhism. It must not be transmitted recklessly: it is bestowed

when the recipient's capacities accord. It cannot be measured by reason; only actual verification reveals it. It neither grasps at appearances nor rejects all appearances. Taking Mind-Seal as the core principle, prajñā as the function, dhāraṇī as the method, and the Pure Land as its ultimate destination, its practice differs greatly from those of other schools, and the speed of its realization also differs from other methods. Some are taught Chan meditation; others receive different esoteric practices, through which they are gradually introduced as preliminary expedient means. What has been said above concerning the various schools is only a general outline.

If practitioners wish to ask which Dharma they should cultivate, this may first be discussed. Before this association transmits a Dharma, it first examines the person's capacities, circumstances, available time, physical strength, and so forth, and only then imparts the Dharma, so as to avoid the fault of doubt and retreat midway. As for the methods of practice, they should be explained as follows.

D. Methods of Practice

We have now entered the Section on Right Cultivation; this is of the utmost importance!

I. Cultivating Merit and Wisdom Together

The Buddhadharma fundamentally aims to save the world, teaching people to liberate themselves from all suffering and adversity; to eliminate such evils as deceit, cruelty, harming others, and benefiting neither oneself nor others; to enable people to be peaceful and at ease; not to give rise to needless fears; not to plant needless evil causes; and not to undergo needless painful results. Then the world will naturally be at peace. "Great" means universal and extensive. If everyone held an attitude of equality, how could they create such karma as killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, and false speech?

Yet all the various sufferings and afflictions before our eyes, whether one has money or not, arise from scant blessings. Those who have money do not use it to create blessings, but allow it to be exhausted. They do not plant fields of blessings for the future, and become impoverished in their own lifetimes, or their children and grandchildren squander everything. Those without money do not understand the causes of their poverty: it is all due to miserliness in past lives. The more karma one creates, the more severe one's suffering becomes. The wise worry about causes, not results; the noble worry about the Way, not poverty.

Understand that the sufferings of this life are like a shortage of grain this year: the cause is that too little was planted last year. If one cultivates and sows seeds today, one will surely harvest next year. One must never borrow next year's grain in

advance, nor may one say that there will be no next year. Those who do so are people of scant blessings.

Because of the conditions of scant blessings, it is difficult to encounter a good spiritual teacher. If one has merit and virtue, various causes and conditions will naturally lead one into Buddhism. Thus, whether one has blessings does not depend on being poor or wealthy. A poor person willing to cultivate has the mark of truly great wealth and nobility.

I have often said that if a person seeks wealth, this is the mark of poverty; if one were not poor, why would one seek it? If a person seeks rank, this is the mark of lowliness; if one were not lowly, why would one seek it? The root lies in one's own perception of oneself as poor and lowly. Appearances are created by the mind; causes necessarily bear results. This is not harsh criticism. In general, for people given to excessive worry, adverse conditions gradually become complete, and before long they will certainly encounter setbacks or reversals. Worry necessarily brings poverty, and vexation necessarily brings illness; these are inherently connected.

Moreover, people of scant blessings must inevitably be busy with clothing, food, and shelter, and have no leisure for cultivation. They are the most pitiable of people. Therefore, when encountering a person of scant blessings, one should first enable that person to cultivate blessings and remove the obstacles to entering the Way. Those who have blessings should be enabled to cultivate wisdom while also nurturing their blessings. This is called cultivating merit and wisdom together; it is not something that a person without blessings can undertake.

The method of cultivating blessings emphasizes giving. Of the six pāramitās, giving is first and is called planting a field of blessings. Those who have money and are generous need not necessarily be urged to give. But those who are miserly or impoverished should be encouraged to give more: first, to teach them generosity and eliminate their habitual greed; second, to plant various wholesome roots and support their causes and conditions. This is not comparable to worldly ways of emphasizing personal favors and weighing amounts according to wealth or poverty.

With the inferior views of ordinary beings, people seek the Buddha solely to seek blessings, believing that blessings are something the Buddha can bestow and that they can obtain simply by asking. If they do not obtain them, doubt and slander arise. Others seek the Buddha for wisdom, believing that wisdom too is something the Buddha can bestow and that they can obtain simply by asking. If they do not obtain it, they likewise give rise to doubt and slander. In recent times, there are many who seek the Way but few who practice it; many who cultivate the Way but few who realize it. All of this is due to this fault.

Practitioners should know that merit and wisdom must be cultivated together. The Buddha merely points out the Dharma gate, teaching you to plant wholesome causes first, so that you may later obtain the rewards of merit. If you seek wealth and honor, you should eliminate miserliness and first cultivate generosity. If you seek to open wisdom, you should draw near to good spiritual friends, and you must likewise first cultivate generosity. To cultivate merit is itself true wisdom. Whoever truly possesses wisdom will surely be willing to eliminate greed and anger in order to create merit. Thus, cultivating merit is precisely cultivating wisdom. Foolish people forcibly divide the two; this too is a most biased attachment.

II. Samādhi and Wisdom Mutually Support One Another

When worldly people enter the Way, they too know to seek samādhi. “Knowing where to stop, one can then become settled” is the samādhi spoken of by the Confucians and adopted by the Daoists. Yet this is merely stillness and cannot be called samādhi. Samādhi means being equally settled in activity and stillness; it means remaining undeluded when encountering circumstances; it means engaging with everything while remaining unstained by everything, without attachment or abiding.

Samādhi and wisdom are not two. They are provisionally named as two: when there is samādhi, wisdom is present within samādhi; when there is wisdom, samādhi is present within wisdom. They mutually support one another, like fire and its light. Though their names may be two, they cannot be separated. Worldly people seek samādhi by forcibly suppressing thoughts so that none arise, and by cutting off seeing and hearing; they take this to be samādhi. How are they any different from wood or stone? This is to die in empty nothingness and fall into annihilationism. When activity returns, they will inevitably become deranged and turn demonic.

Moreover, worldly people mistakenly cling to samādhi and wisdom as two separate matters, and thus distinguish between having much samādhi and little wisdom. They do not know that this is not the ultimate teaching. Samādhi and wisdom are inherently equal, with no distinction of greater or lesser. It is only because worldly people have habitual tendencies—some favor activity and some favor stillness—that those who favor activity are said to have more wisdom, while those who favor stillness are said to have more samādhi. In truth, both are still far from samādhi and wisdom. Samādhi and wisdom should function from their common essence, mutually supporting and interpenetrating each other. Right view free from delusion is called samādhi. Samādhi means right concentration. The various names for meditative concentration are now explained below.

(1) Samādhi: this is the general name for all forms of concentration. It encompasses all dharmas, holds immeasurable meanings, and gathers in the mind in all

meditative concentrations.

(2) Śamatha: this means cessation, regulation, and extinguishing. It can regulate the unwholesome dharmas of the faculties, so that there is no defiled attachment. It also means tranquility and is called the characteristic of samādhi.

(3) Samāpatti, also called samā: it means cancellation, or expedient cessation in accordance with conditions. It is rendered here as “equal attainment,” meaning that within equanimous maintenance one can attain a superior stage: maintaining evenly, free from both torpor and restlessness, one reaches supreme samādhi and the stage of the sages.

(4) Dhyāna: this is rendered as “quiet contemplation,” with quiescent cessation as its meaning. Samādhi and wisdom interpenetrate; thus, there is contemplation within stillness. It is therefore not an indeterminate state. It differs from the Tiantai threefold contemplation, for that system investigates the natures and characteristics of all dharmas and develops understanding through their meanings. Here, practice is more often based on mind: no object of contemplation is established; the two extremes are stilled, and discrimination ceases.

(5) Vipaśyanā: this is rendered as contemplation. It means illuminating principle with wisdom and is therefore called right view; it is also called clear seeing. When contemplative practice is accomplished, object and wisdom accord with one another, and one clearly sees one’s nature without obscuration.

(6) Upekṣā: cessation and contemplation are equal. Cessation is samādhi, and contemplation is wisdom. It also means neither contending nor proceeding, and may be called relinquishment: one does not contend over annihilationism or eternalism, nor proceed within emptiness or existence, because one relinquishes the two extremes.

(7) Madhyama: this means not clinging to the Middle Way. The Middle Way too is only a provisional designation and should not be established.

(8) Vitarka and vicāra: these are rendered as initial examination and sustained investigation, and are also called awareness and contemplation. The stirring of the coarse mind is called awareness; the discrimination of the subtle mind is called contemplation.

(9) Samādhi: this is rendered as harmonizing, upright concentration; it is also called right thought, right concentration, and right reception. It means that when one enters this samādhi, one does not receive any dharmas.

In sum, samādhi and wisdom mutually support one another and all return to the gate of the syllable A. A signifies that all dharmas are originally unborn. Arising is

dependent arising and is originally unobtainable. Upon realizing and entering the ocean of Vairocana's nature, this single syllable alone is taken as the true mantra, through which one freely establishes the great maṇḍala. Ordinary beings lack wisdom and cannot clearly contemplate the source of all dharmas; they falsely suppose that there is arising. Thus, the profound secret treasury is concealed by sentient beings themselves; only through realization can it be known.

All true mantras do not depart from the fifty letters; they are all the general characteristics of the Buddhadharma. The syllable A stands first and encompasses them all. Each of these fifty letters is a gate to liberation. Liberation means attaining the forbearance of the unborn dharmas through samādhi and wisdom. If worldly people understood this meaning, realized the unborn, and gave rise to no appearances, what evil could they commit? What offense could they commit? And what precepts would there then be to uphold? Such precepts are implicit within samādhi and wisdom and cannot be fathomed by foolish people, who rashly conclude that practitioners of Esoteric Buddhism and Chan observe no precepts. Yet the Dharma gate of observing precepts must also be explained, for the benefit of beginners.

III. Integrating the Essence and Characteristics of the Precepts

Precepts have two aspects: their essence and their characteristics. The characteristics concern deportment; how could they be discarded? Yet without their essence, they verge on falseness. The essence of the precepts belongs to mind. Although mind is without characteristics, if one still retains an idea of "without characteristics," this remains a characteristic and therefore still belongs to the realm of characteristics. One must reach pure emptiness and selflessness, with no agent of action, no action performed, no one who observes precepts, and no precepts observed. Only then does one truly and completely possess the great precepts.

Those of inferior wisdom do not understand this. Some foolish people mistakenly take it to mean breaking the precepts and run about shouting their objections. Others mistakenly believe that the Chan school advocates freedom and indulgence, and that there is originally no need to uphold precepts; thus they become unrestrained and dissipated. One side wants to overthrow them, and the other wants to preserve them, but in truth neither understands the meaning of precepts. This is why matters come to such a state.

Precepts have the mind of restraint, and the Dharma provides standards for it; hence they are called discipline. Sentient beings are inverted, and their three karmas are impure. For those of lesser capacity, one first enables them to understand the characteristics of the precepts. Killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct have manifest forms that can be seen, and they can readily understand them. Therefore,

one first teaches the five precepts and also clarifies the law of cause and effect to confirm them, thereby restraining their conduct. This is restraint with respect to results.

For those of higher capacity, one teaches the essence of the precepts. Killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct are results; where is their cause? One then knows that greed, anger, and ignorance are their roots. If the karma of intention is pure, evil karma naturally ceases. This is to restrain the mind: when the mind is pure, the Buddha-land is pure. This is restraint with respect to causes. For those of the highest vehicle, one teaches that essence and characteristics are nondual, and that both are empty through conditions. Mind cannot be obtained; on what could evil depend in order to arise? When subject and object are both forgotten, this is called the mutual support of samādhi and wisdom.

If there is defiled attachment, it is called breaking the precepts. Nothing is stricter than this in the precepts and discipline. Therefore, the precepts of non-precept are called the great precepts. After the Buddha entered parinirvāṇa, he instructed sentient beings to take the precepts as their teacher. This means relying on one's own mind and using this Dharma to regulate it. If one merely keeps the external forms and deportment without seeking within one's mind, one is instead led into falseness. How could that be right? There are many worldly people who do evil and act falsely; this is precisely their ailment. When practitioners speak of precepts, are they not afraid of breaking them? I shall therefore tell them how frightening the karmic consequences of breaking precepts are.

(1) Those who commit killing, stealing, or sexual misconduct create their own karma and receive its results themselves. If they are willing to undergo retribution, let them boldly do as they please. For anyone who does not understand the principle of cause and effect through the three periods of time, first explain to them the cause and effect of the three periods of time and the harm of breaking precepts. Once they truly and deeply believe, they will naturally cease creating evil karma. But this applies to those who have not yet understood Buddhist principles.

(2) As for lay practitioners who already understand Buddhist principles, how could they fail to know the precepts and discipline? Yet they still do not understand what is called breaking precepts, because their mind-ground is not yet clear. If breaking precepts meant only committing killing, stealing, or sexual misconduct, then the Buddha's precepts would be only one part, and all the rest could be abandoned. Therefore, know that the precepts of mind are the precepts. For now, let us not discuss such profound meanings as mind being empty and free of defilement.

It is enough to speak simply: not giving rise to evil thoughts is observing the precepts. But what are evil thoughts? One should tell them that greed, anger, and

ignorance are as culpable as killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct. If one's own mind is impure and constantly gives rise to vexation and disturbance, blaming Heaven and resenting others, this is a grave breach of precepts, for where there is a cause there must be a subsequent result. Therefore, hating someone for breaking precepts is itself breaking precepts. If one does not understand this principle, one is no different from someone who denies cause and effect, which is even more frightening.

Bodhisattvas do not see the faults of others. This has two meanings. First, "not seeing" means not blaming them and not giving rise to a view of self in determining their right and wrong. Second, "not seeing" means not abiding in attachment and not taking their faults to heart. The former is compassion for their transgressions; the latter is wisdom that does not grasp at appearances. This is what is called the dual operation of wisdom and compassion. Bodhisattvas never depart from the Mahāyāna vow: generosity restrains greed, great compassion restrains anger, and prajñā restrains ignorance. Thus, cultivating every dharma does not depart from the Buddhadharma or from the precepts. Yet inwardly and outwardly one must be alike, and essence and characteristics must be integrated. Only then can one be said to have attained the precepts; otherwise, one cannot escape delusion.

IV. Integrating Samādhi, Wisdom, and Emptiness

All Dharma gates of the pāramitās—whether six, ten, or even eighty-four thousand—take prajñā as their chief. The three baskets and twelve divisions of the teachings never ultimately depart from this Dharma gate. Through wisdom, one realizes emptiness and naturally becomes settled; samādhi gives rise to wisdom, and wisdom in turn leads to realization of emptiness. Together, they are like a turning wheel, whose wondrous functioning is inexhaustible. Cultivating these three has no before or after; they are activated simultaneously. This is the most essential point and must receive special attention.

You have associated with one another for a year. Speaking impartially, would those who have realized through practice hope that others knew it? Moreover, each knows for themselves whether something is cold or warm; how could others know? Yet, in order to avoid misleading people in the future, it is necessary to understand the reason clearly. The benefits you have received truly come from the purity of your faith and your earnest effort in practice. You have not failed the many years of ascetic practice, the doubts and slanders endured, and the painstaking efforts to spread the Dharma undertaken by my revered teacher, Master Dayu.

Moreover, all of you have passed through doubt and slander. Later, your spirit of inquiry became strong: unwilling to take what you heard as though it were what you had seen, you yourselves practiced six or nine sessions every day, trained in

contemplation, and practiced according to the Dharma. You then turned toward Right Faith. Unless you had truly received real benefit, how could you have come to such deep and unwavering faith?

You should know that among fellow practitioners, some have practiced three or four thousand sessions and still do not understand the reason, nor can they apply the practice. Where exactly does the cause lie? Do you know? You have investigated together for only a year, yet your own sense of what you have gained differs. Wherein lies the cause? What you have gained lies in practice within non-practice. What is practice within non-practice? It means that even when not formally practicing, one is still practicing.

You have deeply grasped the subtlety of the practice. You do not cultivate only when seated in the Buddha hall; rather, you are willing everywhere to train in contemplation and realize emptiness, applying prajñā even in places of recreation. You train until you gather the mind into oneness; this is precisely putting it into function. This is not true of this practice alone. Whether one cultivates Pure Land or Chan, every Dharma should be practiced in this way and can be practiced in this way. It is not that Dharma methods themselves are divided into sudden and gradual; the fault lies in practitioners' failure to understand how to apply them.

How could cultivation be limited to two hours? Throughout the six periods of day and night, constantly abide in the ocean of vows; remain vigilant at every moment, contemplate the mind in accordance with circumstances—this is called right cultivation. What is called practice on the meditation cushion is only cultivation of the essence. Entering śamatha is called cessation; through cessation one attains samādhi, and ignorance suddenly vanishes. Once the root is attained, do not worry about the branches. This is the marvelous secret of capturing the king before capturing the bandits.

What is called practice off the meditation cushion is simply applying it everywhere. Dhyāna is quiet contemplation and is called contemplation. Contemplation gives rise to wisdom; wisdom's contemplation realizes emptiness; and application removes habitual tendencies. The depth of the work varies, but there is no fixed Dharma and no fixed time. With much practice, one becomes proficient. These are the two great outlines, advancing together like two wheels; never neglect either one. It is also like testing a blade: the former is sharpening, and this is using it. Without using it, one does not know whether it is sharp or dull; without sharpening it, it cannot become keen. In brief, one must contemplate the mind without interruption. In walking, standing, sitting, and lying down, everywhere is practice, and everywhere wondrous functioning arises.

Ordinary people’s cultivation necessarily proceeds through stages: first, practicing in order to seek awakening; second, practicing correctly after awakening. Practice undertaken to seek awakening is fundamentally the opening through ignorance and turning onto the right path. This depends on a good spiritual teacher’s guidance into awakening, together with one’s own strenuous inquiry and investigation. There will surely come a day of sudden breakthrough. The word hu is a term used in Chan circles, referring to the vast and open state of mind at the time of awakening.

Proper cultivation after awakening means, after prajñā has opened, clearing away habitual tendencies and entering the time of true practice. This practice consists simply in constantly maintaining awareness and contemplating emptiness. The books of Chan koans and recorded sayings are to be used after one has awakened, as aids for practicing their application; they are not to be read before awakening in the hope of attaining awakening. Before awakening, reading them is useless and instead gives rise to views of self and increases various ailments. As for the saying that there is no cultivation, attainment, or realization, it does not mean abandoning cultivation, attainment, and realization. It means neither grasping nor abiding, forgetting both subject and object, and further recognizing that all things arise from conditions and have no substantial entity.

What are called cultivation, attainment, and realization are also provisional names established when conditions converge. Maitreya Bodhisattva's explanation of the Diamond Prajñā Sūtra says: “Neither conditioned nor apart from it is the nirvāṇa of all Tathāgatas.” This means neither grasping conditioned dharmas nor departing from conditioned dharmas. Neither grasping nor rejecting is the realm of the Tathāgata's nirvāṇa. Thus, existence and nonexistence are nondual: though one engages with phenomena, the mind remains unstained. This is called emptiness.

Yet some people are attached one-sidedly to emptiness. They think, “All sentient beings possess Buddha-nature, so why need I cultivate further? And why must I liberate others?” They do not understand that saying sentient beings are Buddha in their fundamental essence is like saying that a drunkard is originally not drunk. Yet because of wine, he is deluded and is now acting perversely; he cannot be left unaided. If one is biased toward emptiness, that emptiness is equivalent to attachment to existence. In the end, one has never truly realized emptiness.

Worldly people do not understand the meaning of emptiness and take annihilation and nonexistence to be emptiness. Sages understand emptiness as the fact that all things lack self-nature and substantial entity; nothing can be obtained. Though things exist, they do not truly exist, so there is nothing to grasp as real. The cause of sentient beings' suffering lies in taking the false for the true and clinging to a self. Bound by form and bound by mind, they are never liberated and ultimately suffer.

The sages pity them and therefore teach the emptiness of circumstances, mind, and all dharmas. To empty the mind is to empty circumstances; not clinging is realization of emptiness. Only upon realizing emptiness does one understand no-self, and no-self is the cessation of suffering. Therefore, at the causal stage one must first open the Buddha's knowledge and vision; the Buddha's knowledge and vision is prajñā. With prajñā, one breaks through emptiness: emptiness means non-clinging, and even non-clinging is not clung to. This is pure emptiness and no-self; neither suffering nor pleasure has any basis.

Worldly people fear falling into emptiness. This fear of falling means that they have not realized emptiness. A group of overly cautious people all say that they fear falling into emptiness; this is because they do not understand its meaning. Still others misunderstand emptiness and then claim that there is no cause and effect, committing all kinds of evil. Because they are fundamentally unenlightened, “wandering aimlessly and without restraint, they encounter calamity and misfortune”—this is precisely what the saying means.

Practitioners must avoid speaking of prajñā to confused people, lest they create many offenses of doubt and slander. Yet one must first use tentative means to awaken their potential, assess whether they are ready to hear this teaching, and only then impart it. Moreover, to speak rashly of prajñā is a grave offense. The fault, however, is not in speaking, but in speaking rashly.

People today discard prajñā altogether; this is abandoning food for fear of choking—truly delusion upon delusion. Therefore, to speak to those who should not be spoken to is delusion; not to speak to those who can be spoken to is also delusion. To speak to others when one cannot speak properly oneself is delusion; not to speak to others when one can speak properly oneself is likewise delusion. Thus, one must understand the meaning comprehensively. One must never abandon the medicine on this account, nor suspect the illness because of the medicine. Its living application lies in the person; what fault is there in the medicine? I shall now explain for you the meanings of the eighteen emptinesses.

Emptiness does not mean the emptiness of air, space, or a void, for such emptiness still has an appearance. An empty bowl, for example, possesses the appearance of emptiness; when it is filled with food, that appearance disappears. Therefore, emptiness does not mean the absence of seeing, hearing, feeling, and knowing.

This emptiness means that, through the power of prajñā, one realizes that every affair and every object lacks self-nature and substantial entity, and exists only provisionally through the convergence of causes and conditions. This is what is called emptiness. The Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom says: “Śāriputra, if a bodhisattva wishes to abide in inner emptiness, outer emptiness, inner-and-outer

emptiness, emptiness of emptiness, great emptiness, emptiness of ultimate meaning, conditioned emptiness, unconditioned emptiness, ultimate emptiness, beginningless emptiness, dispersal emptiness, emptiness of nature, emptiness of inherent characteristics, emptiness of all dharmas, unobtainable emptiness, emptiness of no dharma, emptiness of existing dharmas, and emptiness of both no dharmas and existing dharmas, that bodhisattva should study prajñāpāramitā." The meanings of these eighteen emptinesses are briefly explained below:

(1) Inner emptiness: "Inner" refers to the six sense faculties—eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. The eye is empty because it lacks self and what belongs to self, and so forth.

(2) Outer emptiness: "Outer" refers to the six sense objects—forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tactile objects, and dharmas. Form is empty because it lacks self and what belongs to self, and so forth.

(3) Inner-and-outer emptiness: within the combined twelve sense bases, there is no self and nothing belonging to self, and so forth.

(4) Emptiness of emptiness: this breaks through the preceding three emptinesses; that is, the three emptinesses are themselves empty.

(5) Great emptiness: this is the emptiness of the ten directions. Since the ten directions are boundless, it is called great. From the standpoint of the western direction, the west is boundless; every place has a west, and thus it is called empty.

(6) Emptiness of ultimate meaning: ultimate meaning refers to the true characteristic of all dharmas. What cannot be destroyed or ruined is called the true characteristic. Yet this true characteristic is also empty. Why? Because it is empty, there is nothing to take hold of or cling to. If the true characteristic of all dharmas existed as an entity, it would be something one could take hold of and cling to. But the true characteristic is precisely non-characteristic, and is not to be grasped or clung to.

(7) Conditioned emptiness: conditioned dharmas arise from the coming together of causes and conditions, such as the five aggregates, twelve sense bases, and eighteen realms; therefore, they are empty.

(8) Unconditioned emptiness: unconditioned dharmas are said to be without causes and conditions, neither arising nor ceasing, like empty space. An objection may be raised: conditioned dharmas may be empty because they lack self-nature, but how can unconditioned dharmas also be empty? The answer is that without conditioned dharmas, there would be no unconditioned dharmas. The true characteristic of conditioned dharmas is itself the unconditioned. Because the conditioned is empty, the unconditioned is also empty; the two are not different.

(9) Ultimate emptiness: ultimate emptiness demolishes all dharmas, leaving nothing remaining; hence it is called ultimate emptiness. This ultimate emptiness is itself empty, without the opposition of void and real. If anything remained, it could not be called ultimate emptiness.

(10) Beginningless emptiness: because all dharmas have no initial point, sentient beings have no beginning. Moreover, covered by ignorance and bound by attachment, they come and go in birth and death, and their beginning cannot be found. Breaking through this beginningless dharma is called beginningless emptiness.

(11) Dispersal emptiness: dispersal means the characteristic of separation. Dharmas exist through combination. For example, a cart is formed from spokes, rims, shafts, and hubs; when these are assembled, there is a cart, but when they are scattered apart, the name “cart” is lost. A person is called a person because of the combination of the five aggregates and four great elements; when they are separated, no person can be found.

(12) Emptiness of nature: the nature of all dharmas is always empty. They continue provisionally and therefore seem not to be empty. For example, water is naturally cold, but when fire is applied it becomes hot; when the fire ceases for a long time, the water returns to coldness. As a sūtra says: “The eye is empty of self and what belongs to self.” Why? Because its nature is inherently so.

(13) Emptiness of inherent characteristics: all dharmas have two kinds of characteristics: general characteristics and particular characteristics. Both are empty; hence this is called emptiness of inherent characteristics. General characteristics include, for example, the fact that all things are impermanent. Particular characteristics mean that, although all dharmas are impermanent, each has its own distinct characteristic: earth has the characteristic of solidity, fire the characteristic of heat, and so forth.

(14) Emptiness of all dharmas: all dharmas include inner and outer, beautiful and ugly. They arise with the mind and are empty because they have no intrinsic substance.

(15) Unobtainable emptiness: all dharmas, including nirvāṇa without remainder, are unobtainable and therefore empty.

(16) Emptiness of no dharma: “No dharma” means that a dharma has already ceased. What has already ceased is absent; this is called emptiness of no dharma.

(17) Emptiness of existing dharmas: “Existing dharmas” are dharmas that exist through the coming together of causes and conditions. Since they lack intrinsic

nature, this is called emptiness of existing dharmas.

(18) Emptiness of both no dharmas and existing dharmas: the characteristics of both no dharmas and existing dharmas are unobtainable. This is called emptiness of both no dharmas and existing dharmas.

These are the eighteen emptinesses. All dharmas are empty because they lack self. “Self” means sovereign mastery. When dharmas are apart from conditions, they cannot arise by themselves; therefore, they naturally have no sovereign mastery. Without sovereign mastery, there is no self.

Since things arise from the coming together of causes and conditions, they are empty. Since neither beginning nor end can be obtained, they are empty. Since they are merely manifestations of mind, they are empty. Know that the myriad dharmas all manifest from mind and entirely lack intrinsic substance; therefore, they are called empty. If one wishes to abide in this gate of the eighteen emptinesses, one should study prajñā. Practitioners must not, because I speak of emptiness, fall into emptiness; nor must they fear falling into emptiness because I speak of it. Falling into emptiness and fearing emptiness are both attachments to existence and remain the inverted birth and death of delusion. Know that not a single dharma has ever gone beyond the numinous terrace of one's wisdom-nature. The wise will understand this for themselves; but without relying on prajñā, one is like a person entering darkness and sees nothing.

To empty all circumstances is called severing the bondage of form; to empty all mind is called severing the bondage of mind. When these two bondages of form and mind are severed, one will no longer regress. Yet residual habits remain and must still be cultivated away. When even the residual habits connected with the bondages of form and mind are completely removed, this is ultimate attainment. Then samādhi and wisdom are unified and function together; their wonder is like an inexhaustible treasury.

V. Undertaking the Great Resolve

If one aims for the highest, one attains only the middle; therefore, arousing a great resolve is the first essential gateway to entering the Way. If one's aspiration is great, one's accomplishment will necessarily be great, for cause and effect are accomplished simultaneously. Only one who can undertake this meaning is a seed of the Tathāgata, born into the family of the Tathāgata. This is also called the power of one's fundamental vow.

How fortunate we are to be born in this present age: not only do we hear the true Dharma, but we also receive and uphold it. Relying above on the Buddha's compassion, we are shown an inexhaustible treasury. It is like a poor son

encountering one with heavenly sight, who points out treasure buried in the ground, and who thereby suddenly becomes rich. If one is overly modest and thinks oneself not destined for wealth, one will remain poor for life. To undertake is to shoulder a burden: to shoulder the Tathāgata's unsurpassed bodhi is the Buddha's entrustment. Why, then, must one be timid and self-effacing, imagining that yielding one's virtue is admirable? Thus, arousing a great resolve is the first critical pass in practice.

VI. One Must Truly Leave Home

The meaning of leaving home is subtle. The Buddha established shaving the head and wearing dyed robes as leaving home in order that people might depart from the afflictions of household and worldly life. A person's ties with family are the deepest and longest-lasting, and emotional attachment binds them most strongly. Without severing these bonds of attachment, there is no way to enter the Way. Thus, one longs for the quiet of mountains and forests, delights in being far from worldly toil, and leaves it behind. The Buddha had to teach in this way for those of lesser capacities. Yet there are also lay practitioners who outwardly have spouses and property, dwell daily amid afflictions, and yet remain unstained, their minds apart from worldly toil. These are those who have truly left home.

Therefore, lay practitioners should leave home while remaining at home: though the body remains in the household, the mind has already departed. Bhikṣus, however, should leave home in both senses: body and mind should both leave home, forever severing afflictions. This is what the Buddha taught for those of superior capacities. As for bodhisattvas who have realized the mind, the great matter is already concluded: they have entered the stage beyond learning, and the mind neither departs nor enters; nor are there any afflictions.

They manifest the appearance of a bhikṣu solely in order to teach and transform sentient beings and to expound the Dharma; it may also express dignified deportment. Thus, leaving home is acceptable, and not leaving home is also acceptable. In all cases, do not deceive yourself or others; this is called truly leaving home. As for returning to lay life, the Buddha's regulations permit it. If one retains the body of a bhikṣu but one's mind is constantly disturbed and one remains attached to fame, reputation, gain, and support, one has in fact returned to lay life and has also broken the precepts. Such a person is not a saṅgha member worthy of offerings and is no different from an evil person. As for those who are pure and virtuous, whether bhikṣus or lay practitioners, all are called treasures of the Saṅgha. This must be understood.

VII. Guard Carefully Against the Eight Taboos

What are the eight taboos? First, seeking spiritual powers. Second, excessive doubt and fickleness. Third, seeking quick results and waiting expectantly. Fourth, being bound by personal feelings and relying on others. Fifth, rigidly clinging to one's faults. Sixth, not following the rules. Seventh, losing awareness and illumination. Eighth, claiming attainment when one has not attained, claiming realization when one has not realized, and judging the inner states of others. These are called the eight taboos because violating them can obstruct the Way; therefore, they must be avoided.

First Taboo: Spiritual Powers

The root of seeking spiritual powers is greed for attainment. When the causal ground is improper, the harm it causes becomes all the greater. There is no one in the world who does not seek spiritual powers, yet people do not know what shen is or what tong means. They practice blindly, misleading themselves and others. There is also a group of people who, like those who stop eating for fear of choking, have never understood this matter. Fear arises from their doubts, and they dare not proceed. They even dare not cultivate the supreme Mind-Seal Esoteric Vehicle transmitted by the Buddha, and they obstruct others from practicing it, thinking this to be compassion. It is like an incompetent doctor who kills someone through the wrong medicine: rather than blame the doctor, they ban the medicine. The fault lies with the incompetent doctor; what blame belongs to the medicine? How profoundly deluded this is!

There is a shen associated with the blood and vital energies of the human body. What is stored within is called essence; what manifests outwardly is called spirit. The mind is the master, while essence, energy, and spirit are its servants. These spiritual powers are the unobstructed functioning of mind and intention—the spiritual powers of mind. They extend from oneself to others and arise from essence as function. Spiritual force may be greater or lesser, and the power of penetration may be keen or dull. Human spiritual powers are inherently possessed. It is like fire in a lamp: fire inherently has light. If fire does not emit light, it is not because it lacks light; the fault lies in obstruction and lack of free passage. One is obscured by the seven emotions and six desires, so that the essence is present but its function does not arise.

People do not understand spiritual powers and therefore mistake transformations and illusions for spiritual powers, greatly misleading themselves. Such transformations and illusions are merely magical arts, akin to techniques; they cannot be performed without something on which to rely. Spiritual powers are not like this.

The Treatise on the Treasury states: There are five kinds of spiritual powers. The first is demonic powers, such as old foxes transforming themselves, or spirits of wood and stone attaching themselves to people. The second is karmic-result powers, such as ghosts and spirits foreknowing events, divine dragons concealing and transforming themselves, or those who cultivated the heavenly eye in former lives without completing it and who, as children in this life, have unusually keen sight and hearing.

The third is dependent powers, such as traveling by means of talismans, medicinal concoctions, mantra-water, or emitting light to summon spirits—cases that necessarily rely on something. These first three are only provisionally called powers; in truth, they are not powers, for they are not ultimate and will inevitably regress.

The fourth kind, spiritual powers, comprises five: the heavenly eye, heavenly ear, knowledge of others' minds, knowledge of former lives, and spiritual travel. Though called powers, they may be ultimate or nonultimate. For those without the Way, they are nonultimate and will eventually regress; moreover, they are dangerous, for one may become deranged, turn demonic, and fall into the great hells. The ultimate kind will be explained in detail below. The fifth is powers of the Way: the Way is their essence, and the preceding five spiritual powers are their function.

Buddhists chiefly seek to attain powers of the Way, beginning with the six supernormal powers. The sixth power, which stands above the five powers, is the power of the exhaustion of outflows. Worldly dharmas involve outflows, while supramundane dharmas are without outflows. To penetrate both without being tainted or attached by either is called the exhaustion of outflows. In cultivating the six supernormal powers, one must first realize the mind-ground, unfold awakened wisdom, and realize pure emptiness as one's essence. Only then may one respond to and transform the myriad things, meeting circumstances without a calculating mind as one's function.

Therefore, the Treatise on the Treasury also states: There are three kinds of wisdom: true wisdom, inner wisdom, and outer wisdom. Extensive knowledge of past and present and understanding worldly affairs are outer wisdom. Cutting off afflictions and making the mind quiet is what the Lesser Vehicle cultivates; this is inner wisdom. Neither is ultimate and therefore neither is called true wisdom. In true wisdom, sages and ordinary beings are nondual, emotional views are all empty, one realizes that there is nothing at all, and essence and function are such as they are. This is called true wisdom, and it is precisely powers of the Way. What we cultivate is powers of the Way as essence and the five spiritual powers as function. To activate function before attaining the essence will inevitably lead to downfall and bring later consequences. This is deeply frightening.

Taoist practitioners regard developing the five spiritual powers as the highest standard. They forcibly suppress the six consciousnesses and habitual tendencies, using methods of subjugation to develop the five spiritual powers. Yet their fundamental nature has not been emptied. When powerful external circumstances arise, they become either joyful or sorrowful, and demons take the opportunity to enter. For example, when the heavenly eye opens without obstruction and they see matters involving their own grievances and resentments, they may unconsciously become angry and thereby fall.

Or they may see scenes of attraction between men and women and, without realizing it, let their feelings shift and enter a womb. Because the roots of greed, anger, and ignorance have not been removed but only temporarily suppressed, once they react they can no longer be controlled.

If one first realizes the emptiness of dharmas and later develops the five powers, then, when all circumstances arise, there is no distinction of beauty or ugliness, intimacy or estrangement, affection or aversion, joy or anger. One remains impartial and free, beyond anything that can be shaken; favorable and adverse circumstances are alike. Such spiritual powers possess both essence and function and are called ultimate. Otherwise, before one has attained the root, one is instead misled by spiritual powers; thus they are not ultimate. Craving spiritual powers is itself rooted in greed and also belongs to an inferior penchant for novelty. If one uses them to seek fame, profit, and reverence, one has not left behind the greed for gain and loss. How can this be called the Way?

In the practices of our association, the first rule is that one must not seek spiritual powers. Seeing light, seeing Buddhas, and the like while sitting in meditation are all produced by the deluded mind. Such experiences are therefore made the subject of a solemn warning. Therefore, we repeatedly warn practitioners lest, after attaining even a slightly exceptional state, the demon of delight enter their hearts. Thus, the Way and techniques must be clearly distinguished. During the past year, several hundred people have practiced these methods in our association, and fortunately none has developed such disorders, because their causal ground is correct and their aspiration is lofty.

The Taoist five spiritual powers are attained through strenuous effort. The Buddhist five spiritual powers are naturally realized after one has realized the mind. Taoists may attain the five spiritual powers with function but without essence. Although their initial intention is directed toward the Way, they later unknowingly drift into mere technique; thus it is technique rather than the Way. When Buddhists realize the five spiritual powers, they establish essence before function and employ techniques as the Way.

The Taoist five spiritual powers may regress and lead to downfall; they are temporary attainments. Buddhism has no such defect, and its attainment is called ultimate. Taoism specializes in employing the five spiritual powers, whereas Buddhism uses them only when there is no alternative.

Taoists regard the five spiritual powers as miraculous; Buddhists regard them as utterly ordinary.

Non-Buddhist practitioners of spiritual powers may also possess the five powers, but they lack the power of the exhaustion of outflows. The original intent of studying Buddhism is to seek liberation, free from bondage. One should value only the power of the exhaustion of outflows. Once all outflows are exhausted, one thoroughly understands both worldly and supramundane dharmas; this is the true Buddha Way.

If one focuses exclusively on spiritual powers, the mind is held captive by them. This is greed for attainment. Not only will one be unable to transcend birth and death, but one will also enter deeply into demonic obstacles and may even become deranged. This is most lamentable. Ancient worthies distinguished powers of the Way from spiritual powers in order to clarify this point. In cultivating the Heart-of-Heart Dharma, realizing one's true nature and realizing the mind are primary, thereby accomplishing formless siddhi. Siddhi means great accomplishment; it is not something that those who delight in lesser teachings can conceive.

Those who have traditionally cultivated Japanese Esoteric Buddhism or Tibetan Esoteric Buddhism often delight in speaking of spiritual powers. Such practitioners mislead themselves; the fault does not lie in the Dharma. Spiritual powers do not come from outside. When the mind is still, it is rich in wondrous capacities: naturally, everything is understood and every situation is met appropriately. By the power of wisdom, one employs wondrous methods. If it benefits sentient beings, everything may serve as skillful means; but if it is for one's own greedy acquisition, even the slightest degree belongs to birth and death.

Others hear mention of spiritual powers and turn pale at the sound of them, stopping eating for fear of choking. They take Esoteric Dharma to be demonic Dharma and slander the Buddha and the Dharma. They are truly pitiable.

They do not know that when Buddha-recitation reaches one-pointedness of mind without distraction and samādhi is realized, one may then travel spiritually in the Pure Land—whether one has already been reborn there, is reborn there in this life, or will be reborn there in the future. If this is not spiritual power, what is? People's capacities are attached to forms: they insist that only what can be seen is spiritual power, while regarding the wondrous truth that cannot be seen as empty and false. Buddhadharma neither grasps appearances nor departs from them. It takes

Mahāprajñā as its principle; therefore, there is no need to see light or Buddhas and thereby invert the mind. One need only contemplate one's own nature inwardly, thoroughly realize the unborn, and have a mind free of hindrances; spiritual powers are then naturally present.

Within the minds of sentient beings are inherently complete the causes of the three greatnesses of essence, characteristics, and function. Since essence is great, characteristics are great, and function is great, what kind of spiritual power would not be present? These causes of the three greatnesses can become the fruition of the three bodies—the dharmakāya, sambhogakāya, and nirmāṇakāya. Sentient beings do not lack them; they simply do not know. The reason they do not know is that they cling to phenomenal appearances and, through delusion, are separated from true principle.

The Diamond Sūtra states: “Ordinary people greedily cling to affairs.” Therefore, all sūtras and treatises demolish sentient beings' attachments to the appearances of body, mind, and phenomena. The Record of Auxiliary Practices says: “If one cultivating samādhi suddenly develops spiritual powers, one must quickly abandon them, for dharmas with outflows are false.”

Buddhadharma values being without outflows and without grasping, and it honors prajñā. Prajñā can dissolve all appearances. Simply resting in principle is itself penetration in phenomena; but if one exclusively seeks powers, one will necessarily obstruct one’s understanding of principle. Penetration in principle is nothing other than expounding the gate of the One Vehicle and realizing the principle of the unborn. When a single word accords with the Way, one realizes nirvāṇa amid birth and death. When one directly sees and understands the principle, one attains perfect enlightenment amid the dusts of toil. In an instant, one is transformed from ordinary to sage; in a moment, conditioned existence becomes emptiness. Is this not the greatest spiritual power? “All under heaven return to benevolence” expresses precisely this meaning.

Therefore, practitioners should first realize the power of the exhaustion of outflows. All other powers are deviant and false, not genuine. What is deviant is not right; it gives rise to confused thoughts and deludes one from one's intrinsic nature. One must never vainly hope for them.

In light of the foregoing, there is no need to discuss demonic powers, karmic-result powers, or dependent powers. Among the five spiritual powers—the heavenly eye, heavenly ear, knowledge of others' minds, and so forth—Buddhadharma also possesses them. They are here collectively called deviant and false because they have only the function of spiritual powers, without the essence of powers of the Way. Powers of the Way belong to the exhaustion of outflows. Spiritual powers are

shared by non-Buddhist paths and the two vehicles, whereas powers of the Way are elucidated only by the Mahāyāna Dharma.

Buddhadharma values only powers of the Way, not spiritual powers; yet it does not discard spiritual powers altogether. One is simply not permitted to employ them before one's strength has matured, lest two kinds of error arise. Thus the Treatise on the Treasury also states: “Wisdom has deviant and right forms; powers have genuine and false forms. Unless one's dharma eye is keen and clear, it is difficult to discern them. Therefore, people in the world often believe in the false and deviant, and seldom believe in the genuine and true. This is why this wondrous principle is difficult to reveal.”

A quiet mind is the Lesser Vehicle's entry into the annihilationist view. What true wisdom reveals, however, is the realization in essence that there is nothing at all and that purity and impurity are nondual. This is the essential way of breaking attachment to dharmas. Without breaking attachment to dharmas, one cannot speak of the essential teachings of the Mahāyāna. Therefore, the Mahāyāna teaches that all phenomena are such as they are and are manifested only by mind. Such teachings all clarify entry into the Dharma gate of nonduality. Then principle and phenomena interpenetrate completely, cause and effect penetrate one another, and the wondrous functioning of spiritual powers is fully present before one.

In sum, the wondrous function of spiritual powers lies in the wondrous penetration of opening the wisdom eye and dharma eye. The wisdom eye knows people's capacities, whether sharp or dull; the dharma eye knows what Dharma should be applied to which persons in order to liberate them. Together, these constitute the Buddha eye; there is not some separate Buddha eye. These spiritual powers proceed from within to without. First penetrate yourself; first liberate yourself from habitual tendencies and afflictions. When you have cleared away your various karmic obstacles, penetration will naturally open.

Yet to eliminate karmic obstacles, one must rely on prajñā to sweep them away. This is the great spiritual power sought by bodhisattvas. This may further be demonstrated through the Mahāvairocana Sūtra, the Prajñā Sūtra for Humane Kings Who Protect the Nation , the Heart Sūtra, and other texts.

The Mahāvairocana Sūtra says: “When a bodhisattva realizes the gateway of pure bodhicitta, this is called the Way of the First Dharma-Light. Abiding here and practicing diligently, the bodhisattva soon attains the samādhi that removes all obscurations.” People often mistake bodhicitta for great compassion, as though turning from an evil mind to a good mind were all that arousing bodhicitta meant. Know that bodhi itself cannot be grasped: understanding that nothing can be grasped is bodhicitta.

The Way of the First Dharma-Light is explained here as progressing from the first bhūmi to the tenth. “Way” here means “ground.” Only after cultivating and realizing samādhi, understanding that mind cannot be grasped, and directly seeing reality can one abide here. To abide here is to abide in prajñā; without prajñā, there is no way to clear away all obscurations. With diligent practice, one soon naturally attains the samādhi that removes obscurations, and the five spiritual powers will manifest.

Spiritual powers are originally fully possessed by everyone; they are not possessed only by Buddhas and bodhisattvas while sentient beings alone lack them. Sentient beings are obstructed by beginningless ignorance and therefore cannot manifest these powers.

Precisely because they are originally complete, they cannot be given or taken away. One can only cultivate and realize them oneself, through a definite course: first, cultivate in order to seek awakening, realize samādhi, and directly see true reality; second, after awakening, undertake proper cultivation and use the power of prajñā to sweep away obscurations; third, as the obscurations gradually clear, spiritual powers naturally manifest. Only such spiritual powers never regress.

They are not like the spiritual powers developed by non-Buddhist paths through forcibly imposed meditative concentration, which ultimately regress when one encounters circumstances and gives rise to delusion. Therefore, to develop the five spiritual powers before attaining the samādhi of pure emptiness is most dangerous. Because the mind of aversion and attachment has not yet been removed and one cannot regard all things with equanimity, all kinds of strange appearances come before one's eyes. To be carried along by them is precisely the inverted round of birth and death.

There are said to be five kinds of obstruction:

1. The obstruction of afflictions: in its coarse aspect, this means the six fundamental afflictions—greed, anger, ignorance, doubt, pride, and wrong views. In its subtle aspect, it means the eighty-four thousand habitual tendencies. All these are accumulated habits from former lives that obstruct one's capacity to enter the Way.

2. Karmic obstruction: because one has created countless sinful karmas in the past and present, even though one may now have the causes and conditions for attaining the Way, one's former karmic offenses have not yet been cleared away and thus naturally give rise to various hindrances and difficulties.

3. Obstruction to receiving the Dharma: although one has already practiced, because one slandered the Dharma in former lives, one cannot encounter a good spiritual friend. “Good” means skillful; “spiritual friend” means one who knows a person's capacity and guides that person beneficially by means of the proper

Dharma. The proper Dharma is that which precisely accords with the person's capacity, just as medicine accords with an illness; it is not confined to any particular kind of medicine.

For example, if a person's capacity accords with the Pure Land, but one teaches that person Chan or Esoteric Buddhism, which do not accord with that capacity, one is not a good spiritual friend. If a person's capacity for prajñā is already mature, one should skillfully guide that person so as to accomplish the siddhi of formlessness; if one nevertheless continues to teach form-based dharma gates, one is likewise not a good spiritual friend. Although this is the teacher's fault, it is also the karmic result of that person's having doubted and slandered the Dharma in former lives, or having begrudged teaching it to others.

4. Obstruction by livelihood: although one has heard the proper Dharma, one is busy making a living and has no time to practice, and therefore encounters many hindrances.

5. The obstruction of what is known: although one has encountered a good spiritual friend and heard the proper Dharma, various circumstances, such as arrogance and conceit, prevent the necessary conditions from coming together and hinder the perfection of prajñā. These are called the five obstructions. Thus, various causes and conditions obstruct entry into the Way. Clearing karmic obstacles and entering this gate still depend on prajñā; without prajñā, there is no means to remove all obscurations.

Moreover, unless the coarse obscurations are removed, one cannot cultivate the perfection of prajñā. The Heart Sūtra says that bodhisattvas, and even the Buddhas of the three periods of time, attain unsurpassed bodhi through prajñāpāramitā. If one realizes one's true nature and becomes a Buddha, how could one see one's true nature without relying on prajñā?

The Renwang Sūtra says: “Before vajra samādhi, all knowledge and views cannot be called seeing. Only the Buddha suddenly comprehends and possesses all-knowing wisdom; only then can knowledge and views be called seeing.” This seeing is prajñā. The Buddha is called the Greatly Awakened One, possessing the wisdom of all wisdom, the unsurpassed great radiance and great spiritual power.

The Renwang Sūtra also says: “Upon realizing vajra samādhi, it is as though one has ascended a lofty platform and surveys everything universally, with nothing not fully understood. One is identical with the realm of reality, equal to dharmatā, perfect in the treasury of virtues, and abides in the position of the Tathāgata. One may go to the Buddha-lands of the ten directions, benefiting and bringing happiness to sentient beings, comprehending true reality, and being no different from the

Buddha.” The Buddha-lands spoken of are not fixed places, and the sentient beings referred to are not limited by closeness or distance, intimacy or estrangement.

The Renwang Sūtra also says: “All Tathāgatas throughout the dharma realm of the ten directions rely on this gate to attain Buddhahood. If anyone says that Buddhahood can be attained apart from this, that is the teaching of Māra, not the teaching of the Buddha. Therefore, you should know thus, see thus, and faithfully understand thus,” and so forth.

The Buddha speaks decisively, lest later generations be deluded by cognitive hindrances and fail to enter through faith. This is the gate of prajñāpāramitā: however far one goes, one returns to this source. If practicing prajñā is not ultimate, what practice is? Would that not make the Buddha’s definitive scriptures nondefinitive? Such a claim favors the Buddha’s power at the expense of one’s own.

They suppose that the Buddha’s miraculous transformations and blessings can make them Buddhas in an instant. Since spiritual powers are the only evidence of Buddhahood they think others can see, they mistake such powers for Buddhahood and cast prajñā aside. They do not understand that Buddhahood means awakening to all phenomena through wisdom that knows reality. Hence it is called awakening, and a Buddha is an awakened one. “Awakening” is used here as a shortened expression for prajñā.

“Miraculous transformations” was formerly rendered “spiritual power.” The Tathāgata’s majestic spiritual power exceeds all measure; it is his own realization of complete awakening, saṃbodhi. Even tenth-bhūmi bodhisattvas have not reached this realm. Only by personally realizing and entering the gate of the three mysteries can one accord with the Buddha and receive the Buddha’s empowering blessings. This arises in response to capacities and conditions, naturally rather than by force.

Therefore, although the Buddha's power is vast, not everyone can receive his blessing. Otherwise, all sentient beings would already have been liberated by the Buddhas of the past.

Because of the power of their great compassionate vows in the past, the Buddhas wish to bring benefit to all sentient beings and universally reveal various dharma gates. Yet people can spread the Way; the Way cannot spread people. The secret essential treasury of the Tathāgata is one's own treasure. One must cultivate in accordance with the Dharma, and only when one reaches an equivalent degree can one receive the Buddha's blessing. How could there be distinctions of greater or lesser favor, intimacy or estrangement, between Buddhas and sentient beings? Moreover, the causes and conditions for accomplishment differ for each person. When one's own capacities and conditions have not matured, the power of prajñā is

not yet sufficient, and emotional views obscure one, they obstruct one's entry into the Way.

Such people do not blame themselves but doubt the Dharma; to doubt the Dharma is itself evidence that the power of prajñā is insufficient. Nor do they know that spiritual powers manifest only after prajñā has swept away the five obstructions. Furthermore, if spiritual powers are such that everyone can see them, they are not spiritual powers, because such seeing is no different from that of sentient beings. If a magician or illusionist also claims spiritual powers, and by the power of spells blesses herbs so that all kinds of unprecedented things appear, can that person thereby be called a Buddha?

They make only this one mistake at the causal stage, and it causes the whole undertaking to go wrong. Therefore, practitioners who seek great spiritual powers have an improper causal ground and belong to Māra's retinue. This is specifically listed first among the eight prohibitions. Take care not to mislead yourselves.

The Second Prohibition: Excessive Doubt and Fickleness

Doubt arises from not understanding why things are as they are and from placing too much weight on gain and loss. Fickleness arises from unsteady faith, craving quick results, and practicing without constancy. Both result from a disposition to covet convenience. Whenever one studies something—whether a craft, farming, or commerce—three years are required for completion; there is absolutely no principle by which one can succeed in only a few months. How much more is this so in studying Buddhism, and how much more with one's habitual tendencies from many lives!

Before a matter has been settled, one predicts and discriminates according to one's own views; or, before one's understanding is genuinely sound, one fixes one's own opinions and judges matters to be right or wrong. Yet inwardly one never has certainty, and afterward one hesitates and remains undecided. This is called doubt. In its coarse aspect, it is delusion; in its subtle aspect, it is doubt. When something should not be done, if one does not distinguish right from wrong and blindly follows along in confusion, that is delusion. When one clearly knows that something should not be done yet cannot overcome one's emotional views, and one's mind wavers in turmoil, that too is delusion. When the subtle continuous flow of mental activity calculates and remains confused and uncertain, it has entered into doubt.

The karmic actions created and sufferings endured by worldly people are beyond recounting. Yet they also suffer because they do not know their suffering, and the bitterest of sufferings is not understanding the mind-ground. If the mind-ground is clear, there is nothing that cannot be accomplished. The mind is master of all and is called the mind-king. If a king loses his position, the country will inevitably fall into

disorder. Therefore, dispelling doubt is like establishing a ruler in a country to quell disorder; it is the first step in the work of realizing the mind.

Doubt and faith are direct opposites: lack of faith is doubt. If one wishes to arouse faith, one must first dispel doubt. Once doubt is dispelled, one must be resolute and never retreat; only then can one enter the path of diligent progress. The doubts and retreats that occur midway today belong to this illness, and its importance is therefore immense.

The method for dispelling doubt should begin with inquiry and practice. First is inquiry: regard yourself as a most honest person, be humble and open-minded, and ask about matters when you encounter them. In ancient times, even those in high positions should not have been ashamed to ask those below them. How then can beginners seeking good spiritual friends fail to be humble and receptive? Ask about each matter in order to resolve your doubts. This is called inquiry.

Second is actual practice. After receiving instruction from a good spiritual friend, one may understand the principle but not yet realize it in actual experience; one will inevitably return to doubt and delusion. Therefore, one must actually cultivate and practice, bringing principle and phenomena into mutual harmony, until there is no hindrance at all within the mind. Only then is doubt said to have been dispelled. This is called practice. But are inquiry and practice separate? No: inquiry itself is practice; they need not be rigidly divided into two. Inquiry opens the opportunity for practice, and practice in turn creates the conditions for inquiry. Ask as you practice, and practice as you ask; each advances the other. If one merely asks but does not practice, it is ultimately of no benefit.

There are two kinds of doubt: doubt before an undertaking and doubt during or after it. Doubt during or after an undertaking still has some reason, but doubt beforehand is the operation of emotional views: one fabricates things out of nothing, and naturally doubts ever more deeply. Some thereby become ill or deranged; these are among the most miserable people in the world. Yet such doubt is already a result, arising from anxiety over gain and loss. Anxiety is the cause of doubt and also arises from circumstances; it is not entirely fabricated from nothing. But when one need not doubt a matter, or could refrain from doubt but instead repeatedly worries about it, this is merely unnecessary entanglement and self-inflicted disturbance by an ordinary person.

Practitioners often doubt the Dharma and doubt people, and their disposition consequently becomes fickle. This is great delusion and great falsity. The inferior tendencies of people are no more than two: greed and the desire to save trouble. First, they seek to expend no effort and attain accomplishment quickly. Second, they crave abundance in order to surpass others. Third, the illness of clinging to existence

over many lives binds them tightly and is difficult to undo. If they gain nothing, they suspect that it is biased emptiness and that their labor has been fruitless, so they wish to change course and begin anew.

Fourth, practitioners are constantly swayed by human sentiment, echo whatever others say, take their ears for eyes, and delight in making irresponsible remarks. Fifth, in the course of practice, favorable and adverse circumstances arise unpredictably, and progress and regression are uncertain; if they doubt because of adversity, thoughts of retreat soon arise. Sixth, people's habitual tendencies often delight in displaying their abilities and being different, and in producing empty theories to advertise their own superiority; they thus forget the transgression of slandering the Dharma.

Not understanding the meaning of relying on the Dharma rather than on persons, one slanders the Dharma because of particular people, forgetting the reason for this principle: this is the seventh error. Others' inner states are not for me to presume to fathom; yet I make discriminating inferences and rashly judge their right and wrong: this is the eighth error. All of these arise because one has not clarified one's own fundamental ground.

III. Avoid Seeking Speed and Entertaining a Waiting Mentality

It is a good thing for practitioners to be courageous and diligent. But diligence means being single-minded, and progress means not retreating. To remain thus from morning to evening, neither hasty nor slow, and without interruption—this is called diligence. It does not mean greedily seeking much and pressing ahead fiercely; excessive eagerness, too, is greed. Whoever begins at too high a level will certainly be unable to sustain it. Whoever anxiously seeks results will inevitably become coarse and restless, and the practice undertaken will certainly be difficult to accomplish.

Nowadays, those who seek teachings everywhere yet fail to gain practical benefit after practicing for ten or twenty years do so because they have too many dharma gates. They seek results too quickly, practice for too short a time, and hold their views of the teachings too deeply. In the end, they understand a hundred methods but accomplish nothing at all. This is the error of greedily seeking speed and rushing forward.

Conversely, one may drift along and waste the opportunity. Having gained even a slight superior experience, one becomes self-satisfied and gives rise to a waiting mentality. The two words "carelessness and indulgence" are the greatest obstacles to the Way, for if one does not advance, one retreats.

Practitioners begin halfway along the path, having never worked from the fundamental ground. They often neglect even basic Buddhist principles; after a long time, they are ashamed to ask again, muddle through, and allow themselves to remain confused. This is the first error.

If the fundamental ground has not been clarified, they remain in the dark as to where practice must ultimately end. Moreover, they imagine that, once the time is ripe, their practice and conduct will naturally become complete; so they let things take their course and wait for the time. This is the second error.

In practice, one must first seek awakening; only after awakening does proper cultivation begin. If one gains even a slight awakening, that is precisely when the work begins. Yet one may wish to let things proceed naturally and freely, without seeking thoroughness, and in the end sink into decline. This is the third error.

When the work of practice reaches subtle and minute levels, it is most difficult to distinguish clearly. The whiteness of a white bird and the whiteness of white snow are two, not one. At this point one must not be in the least vague. If one drifts along and lets things go, merely waiting for the time to arrive and imagining that with enough time one will certainly understand thoroughly, this is the fourth error.

Letting things proceed naturally and a waiting mentality are entirely different. Once one has realized the mind and entered the state in which things proceed naturally, one still must not be careless in the slightest. One must investigate to the utmost ultimate point, and then move from ultimate thoroughness to ultimate familiarity. When familiarity becomes complete, subject and object are naturally forgotten. Only then may one let go.

As the saying goes, after awakening one should feel as though one has lost one's parents. How can one take letting things go as freedom, force oneself to act at ease, and abandon the work? In short, one knows one's own work of practice. Let us now use planting a tree as an analogy. At the outset of practice, one must first distinguish the nature of the soil and determine what should be planted. After planting the seed, although no sprout may be seen for a time, one must never doubt that it will not grow and dig it up to inspect it. One need only water it daily and diligently carry out one's proper task.

When sprouts appear, do not rejoice. One need only guard carefully against wind, rain, flood, drought, insects, and ants. Even after flowering and bearing fruit, one should not impatiently pick and eat it; one need only tend it and wait for the time. Only then does one enter the stage in which things proceed naturally. If, upon first seeing sprouts, one simply lets them go untended and waits for them to grow by themselves, this is another error of the waiting mentality. The former is excess; this

is deficiency. Both are obstacles to practicing the Way and should therefore be avoided.

IV. Avoid Personal Feelings and Reliance on Others

Those beginning practice often follow others blindly, using their ears as their eyes. To rely on a good spiritual teacher is, of course, proper; but one must not be governed solely by personal feelings. For example, the method first practiced is like the physician first consulted: this is a matter of personal feelings. But if the physician and medicine are unsuitable and no effect is seen after a long time, one should consult another physician. One must put one's life first and must not let personal feelings lead one into error.

Those who readily change physicians and medicines mostly act from personal feelings, but this is also because their suffering is not truly urgent to them. If one takes oneself as the point of reference and clearly examines the relation of benefit and harm, then, when medicine proves ineffective, one should first awaken to this oneself and promptly change the prescription, without the slightest hesitation or vacillation. There is no reason to give undue weight to personal feelings. If the medicine is effective and one's life is at stake, how could one change course because of personal feelings? Thus the control lies with oneself. Never rely on others or use one's ears as one's eyes.

Practitioners often suffer from not knowing: first, they do not know their own fundamental faults; second, they do not know who is a good physician; third, they do not know which medicine is excellent; fourth, they do not know under what circumstances medicine may be called effective; fifth, they do not know that after taking medicine there will inevitably be various reactions, and so they stop out of doubt and fear. Thus, before practicing, they blindly follow others; during practice, they train blindly; and after gaining a slight experience, they become self-righteous. Error upon error—how painful this is!

V. Avoid Rigidity and Attachment as an Affliction

Practitioners are like workers: they cannot do without skillful thought, for skill brings twice the result with half the effort. The Buddhadharma has no fixed method. Chan, Esoteric Buddhism, and Pure Land practice, for example, are provisional methods for returning to the source. Yet because people's capacities differ, the methods also vary accordingly. If one rigidly clings to them without flexibility, there is no way for spiritual responsiveness to be awakened. How then can one reach the state of freedom and ease and ascend to the land of utmost bliss?

Therefore, single-mindedness differs from rigid adherence. If one aspires to go west but suddenly longs to be born in the east, this cannot be called single-mindedness.

One should know that east and west are the same blissful place of practice; east and west are merely provisional names. In the four directions and above and below, there are Buddha lands adorned in their various ways. I should first purify my own mind and acquire the qualifications for rebirth. Then east is possible and west is possible; in every case one may attain rebirth according to one's vow. This is called flexibility.

If one rigidly clings to a single method, believing that the Western Pure Land is the only land of bliss and that there are no others, such attachment to views is so firm that rebirth is truly difficult. Sentient beings' sickness and suffering are nothing but attachment to self. Learning the Buddha's teaching is precisely for removing attachment to self. If, through cultivation, one adds another layer of the affliction of attachment, is this not suffering added to suffering?

All deeply ingrained habitual tendencies arise from the affliction of attachment. Mazu's rigid adherence to seated meditation was such an affliction, for which Nanyue rebuked him. Other traditions are not free from the same illness. Yet there is also a group of people greedy for convenience and clever shortcuts, who think that ten recitations are enough to attain rebirth. They regard this as extraordinarily easy, merely waiting until death to make an effort, assuming that the Buddha will naturally come to guide them. This is truly like rejoicing at the sight of wealth in a dream. Therefore, they must be urged not to become careless and indulgent.

Yet sentient beings are difficult to guide: when helped up in the west, they fall over again in the east. One must be skillful in adjusting matters, like tuning the strings of a lute: if they are too loose, they produce no sound; if too tight, they break. First, one must awaken living and responsive spiritual intelligence. Second, one must make people understand the benefits and harms, so that they themselves feel the urgency. When applying oneself, one should be like leading troops against the enemy, advancing without looking back. When not applying oneself, one should let everything go and regard it as though nothing were happening, while the mind remains ever lively and responsive. Only such work is called diligence.

VI. Avoid Failing to Follow the Rules

Every method of practice must have a lineage of transmission. For beginners, the responsibility lies with the teacher; after one has received it with faith, one must practice in accordance with the method. If one takes one's own views as correct and alters the method, accomplishment is truly difficult. Formerly, practitioners of the Heart-of-Heart Dharma were required to maintain the practice for two hours. One person thought that he recited mantras faster than others and that an hour and a half was sufficient for 1,080 repetitions. He therefore practiced without following the rules. In the end, it proved ineffective, and he instead suspected that the practice of

others was inauthentic. He then doubted the Dharma and slandered the teacher. This is truly a great taboo.

Therefore, before transmitting a teaching, one should be extremely careful, examining the person's health, available time, and the coordination of all conditions, so that abuses will not arise. Those who receive the teaching should make honesty, sincerity, and earnestness their chief principles. Asking many questions can dispel doubts, but self-awareness is also essential.

VII. Avoid Losing Awareness and Illumination

This is practitioners' greatest fault. Those who practice for decades without gaining the slightest benefit suffer precisely from this fault. Practice is undertaken at particular times, but its application lies in daily life. The work of awareness and illumination is the practitioner's sole aim and the only method for cutting off suffering and realizing truth.

Sentient beings are confused and afflicted solely because they are unaware. When external objects come to entice them, whether favorable or adverse, they are vainly carried along in cyclic wandering. If, through the power of wisdom, one maintains awareness and illumination, recognizes their falsity, and finds inner and outer both empty, one will not be swayed or deluded. Naturally, there will be neither joy nor anger; one will not create evil causes, give rise to evil conditions, or undergo painful results. Awareness is initial awakening at the causal stage; it awakens before events arise and is therefore called the awakening of great wisdom. Illumination is the practice of resistance: when all circumstances arise, amid the inner struggle between personal desire and higher principle, one can distinguish gain and loss, benefit and harm, decisively advance or withdraw, and remain unmoved and unshaken. Then one's strength naturally becomes sufficient.

Therefore, at all times, in all places, and in every matter, one should remain alert and contemplative, never forgetting this. Practitioners often divide practice time and ordinary time into two separate things, thinking that walking, standing, sitting, lying down, and dealing with others in daily life are not practice. This is the first error.

Practitioners do not know that awareness and illumination are precisely the training of the mind amid circumstances. Because they do not understand the Mind-Ground Dharma Gate, they do not know how to use the mind. This is the second error.

Practitioners speak of emptiness, but the activities they undertake remain not empty. Because they cannot maintain awareness and illumination, they have no way to realize emptiness. This is the third error.

Practitioners do not know that awareness and illumination are the most important dharma gate of practice: the more one trains, the better; and the more one encounters provoking circumstances, the more one can verify one's own strength in samādhi and wisdom. Yet they seek only blessings and rewards, cannot receive great benefit, and cannot put it to great use. This is the fourth error. To forget is to forget the reason for practice; it is to drift along without urgency. This is why there are many who understand the Way but few who practice it, and many who practice the Way but few who realize it.

VIII. Avoid Claiming Attainment Before It Is Attained

To claim realization before realization has been attained, to assess others' inner states, to aim excessively high, and to boast and become vain—these are habitual tendencies of sentient beings. Many are also led astray by competitiveness. For example, one may understand the principle of contemplating emptiness and imagine that one can thereby realize emptiness. But when circumstances arise, one is still not empty and afflictions remain as before; one's strength is not yet sufficient. One cannot truly avoid the ridicule of those who know.

Yet if one has genuinely attained realization to one or two degrees, then even though principle and phenomena have not yet merged for the time being, there will ultimately come a day when one reaches the goal through diligence. But if one has not clarified the fundamental ground and nevertheless claims realization, then one has not even understood the principle, much less realized it in practice. This is truly delusion upon delusion. For example, non-Buddhist paths do not know what realizing the mind and seeing one's true nature means, yet they rigidly adhere to particular bodily apertures or claim attainment through contemplating a lunar disc, then call this realizing the mind and seeing one's true nature. This is the height of confusion and difficult to remedy.

Moreover, one alone knows one's own work of cultivation, for it belongs to the mind-ground. How can it be judged by outward appearances? Conjecture is delusion, and assessment is also affliction. Therefore, others' superiority or inferiority need not cause me anxious concern. Once one becomes involved in winning and losing, one unknowingly falls into jealousy and anger arises. One's own practice and conduct then instead become lax and regress. One must be careful.

These eight kinds of errors concern the fundamental conditions for practicing the methods of every tradition. Whether one practices Pure Land, Chan, or Esoteric Buddhism, all should be as described above. Next, let us discuss the methods of each tradition.

The aim of Dharma practice is to reach the other shore; this is pāramitā. Pāramitā means returning to the source, and the source is the origin.

There are many dharma gates for returning to the origin. Some take Chan meditation as their means of returning to the source, and this is called the Chan school; some take Pure Land methods as their means of returning to the source, and this is called the Pure Land school; some take Esoteric methods as their means of returning to the source, and this is called the Esoteric school. Chan, Pure Land, and Esoteric Buddhism are methods, not the origin; they are boats, not the other shore. Only when the choice to employ or set them aside rests with oneself, without being bound by methods, can this be called the other shore. Steadfast resolve is indispensable, but partial attachment must not arise.

Those who study Buddhism should aspire to cast off their bonds and seek liberation, living freely and at ease and removing every suffering and adversity. Among all sufferings and adversities, bondage to dharmas is the most painful. The deeper one's habitual tendencies, the heavier one's bonds. Chan has Chan habits, Pure Land has Pure Land habits, and Esoteric Buddhism has Esoteric habits; and the habit of considering oneself right in each case is the beginning of sectarian disputes. Practitioners seek the samādhi of non-contention; to engage in argument is most shameful.

Yet at times one cannot avoid distinguishing or contending. Such distinction and contention are called proper causes; they must not involve personal feelings, nor should they provoke the other party's anger. They should be handled with an even mind and calm spirit. If capacities are not mutually attuned, do not oppose the other person; opposition will only drive them farther away. This applies not only to others but also to oneself: one must humbly discipline oneself, correcting one's faults whenever they are recognized. If one does not correct them, one does not truly know them. Do not suppose that only killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct are faults. Whenever the mind-ground remains unclear and cause and effect unresolved, one is entangled everywhere; with every movement one incurs fault. All of it is wrongdoing.

The Earth Store Sūtra says: "Every stirring of the mind and every movement of thought is evil, bound by karmic force; there is no escaping its guilt." This is to be helplessly swept along, not knowingly to offend; how lamentable.

VIII. A Brief Account of the Practices of the Various Schools

Although this association is a Mind-Seal practice center devoted specifically to the Heart-of-Heart Dharma, it also propagates Chan, Pure Land, and the other schools. Here is a brief account of their methods of practice: first, the Pure Land Dharma gate; second, the dhyāna Dharma gate; and third, the Heart-of-Heart Dharma gate.

The Pure Land Dharma Gate

Throughout forty-nine years of teaching, the Buddha's many skillful means serve to gather the mind into oneness, until even oneness cannot be grasped. These means free beings from suffering and respond to their capacities; there is no fixed method. Buddha-remembrance is one such skillful means and must not be confined to oral recitation of the name. Inwardly contemplating one's own nature, studying sūtras and treatises, walking, standing, sitting, lying down, and dealing with others—all can be Buddha-remembrance.

For hundreds and thousands of years, many have practiced Buddha-recitation, yet few have attained realization. There are five reasons: first, they do not understand what kind of mindfulness this mindfulness is, or what the Buddha is; second, they seek an easy advantage and cannot endure hardship; third, they do not understand the essential point of mind, and their strength is insufficient; fourth, they divide into schools and factions, giving rise to views of purity and impurity; fifth, they have not obtained the key to the Dharma gate of holding the name.

First understand who it is that recites the Buddha's name, and who it is that suffers, becomes confused, and wanders through birth and death all day. Then undertake Buddha-recitation. When the mind-ground is clear, I am not apart from the Buddha, nor is the Buddha apart from me. Buddha and self share one light; essence and function are one in suchness. Everywhere is Pure Land; every place is the West. Through diligent effort in this way, rebirth in the West is not difficult; nonretrogression can certainly be realized in this very life.

Pure Land practice requires dual cultivation, not single cultivation. What is single cultivation? It is to believe only in Amitābha Buddha of the West, make vows oneself for rebirth there, rely on the Buddha to come and guide one, yet make no effort oneself to reform and remove habitual tendencies. This is called single cultivation.

What is dual cultivation? It is to understand one's own original mind-ground: its light is immeasurable, its life is immeasurable, and it is nondual with Amitābha. In the communion of response and resonance, the ten directions are entirely the West. Everywhere, if this mind is present, the Buddha comes without coming, and I go without going. There is no distinction between self and other face to face. Morning and evening, here it is; the Sahā world does not differ from the West. Every utterance is Buddha-recitation; there is no one able to recite and nothing recited. Water does not leave the fish, yet the fish forgets the water. Without establishing a view of Amitābha or a view of purity and impurity, one is at once reborn. This is dual cultivation.

But if one speaks of it while the mind does not put it into practice, clings to the name, and does not contemplate with the mind, this is called single cultivation. When mind and speech correspond, this is called dual cultivation. In fact, dual

cultivation is easy and single cultivation difficult. Dual cultivation brings freedom and ease, whereas single cultivation is laborious. Dual cultivation decisively brings rebirth; single cultivation will certainly bear no fruit. Only such practice is right cultivation and right conduct.

Before practicing Buddha-recitation, however, one must possess several prerequisites: first, one must recognize what the Pure Land is; second, one must understand the meaning of the three characters in A-mi-tuo, the Chinese transcription of Amitābha, and what it is in oneself that is reborn in the Pure Land; third, one must understand the stages of the Dharma gate of cultivation. If these three matters are not understood, then even if one holds the name ten thousand times, one is merely like a parrot learning human speech, entirely useless. This is what is called being turned by the sūtra, rather than turning the sūtra.

The Pure Land has both the Pure Land of principle and the Pure Land of phenomena. The Pure Land of phenomena is the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss, a Buddha-land that truly possesses the magnificence of its dependent and principal recompenses. The Pure Land of principle is the pure land of my own intrinsic nature. The mind pervades all places, and all are the West; the ten directions do not differ from the West. Therefore it is called perfect enlightenment.

Let us further explain the two characters Pure Land separately. Purity means sweeping away all habitual tendencies and being free from contamination. Land refers to the original mind-ground. The wondrous substance of my original awakening is also originally of immeasurable light, illuminating the lands of the ten directions without obstruction; its life too is immeasurable and boundless, identical and nondual with the Buddha. Amitābha and I have never truly been separated by coming and going. In delusion, they are ten thousand miles apart: the West becomes Avīci. In awakening, they are but an inch apart: Avīci itself is the West. Thus the sūtra says, “If one wishes to purify one’s land, one must first purify one’s mind; as one’s mind is purified, so is the Buddha-land purified.”

In this explanation, A-mi-tuo, the Chinese transcription of Amitābha, signifies suchness that is unmoving, neither arising nor ceasing—the treasury-nature of Vairocana, of great freedom and ease. Here a signifies non-arising; mi signifies my great freedom and ease; and tuo signifies suchness that is unmoving. Since the wondrous mind of perfect enlightenment, my fundamental essence, is identical with Amitābha, “rebirth” is only an expedient expression used of necessity. Since there is neither coming nor going, why speak of going? Since there is neither arising nor ceasing, why speak of birth? Thus, that which is reborn is not my physical body of appearances, but my Tathāgata-garbha nature, which has always been without arising, ceasing, coming, or going—constant and unchanging. The four matters of faith, vows, practice, and realization are set forth below.

First, faith does not mean merely believing that the West is a magnificent Buddha-land and thereby counting as having faith. One must also deeply believe that one's own intrinsic nature is Amitābha, that one can originally become a Buddha in the same way, that all people can become Yao and Shun, and that all sentient beings can become Buddhas. The only difference is between delusion and awakening.

This faith is exceedingly difficult. If one's faith does not turn back, then with a single thought of pure faith one has already planted every good root in the presence of immeasurable millions of Buddhas and has gone beyond the state of ordinary beings. Therefore, unless one's faith is true, firm, and earnest, the power of one's vows will not be strong. The ancient worthies said: It is easy to believe in Buddhas as fruition, such as believing that Śākyamuni, Amitābha, and the other Buddhas are Buddhas. It is difficult to believe in Buddhas as causes—that all sentient beings and oneself can become Buddhas at the causal stage. Therefore this is called the Dharma difficult to believe. The sūtra says, "Upon first arousing the mind, one immediately attains great awakening." Thus faith is the mother of all practices.

Second, vows means making vows; a vow is an aspiration. What is the work of a person of learning? It is said: to uphold one's aspiration. To make vows is to establish an aspiration; to vow to become a Buddha is to establish the unsurpassed aspiration. But if one concentrates solely on vowing for rebirth in the West, admiring its meritorious adornments of form, one has not yet departed from greedy attachment and has not truly made vows.

The sūtra says: "Those who delight in lesser dharmas are attached to the views of self, person, sentient being, and life span; therefore they cannot hear, receive, read, or recite this sūtra." Thus one's vows must be great. Great vows bring great attainment; small vows bring small attainment. To hold a great thing, one must have a great vessel. To attain such meritorious adornments, one must make great vows, saying: "I now vow to be reborn in that land in order to become a Buddha myself and to liberate all sentient beings, not out of greed for gain." This is genuine vow-making. Therefore the sūtra contains three instances of "one should make vows."

Third, practice means cultivation. Cultivation does not mean merely holding the name. One should at all times grow weary of and renounce birth and death, and in every thought remain mindful of Amitābha. Hold the name with the mouth and keep it in mind continuously and seamlessly; then one attains the state of the yoga of the three mysteries. As pure dharmas gain strength, defiled dharmas lose strength. One can refrain from thoughts of greed, anger, and ignorance because mindfulness of Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha has gained strength. If one does not think of this, one must think of that; if one does not think of the Western Pure Land, one thinks of hell.

It is as easy as turning one's hand over. The hand is not two; how could the mind be different? It is present at this very moment—there is no need for hesitation. With such single-minded and sincere cultivation, for one day up to seven days, the mind will not become inverted; and even a mind that is not inverted cannot be obtained. Naturally, one attains one-pointedness of mind without distraction. One mind is no mind; when mind cannot be obtained, this is right cultivation.

Moreover, cultivation is the breaking of the turbidity of views. If one holds a view of purity, then a view of impurity immediately arises in opposition; this cannot be called practice. The sūtra says: "This Dharma is equal, without high or low." The Buddha taught this Pure Land Dharma gate as a skillful means for sentient beings, yet he did not permit the view of sentient beings. Because Mañjuśrī held a view of Buddha, he was even reproached with being sent to the Iron Enclosure. Therefore, if one's views are impure, one's mind is impure; and if the mind is impure, the land is impure. Thus faith must be firm and vows great; only when they are joined together is there right practice. It is not merely holding the name that is called practice.

A single utterance of Amitābha suddenly transcends the grave sins of birth and death accumulated through eighty billion kalpas. The prior and later limits are both cut off; the workings of mind are hidden. It is originally the Dharma of non-arising and also the unsurpassed esoteric vehicle.

The sūtra version translated by Master Xuanzang emphasizes right mindfulness and contemplation, whereas the version translated by Master Kumārajīva emphasizes holding the name. In fact, they are nondual: when one contemplates, one does not depart from oral recitation; when one recites orally, one does not depart from the activity of mind. The ancients gave equal weight to contemplation and recitation; they were not like people today, who obstinately cling to one side and cannot adapt. Esoteric Buddhism explains Amitābha in four ways: superficial and abbreviated, profound and secret, secret within the secret, and profound secret within the secret. Yet these amount to no more than the meaning that Amitābha of the West and Amitābha of one's own intrinsic nature are identical and nondual. Thus a single utterance of Amitābha is originally Esoteric Buddhism; the traditions cannot be split into mutually exclusive camps.

Fourth, realization means actual realization: realization is the thorough comprehension gained when mind and states are experienced as one. The sūtra says, "Only a Buddha together with a Buddha can fully realize and know." This means mind seals mind: only one oneself knows, and others cannot fathom it. Moreover, realization follows the three of faith, vows, and practice. As one cultivates faith, vows, and practice, so is one's realization. If one thoroughly understands the empty characteristics of all dharmas, then in terms of principle there is naturally no cultivation, attainment, or realization. But when principle and phenomena are

perfectly integrated, how could cultivation ever be abandoned? When one cultivates, realization is contained within it.

The Dharma gate of Buddha-recitation relies on the Buddha's power. But if one's power to call upon the Buddha is weak, the Buddha's responding power is likewise weak. For ten years I practiced Buddha-recitation, yet from beginning to end I did not dare believe that I had a firm grasp. In the autumn of the eighteenth year of the Republic, after practicing the Heart-of-Heart Dharma, I returned to Buddha-recitation and only then understood its subtle wonder and awakened to the meaning and state of avaivartika. One-pointedness of mind without distraction must certainly be achieved in ordinary times; it can never be arranged at the last moment.

Therefore, in addition to the Dharma gate of Buddha-recitation, one should investigate Esoteric Buddhism as a principal support; its states are truly inconceivable. I acknowledge my former many faults: I stubbornly divided Pure Land and Esoteric Buddhism into separate schools, a fault equal to slandering the Buddha. When the Buddha was alive, there was originally no division between Chan and Esoteric Buddhism. Later generations temporarily made distinctions as an expedient, in order to seek single-mindedness; they did not deliberately establish sectarian boundaries.

The ultimate source is not two, though skillful means have many gates. If one stubbornly clings to one's own views and strictly differentiates sectarian boundaries, one remains attached. How then can one attain liberation?

Consider this: when one realizes the tolerance of the non-arising of dharmas, even mind does not exist. Who is there to make distinctions? Who is there to realize? In his prayer of aspiration, Master Lianchi wrote, "May I behold Amitābha Buddha amid Chan contemplation and in the state of dreams," and so forth. How could he have been one who rejected the Chan school? People today rigidly insist that they will practice nothing but Pure Land and oppose Esoteric Buddhism, yet they themselves recite the Rebirth Mantra.

Therefore, holding to the Buddha's name is one of the expedient methods for cultivating the Pure Land. All dharmas are Buddhadharma; by cultivating every wholesome dharma, one attains unsurpassed bodhi. How could it be that, if one cultivates another method, Amitābha would not permit one to be reborn? Now, using the single phrase "Amitābha," recite until the myriad dharmas return to the One; then recite until even the One is unobtainable. Only then is accomplishment attained.

Even if one practices another method, one may attain accomplishment in the same way; yet one's aspiration and vow toward the West must not be divided. When recitation reaches the point at which one thought is no thought, this is called true

recitation; when a single mark is markless, this is called true suchness. Upon seeing true suchness, the mind naturally has no thoughts to which it is bound. Freedom from binding thoughts is liberation. The sūtras say that liberation is the Tathāgata and is nirvāṇa. Practitioners must never resign themselves to being inferior and limited, thinking that this cannot possibly be accomplished in this life. Still less may they regard others as likewise inferior and limited. To hold such a view is arrogant conceit; it shows that one does not understand the Pure Land and will certainly be unable to attain rebirth there.

In the method of Buddha-recitation, beginners should recite in unison with the assembly, with their pitch harmonizing with that of the group. There is no need to voice every character aloud. Use the breath method to regulate and tame the mind; whenever you pause to change or rest the breath, mental recitation should nevertheless remain unbroken.

First, one should harmonize one's voice with that of the assembly. Next, reciting with a smaller group is better than reciting with a large group, and reciting alone is better than reciting with a small group. Reciting the six-character name is not as good as reciting the four-character name, and reciting the four characters is not as good as reciting one character. The original sound of Namo Amitābha Buddha is Namo Amitābha Buddhāya. In principle, it should be recited only after formal transmission, no different from practicing Esoteric Buddhism.

What is meant by emphasizing one syllable is to stress one syllable among the four, for example the tuo syllable; this creates space for visualization and is most effective. Moreover, the time spent in Buddha-recitation must not be too long. What is best is for each thought-moment of recitation to remain unbroken. Ideally, recite for fifteen minutes and then meditate for fifteen minutes, alternating visualization and recitation.

People today prize large numbers and regard a loud voice as superior. They do not even distinguish what merit and virtue are, foolishly treating the merit of Buddha-recitation as though it were paper money deposited in a treasury. Their stupidity is beyond comparison.

For the moment, let us provisionally establish a scale of merit and virtue: when Buddha-recitation becomes one degree proficient, that is one degree of merit and virtue; when one receives ten degrees of benefit, that is ten degrees of merit and virtue; when one removes one degree of habitual tendency, that is one degree of merit and virtue; when one removes ten degrees of habitual tendency, that is ten degrees of merit and virtue. Proficiency lies in one's own mind, and one's own mind is the treasure house. If one says that realizing the mind and seeing one's true nature is merit and virtue, then practitioners of the Heart-of-Heart Dharma, after

completing one thousand meditation sessions and being instructed in how to bring it into function, will surely know for themselves the subtle wonder of the Pure Land Dharma. I previously wrote a book entitled Amitābha Mind Essentials, which may be consulted.

Cultivating the Dharma Gate of Chan Meditation

The Chan school is a special transmission outside the teachings, beyond the reach of words and expression. It employs only mind-seal, yet there is no mind that can be sealed. Without outward evidence, how could there be authentication? Therefore, the Buddha held up a flower to reveal the potential, and Mahākāśyapa responded with a smile. It does not fall into verbal formulations or into annihilationism, but directly realizes the essential point of mind: Mahāprajñāpāramitā. Those who are not of the very highest capacities cannot comprehend and awaken to it.

The one teaching in which the people of the East may take pride before the whole world is Chan. Students of this school possess minds that are lively, free, and at ease, while their spirit is lofty, unrestrained, and graceful. Though the mind sweeps away existence and ranges freely in emptiness, it does not fall into nihilism; though their practice is single-minded and pure, they do not delight in pedantic attachment. Because they possess such Dharma vessels, they can receive it.

When Bodhidharma, the First Patriarch, came to the East, the proper causes and conditions had already matured. What he transmitted was no separate dharma: he merely pointed directly to seeing one's original nature. Free from thoughts, one attains it; he taught people to realize it directly for themselves. Only after the Song dynasty did the method of huatou arise, such as investigating, "Who was I before my parents gave birth to me?"

By the Ming dynasty, the Chan school was gradually declining. Chan masters such as Dufeng first introduced Buddha-recitation. This recitation meant right mindfulness and contemplation: practitioners were taught to investigate, "Who is it that recites the Buddha's name?" Gradually, Chan and Pure Land were cultivated together. Later generations further turned huatou into chanting and reading, without understanding the school's essential intent. Thus, they shifted from biased emptiness into wild abandon and came to be rejected by the world. More recently, people have even abandoned Chan altogether, like giving up eating for fear of choking; or they openly attack it vehemently, declaring that everyone in the world is of dull faculties in the Dharma-ending age and that entering the Chan school is like encountering snakes and scorpions. Is not such rebellious arrogance deplorable?

They do not understand that, as practitioners proceed from the ordinary to the noble, Dharma gates may indeed be immeasurable, but their ultimate return to the source is not two. Without arriving at Chan, one cannot be called ultimate. What are

called the most secret and unsurpassed Pure Land are all meditation. When not a single thought arises, this is called Chan; when one sits and sees one's original nature, this is called meditative stability. Only on reaching this state can one be called truly pure; only then is it supremely esoteric.

For people of the very highest and sharpest capacities, entering is like stepping through the door into a room: one push, and they are inside. But people of dull faculties stand somewhat farther from the room and must be led in gradually. How could there be a fixed method for leading them in? Before the time has come when they can be pushed, even a hundred or a thousand pushes will leave them outside the room. A blow or a shout may bring sudden awakening; a single abrupt cry may do the same—but only when it meets the right person at the right moment.

Therefore, the Chan school places great importance on teachers and students, and on expediently guiding people in. People of modern times have capacities that are too slight: the hardships of livelihood are heavy, their obstacles are too thick, and they have no leisure for single-minded cultivation. They lack both teachers and conditions, and their own strength and circumstances are ultimately insufficient. They should rely on the Buddha's power, using Pure Land or Esoteric Buddhism as a preliminary guide. Once their potential has opened, they are then pressed onward step by step, until they reach the end of the mountains and waters, where the road is cut off and the valley ends. Then they will naturally awaken with complete clarity and personally see the original landscape.

Without undergoing a great death, one cannot attain a great birth. Only after one has awakened with vast clarity may one be permitted to consult the recorded sayings, polishing and refining one's realization until it is bright and pure. Before penetrating the three barriers, one must not be lightly approved. As for all the teaching and guiding methods within the school, customs have differed from the Tang and Song dynasties until now; how could they be copied rigidly? Such cases as "the cypress tree in the courtyard" and "three jin of flax" could point and guide according to the occasion because those objects were then present. Thus, if one says that Chan practice has a fixed method, it can no longer be called Chan.

Today the Buddha teaches a fixed dharma, and tomorrow he teaches a non-fixed dharma. Non-Buddhists are alarmed and frightened, considering it a perilous path; how could they be addressed concerning the supreme Dharma? Since the Heart-of-Heart Dharma has become available in the world, entering the Chan school has become most direct and expedient. If one practices according to the Dharma, success may be assured. Yet this is something one knows for oneself, as one knows cold and warmth. First take dhāraṇī as the method and prajñā as the verification, thereby adorning one's own Pure Land. This is true Chan practice.

Cultivating the Heart-of-Heart Dharma Gate

The great Heart-of-Heart Dharma is the highest formless Esoteric Vehicle. Those who lack a spirit of great fearlessness would not dare to believe in it and practice it. In Tibet, one must first cultivate form-based esoteric practice for twenty years or more before one may practice this Dharma. But people of the East have different capacities and may proceed directly to profound cultivation.

When this Dharma is first practiced, the responsibility rests with the teacher: without examination, it must not be transmitted casually. Around 1928 and 1929, Acharya Dayu established centers in Beijing, Shanghai, and other places. At that time, fifty or sixty thousand people sought the Dharma, and several hundred received transmission each day. There was no time to discuss the essential points of the Dharma in detail, so the world came to regard it as ordinary Esoteric Buddhism. More than half discontinued their practice midway or gave rise to doubt and slander. Of those who maintained unwavering faith, received close personal instruction, and gained some understanding of the essential point, fewer than two hundred remain today.

At present, Master Dayu has retired into seclusion at Hángāo and has temporarily withdrawn from worldly ties. He has instructed fellow disciples in various places to spread and teach the Dharma. Though I possess only a superficial understanding, I presumptuously take the seat and form with you all this unsurpassed and excellent affinity. I feel deeply ashamed.

Fortunately, during the past two years all the practitioners have received benefit, Dharma affinities have flourished day by day, Chan and Esoteric Buddhism have come together, and this land has become pure. Thus, all past doubts and slanders concerning the Heart-of-Heart Dharma will also, through your personal realization, melt away of themselves without argument. How could the merit and virtue involved for future practitioners be conceived or measured? There is in fact no need to restate the practice of the Heart-of-Heart Dharma, but to facilitate those who come later and benefit later students, it seems necessary to explain it in detail.

In terms of its classification, the Heart-of-Heart Dharma belongs to the Esoteric division. Yet it enables practitioners to realize directly the mind-field, and thus also connects with Chan and Pure Land; it fuses Chan, Pure Land, and Esoteric Buddhism in a single crucible. It breaks all attachment to dharmas and reaches the utmost ultimate ground. Its ritual procedures are also extremely simple: there is no need to prepare the various offerings. Regardless of sex, age, or social status, anyone able to sit for two hours may practice it and may attain meditative stability within a set period.

Meditative stability naturally gives rise to wisdom. Therefore, one cannot discuss the essential point of mind with those who have not sat for more than one hundred sessions, enabling them to understand the essence and bring it into function. The wonder of this Dharma lies in suddenly opening into clarity amid darkness and complete lack of interest, personally seeing true suchness and realizing samādhi. Because each person's habitual tendencies differ, the speed of their responses and the appearances that arise also differ accordingly. Therefore, during practice, one should remain close to teachers and Dharma friends in order to ask questions and consult them. Otherwise, having barely attained meditative stability and encountered an experience, one may suddenly become doubtful and cease sitting. This is an extremely common problem.

In cultivating the Heart-of-Heart Dharma, the emphasis lies on tempering the mind through circumstances after leaving the meditation seat. By the power of wisdom's illumination, see that everything is illusory, and the mind will naturally be without attachment. Without attachment is non-abiding; non-abiding is what is called no-thought. It does not mean that one neither sees nor hears. This Dharma is the unsurpassed wondrous method for gathering in the mind: from realizing the mind, one empties circumstances; from emptying circumstances, one empties the mind; from emptying the mind, one empties emptiness itself; from emptying emptiness, one reveals one's nature; from revealing one's nature, one attains complete illumination; and from complete illumination, one reaches lucid quiescence. Thus one enters the supremely subtle realm of the Heart-of-Heart.

The cultivation of the Heart-of-Heart Dharma may be roughly divided into five periods: first, the period of completing the six mudrās; second, the period of continuing to practice; third, the period of seven-day retreats; fourth, the period of completing one thousand meditation sessions; and fifth, the period of letting go and practicing no further. This Dharma requires at most one thousand sessions. If one refuses to let it go after that, one develops the illness of attachment to dharmas. Yet after completing the six mudrās, some people refuse to sit further. These two kinds of people are the most numerous, and this is greatly regrettable.

The root illness of sentient beings lies only in habitual tendencies. Unless their root is removed, the work is not thorough. This root lies latent within one's nature; the Heart-of-Heart indicates that nature. In the initial cultivation of this Dharma, one seeks meditative stability. Attaining stability is its essence; from stability, wisdom arises, and the arising of wisdom is its function.

Cultivating stillness while seated is essence; cultivating contemplation after rising is function. As stillness and contemplation advance together, samādhi and wisdom support each other, and essence and function are unified. Great essence gives rise to great function; limited essence, to limited function. Yet practitioners often fail to

put realization to work. They meditate for two hours daily but neglect investigation and reflective awareness in ordinary life. With little result, they begin to question whether the method is ultimate. It is like sharpening a knife but never using it: without knowing whether it is sharp or dull, they blame the sharpening and give rise to mistaken personal views. How regrettable!

The cultivation of the Heart-of-Heart Dharma differs greatly from other Dharma gates. At the beginning, it is easy to attain meditative stability, but midway through practice one may instead feel increasingly disordered. This is precisely the time of great progress, and practitioners must never become doubtful and retreat. It is like two bowls of muddy water: in one, leave it still and unmoving, so that the mud settles and the water naturally becomes clear. Though the result appears quickly, it is not ultimate; with the slightest disturbance, it becomes turbid again.

In the other, gradually remove the mud. Naturally, there is much stirring; but the more it is stirred, the more mud is removed. Once it has been stirred until thoroughly clean, one need no longer fear disturbance or overturning. It is also like a sick person who, after taking medicine, must undergo reactions such as sweating, vomiting, and diarrhea before the illness is eliminated.

When worldly people seek meditative stability, they often regard rigidly remaining motionless as stability. This is stillness, not meditative stability. Meditative stability means being equally at ease in stillness and activity, with stability and disturbance not two. Whatever circumstances may appear—gain and loss, defamation and praise, commendation and ridicule, suffering and pleasure—when the eight worldly winds arrive, receive them without being stained; remain unchanged and unmoved. This is right meditative stability.

The Heart-of-Heart Dharma can truly be cultivated to such states. Yet those of inferior wisdom will surely stare in astonishment and exclaim, “This is the realm of the Buddha. How could ordinary beings like us possibly achieve it? This must be the deluded inversion of a mad demon; he does not know his own limits,” and so forth. Those who hear such words will certainly become doubtful, withdraw, and cease to study, thereby harming themselves through inaction. This is merely a human failing and must absolutely be avoided. Practitioners should have a valiant spirit and a spirit of adventure. There is no easy gain without labor in this world—how much less in studying Buddhism!

Japanese Esoteric Buddhism and Tibetan Esoteric Buddhism emphasize form-based practice, with extremely strict ritual procedures, majestic Buddha images, and considerable expense. The Heart-of-Heart Dharma alone is not constrained by any of these things and does not require a particular place. As long as one practices in

accordance with the Dharma and completes the required time, one can attain accomplishment. Patiently quiet the breath; there is no other method.

First, do not seek spiritual powers. Second, do not seek visions of light or Buddhas. Should any states appear before you, do not rejoice in them, nor doubt or fear them. Regard them as products of illusion and ignore them altogether. Do not be impatient while sitting. If someone comes to disturb you, or a child cries, do not become annoyed or resentful. Whenever something runs contrary to your wishes, use it to train the mind and transform its accumulated habits. Whenever annoyance or resentment arises, give rise instead to joy. After long habituation, this will become natural, and the light of equal wisdom will manifest.

In practicing the Dharma, reverence and earnestness are paramount. Reverence keeps one from being careless, and earnestness enables one to endure; thus samādhi will not be difficult to attain. After leaving the meditation cushion, lively contemplation is paramount. Liveliness can dissolve rigid habitual tendencies, and contemplation can examine the depth or shallowness of one's daily practice; thus functioning will not be difficult to bring forth.

Thereafter, in assessing the capacities of others, one will likewise become increasingly skilled through this practice, and the wisdom eye will open without one's being aware of it. To attain samādhi and realize the essence, one may rely on the Dharma, for it has mantra and mudrā. But the opening of wisdom and the arising of function depend entirely on oneself; one must constantly contemplate and practice. Take great care not to become lax. Modern practitioners may practice for many years while their afflictions remain unchanged. This is the fault of refusing to practice bringing forth function. They mistakenly regard worldly dharmas and Buddhadharma as two wholly separate things. The Sixth Patriarch said, "Buddhadharma is in the world; awakening is not apart from the world." If one does not rely on external circumstances to train the mind, one will go far astray.

For those who practice this Dharma, the essential point is that the mind not become lax; it does not lie in damaging the body or undergoing suffering. Therefore, among precepts, the precept of mind is foremost. Holding a mudrā with the hands is the secret of body; thus bodily karma such as killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct does not arise. Holding a mantra in the mouth is the secret of speech; thus verbal karma such as divisive speech and other evils does not arise. When the mind is clear and empty, this is the secret of mind; thus mental karma such as greed, anger, and ignorance does not arise.

This is the precept of non-precept: it restrains those who are unaware. Contemplation after leaving the meditation cushion, realizing emptiness, is precisely the prevention of potential faults and the stopping of evil at the causal stage; it is

restraint before evil arises. Killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct are results; at the causal stage, they belong to greed, anger, and ignorance. Yet greed, anger, and ignorance are themselves results, whose causal ground is not realizing the mind. Therefore, the Heart-of-Heart Dharma directly realizes vajra prajñā. It is the supreme wondrous gate for awakening to the mind and uprooting fundamental karmic obstacles.

Among Dharma gates of practice, actual practice is primary; merely discoursing on doctrine is entirely useless. In Esoteric Buddhism, one not only practices personally but also relies on the Buddha's power, and thus has a sure basis. One cultivates the three virtues of precepts, samādhi, and wisdom, entering into them without consciously knowing it.

Chan and Esoteric Buddhism have always differed from other schools. They begin practice with ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna), tracing from fruition back to cause, and first realize the great perfect mirror wisdom—the so-called fundamental wisdom, that is, non-discriminating wisdom—also called formless siddhi.

The Platform Sūtra of the Sixth Patriarch also discusses this briefly. For the Heart-of-Heart Dharma, eligibility does not depend on how long or deeply one has practiced before. The practitioner must be examined by the empowerment teacher; even someone unable to read or entirely new to practice may receive transmission. Nor is a particular location required: one may sit and practice anywhere, without necessarily entering a ritual maṇḍala or preparing many offerings. The ritual implements and procedures of Tibetan Esoteric Buddhism are beyond the means of ordinary people; this method is convenient in that respect.

When practicing the Heart-of-Heart Dharma, one is temporarily not permitted to consult sūtras or treatises, lest they divide the mind. Even sūtras one has previously studied or read must be set aside for the time being. After completing one hundred meditation sessions and realizing samādhi, the essential point of the mind will be opened, and one's understanding and state of mind will naturally differ. When one takes up the sūtras again, one will certainly encounter an entirely different realm. At this time, one should constantly draw near to good teachers, who can provide guidance and correction. Only after thorough awakening may one read the sūtras, so that one is not turned by them.

Originally, Tibetan Esoteric Buddhism had no Red and Yellow schools. The esoteric teachings of the Red school were considered the most complete, but their efficacy was so great as to verge on the mysterious. When they were transmitted to unsuitable persons, harmful abuses proliferated. Tsongkhapa, patriarch of the Yellow school, had no choice but to come forward and reform its teachings. Yet although the old abuses were eliminated, new problems arose.

Because everything studied had to follow a fixed sequence and could not exceed prescribed periods, the system became too rigid. It prevented those of sharp faculties from attaining accomplishment quickly, which is greatly regrettable. For example, in Tibet one must practice such teachings as the formless esoteric vehicle and the Heart-of-Heart Dharma for twelve to twenty years. Although this is the prescribed rule, people differ in the sharpness or dullness of their capacities; some may waste their time and be unable to proceed directly to profound cultivation.

Although lamas may themselves have deep practice, they cannot fully understand the capacities of people in the Eastern lands. Qualified teachers are too scarce; therefore, the esoteric vehicle received in the Eastern lands consists only of outward forms and has not reached its profound essentials. Recently, only Master Nona has taught the formless esoteric practice and gradually provided guidance. Among all the lamas, he alone understood the Heart-of-Heart Dharma.

They do not know that the Heart-of-Heart Dharma is inherently present in both Japanese and Tibetan Esoteric Buddhism. It is the Buddha's authentic transmission, not the private invention of any individual.

Before practicing, understand the method's meaning, keep its fundamental purpose in mind, and do not be led astray by the method itself. Esoteric practice receives the Buddhas' empowering blessings, a tremendous aid, like an airplane that helps a traveler. Yet the traveler must still start it. To suppose the Buddha can make someone a Buddha is like expecting an airplane to take off by itself merely because one is sitting in it. Does that make sense? The foremost habitual fault of esoteric practitioners is to seek mystery and depend entirely on the Buddha.

They do not put themselves into motion. Favoring ritual procedures without understanding the mind's essential point, they leave their own mind-ground unclear and their habitual tendencies unresolved. The airplane never takes off. After ten years of esoteric study, their afflictions remain; despite seeking countless teachings, their suffering is unchanged. Can the method fairly be blamed? What are the three mysteries? Body, speech, and mind. Where do they lead? To purity. A pure mind-ground is clear evidence of benefit. For a patient taking medicine, efficacy matters; why argue over the medicine's rank? Several further points deserve attention in esoteric practice.

1. In holding a mantra, accurate pronunciation is the foremost principle. Whenever one receives a mantra, after reciting it until moderately familiar with it, one should again ask the empowerment master to correct its pronunciation and intonation. The characters and phrases have rules concerning stress, lightness, divisions, and whether sounds are joined or separated; each must be carefully studied. One must

not merely resemble the sound but also embody its spirit. With familiarity, it will become natural.

2. Offerings such as incense, flowers, water, and lamps are all symbolic teachings. Their purpose is to bring one's own Vairocana Buddha-nature into accord with the Buddha. Incense symbolizes freedom from impurity; flowers symbolize wondrous functioning; water symbolizes limpid purity; and lamps symbolize light. All symbolize the tathāgata-garbha nature of oneself and sentient beings, adorned with wondrous virtues and nondual with the Buddha. Contemplate that you yourself are also a Buddha. The main emphasis lies in the mind-ground; hence it is said, "Mind, Buddha, and sentient beings: the three are without distinction." During practice, these form-based methods are borrowed temporarily for no more than gathering in the mind.

3. Ritual procedures have their established Dharma gates; one must never devise them according to one's own ideas. This emphasizes transmission from a teacher. Practice according to the periods and number of sessions prescribed by the teacher, concentrating single-mindedly on one gate and penetrating deeply into it; one will certainly gain something. If one aims too high, hankers after the distant, and changes course whenever one sees something different, one will inevitably attain nothing.

4. In practicing Esoteric Buddhism, one must avoid discussing the Dharma with practitioners of Exoteric Buddhism. Because their standpoints differ, misunderstandings are frequent, and these in turn often give rise to doubt and confusion, hindering diligent practice. Esoteric Buddhism and the Chan school generally begin with ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna): they first break through ignorance and then remove obscurations. Their foundations are simply different. Exoteric Buddhism regards breaking through ignorance as extremely difficult, requiring passage through three great asaṃkhyeya kalpas. Yet an asaṃkhyeya means an inexpressible span of time. One cannot assess Buddhist practice solely in terms of this lifetime, and there is no fixed time for either slowness or speed. Those attached to the marks of words cannot be spoken to about this.

In the present age, because the environment is unfavorable, people's minds increasingly tend toward unrest, and dealing with worldly affairs becomes ever more difficult. People commonly suffer from three deficiencies: first, weak and illness-prone bodies; second, a lack of meditative stability; third, weak powers of discernment. Because the body is weak, illnesses are frequent; all progress is impeded, while one's lifespan declines. One may die early in middle age or become disabled by illness, which is most regrettable.

The only remedy lies in cultivation and nourishment. Cultivation gathers in the mind and sees one's true nature; nourishment regulates the breath and calms the spirit.

When the mind has a master, the vital energy is naturally sufficient; essence is firm and spirit flourishes, so illness may be dispelled and life prolonged. Insufficient meditative stability largely arises from physical weakness. Only a strong body can endure exertion and engage in devout practice. When meditative stability is strong, wisdom is sufficient, and one's power of discernment naturally becomes broad and far-reaching.

Buddhadharma actively liberates sentient beings; it is not passively concerned only with one's own liberation. For elderly people, the road home is already near; they should practice swiftly and leave the paths of suffering early. The fourth mudrā of the Heart-of-Heart Dharma can bring rebirth in the Western Pure Land and assist the causal conditions for their Buddha-recitation and rebirth.

Middle-aged people are actively engaged in worldly affairs. If they feel their energy is insufficient or their meditative stability inadequate, and if they become anxious and timid when matters arise, thereby often mishandling affairs, the Heart-of-Heart Dharma can enable them to attain samādhi within a set period. Samādhi and wisdom support one another, with immense significance for the work of an entire lifetime.

Young people have insufficient powers of discernment, and their minds are easily unsettled. Once enticed by external objects, they fall into degradation. If they practice the Heart-of-Heart Dharma, their foundation can become firm; moreover, what enters first takes precedence, and the scope for developing their undertakings will be immeasurable. Therefore, everyone can practice this Dharma. Women at home who wish for less illness, suffering, and vexation will find practicing this Dharma an especially supreme and wondrous instruction. Alas, people today have scant blessings: receiving this Dharma is already extremely difficult, and how much more regrettable it is to receive it yet not practice it.

For those who practice the Heart-of-Heart Dharma, after completing one hundred meditation sessions, complexion and physical strength gradually improve. Its various benefits cannot be fully described. I shall now further explain the essential points of practice, though I can describe only one ten-thousandth of them. At the most subtle and profound level, none but one who has realized it personally can know it. You will soon be able to draw near to this unworthy teacher for further verification of realization, and your understanding will be more complete. The conditions lie ahead; where there is aspiration, there is accomplishment. Be at ease for a while.

First: Arouse a Vast Resolve

When beginners practice the most vast, supreme, perfect, and complete great Dharma of the Heart-of-Heart, they truly cannot accord with it unless they arouse a

vast resolve. The following ten points are briefly set forth:

1. With respect to the Dharma, one should give rise to pure faith. This is what is called right faith. The firmer one's faith, the less likely one is to retreat midway.

2. Arouse an impartial mind. From Buddhas above to sentient beings below, regard all as equally impartial. Toward those who do not practice the Dharma or who disparage it, do not give rise to arrogance, pride, or anger. Do not praise yourself, and do not look for the faults of others.

3. Do not form the mudrās you hold at improper times; do not use them when impure; and do not employ the Dharma for fame, reputation, profit, or gain.

4. Do not disparage the Dharma yourself by transmitting it carelessly, and do not disparage the Dharma of others. First put an end to your own disparagement, and do not cause others to disparage it. If others disparage it, that is the same as your own disparagement. Those who hold sectarian views are not disciples of the Buddha.

V. Keep the precepts without transgression; constantly gather the mind in samādhi; cultivate the precept against killing and all wholesome practices.

VI. Revere the Buddha, revere the teacher, and also revere spiritual friends. Do not give rise to jealousy or erroneous views toward fellow practitioners.

VII. At all times arouse a vast and expansive mind, taking the liberation of all sentient beings as your aim.

VIII. Let your resolve and faith be firm; do not shrink from toil or fatigue.

IX. Cultivate the six perfections to counteract all afflictive attachments: generosity counteracts stinginess, upholding the precepts counteracts greedy defilement, forbearance counteracts anger and evil, diligence counteracts laziness, dhyāna counteracts distraction, and prajñā counteracts unawareness.

X. Seek wisdom and insight wholeheartedly; first break through ignorance, and do not rashly seek spiritual powers.

Read these ten points once each day as a reminder, so that the mind does not become heedless.

Second: The Stages of Practice

I. Do not be hasty in taking your seat. First read the mantra text until you know it well; take your seat only after you can recite it from memory.

II. There are five methods of mantra recitation: (1) recitation while counting; (2) recitation without counting; (3) loud recitation—when dullness or sleepiness arises, recite aloud several dozen times; (4) soft recitation; and (5) vajra recitation, in which the mouth moves slightly without making a sound, while one hears oneself very clearly. When seated for practice, use vajra recitation.

III. The Six Mudrās:

(1) The Bodhicitta Mudrā is the king of all mudrās. When practicing it, one must especially avoid giving rise to anger.

(2) The Mudrā for Accomplishing Bodhicitta is specifically for eliminating karmic obstacles and removing all grave illnesses.

(3) The Mudrā of Direct Transmission of Bodhi: before forming this mudrā, first recite the Three Refuges—"I take refuge in the Buddha, I take refuge in the Dharma, I take refuge in the Saṅgha"—three times. Burn three kinds of incense: sandalwood, frankincense, and aloeswood, each separately. Those unable to obtain these may burn a single burner of other incense instead. Nor is it necessary to keep incense burning continuously for two hours, for during practice one should not smell fine incense, lest it disturb the vital energy.

(4) The Tathāgata-Mother Mudrā: before forming this mudrā, first recite "Homage to the Buddhas of the Ten Directions" seven times. Do not recite the mantra loudly; use vajra recitation.

(5) The Tathāgata Well-Gathered Dhāraṇī Mudrā: when practicing this mudrā, recite "Homage to All Buddhas of the Three Times" three times every morning, direct the mind toward the Ten Directions and take the Three Refuges, and burn incense as for the third mudrā.

(6) The Tathāgata-Speech Mudrā: before practicing, first recite the Three Refuges. When finished, release the mudrā above the crown of the head.

Practice each mudrā for eight sessions, that is, eight times. Complete the first mudrā before proceeding to the second, and continue in sequence. Each session lasts two hours: it may exceed the time, but must not fall short. You may practice two or three sessions a day, but be sure to gauge your own strength and never greedily undertake too much. Complete eight sessions for each mudrā. After completing all six mudrās in sequence, add one further session of the first mudrā; if any of the others was not practiced in accordance with the method, add one session for it as well. This completes the six mudrās, and one will never again enter the three lower realms.

After completing the six mudrās, you must not become heedless. Continue to practice one session daily, exclusively practicing the fourth mudrā. After approximately six or seven sessions, add one session of the second mudrā. If practicing three sessions daily, or five or six sessions daily during a seven-day retreat, practice the fourth mudrā in all sessions and the second mudrā in the final session. The remaining first, third, fifth, and sixth mudrās need no longer be practiced.

After any seven-day retreat in which you have practiced five or six sessions a day, if you judge your strength to be ample and are capable of vigorous progress, then on the fifteenth day of a long lunar month you may practice nine sessions, seeking to complete ten thousand recitations in one uninterrupted stretch. Do this once each month. On that day practice only the fourth mudrā, not the second; nevertheless, practice according to your strength. Those who practice one uninterrupted session daily will certainly realize the mind after one year. Those seeking speed may undertake three seven-day retreats, totaling three weeks, practice for three or four months, and regularly draw near to spiritual friends; they too may attain wisdom and insight.

IV. The six mudrās must not be practiced out of sequence. You must complete them in order before undertaking a seven-day retreat. Unless one has completed such a retreat, one may not sit for nine sessions or practice the samādhi mudrā. Before completing one thousand sessions, do not become heedless. Once one thousand sessions have been completed, further formal practice is unnecessary and serves no purpose; one need only apply it in daily life.

V. The most important points during practice are these: before two hours have elapsed, do not leave your seat, release the mudrā, stop reciting the mantra, or speak. Do not recite the mantra too quickly or too slowly; approximately twelve recitations per minute is the standard.

When taking your seat, do not attend to any other matter. Cover the mudrā with yellow cloth, disregard everything else, recite the mantra with the mouth, form the mudrā with the hands, and let the mind think of nothing. This is called the correspondence of the three mysteries. To practice until attaining the formless siddhi is accomplishment. The time of practice is unrestricted, though the best time is from five or six in the morning until seven or eight. In cold weather, do not practice too early. After each two-hour session, wholeheartedly make great vows and dedicate the merit to all sentient beings; this is of first importance.

After completing the six mudrās, you must recite the Maitreya mantra aloud forty-nine times each day and observe this for life. This is planting seeds at the causal

stage and differs from other mantras. During practice, it is most important to eat little. After eating, wait at least an hour and a half before taking your seat.

Third: Preparations for Practice

I. Offerings: in the center, offer one image of Śākyamuni Buddha, three cups of water, three mirrors, three halberds (or knives in their place), three incense burners, and three portions of food, such as fruit. Place two vases with flower offerings to the right and left, and light one lamp in the center. Those without the means may offer as much or as little as they wish.

If, after accomplishing the practice, you wish to perform a great ritual for the benefit of the public, set up three altars in three sections. The central and first section should be white, for practicing the Buddha Way; the upper and second section should be red, for practicing the bodhisattva way; and the lower and third section should be blue-green, for practicing the Vajra Path. Within the altar area, lay one carpet and mark a central circle, divided into white, red, and blue-green. From the center, each dimension should extend eight chi (traditional Chinese feet). These are offerings for the altar area; for ordinary daily practice, there is no need to set up an altar. This Dharma differs from other esoteric practices in that it does not depend on forms; thus even poor people may conveniently practice it themselves.

II. Personal equipment: (1) a square of yellow cloth to cover the mudrā; (2) a wound clock or watch, or incense in its place—each stick should burn for approximately two hours; (3) a spittoon; and (4) a blanket for covering the legs and a meditation cushion. The sitting portion of the cushion should preferably be six or seven cun (traditional Chinese inches) high. Cross the legs beneath you; full lotus is not required. For full lotus, the seat should be level and the rear cushion should not be high. For half lotus, the rear cushion may be raised two or three cun.

III. Precautions: (1) There must be no drafts from the windows. Do not take your seat in a windy or cold place, and do not wear a hat. The room should be slightly warm, but do not become overheated. (2) The door should not be locked, so people may come and go. It is advisable to ask someone to watch outside the door and attend to matters as needed. Even if a child cries loudly and causes disturbance, it does no harm; never become angry, but use it to train the mind not to be moved.

(3) Do not keep a kettle of water boiling in the room, nor cats or dogs, lest they cause disturbance. (4) Unless there is an extremely urgent matter, do not allow anyone to notify you, and do not leave your seat. Even if notification is necessary, it must be given quietly. (5) Relieve yourself and wash your hands before taking your seat. After leaving your seat, strictly avoid urinating within five minutes, lest it harm the vital energy.

Moreover, when taking your seat, drink little water and eat little porridge. Overeating readily causes dullness. In warm weather, you may practice barefoot. (6) When the practice period is complete, do not leave your seat hastily. First stretch your legs and arms, rub your palms, and massage your face to harmonize the blood and vital energy; then descend slowly. After leaving your seat, it is advisable to walk more.

(7) When sitting, do not raise the head too high, lest the mind become scattered; nor lower it too much, as this easily causes coughing. Do not lean the back against anything, for prolonged leaning may injure the lungs. Hold the mudrā at the chest; do not lie down. Keep both arms slightly close to the sides. Lower the eyes as though closed. Strictly avoid becoming dull, releasing the mudrā, and falling asleep. There is no need to prepare tea, for the mouth will not become thirsty. Keep the waist straight and still; do not repeatedly stretch and contract it, lest the waist become sore. When first sitting, minor discomforts may arise, but after a while one will settle. These are old illnesses surfacing, not new illnesses, so do not become anxious.

(8) If, while sitting, you suddenly seem to fall asleep but the mudrā does not come apart and mantra recitation does not stop, this is not dullness or sleep. It is precisely the sign of samādhi appearing. Do not doubt it and interrupt the practice.

E. What Constitutes Ultimate Accomplishment in Practice?

What does one practice to attain before it can be called ultimate accomplishment? First one must understand what one is practicing. The answer is: Buddhahood, that is, awakening. To pass from the ordinary to the noble is simply to turn from delusion to awakening, transform consciousness into wisdom, and open the Buddha's knowledge and vision. Yet Exoteric Buddhism holds that Buddhahood requires three great asaṃkhyeya kalpas; Esoteric Buddhism teaches attaining Buddhahood in this very life; the Chan school points directly to the source of mind and teaches immediate Buddhahood; and the Pure Land tradition teaches becoming a Buddha after rebirth in that land. Which should one follow? The answer is that each has its own standpoint and causes and conditions; this does not mean that the teachings differ in superiority, speed, or conflict. Let us discuss this briefly.

I. This discussion of Exoteric Buddhism concerns those who have not previously studied Buddhism. It is like first entering elementary school: one must spend a certain number of years before progressing through middle school and high school to university, and must spend further years there. One cannot skip grades and leap ahead at once. This is a provisional formulation based on principle. Asaṃkhyeya originally means an inexpressibly great number, and no fixed endpoint can be specified. Learning Buddhism necessarily extends across the three divisions of time.

Though one's study in this life may be shallow, because of causes and conditions from former lives, one may later surpass others or even enter university directly. It must not be limited by worldly, discriminating views. Moreover, Exoteric Buddhism relies on one's own power, so accomplishment is comparatively difficult; it cannot be discussed on the same temporal basis as Esoteric Buddhism.

II. Esoteric Buddhism relies on the Buddha's power and receives the empowerment of the three mysteries; this is the distinctive teaching of its own tradition. Just as a child cannot climb a mountain but relies on the mother's strength to carry them, so, because the causes and conditions differ, accomplishment can be attained in this very life.

III. The Chan school points directly to the source of mind, and one may suddenly awaken upon hearing the words. Such people are of the highest capacity; because they cultivated diligently in former lives, their causes and conditions are complete in this life. They enter the hall in a single step and therefore can become Buddhas immediately.

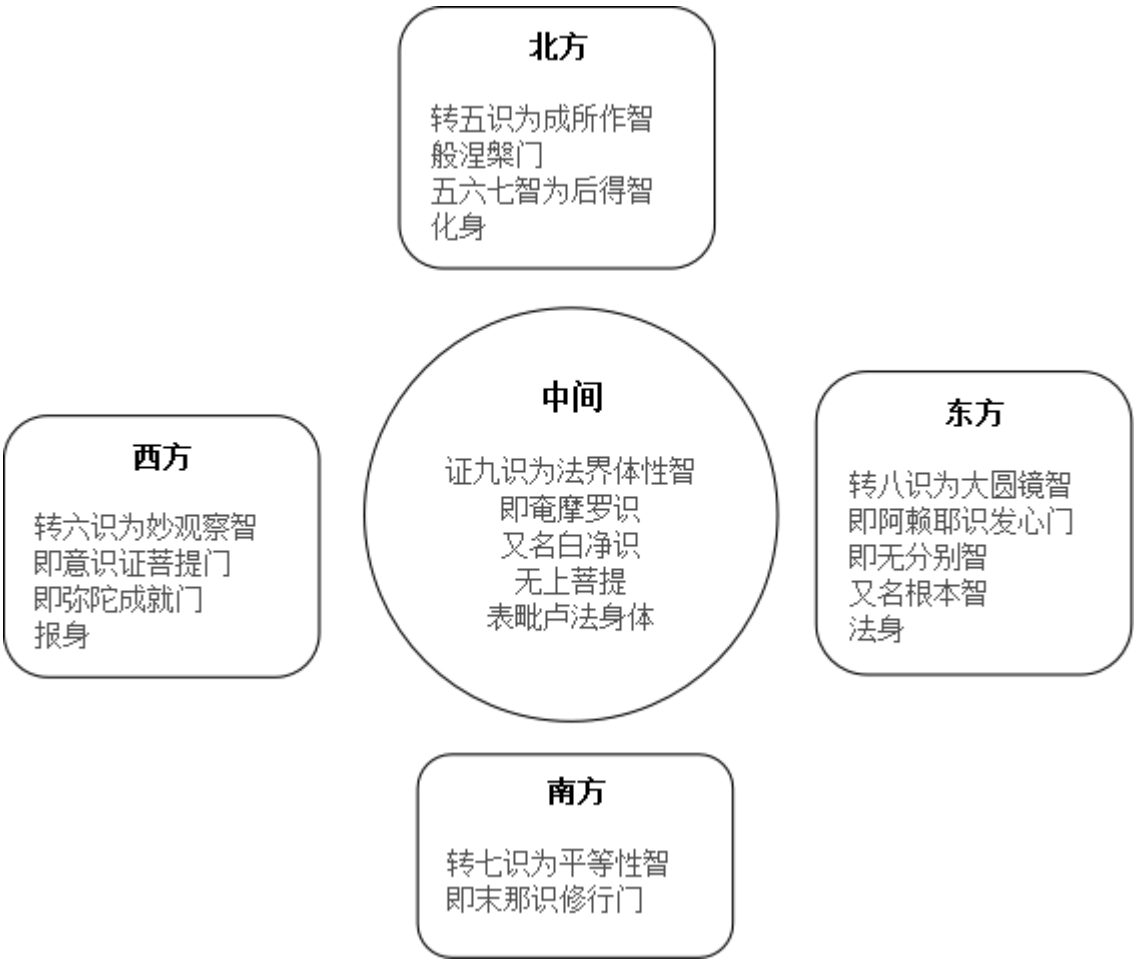
IV. The Pure Land method is originally Esoteric Buddhism. Its vows are directed exclusively toward the Western Pure Land, with rebirth there as its sole aim. One seeks only rebirth in the West, and naturally, when the lotus opens, one sees the Buddha. Its aspiration is not to see one's nature in this very life, but to complete one's training and graduate in another world. The Buddha's power upon which it relies is directed toward rebirth as its goal. To realize one's intrinsic Pure Land and attain purity and adornment is what becoming a Buddha means.

The Buddha taught the Pure Land Dharma gate so that those of superior capacity might realize it in this very life and bring the fruition stage to perfect completion; he also opened an easy and expedient Dharma gate for those of lesser capacity, enabling them to plant seeds at the causal stage. Yet present-day Pure Land practitioners have turned this supremely subtle and wondrous great Dharma of the Pure Land into a convenience for those of timid resolve and inferior wisdom. Those who are not vessels for this Dharma naturally find it difficult to receive it; some regard it as slow and circuitous, concerned only with their own liberation. This is deeply regrettable. In short, the Pure Land Dharma is no different from Chan or Esoteric Buddhism. Accomplishment through rebirth is certainly possible, and accomplishment in this very life is also possible; the causes and conditions simply differ.

V. The Chan and Esoteric schools begin their practices from fruition and seek out the cause, cultivating from ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna). They first reveal the dharmakāya and realize fundamental wisdom—that is, great perfect mirror wisdom, also called non-discriminating wisdom. Other schools begin from the cause and seek

the fruition, cultivating from the sixth and seventh consciousnesses. Their practices at the causal stage truly differ; therefore, the speed with which they realize fruition also differs. The Esoteric Buddhist chart of transforming the nine consciousnesses into the five wisdoms is set out below.

Chart of Transforming the Nine Consciousnesses into the Five Wisdoms



VI. The Chan and Esoteric schools first break through ignorance and afterward eliminate habitual tendencies. Often, the great matter has already been clarified while habitual tendencies remain. Yet their roots have already been loosened, and one has the power of wisdom's illumination; it is no longer like the former state of being deluded and unaware. Other schools are the reverse: they first eliminate habitual tendencies and wish to break through ignorance only after these tendencies have been purified. They do not know that before ignorance has been broken through, they are merely forcefully suppressing habitual tendencies and exerting effort to subdue them; this is not their eradication at the root. Though such practice may show results temporarily, in the long run the counterforce becomes strong, and it is as if one had not practiced at all. It is not thoroughgoing. At death, one often becomes confused and inverted; this is precisely the fault.

VII. The Chan and Esoteric schools regard breaking through ignorance and seeing one's true nature in this very life as Buddhahood. If one relies on the Buddha's power, this can indeed be realized in this life. To eliminate habitual tendencies completely, however, is not originally something that can be accomplished in one lifetime. Exoteric Buddhism, on the other hand, generally regards Buddhahood as attained only after ignorance has been broken through, the five spiritual powers have arisen, habitual tendencies have been completely eliminated, and everything has been perfected, as in the case of Śākyamuni Buddha. This is like planting a fruit tree: one party considers it accomplished when it first bears fruit.

The other considers it accomplished only when the fruit is ripe and edible, picked, and placed in a vessel. One has no temporal marks: before and after are nondual. The other clings to fixed forms and provisionally establishes stages. One has the strength to undertake it and regards it as only natural. The other is overly solemn about it and consequently distinguishes difficulty from ease. Unless each point is clearly distinguished and explained, partial attachments and sectarian disputes will cause students much suffering.

In sum, what differs among the methods of practice of the various schools is their ritual forms and points of departure; what they share are their aim and final destination. In seeking to develop wisdom, cross over to the other shore, and be liberated from birth and death, all schools are alike. There are several essential instructions: once practitioners have them, entering the gate will not be difficult.

Four Essential Instructions

(I) First understand the true meaning of practice. Buddha-recitation, seated meditation, and practicing methods are preparation, like building strength for a journey. Lacking strength on the road shows that this preparation was insufficient. Actual practice takes place after leaving the Buddha hall and rising from one's seat—in walking, standing, sitting, and lying down, amid all people, affairs, and actions. If one finds one's strength insufficient then, further training is needed.

Further cultivate that strength and use other methods to support it. Actual practice is primary; preparatory training is secondary. People reverse this relationship and lose sight of the essential point, giving priority to the secondary at the expense of the primary. The results are naturally meager. This is the first instruction.

(II) What is actual practice? After leaving the Buddha hall, first understand how to put realization to work. The key is "do not forget": remain alert and attentive in every place and circumstance. Become accustomed to using this mind. Its use is awareness and illumination. Do not fear thoughts arising; fear only noticing them too late. Without awareness, circumstances carry you away. Once you have wandered far, it is hard to find the way back.

Not knowing how to return is wandering. People are thoroughly familiar with greed, anger, and ignorance, habits not acquired in a day. Now one must likewise make the unfamiliar practice familiar by developing a new habit. When it is never forgotten, practice is mature: it becomes so natural that one cannot stop even if one wishes. This is "learning and regularly putting it into practice"; its joy is evident. This is the second instruction.

(III) A concise explanation of practice: practice means returning. "Restrain oneself and return to propriety; then all under Heaven returns to benevolence." Returning to the original is to have nowhere that one cannot penetrate; all things are complete within oneself. Only then is the work of fully extending knowledge and investigating things accomplished. Therefore it is called returning to benevolence. Yet restraining oneself is the cause, and returning to propriety is the result; restraining oneself and returning to propriety are again the cause, while all under Heaven returning to benevolence is the result. Restraining oneself is the first step of practice. To restrain oneself is to control one's mind. All activity is created by mind; because the mind grasps at conditions, thoughts become deluded. When the mind is held to one place, there is no defilement or attachment. With neither delusion nor truth, one has returned through practice to the original.

"One place" must not be rigidly grasped as though there were a particular place called one. Here "one" signifies the absence of a fixed place; pervading every place without the slightest attachment is what is called one place. This one place is an all-pervading, vast place free of attachment; it is not the sharp and exclusive "one" to which the myriad dharmas return. Without actual cultivation and realization, one cannot understand this intuitively. Just employ the single word "illuminate." When illumination becomes mature, one can avoid forgetting; by not forgetting, one is neither deluded nor moved. This is what is called practicing prajñāpāramitā deeply. This is the third instruction.

(IV) The process of entering practice: progress in practice must have a process. It is like climbing a mountain: from the bottom upward, there must be stages. For those of sudden capacity, who originally go straight to the summit, there is no need to speak of this. But for beginners, expedient means are indispensable. There are five stages in the work of illumination: first, knowing illumination; second, illuminating emptiness; third, illuminating quiescence; fourth, emptying emptiness; fifth, quiescent illumination.

Knowing illumination means knowing how to put it into function, and knowing that without illumination one cannot transform. Opening this wisdom of awareness is actual practice after awakening, but it begins with understanding and then proceeds to practical cultivation. Illuminating emptiness means that without illumination one cannot realize emptiness; here one has already entered practice. Illuminating

quiescence means one has entered the state of profound quiescence. Yet at times one forgets illumination; as soon as one becomes slightly and keenly aware, one is again profoundly tranquil. Emptying emptiness is also illumination: through the power of illumination, one empties that emptiness.

Quiescent illumination is the state of constant quiescence and constant illumination. There is never a time when one is not quiescent and never a time when one is not illuminating. Whether illuminating or not illuminating, all is quiescent; one does not even know oneself to be illuminating or quiescent. In brief, when practice is mature, one enters a transformed state.

All bondage to birth and death arises through the relationship of mind and objects. They are inseparable: external objects are mind, and the objects within mind are also mind. Using mind to break through mind frees one from both mind and objects; this is called breaking through ignorance. “Breaking through” means realizing emptiness, not smashing something. If an image of breaking remains, this is not emptiness. Ignorance stands opposed to illumination; where illumination is present, ignorance cannot stand. Here, “breaking through” means cessation.

Once ignorance ceases, it cannot be found. The key lies in “illumination.” Failure to illuminate, or to know what to illuminate, stems from insufficient strength of samādhi and wisdom and failure to put them to work. Yet their application also rests on illumination: illumination brings transformation; transformation releases attachment and turns away from it, revealing the emptiness of its basis. Once ignorance is transformed, it cannot be found. Emptiness is samādhi. Thus illumination is transformation; transformation is emptiness; emptiness is samādhi; samādhi is freedom from delusion; freedom from delusion is freedom from wandering; and freedom from wandering is freedom from birth and death.

Turning this around, there is no illuminator and nothing illuminated; thus there is no so-called emptiness, samādhi, freedom from delusion, freedom from wandering, and so forth. In the end, birth and death themselves cannot be found. This is one who can truly transcend birth and death. Turning it around once more, since nothing can be found to have an intrinsic substance, then whether one illuminates or does not illuminate, transforms or does not transform, is empty or is not empty—even whether one transcends birth and death or not—all are equal and nondual in ultimate reality, and none of these alternatives is excluded. Thus it is wonderful, and not being thus is also wonderful. This is truly to enter the Dharma gate of nonduality in transcendent freedom; even the notion of having transcended is relinquished. This is ultimate transcendence of birth and death.

Once this principle is clear and there is no confusion whatsoever, ignorance has been broken through. Only habitual tendencies remain deep and heavy, and they

seem not to be eliminable in this very life. There are nine stages, distinguished as follows: (1) coarse within coarse; (2) subtle within coarse; (3) very subtle within coarse; (4) coarse within subtle; (5) subtle within subtle; (6) very subtle within subtle; (7) coarse within the very subtle; (8) subtle within the very subtle; (9) very subtle within the very subtle.

These nine types indicate the relative depth of the mind's bondage. Up to very subtle within the coarse is the state of the first bhūmi: ignorance has already been broken through, and bondage to form has been severed. Very subtle within the subtle pertains to the third through sixth bhūmis, where bondage to mind has already been severed.

Very subtle within the very subtle pertains to the eighth bhūmi and above. The residual habitual tendencies of the two bondages of form and mind have already been severed, and one gradually enters the stage of equal enlightenment. Only when the very subtle within the very subtle has been exhausted is great awakening fully perfected; this cannot be accomplished in one lifetime. It is like a child in the womb or a newborn infant: though not yet like an adult, it cannot after all be called nonhuman. Likewise, though one cannot equal the Buddha's complete great awakening, one cannot after all be called other than a Buddha.

Attainment in this very life is attainment of this Buddhahood. To nurture the sacred embryo is to nurture the sacred embryo of one who has already become a Buddha. Foolish people cling to appearances and cannot be spoken to about the essential teachings of the Mahāyāna. Only those whose faith does not recoil, who are neither startled nor afraid, are fit for it.

The Process of Illumination, Transformation, Emptiness, and Samādhi

Rigid Relaxed

Long Short

Large Small

Strange Unafraid

Two Nondual

Forced Natural

Existence Emptiness

Emptiness Emptiness of Emptiness

Hindrance Nonattachment

Bondage Liberation

Raw Mature

Consciousness Wisdom

Confusion Unmoved

Wandering Cessation

Drawn Along Freedom

Emptiness of Emptiness Not Empty

Powerless Replete with Strength

Partial Complete

There is no way from here to there without the illumination of wisdom. As the occasions of illumination increase day by day, its power naturally becomes sufficient, and the sense faculties and their objects naturally fall away. Only this is actual practice. This is the fourth instruction.

The foregoing has briefly explained the methods of practice. Yet once they have fallen into verbal formulations, how could they be ultimate? Thus one knows that the ultimate point lies in the practitioner's own realization within the mind; it cannot be expressed in words. I, too, am merely making unnecessary fuss—ha, ha!

F. Stages of Practice

How could methods of practice have fixed forms? If there were fixed stages, there would be fixed dharmas. Yet for beginners, they should be made definite, so that practice may be simple, direct, and swift. After the gathering, these matters may be taught individually in person: perhaps Pure Land practice before esoteric practice, or esoteric practice before Chan. They may then be discussed further.

As for relying on teachers and spiritual friends in practice, it is nothing more than seeking discussion and arriving at a decision. Once one obtains the essential instruction, one achieves twice the result with half the effort; once one gains its benefit, one will naturally be unwilling to turn back. With my limited and partial understanding, I discuss with you all the Dharma gates for studying Buddhism. Though I have not reached their depths, perhaps I will not mislead others. If there are doubts, or if you consider anything inappropriate, please offer direct instruction with an honest mind. If we examine and verify matters together, we shall not be far from Mind-Seal.

Section on Verification of Realization

The Dharma gates of cultivation comprise no more than two: cultivating in order to awaken, and proper cultivation after awakening. To cultivate in order to awaken is to awaken to this mind-ground, recognize one's original nature, and first break through ignorance. Proper cultivation after awakening is, after realizing the mind and seeing one's true nature, to activate the wondrous function of prajñā and sweep away habitual tendencies. The former clarifies the essence; the latter activates its function. Samādhi and wisdom support one another, and essence and function are unified.

All you fellow practitioners have studied and cultivated together here for two years. You recognized your original nature early on and have already begun to put it into function. This is precisely the time to proceed from cultivation to realization. Since there is something awakened to and realized, it should be examined and confirmed, lest one fall into empty and delusive fabrication. Therefore, this section on verification is presented, that you may use it as a mirror for self-examination.

Realization means being mutually sealed with the Buddha; it means returning to and realizing the ground of awakening. What is the seal? It is simply mind. What is awakening? It is simply mind. When one fully understands this unobtainable mind, that is seeing the Buddha; this is called Mind-Seal. What is cultivated is this, and what seals is also this. Ordinary beings, departing from original awakening, mistakenly enter the path of delusion; thus they rely on the Buddhadharma to cultivate a return to original awakening.

Yet the features of original awakening have long been forgotten. It is like a miser who does not know what generosity is, or a cruel person who does not know what benevolence is. Having become habituated to what seems natural, these tendencies penetrate deeply and are hard to uproot. They instead regard miserliness and cruelty as proper, and call generosity and benevolence foolishness; they may even be frightened by them. In human relations, there is only mutual deception and manipulation, creating this world of fraud, cruelty, and fear. Is this not an extreme inversion?

Now that I study the Buddha's teachings, I merely seek to restore what is original. This is nonduality with the Buddha, and nonduality is mutual sealing. It is like copying an ancient painting so faithfully that it is a perfect likeness; there is no need for false modesty. One need only examine one's conscience: if its luminosity equals that of the sages and worthies, and if one is as free and at ease as a Buddha, then one too is a sage and a Buddha, and may dwell in this without doubt.

But if, upon examining oneself, one finds one's mind still as darkly venomous as hell, and as foolish as a pig or deer, then one is no more than a hell-being, pig, or deer; this cannot be escaped. Therefore, the section on verification is a mirror by which practitioners examine themselves and a ruler by which they measure themselves. It allows not the slightest falsification or accommodation; empty words are absolutely useless and merely deceive oneself. Thus verification is one's own verification. Only those who share one's view and practice, or whose realization is higher than one's own, can confirm one's realization. Those whose paths differ cannot make plans together—how much less those who differ in every respect.

The Buddhadharma does not merely save individuals; it truly saves the world. A veneer of civilization concealing actual barbarism is what Buddhism regards as gross superstition, and it must be overturned. This must be done without direct attack. Rather, people must come to feel shame on their own, so that this delusion naturally collapses and they are subdued without realizing it. As the saying goes, "Attacking a city is inferior; attacking the mind is superior."

I have previously discussed the Chinese people: their position is the lowest, yet their spiritual vision is the highest; their drive for advancement is weakest, yet their aspiration to transcend is strongest. Their movement is direct, not lateral. Their latent power lies in their capacity to soften the other side, for they have deeply grasped the subtle art of winning hearts and settling minds. This cannot be judged by temporary gains and losses.

In brief, the spirit of the Chinese people is rooted in mind-only; settling the mind is its sole guiding principle. So long as the mind is at peace, all else may be relinquished. In the present age, yielding may seem a weakness; yet if all humanity yielded in this way, how could there have been the terror of the World War of 1914?

In all cultured nations, people delight in yielding virtue to others. What they do not yield concerns moral principle; what they do not contend for concerns private gain. The distinction between righteousness and profit is very clear. The world's present bleak condition is still the gift of greed and conflict of mind; its vital energy has not yet recovered, and no one is seen to have awakened.

If people could be guided and transformed by the Buddhadharma, so that everyone actively pursued true culture and did not harm themselves or others through falsity, their lives would naturally be long. Therefore, if one wishes to transform others, one must first transform oneself; if one wishes to transform the world, one must first transform human minds; and if one wishes to transform human minds, one must broadly spread the Buddhadharma and awaken people's wisdom.

The Buddhadharma is the touchstone by which the world's civilization and barbarism are tested. The world may decay, and all things may come to an end, but

the Buddhadharma neither decays nor ends, because the power of mind neither decays nor ends. Now, beginning with one person's cultivation and realization, its transformative influence extends to immeasurable multitudes. All sentient beings will ultimately one day share the same seal and the same ground. The worlds of the ten directions will, in the end, be pure. Therefore it is said that the Buddhadharma is vast and boundless.

The saying that there is no cultivation, no attainment, and no realization speaks in the strongest terms of the original emptiness of all dharmas and of the need not to grasp at anything. It is a true statement made only after one has cultivated, attained, and realized. Only when both subject and object are empty does one possess such a state. Since one is now indeed cultivating, how can one say that there is no realization? Yet verification has no fixed method: everywhere may serve for examination, and every place is Mind-Seal. If one can be thus, then every place is called Buddha-remembrance, and wondrous functioning arises.

The depth of one's practice of faith, vows, and conduct determines the realization obtained through verification. Within faith and vows, one realizes as one practices; it need not necessarily be divided into four stages. But before samādhi has been realized, no experience may be called verification, because it is not ultimate, one may repeatedly regress, and doubts arise of themselves.

The course of practice changes according to each practitioner's habitual dispositions. At times one may seem to regress while actually advancing; at times something may seem right while actually being wrong. Without examples and verification, misunderstandings will inevitably arise. Thus, unwillingly, one must speak of there being realizations and attainments.

Verification concerns a dharma that, by its nature, cannot be expressed. Once it falls into verbal formulation, it becomes flawed speech. Moreover, what accords with person A may not necessarily seal person B; what is realized by person C may not necessarily be accessible to person D. Each person must understand it for themselves. Do not cling to words and mislead yourself; only then can one truly bring forth great function.

The greatest difficulty for practitioners is that, after strenuous effort, they have gained some realization; yet while they are making progress, no one verifies it for them. They then become doubtful and stop, turn to another method, or enter a wrong path. How is this different from a seriously ill person who has just shown signs of recovery, only to lose the physician midway and thereby suffer a harmful delay? The patient may then fail to recover, previous efforts may be lost, or another illness may develop.

Such are those in the Chan school who become dry and still like wooden puppets; those in Esoteric Buddhism who become attached to supernatural marvels; and those in the Pure Land school who single-mindedly seek only their own liberation. There are also those who have realized samādhi but do not know what samādhi is like, or who have not seen true reality yet stubbornly insist that true reality is something visible. Although this is self-delusion, the teacher also bears blame.

Verification is one's own verification; it is not like a tangible object that can be weighed or measured. Yet there is no harm in setting up a provisional ruler as an aid to comparison and verification. After strenuous practice, students will naturally have some realization. But because of their habitual arrogance, they are unwilling to seek verification from others. In the former case, there is no one to verify them; in this case, they consider themselves right. They may fail to make further progress, or turn reckless and unrestrained. Though this error results from the absence of a teacher, it is also the retribution of one's own arrogance. It is precisely the obstacle of dharmas among the five obscurations, and must not be ignored.

The Sixth Patriarch said: "The Buddhadharma is in the world and is not apart from awakening in the world." If one understands human feelings and circumstances, one is not far from realizing the mind. All the various situations before one fall within the eight worldly winds. Use them for examination and verification; when one's own mind knows things as they truly are, this is called Mind-Seal. Although I now present this section on verification for my fellow students, it does not cover even one ten-thousandth of the matter. If each of you cultivates diligently without retreating, and makes daily progress, there will surely be further verification of this.

Master Zeng said, "Each day I examine myself." Here, "three examinations" does not mean three separate occasions, but the beginning, middle, and end of each day: in other words, inward self-examination at every moment. Examination is reflective awareness and inward contemplation. Inward is established in relation to outward, so ultimately there is neither inward nor outward; mind and objects are one in suchness, and body is mind. This deeply expresses the subtlety of putting realization to work.

We should learn from Master Zeng's three examinations and ask: Can my cultivation fail to be diligent? Can I gather in my mind without becoming careless? Has my contemplation been lost? If one examines oneself in this way, there is none who will not achieve great accomplishment. To apply diligent right contemplation to what is not yet settled in principle is called investigation; when an event arises and one meets the circumstances with awareness and turns the mind around, this is called contemplation. In truth, principle and phenomena are nondual: in an instant, before and after are clearly penetrated, and great function arises all at once. The result gained through investigation and contemplation is called realization; what accords

with the mind-ground method is called the seal. A thousand words and ten thousand phrases lie only in this single turning of thought.

To turn quickly is to awaken quickly. Do not fear the arising of thoughts; fear only delayed awakening. It is like entering a dangerous path: the danger lies in not being aware; awareness itself is turning back to the shore. Again, after death, the intermediate state drifts without a master, drawn along by karmic force; this is entering danger. This karmic force is the emotional views to which we stubbornly cling and which we do not dissolve. If one's wholesome force is strong in ordinary times, one enters the wholesome; if one's unwholesome force is strong, one enters the unwholesome—like willow down carried by the wind.

It has not the slightest control of its own. Once awareness arises, it is like encountering an object and coming to a stop: one no longer drifts. Not only does one cease drifting; one can turn around and emerge. All kinds of functions arise from this, and the power of supportive conditions immediately becomes strong. Whether one moves toward good or evil depends on the coming together of the same conditions. Yet doing evil is easy and turning toward good is difficult, because habitual inclinations are weighted to one side. At the critical juncture of birth and death, everything depends on one's ordinary practice of a single contemplative illumination. When willow down is flying about, one must have the strength to hold fast; this depends solely on activating function in ordinary life and continually practicing wisdom-contemplation.

The ancients said: "When the force of defiled dharmas is weak, the force of pure dharmas is strong." It is always a matter of the mind's turning, always a matter of activating function here and now; there are differences of familiarity or unfamiliarity, swiftness or slowness. Do not wait until the critical moment in panic and rely on others' assistance. Thus we know that cultivation is cultivated in action: activating function and practicing contemplation in ordinary life are the foremost important task. Inner examination is nothing other than observing one's own mind. Never lose contemplation in any circumstance; this is right contemplation. But one must cultivate after awakening; only then is it called proper cultivation, only then does it become truly useful, and one's effort is not wasted. The discussion is divided as follows.

A. Verification of Practice on the Meditation Cushion

While seated in meditation, there is originally nothing to verify through contemplation. The moment one seeks to verify through contemplation, the mind is again divided. Whatever circumstances arise—favorable or adverse, whether one sees light or sees Buddhas—are all illusory appearances and must never be grasped. One should reflect that all appearances are false and unreal. (This reflection too is

false and unreal, but when it is appropriate and useful, one need not insist that it is false.) Neither welcome such appearances with admiration nor drive them away with aversion. The wonder lies in the two words “do not attend to.” Simply do not attend to them: then it becomes truly useful, one ceases wandering, and this is verification.

Those who cultivate visualizations in Japanese or Tibetan Esoteric Buddhism use one visualization to eliminate myriad thoughts. Accomplishing the visualization is only the first step in gathering in the mind and returning it to oneness; one must never deludedly cling to it as true. It is like having sores and ulcers all over the body, festering on every side, and using medicine to contract them into a single boil, concentrating the poison in one place. The filth and poison remain no different. One must not cling to it and refuse to let it go; it must instead be uprooted completely; only then is there true purity.

Practitioners in recent times often delight in accomplishing visualizations and then become vainly arrogant. Some even take seeing a moon disk to be realizing the mind and seeing one’s true nature. They do not know that this is only an initial expedient, still far from the main point. If one knows it to be illusory, one should promptly let it go and enter the state of pure emptiness.

What distinguishes the Heart-of-Heart Dharma from other methods lies fundamentally in not grasping appearances. Yet people cannot be without thoughts; to be without thoughts is to fall into annihilationist emptiness. When there are thoughts, there cannot be no appearances. When one sits until scattered thoughts fly about and all kinds of fantasies come before one’s eyes, if one gives rise to the thought of detesting and cutting them off, that itself is an appearance. One need only not attend to them. Not attending to them means letting them be, without concern for their coming or going.

Do not welcome them with delight or longing: this is non-grasping. Do not reject them with aversion or keep them at a distance: this is non-abandonment. Neither grasping nor abandoning is true non-grasping of appearances. Thus we know that the Heart-of-Heart Dharma is the unsurpassed dharma gate, supreme among dharmas, taught by the Tathāgata for those of the highest vehicle. When, during meditation, the body suddenly feels hot, cold, and so forth, these are changes in the circulation of blood and vital energy. Since each person's physical constitution differs, such experiences must occur when one moves from activity into stillness; there is nothing strange about them. They are relatively beneficial rather than harmful, but they are not lasting and will disappear after a long time. Do not delight in them or seek them.

When, during meditation, you feel oppressed and impatient, this is fundamental ignorance stirring within. You need only be calm, resolute, and forbearing, struggling

against habitual tendencies. After hundreds or thousands of surges and descents, it is like a boat traveling on the sea: now encountering fierce winds and towering waves, now smooth and steady waters. The boat itself has no mind, and its master has no fear. Deal with everything calmly, without the slightest confusion; endure with firm resolve, and before you know it, you will have reached the other shore. Only in this way can you attain right samādhi. The restless, active habitual tendencies accumulated since beginningless time are thereby transformed. Thus, after sitting for a long time, you will no longer feel oppressed; freedom from such oppression is verification of progress in attaining samādhi.

When thoughts are especially confused during meditation, this too verifies progress, for the seeds of ignorance are all surfacing at once. Treat them with the same disregard; deal with them calmly and let them take their natural course. Likewise, when external circumstances are distracting, or children are crying and making a disturbance, remaining unshaken amid them is verification that the power of samādhi has advanced. Therefore, those cultivating great samādhi and great wisdom do not seek mountains and forests or delight in quietude; they train in the state in which activity and stillness are nondual. This is what those who turn inward and maintain aware contemplation should understand.

After sitting for several hundred sessions, you may instead feel that your power of samādhi is far inferior to what it was before. This is verification of great progress. It is like someone first tasting spicy food: at first, they cannot bear its heat, but after a long time they no longer notice it. When they no longer notice it, that is precisely the attainment of fearlessness; therefore, it is verification.

When miscellaneous thoughts arise in profusion during meditation, coming and going, arising and falling, this shows that the grasping mind has shortened and its force has loosened. It also verifies that thoughts are being turned more quickly and that the power of aware contemplation is strong. Sentient beings' accumulated habits are merely restlessness. If you can sit for two hours without feeling oppressed, and can exercise self-control, this is verification of initial samādhi.

Once samādhi is attained, the fingers naturally cease to ache. The mouth continues to uphold the mantra without stopping, while seeing and hearing remain clear and distinct. Though clear and distinct, one is not drawn away or carried along by circumstances; this is samādhi. Sometimes one may seem to lapse into sleep or unconsciousness, yet the mouth continues to uphold the mantra and the hands remain in mudrā without relaxing. This is right samādhi, not dull sleep.

Sometimes one sits for an hour before entering samādhi; sometimes one enters it within a few minutes; sometimes the mind is extremely agitated. All of these equally indicate progress, and there is no need to force distinctions of superiority or

inferiority. Being able to let things take their natural course is itself the power of right samādhi. After a long time, one passes from an empty state that seems dim and obscure into lucid, pure emptiness—that is, though seeing no images and hearing no sounds, one remains clearly aware. Then body and mind suddenly fall away, sense faculties and their objects fall away, empty space shatters, and the great earth sinks into stillness. The true reality of the markless then appears before one.

At times you may not necessarily be settled while sitting, yet be very settled when not sitting; or you may be the same whether sitting or not sitting. Then the time when everything forms an unbroken whole is not far off. While sitting, never weigh or speculate about such states, for that will instead make the mind unsettled. Simply disregard them, and do not mislead yourself.

B. Verification of Practice Off the Meditation Cushion

Verification after leaving the meditation cushion is nothing other than training the mind amid circumstances, and circumstances differ in being favorable or adverse. To respond to them in accordance with conditions depends solely on prajñā. Prajñā, rendered in Chinese as “great wisdom,” is the great wisdom that thoroughly comprehends worldly and supramundane dharmas as perfectly interfused and nondual. Respond to an illusory circumstance that cannot be obtained with an illusory mind that cannot be obtained. Knowing that it is illusory, respond to it; do not take it as real, nor abandon it as illusory. Neither play nor not-play, one enters the playful samādhi. This is called the manifestation of great function. The meanings of these terms are briefly explained below.

How do samādhi and wisdom support each other? The visible sign of the power of samādhi is its functioning after one leaves the meditation cushion. Functioning is the opening of wisdom, and being able to recognize one's own progress is also the opening of wisdom. Wisdom reveals samādhi, and samādhi supports wisdom. This is called the mutual support of samādhi and wisdom.

How does one realize samādhi? Samādhi, rendered in Chinese as “right concentration,” does not mean being like wood or stone, motionless because one neither sees nor hears. Rather, it means seeing, hearing, feeling, and knowing without being carried along, deluded, or moved. When beginners practice, they may experience the states described above; or, when practicing for a long time, four or five hours may seem to pass in an instant. This is not drowsiness or losing track of time, but right samādhi. Again, one may fix one's eyes on one place while simultaneously hearing with the ears and responding with the mouth, dealing

correctly with each matter without error, while the place on which the eyes rest does not shift. This is called the simultaneous, interchangeable functioning of the six sense faculties, and it is verification of samādhi.

How can there be no-thought? Thoughts cannot be cut off, nor can they be annihilated. When mind and circumstances meet, there is necessarily some discrimination. Ordinary beings drift about in discriminative assessment; this is the activity of consciousness, called discrimination on the level of consciousness. Sages discriminate without abiding or clinging; they use wisdom to transform consciousness, and this is called discrimination on the level of wisdom. If one discriminates yet does not discriminate, it still belongs to direct perception; because one's power is sufficient, this is also called complete direct perception. Thus thoughts do not bind one. It is like a mirror reflecting objects: it takes on forms according to the objects, yet the mirror retains no image; neither, however, does it fail to reflect. This is called no-thought. Deluded thoughts may be cut off, but need not be annihilated; discrimination on the level of wisdom is also no-thought.

How does one see true reality? Know that all appearances are illusory, yet do not discard the illusory. To know illusion is to be free of it; to be free of illusion is awakening. Yet awakening too is illusory. Therefore, mountains, rivers, the great earth, the sense faculties, the body, and the material world are all likewise. Seeing this single appearance of illusion is true reality. A sūtra says: “True reality is precisely non-appearance; it is not some other appearance.”

All Mahāyāna sūtras take true reality as their primary essence. The present thought of each of us has never departed from any appearance. Discursive consideration, discrimination, language, and writing are established in dependence on falsehood. One must be free of appearances within appearances: engaging with them means they are not nonexistent, while being free of them means they are not existent. With no alternative, this is provisionally called true reality. Those who understand this meaning are said to see true reality.

How does one break through ignorance? To know that it is ignorance is to break through it; to know how ignorance arises dependently is to break through it; to know that everything is illusory and not be carried along by it is to break through it; not giving rise to views of aversion or attachment is to break through it; thoroughly realizing that all things are unobtainable is to break through it; knowing that ignorance was originally nonexistent, and is not like a substantial entity that can be seen, heard, or grasped, is to break through it; knowing that ignorance itself arises from the nature of perfect enlightenment, and that discriminative assessment is only provisionally established to reveal the true and the false, is to break through it. Yet unless one has realized samādhi and seen true reality, this is not true knowing and cannot be called true breakthrough.

What are habitual tendencies? Habitual tendencies are accumulated habits—the familiar patterns of everyday life. Once one has understood the mind-ground, ignorance may be broken, but one's strength is still insufficient and one's power of resistance weak; one may still be overcome by circumstances. This is called habitual tendencies. Sometimes, even when ignorance has not been broken, habitual tendencies may temporarily diminish, but this is merely the result of suppression. It is like water becoming clear as the sediment sinks to the bottom: the roots have not been pulled out, and once it is stirred, the water becomes even more turbid than before. For one who has broken through ignorance, although habitual tendencies remain, they are greatly different from those of the past and are transformed day by day. There are several indications:

1. Afflictions arise easily but are easily transformed; what once lasted a long time can be shortened.

2. Long-standing habits and preferences suddenly change.

3. Fear naturally lessens, and ideas of gain and loss gradually fade.

4. When encountering something startling or frightening, or something improper or unwarranted, one no longer persists in discriminative assessment as before.

5. The power of emptiness gradually increases; thus one discerns cause and effect ever more clearly and has stronger judgment when events arise.

6. One experiences tranquility and joy each day, often feeling light and at ease without knowing why.

7. Interests change from time to time: what was faint may become intense, and what was fervent may become cool. Yet there is always a transcendent inner state, unlike either passivity or activity.

8. One's temperament becomes increasingly even. One feels less attachment to people and things formerly most loved, and less aversion toward matters and people formerly most disliked, gradually approaching equanimity toward enemies and loved ones.

9. The body becomes increasingly healthy and vigorous, one is less easily angered, and one's spirit and complexion become radiant.

10. Memory differs from before. One may seem forgetful about trivial matters, but is especially keen and precise in matters requiring concentrated attention.

What is nonduality? Thoroughly realize that all things are originally empty. Whether self and others, good and evil, right and wrong, long and short, favorable and

unfavorable, gain and loss—all are illusory, arising through the conjunction of conditions. Though one knows distinctions, one does not abide in dualistic appearances. This is called entering nonduality, and is also called non-discriminating wisdom.

What is great perfect mirror wisdom? After realizing samādhi, seeing true reality, breaking through ignorance, and realizing the mind and seeing one's true nature, one can already give rise to function from essence, enter the gate of nonduality, and have samādhi and wisdom mutually support each other. Direct perception is then complete, the fundamental has been attained, and the great matter has been clarified. Wisdom is like a round mirror, pervading the dharma realm; hence it is so called. It is also called fundamental wisdom and non-discriminating wisdom, terms that strongly emphasize realization of its essence.

What is the wondrous function of prajñā? In learning the Buddha Dharma, there are no more than two crucial points. First, without eyes, one sees nothing. Second, when sunlight shines brightly, one sees the various colors. Ordinary people are stained by accumulated habits and have long dwelt in ignorance. Before realizing the mind, they are like people in a dark room, where objects lie confused and disordered. They wish to put the room in order, but have no eyes and see nothing at all. Even if they exhaust much effort, the disorder remains, and their labor is wasted.

One must first open the wisdom-eye and break through ignorance, as if first turning on an electric lamp. Only after seeing the various colors can one arrange each item in order without wasting effort.

Although these two crucial points occur in an instant, in truth they require one asaṃkhyeya kalpa. Thus, even after ignorance is broken, habitual tendencies remain; even after the electric lamp is lit, the room's disorder remains unchanged. One must use prajñā to sweep away habitual tendencies, just as one sorts and puts each object in order. Since every object differs, the response to each differs; therefore it is called skillful means, and its wondrous functions are as innumerable as the sands of the Ganges. How could there be a fixed method? This wondrous function proceeds from the fundamental wisdom of prajñā: from the essence of fundamental wisdom arises the function of differentiated wisdom. This is called the manifestation of great function.

What is spontaneous functioning? Spontaneous functioning means remaining unchanged while according with conditions. Letting things take their natural course, one never regresses. It is like ice and snow on a mountaintop that melt in the sun, becoming springs and waterfalls and entering mountain gullies and small streams, where they may still turn, curve, and stagnate. Only when they flow into a great river do they roll ceaselessly eastward and eventually enter the sea. This means that only

those who are undeluded and do not regress may function freely and spontaneously. Yet sometimes people indulge themselves without restraint and consider themselves unimpeded. They do not realize that the very words “consider themselves” are a great obstruction: claiming attainment when one has not attained is a great falsehood.

If practitioners possess the foregoing forms of verification, they can assess themselves amid all kinds of human affairs and circumstances. Through them, they can also verify the extent of their own strength. If such verification is present, do not rejoice; if absent, do not worry. Since there is originally neither arising nor ceasing, Buddha-nature is not lost. Realization merely comes sooner or later. Human birth is difficult to obtain, so one should resolve the matter early in this very life and avoid falling again. There is no other secret: simply apply the mind at every moment and give rise to the wondrous function of prajñā. The Mind-Seal method for meeting circumstances is briefly set forth below.

I. Verification in Dealing with Others

In dealing with people, there are no more than two paths: liking and disliking. A sage said, “Those who, while liking someone, recognize that person’s faults, and while disliking someone, recognize that person’s good qualities, are rare indeed under heaven.” Everyone must have one person whom they love most dearly and one whom they detest most intensely. One is “what I love,” and the other is “what I hate.” Both love and hatred belong to the self. Because of self-love, one clings to these two views. Now that one is practicing, one should break through these discriminations of the two views, reflect inwardly, and ask oneself the following:

(I) With regard to the person I love most dearly, can I lessen my thoughts of attachment? At first, not knowing that love itself is affliction, one calls it the suffering of loving desire, yet takes it to be delightful and clings to it firmly. A mother, for example, fears only that her child may not live long and worries all day long, without realizing that this is suffering. Later, one recognizes love as a great affliction, yet has no way to break through attachment.

Next, contemplate impermanence and emptiness, and determine that separation must ultimately occur. There is originally neither joy nor sorrow to speak of. Yet ideals and facts are hard to reconcile, and one is ultimately unable to break through it. Next, the Dharma view can break it through: when principle and phenomena are united, and this can be realized amid phenomena without stirring the mind, then the suffering of loving desire has truly been severed. This may be accepted as verification of realization.

(II) With regard to the person I detest most, can I lessen my resentment and aversion? Proceed step by step in the same way as above. For example: 1. Can I

refrain from recalling past wrongs? 2. Can I forgive them? And can I forgive them without forcing myself? 3. Can I recognize their strengths? 4. Can I arouse the resolve to liberate them? 5. If they again harm me, can I remain unmoved? If so, emotional views have loosened and may be accepted as verification of realization.

(III) Suppose there are two people before me, one loved and one disliked. If there is a matter to entrust, can I treat them equally? Can I avoid feigning equality in order to gain a reputation?

(IV) When dealing with physical beauty, high rank, worldly enemies, violent people, shameless scoundrels, or followers of non-Buddhist paths, can my state of mind remain at ease? This is true practice. Examine it carefully as verification of realization.

II. Verification in Relation to Things

Everyone has things they love most—whether preferences, hobbies, or customary habits. Without exception, they take what accords with their wishes as joy and what opposes their wishes as suffering. What they enjoy and what they suffer bind the mind.

To break through these two, one relies solely on the illumination of wisdom. Its function should operate precisely when one is in the midst of attachment: reflect that everything in the world is impermanent, and that what I delight in cannot ultimately be relied upon. Before long, there must be one of two separations. First, it may leave me: when it is destroyed or lost, suffering and distress must arise. Second, I may leave it: when I die or am separated from it by distance, suffering and distress must likewise arise.

Knowing that it ultimately belongs to impermanence, one should explain this to oneself at the very moment attachment arises. The mind's firmness will naturally loosen, and the flames of acquisitive craving will naturally be checked.

Yet, knowing that it cannot be relied on for long, one may suddenly give rise to a mistaken one-sided view. For example, if someone loves a bottle, the firmness of that attachment may lead them to devise every possible means of preserving it. Thus arise two attachments. The first is dead attachment: after someone dies, the object they loved is buried with them as a funerary possession. The second is obstinate emptiness: clinging one-sidedly to emptiness, one destroys the object at the height of one's attachment to it so that it will not remain. This is not truly severing attachment. Knowing that the object is difficult to retain and fearing that someone else may obtain it, one first destroys it oneself. These are all one-sided views: one clings firmly, while the other tends toward annihilation. Both are ignorant delusions.

The wise do not find fault with things; they observe the mind. Clearly knowing impermanence, they may still love what they presently possess. Yet because of the illumination of wisdom, they love without clinging. Without clinging, there is no bondage; this is called non-abiding. Therefore, when something is gained, they do not abide in joy; when it is lost, they do not abide in suffering. When both having and not having are relinquished, this is called accordance with liberation. In my present encounters with favorable and adverse circumstances, can I respond naturally? Even if not naturally, how strong is my capacity to resist? This is what should be examined inwardly as verification of realization.

III. Verification in Adverse Circumstances

When people find themselves in adverse circumstances, their various anxieties are entirely sufferings produced by comparison. For a poor person, poverty is originally suffering, but after becoming accustomed to it over time, they no longer feel it as suffering. This suffering arises when circumstances that were favorable turn adverse. All of it belongs to self-generated deluded views. There are roughly three hindrances: first, comparison concerning one's social standing; second, discomfort with one's daily living conditions; and third, fear of the future. The more one compares, the more worries arise. To break through this suffering, one relies solely on samādhi and wisdom. Through the power of samādhi and wisdom, one sees that adverse circumstances arise as a reaction to favorable circumstances: favorable conditions are the cause, and the adverse reaction is their result.

First understand the cause: see that what I cling to as favorable was never inherently existent, but is empty through conditions. What joy or suffering is there to speak of? What obstructs us here are precisely the three hindrances listed above. Things themselves cannot obstruct me; it is only my own mind that obstructs itself.

Now break through the notion of "face." Face is nothing but vanity. Worldly people do not recognize truth and falsity or distinguish right from wrong. They do not regard evil conduct as a loss of face; instead, they regard poverty as a loss of face. This is precisely the great delusion, great inversion, and great stupidity of worldly fools.

Yet concern for face is itself an attachment, and is only human nature. Because people fail to distinguish right from wrong and are lured by vanity, they act perversely and contrary to reason. They do not recognize benefit and harm or distinguish what is weighty from what is trivial. They seek only the immediate satisfaction of clothing, food, and shelter, taking this as glory, and do not hesitate to sacrifice everything. From minor matters to great ones, killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, and false speech are brought about under compulsion. This is why the world can never be at peace.

The pivotal point between order and disorder lies in small causes with great results. If one does not go along with corruption, one should take care not to be distressed over vain reputation and face. The ancients said: “Better to be cursed by petty people than despised by people of virtue.” Such are the relative weight of gain and loss.

With this illumination of wisdom, the matter of face can naturally be let go without obstruction. Deluded hopes and acquisitive greed, together with evil thoughts and actions that depart from the proper path, will also cease thereby. Moreover, peace of mind does not necessarily depend on seeking bodily comfort. Whether one is at ease or ill at ease in daily life also changes with the mind. As for a peaceful life, one should make every effort to arrange it, but should not forcefully demand that it must be obtained.

But do not be greedy for gain. When the mind is settled, the spirit is calm and vital energy flourishes; favorable conditions will naturally converge, and fear of the future will naturally dissolve. The future belongs to the future; I may wait until it arrives and then address it. There is no need to be anxious beforehand. In short, the stronger the power of wisdom, the more spaciously one can respond. This can in turn verify the depth or shallowness of one’s practice, inwardly confirming it in one’s own mind.

IV. Verification in Favorable Circumstances

The reason sentient beings are called sentient beings is that they do not understand cause and effect. Because they do not understand, they fall into causes without recognizing them beforehand, become bound by results without knowing how to free themselves, and repeatedly create causes and receive results upon results. Thus suffering becomes beyond description.

Practitioners aspire to leave suffering behind and seek liberation. Liberation means relinquishment. What worldly people are least willing to relinquish is their present happiness and comfort. If they seek wealth and obtain it, they cling to it as happiness; how could they relinquish it? Favorable circumstances do not refer only to pleasant external situations. Even attachment to dharmas that one personally regards as correct is itself an exceptionally firm favorable circumstance. If one can resolutely relinquish it and realize it as empty, one is not far from the Way. The most difficult things to break through in favorable circumstances are:

(I) The pension one has obtained through hardship and difficulty in old age.

(II) Rich and delicious foods one enjoys eating.

(III) The praise of others and praise offered to one’s face.

(IV) The merit and virtue one has created.

(V) Romantic affection between men and women; this is the root of birth and death.

(VI) A firmly unshakable view of self, or a view of one-sided emptiness.

(VII) The superior states that practitioners feel they have attained.

Of the items above, the first through fifth cannot be broken through without realizing emptiness; the sixth cannot be broken through without emptying emptiness; and the seventh cannot be broken through without the power of the nonempty lasso. To realize emptiness means to realize that all things are empty, thereby breaking through existence. Emptying emptiness means emptying that which has been taken as empty, for even awareness is illusory and is not yet ultimate.

The nonempty lasso means realizing and knowing that all things are originally empty, without distinguishing emptiness from existence; not clinging to either extreme, not establishing a middle way, and entering the state of unobstructed nonduality. Only those of great power can reach this. Further, when favorable circumstances are examined in this way, they are themselves adverse circumstances. From this one knows that favorable and adverse are nondual. The emptiness of persons is easy; the emptiness of dharmas is difficult. Understanding in principle is easy; realization in actual circumstances is difficult.

What is difficult is reversing accumulated habits. Practitioners should not draw back out of fear of difficulty. The course of practice does not go beyond two methods: first, arousing the resolve. Once the resolve is aroused, one is not far from entering the Way. Second, awakening. Once awakened, one understands the root and no longer turns back.

Therefore, after arousing the resolve, only in seeking awakening does one have a practical method. After awakening, only in removing habitual tendencies does one have a practical method. Having a method is itself accomplishment; it is only a matter of time.

It is like dwelling in a dark room and never seeing what is inside. Though one may feel about by touch, it is still of no use. Once the electric light is switched on, one sees all kinds of things. Even if it is switched off again and darkness returns, what one has seen is never forgotten or lost; thus there is no regression.

Therefore it is said that when one first arouses the resolve, one immediately becomes a Buddha. Yet this is not what is meant for people of inferior wisdom and dull faculties. Here lies the difficulty of learning the Buddha's teaching; here also lies why it is not easily believed; and here lies why people are unwilling to undertake it. As for their unwillingness to undertake it, this is certainly because samādhi and

wisdom are insufficient, but also because their merit and virtue are too slight. It is difficult for them to encounter the instruction of a good spiritual friend, and so faith has no means to be aroused.

Tempering the mind through circumstances has two paths, favorable and adverse. These are the circumstances of hatred and love in the Sūtra of Perfect Enlightenment, arising from the conditions of the view of self and thus dividing into the eight worldly winds. The eight worldly winds are gain and loss, blame and praise, acclaim and ridicule, suffering and pleasure. Worldly practitioners cultivate only half of them. They pay close attention to their habitual tendencies amid the four adversities of loss, blame, ridicule, and suffering, yet often neglect the four favorable circumstances of gain, praise, acclaim, and pleasure. Why? Because the fundamental root of greedy self-benefit has not been removed, and they remain attached to the view of ascetic practice, unable to perfect its meaning.

V. Verification When Arousing Compassion

The three meanings of compassion, great compassion, and bodhicitta are often confused and not distinguished by worldly people. Compassion has not yet left behind self-love; it places undue emphasis on results and loses sight of causes because its perspective is narrow. It is like the benevolence of a woman: indulgent and doting affection.

Great compassion, by contrast, places the utmost emphasis on causes, clearly penetrates what comes before and after, and thoroughly comprehends cause and effect. It does not give rise to compassion merely because of immediate and partial suffering. If A kills B, one with ordinary compassion pities B and hates A. One with great compassion pities A as well as B, and is further concerned for C: knowing that the karmic retribution for killing continues in an endless cycle, one also fears that others may imitate it. This is called great loving-kindness and great compassion.

As for directly realizing true reality and perfectly penetrating nonduality, one knows that suffering and pleasure are both unobtainable, that there is no doer and no recipient. Realizing the state of pure emptiness is called great bodhicitta. It is not like worldly people who take bodhicitta to be compassion, as though it were truly some object that could be aroused.

Thus, to arouse bodhicitta is to arouse the resolve to realize the mind of pure emptiness that is ultimate reality. The essence of this bodhicitta is unmoving. Though all appearances of good and evil arise and perish illusorily, the awakened essence is not stirred in the slightest.

Foolish people do not understand this. Covered over by emotional views and ignorance, they cannot realize it. Practitioners should instead examine themselves:

when encountering all kinds of suffering, what scope of mind do they bring forth, and how does its movement appear? The greater one's mind-capacity, the less clinging there must be. Once there is abiding, one falls into inferential knowledge and cannot perfect direct knowledge. Non-abiding is freedom from defilement. To abide nowhere and remain undefiled amid all circumstances—even in thoughts of transcending birth and death and attaining nirvāṇa—is the mark of true bodhi. Hence it is said: arouse bodhicitta in reliance on great compassion.

VI. Verification During Playful Engagements

In the teachings of the Lesser Vehicle, one cannot be free of dharmas. Once dharmas are established, the dual views of right and wrong, good and evil, are difficult to remove, and one is bound by dharmas.

The Mahāyāna does not cling to dharmas, yet neither does it discard them. Since all dharmas are Buddhadharma—neither dharma nor non-dharma—it enters nondual accord and establishes nothing. Thus dharmas may be transformed into wondrous functioning. The Buddha transmitted this verse of the Treasury of the True Dharma Eye: "The Dharma that is fundamentally Dharma has no Dharma; the Dharma of no Dharma is also Dharma. Now, when the no-Dharma is entrusted, how could any dharma ever be Dharma?"

Yet how could it ever not be Dharma? Practitioners nowadays rarely understand skillful means. They commonly divide proper cultivation and playful engagement into two separate matters, considering one absolutely good and the other absolutely evil; thus people regard them as heaven and hell.

They do not understand that circumstances are neither good nor evil: bondage makes everything evil, while liberation makes everything good. Yet even liberation is not to be established; when one is no longer bound by good or evil, this is called the highest good, namely true liberation. One should examine this in one's own mind, not lay blame upon circumstances. There is no fixed dharma; medicine is prescribed according to the illness. The medicine I prescribe is intended for those whose condition it suits; it is not something everyone may take indiscriminately.

People often boast of emptiness, yet do not dare test themselves against their habitual tastes and accumulated inclinations in daily life. This can only be called restraint. To reject them and remain undefiled is not yet to be acknowledged as true emptiness. As one's practice advances, one must test oneself again, thereby verifying the strength of one's own capacity. Ask yourself what you are capable of, and act accordingly. Only then can one know whether it is truly so.

For example, someone may be unable to endure wind because of illness and therefore seek treatment from a doctor. If that person never again encounters wind,

how could the recovery be tested? Only after again facing wind and frost without the least fear can one truly be said to have recovered robust health.

People today, choking once, give up eating; because of medicine, they refuse to acknowledge their illness. This is certainly misguided. Yet when one's practice has not reached maturity, to insist that things must be so and to indulge oneself without restraint is also misguided. Such a state depends first on a qualified teacher and second on one's own awakening; outsiders need not anxiously trouble themselves with misplaced compassion. If, instead, they indiscriminately condemn everything, acting from emotional views and making reckless judgments of right and wrong, it is like others seeing a physician cut open and treat a grave illness, and, unable to bear the sight of blood, objecting out of sentimental weakness. How could that be the original intent of great compassion to liberate living beings?

(This section was originally intended for those engaged in cultivation and realization; it is not a method of practice for beginners.)

Regarding verification in playful engagements: first, one should practice the Heart-of-Heart Dharma. After completing the six mudrās and undertaking a full hundred sessions, one may, in the course of ordinary social interactions, use this to test one's meditative stability. It may also serve as a remedy for those who delight in dry quiescence and soon fall into annihilationism, or who develop thoughts of world-weariness. There is no fixed dharma here. This should be discussed with those who understand; it is difficult to speak of with ordinary people.

The scriptures say, "Do not be startled, frightened, or afraid." This capacity must be developed amid such circumstances. Bhikṣus who observe monastic deportment naturally have no such opportunities. The Second Patriarch once entered playful samādhi, but later people who imitate him may go astray. In my view, this is permissible only with an aspiration like Yi Yin's.

A person's true disposition often reveals itself in play and gambling. To be able to let go of what one loves most is true liberation. To transform intensity into moderation is true progress. To remain unstartled and unafraid is true equanimity. To see as though one had not seen is true realization of emptiness. In all things, one should seek a lively and vital freedom.

VII. Verification When the Mind Clings to Nothing

When the mind is not bound to anything, there are two kinds: having nothing on which to rely, and abiding nowhere. Having nothing on which to rely is like drifting without a master: the mind has nowhere to rest, and, having nothing to do, one does not know what to do in any direction and suffers from a sense of

meaninglessness. This refers to an unmastered novice who has not undertaken cultivation.

Abiding nowhere means that the mind is free of bonds and defilement, with nothing it cannot do; essence and function are such as they are, yet unmoving. It is like a bird flying through the sky: one cannot say that it leaves no trace, nor can one definitely point to a trace as existing, nor rigidly insist that there is none. It is transcendent and at ease beyond such distinctions. This refers to one who has already attained accomplishment.

There is another possibility. Midway through practice, between these two states, practitioners may feel at a loss and not know what to do. In reaction, they may blame heaven and others, resent the Dharma, and turn against themselves. They are then easily unsettled. Hearing that another method is swifter or another teacher's practice more profound, they follow others' opinions and change course. They seek every teacher they hear of.

They also seek every method. Seeking too much may not itself be the greatest harm. The real trouble is the lack of inner direction and haste for attainment. Eventually they know every teaching yet accomplish nothing, remain afflicted in daily life, and panic at death just as before. This is a grave affliction.

At such a time, keep the mind alert and examine it constantly; do not become lax. The first step toward laziness is a lack of commitment: it reveals insufficient urgency, or the complacency of thinking oneself right and drifting away. This too is wandering. Natural functioning and wandering may look alike, but they differ. In the former, the great matter is resolved and practice is continuous and undivided; awareness is never lost, one is not displaced by circumstances, and one remains unchanged while responding to conditions. Hence functioning can be natural. In the latter, the fundamental point is unclear, and circumstances carry one away without inner direction. This is wandering. Arrogance readily arises here, so practitioners must remain vigilant.

VIII. Verification Regarding the Dharma One Practices

If the mind has even the slightest attachment, that is birth and death. It is like a warehouse storing cotton, wood, gasoline, and other inflammable materials: setting off fireworks inside it cannot fail to cause a fire, and is naturally dangerous. Yet if even one spark falls within, in time it will all burn alike; one must not arbitrarily distinguish the two as major and minor matters. Again, if sand enters the eyes, one is blinded; if powdered pearls or fragments of jade enter them, how is the blinding any different?

Practitioners are like those washing soiled clothes. Soap is used to remove the dirt, yet the soap itself is also a stain. Water is used to wash away the soap, yet the water too is impure. Only when the soap is gone and the water has dried can it be called truly clean.

Now we borrow Buddhadharma to gather in the mind. So long as we have not gone beyond deliberate effort, we naturally cannot discard dharmas. But if we rigidly cling to them as real, how is this different from removing dirt but not soap, or removing soap but not water? Would that not be delusion? Thus, though nothing need be discarded, nothing may be clung to.

The mind contains the three poisons; it is like setting off fireworks and burning oneself. If there is even a view of Buddha, a single spark has fallen within. The Buddha himself taught the Dharma to set the fire, and he also taught the Dharma to put out the fire. He feared that later people would not understand and would only keep setting fires without extinguishing them. Therefore, truly repaying the Buddha's kindness means remembering that the Buddha has no dharma to teach, and that I too have no dharma to practice. This is also like washing clothes to remove dirt: dirt is not absent, yet cleanliness too is not established. Wash as one may, in the end pure emptiness cannot be obtained. To let go at this most subtle and minute point is to be one of great freedom.

IX. Verification Regarding Views of Winning and Losing

The mentality of winning and losing is a sentient being's emotional view. It depends on the object of contention, arbitrarily dividing it into superiority and inferiority, without realizing that both are the same habitual tendency—and one of the most difficult habitual tendencies to eliminate.

During diligent practice, one may make a slight use of it for encouragement; but at the stage of verification it must not be present. Once self and others are established, it is wrong. Those who have always loved victory are bound to be arrogant toward others; those arrogant toward others are bound to cling to self, and their minds lack equanimity. This is the most firmly rooted basis of birth and death and must be removed without delay.

Those with true accomplishment cannot be displayed in words or measured by their conduct. Whether acting contrary to convention or in accord with it, they are unfathomable even to ghosts and spirits: transcendent beyond things, yet not apart from human feeling. In responding to those who come, they may deliberately show a losing position, first to test the other's competitive mind and second to spare them distress, while further wishing to arouse their sense of doubt for inquiry. Such a person is thereby invisibly embraced and contained. If they can awaken to this themselves, they will henceforth leap out of this circle; otherwise, they will sink in

hell for a long time. The Earth Treasury Sūtra speaks of the Hell of Much Contention; it is established by just such people.

X. Verification of the Stages in Cultivation and Realization

After completing two or three hundred sessions of the Heart-of-Heart practice, one's inner state naturally opens and brightens. By five or six hundred sessions, one experiences daily peace and joy. As each person's capacities differ, the verification also differs somewhat. Let us briefly discuss what may be realized, without distinguishing superior from inferior.

(1) One may suddenly attain ease and joy, a comfort truly beyond description, and continually wish to regain it. Yet this seems merely to be tranquil ease: one has attained the essence but has not yet brought forth its function.

(2) One may suddenly perceive this mind as vast and inconceivable, and see ever more clearly the causal ground and fruition of matters. This is gradually entering the state of ease born of great compassion; function has already arisen.

(3) One's joy gradually comes to feel plain. There is no sense of having gained something, nor any sense of accomplishment. Instead, one enters emptiness and undifferentiated vastness, while the true essence inwardly fills one. This is gradually entering the state of ease in quiescent cessation.

(4) In passing through these three kinds of ease, one must undergo countless reactions. Even old accumulated habits may all break forth at once. This is because one's previous practice was suppressive. Those who do not understand call it regression; in fact, the work of carrying things out is at its busiest, and all old defilements are being swept out of the house. This is beneficial, not harmful. If one again becomes attached to them and keeps them, that is a great mistake.

(5) At times, one may suddenly enjoy playing with words and composing verses, or delight in arguing extensively with others. These too are seeds among one's old defilements. If they are somewhat better than the rest, once carried out they need not be cherished again.

(6) At times, one may suddenly weep bitterly. There are two conditions: one is fear of birth and death, perhaps fearing that one will not make it in this life; the other arises without expectation, perhaps tears of overwhelming joy. Though they differ somewhat, both are merely seeds surfacing and then coming to an end.

(7) At times, one suddenly sees that mountains are not mountains and waters are not waters; one also sees the many faults of others and considers only this dharma right. This is precisely when one has gone deeply in but has not yet turned oneself

around. If one then undergoes a further reversal, the light of equanimous wisdom will arise and one will enter the nondual state.

(8) At times, one suddenly develops a waiting mind, thinking that after a long time one will naturally attain realization. Such a habit arises entirely from laxity and from a lack of earnestness.

(9) At times, one suddenly loses confidence in oneself. This is because, at the causal stage, one did not dare to take responsibility and one's power of resolve was weak; hence this doubt arises.

(10) At times, one suddenly becomes eloquent and speaks in an unending stream, but before long recognizes that what one formerly said was mistaken. This is because the power of wisdom is not yet sufficient and one's assessment is not comprehensive, so one lacks complete clarity. Yet from this point onward, one makes daily progress.

(11) During this time, one naturally senses progress from month to month and differences from day to day, yet does not know why it is so.

(12) Fear does not readily arise of itself, because concern with gain and loss has faded.

(13) As for the speed of the power of contemplation: because mind and circumstances stand in relation to one another, without contemplation they do not turn; without turning, they do not become empty. This power also gradually increases in the following stages:

(1) One first encounters a circumstance and then brings forth contemplation, but must exert oneself fully to do so.

(2) On encountering a circumstance, contemplation follows; although it comes afterward, one need not exert oneself to bring it forth.

(3) On encountering a circumstance, one immediately knows to contemplate it. There is a slight sequence, but one has not yet gone beyond knowing.

(4) On encountering a circumstance, one immediately contemplates it; the two arise simultaneously.

(5) Contemplation comes first, and circumstances follow afterward, though at times it is forgotten.

(6) Circumstances follow the mind's contemplation, and contemplation is always foremost, though one still attends to the act of contemplation. (The foregoing

belong to the stage of deliberate application.)

(7) One does not know that there is contemplation, yet has not departed from it. One clearly knows that circumstances exist, and they are originally without obstruction.

(8) Ever quiescent, ever illuminating.

Practitioners should ask themselves at which stage they stand.

(14) During this time, arrogance may suddenly arise: one may look down on later learners, glare angrily at those who are stubborn and unreceptive to transformation, or indulge in literary displays and compose verses. All these are seeds of habitual tendencies from previous lives. Whoever one may be, one must pass through this process. People call it “wild Chan.” If one can again cleanse oneself with deep earnestness, one will naturally reach complete purity. Although one has acquired this Chan malady, it is already no small matter; compared with those who have received no news at all, the difference is greater than that between heaven and earth.

(15) During this time, when one attains an excellent state, various views immediately arise. These views are naturally loftier than one's former views, so one delights in them, preserves them, and refuses to let them go. In worldly terms, these are preconceived opinions; in Buddhadharma, they are what one knows. Clinging to what one knows and not seeking the ultimate obstructs the Way. This is a stage that must be passed through, and also a verification when one's practice is half-advanced. If it is not broken through, it turns into a serious illness.

11. Verification When Reading Sūtras and Treatises

Before one's eyes have opened, one is often misled when reading sūtras. Within less than a hundred years after the Buddha's passing, errors had already entered the sūtra texts. When Ānanda was old, he saw a boy misreading a sūtra passage and corrected him, but the boy would not listen. If it was so even then, how much more so is it today—and how much more so among those rigidly attached to textual criticism?

Therefore, if one values the wording and not the meaning, inevitably no sūtra can be read. Even in the Heart Sūtra's two hundred and sixty characters, those who do not understand the meaning of nonattainment and attainment take them to be contradictory. The demise of Buddhadharma in the latter age will surely begin with textual criticism and excessive disputation, leaving later generations with no way to begin. I can state this with certainty. Those of merit turn instead into wrongdoers—how lamentable!

One should read sūtras from a detached standpoint: first understand the sūtra's purport, then comprehend its principles. Do not let the purport be obscured by theoretical interpretations, nor let the principles be constrained by words; that is, do not let one's own mind be bound by sūtras and treatises. The Buddha's teaching is like a physician prescribing medicine for illness: it treats another person's illness and was not spoken specifically for me. It may be used for reference, but should not be taken directly for one's own use. One should use dead words in a living interpretation. Thus it is said that the Tathāgata has taught nothing.

There are two ways of reading sūtras: before practice and after practice; the mental landscape differs in each case. When reading sūtras, one should investigate what cannot be understood. The Diamond Sūtra says, “All Buddhas and the Dharma arise from this sūtra.” What sūtra is this? If they arise from the Diamond Sūtra, then from where does the Diamond Sūtra arise? Again, the sūtra says, “Know that this person is the Tathāgata.” At such points, can you cut off conceptual continuation and assume it directly? This can verify the extent of your strength.

If later people alter the Dharma taught by the Buddha, they enter hell; this must be understood. Yet what the Buddha taught is the meaning of the sūtras, not their wording. If the wording is incomplete, it harms the meaning; this too must be understood. Whether one enters hell depends only on whether one alters the meaning. Yet there are too few people in later ages who practice and realize, so it is better to retain the old wording. Those without genuine strength must not initiate such changes, lest blind followers imitate them. Having found nothing through textual criticism, they may simply sever wording and meaning together, leaving disconnected fragments; that would be a grave error.

12. Verification Regarding Habitual Defilements

Learning Buddhism is nothing other than changing habitual tendencies and transforming one's disposition. When the mind becomes habituated to defiled circumstances, this is called temperament; ordinary people call it one's innate nature. A proverb says, “Mountains and rivers may change, but one's nature is hard to alter.” This strongly asserts how difficult habitual tendencies are to remove, yet it does not understand that this is mistaken.

Original nature is inherently without defilement. It is not spoiled through defilement, nor accomplished through freedom from defilement. It is like a drunk person, who is not in the least different from when sober, except for a single inversion. Yet this inversion does not cause the person to lose their human nature. Once sober, they are wholly intact; if one seeks the drunkenness and inversion, they cannot be found at all. From beginning to end, there is neither accomplishment nor ruin.

From this we know that ultimately there is not a single deluded person in the world: every person is a Buddha, every person is awakened. Yet drunkenness and inversion do exist for the moment. Because there is ultimately neither corruption nor admixture, these temporarily present habitual tendencies are called only illusory existence. Within this illusory existence, we provisionally posit degrees of depth and shallowness, provisionally name good and evil, and provisionally distinguish what is easy to change from what is difficult to remove. All is originally illusory, while awakened nature does not move; for the time being, one may verify oneself through these illusory appearances.

The ease with which habitual tendencies can be removed lies in being straightforward and open: straightforwardness is free of crookedness, and openness is free of entanglement.

Those who are straightforward and open will find it easier to become Buddhas, because their clinging mind is looser. Attachment to self is the root of birth and death. Those attached to self must love themselves; those who love themselves must assert themselves; those who assert themselves must seek perfection; those who seek perfection must compare and calculate; those who compare and calculate must worry excessively; excessive worry brings excessive doubt; excessive doubt brings deep scheming; deep scheming brings subtle crookedness; subtle crookedness brings lack of clarity; and lack of clarity leads to timidity.

Timidity leads to entanglement; entanglement leads to rigid attachment; rigid attachment is difficult to transform; what is difficult to transform cannot be liberated. One goes ever deeper, and one's habitual defilements grow ever thicker. During life, one is unwilling to give away or loosen one's hold on any object, affair, or view. At death, one enters the lower realms; through self-love and attachment, one likewise finds it difficult to emerge.

But why do people have all these faults? It is simply the error of not clearly understanding principle. Lack of clarity comes from failing to distinguish true from false; this failure comes from being unable to empty oneself of all possessions; this inability comes from lacking wisdom; lack of wisdom comes from lacking samādhi; lack of samādhi comes from lacking the Dharma; lack of the Dharma comes from lacking fortunate conditions; and lacking fortunate conditions comes from insisting that oneself is right, failing to receive others with humility, and distancing oneself from spiritual friends. In the end, one sinks into decline.

If practice does not attend to one's own habitual tendencies, it is equivalent to never having practiced. Unless fundamental ignorance is removed, there is no way to deal with habitual tendencies, and one can never become a Buddha. If you wish to verify the speed or slowness of your practice, ask only whether your disposition is

straightforward and open or crooked and entangled. If one reflects on this, one cannot help but shudder. The sūtras say that a woman must transform into a man's body before becoming a Buddha. Here, this is interpreted as meaning that one's disposition must turn from yin to yang, from crookedness to straightforwardness. The straightforward mind is the place of practice. Straightforwardness is the empty mind free from defilement; it has nothing to do with male or female. Therefore the sūtras say that Buddhadharma is neither male nor female, not that it is without male and female.

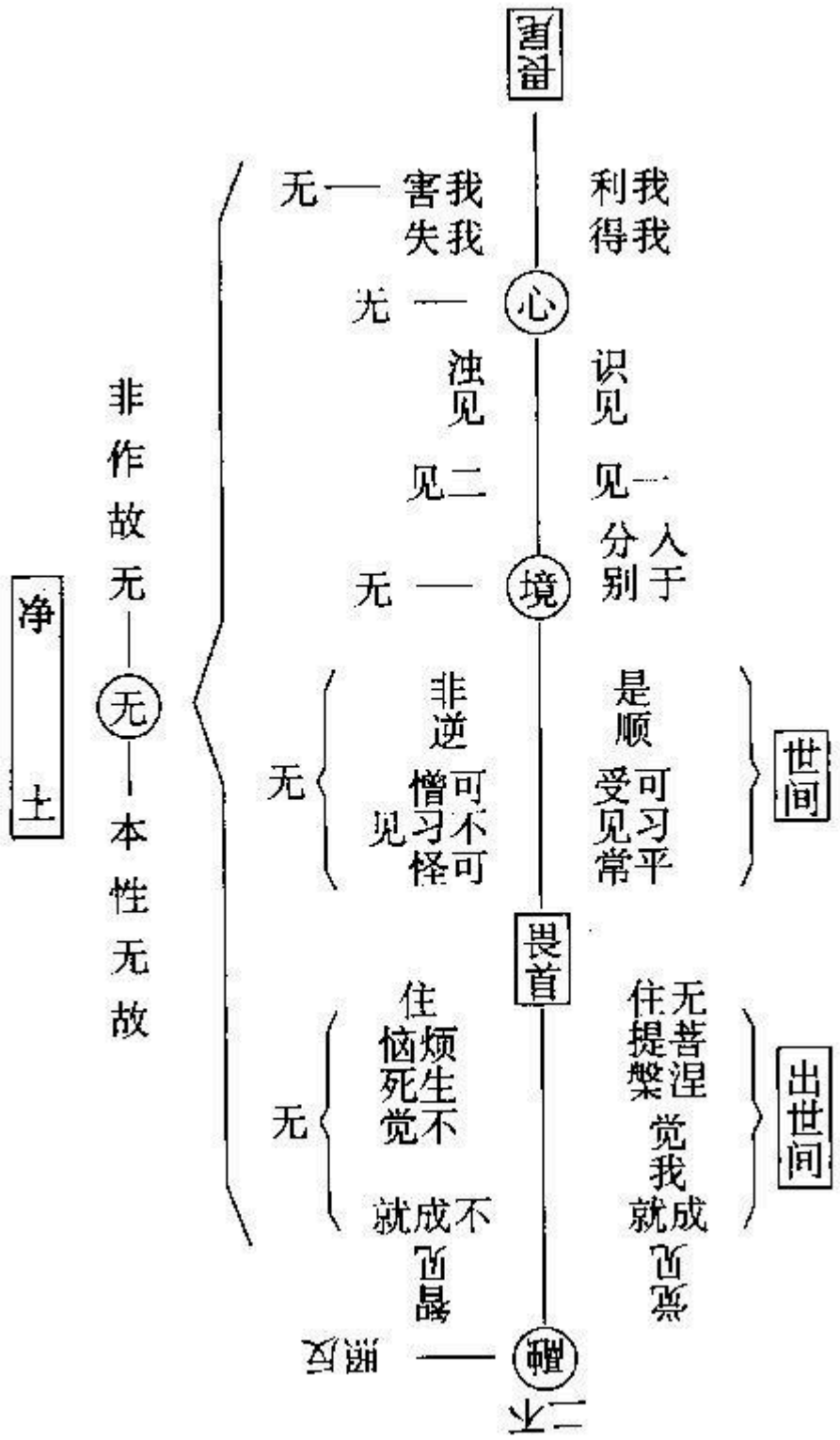
13. Verification in the Face of Extraordinary Events

The sūtras speak of “not being startled, frightened, or afraid,” of “faith that does not turn back,” and of “giving rise in a single thought to pure faith.” Such statements can all be used to examine the depth or shallowness of a practitioner's emotional views. Since beginningless time, sentient beings have clung to self. Outwardly, they seize upon coarse external objects; from the delusive arising of the marks of self, discrimination occurs, and thus arise the marks of self, person, sentient being, and life span. Inwardly, they realize subtle mental objects; from the delusive arising of the view of self, pervasive discrimination occurs, and thus arise the views of self, person, sentient being, and life span.

Circumstances are not inherently favorable or adverse. Only when something exceeds what one's view of self expects do doubt and fear arise; at their extreme, they result in inversion and madness. Tracing this to its origin, there are causes of suspicion and disbelief. In truth, all these are emotional views within the mark of self —illusory and unreal—which are gradually nurtured and developed. As the Sūtra of Perfect Enlightenment says, one nurtures this ignorance without realizing that one is nurturing it into growth.

Emotion is self-love, and views are attachment to self. The illness indeed arises from these, and it is likewise removed by them. Whoever regards strange events as strange has simply seen too little and cannot transform. If one regards them as ordinary, or clearly understands them to be nondual, one's doubts naturally dissolve. Yet one who dissolves such doubts still relies on views: the former view is consciousness, while the latter view is transformed into wisdom. First use wisdom to break through consciousness, and then use wisdom to break through wisdom itself.

Use illusion to extinguish illusion; when there is nothing to extinguish, this is called the supreme truth of no wisdom and no attainment. Going further, even truth is not established; “supreme” is also only a provisional name. I do not cling to self, and the strange is not seen as strange. Could this be possible without great samādhi and freedom from delusion? I shall now reveal the hidden sources of the mental states of alarm and fear in response to events.



In sum, breaking through this habit of comparison is also nothing apart from views. First, do not attend to it: with awareness foremost, know it to be originally illusory; this is the power of direct perception that naturally does not attend to it. Second, use a view to break through a view: as one uses a sword to cut an object, then uses the sword to cut the sword. This employs deliberate application as a skillful means. Let me offer two matters for investigation:

1. Customs. These are conventional views, among the most difficult things to break through, because the few cannot prevail against the many. Those who reform customs must forcefully seek to break them, but this is not called breaking through; it is only changing customs, replacing one custom with another. One should first use wisdom to dispel others' confusion, without opposing them. Where no ultimate conclusion can be reached, one provisionally establishes what brings peace to the majority and preserves it as an expedient; this itself is ultimate. Within oneself, however, one never ceases to know clearly. One does not rise and sink with convention, but sees all circumstances as naturally thus, with nothing extraordinary to speak of. Then one enters the ground of pure awakening.

2. Unexpected events. Whenever an unexpected event occurs, its magnitude is irrelevant. Because we do not recognize impermanence, cling to things as truly existent, and fail to distinguish the false, we are shaken by them. Moreover, when something is unanticipated and suddenly heard of, fear often arises. Those with wisdom, before the event bears fruit, fully understand at the stage of its causes that it is certainly ultimately impermanent and entirely subject to arising and ceasing.

When children are born, their parents naturally cherish them and hope they will grow up and live long lives. Yet each has particular causes and conditions and a lifespan of their own. Even at the birth celebration, the future scene of illness, death, and burial is already determined. Why be distressed? People are like this, and so are things. By continually maintaining this wise contemplation and entering nonduality, one can relinquish all future suffering.

The wonder of the Buddhadharma is like a vaccination: it removes future fear by preparing one in advance. Then even sudden news brings no terror. By addressing the cause, this approach is more complete than worldly remedies applied only to the result.

The Sixty Types of Mind

Sentient beings have immeasurable habitual tendencies; when enumerated, they amount to eighty-four thousand categories. The Mahāvairocana Sūtra abbreviates them to sixty, saying that there are sixty kinds of mind, each with its corresponding characteristic. They are explained here still more concisely. Practitioners should use this to inquire into themselves: Which kind of mind is strongest in me—that is, which manifestation of my affliction is deepest? What antidote should I apply? Then habitual tendencies will naturally be eliminated, and fundamental wisdom will grow ever stronger. A concise explanation follows:

1. The mind of greed: This means grasping at whatever object one encounters, thereby defiling the pure mind. It must manifest outwardly, just as seeing smoke

reveals the presence of fire. Greed has its root within and obstructs every entry into the Way. Greed for wealth, fame, profit, or even the flavor of the Dharma is all an affliction. The antidote is to empty all things.

2. The mind free of greed: This is contrary to the preceding mind, yet it is a practice of non-greed without wisdom. For example, when one is earnestly cultivating, one may nevertheless lapse into passive, biased emptiness and non-greed, failing to arouse the great resolve; one seeks only meager satisfaction, fails to make diligent progress, or falls into annihilationism. The former is excessive grasping; this is excessive rejection. Both are afflictions. The antidote is neither grasping nor rejecting, but arousing the great resolve and taking responsibility.

3. The mind of anger: This is resentment arising because one cannot obtain what one greedily seeks. The antidote is a compassionate mind.

4. The mind of compassion: This is contrary to anger, but it is merely sentimental benevolence and obstructs entry into the great Way. The antidote is to understand cause and effect, seek the ultimate, and attend to what is fundamental.

5. The mind of ignorance: In whatever one undertakes, one is unable to discriminate with wisdom and is beset by many delusions. The antidote is to develop prajñā.

6. The mind of cleverness: This is the petty cleverness of the world, making contrived distinctions—this is superior, that is inferior—and taking oneself to be right. One does not realize that one's own knowledge and views are extremely limited; the light of a firefly cannot set Mount Sumeru ablaze. The antidote is humility and freedom from arrogance.

7. The mind of doubt: This arises when one is overly calculating about personal gain and loss, unwilling to suffer the slightest disadvantage. One then hesitates and cannot decide in dealing with affairs, losing one's bearings whether advancing or retreating. The antidote is a spirit of self-sacrifice and courage.

8. The mind of rash decision: This means making decisions too quickly, without distinguishing right from wrong, and thereby mishandling matters. The antidote is to investigate through wise contemplation and not to place undue weight on personal feelings.

9. The dark mind: One says that a matter should admit of no doubt, yet one remains doubtful and indecisive. This is somewhat like the seventh mind: the former is subtle, while this is coarse; the former is excessive, while this falls short. Here too, the antidote is the illumination of wisdom.

10. The mind of clarity: One says that everything is understood, yet excessive scrutiny becomes a fault. One does not realize that worldly affairs are inherently

impermanent and can scarcely be expected to reach perfection. The antidote is not to demand perfection.

11. The mind of accumulation: Having found one excellent method, one gathers everything around it and rejects all others. Those who favor esoteric practice may imagine that there is no other method; Pure Land practitioners may do the same. This is the beginning of sectarian disputes. The antidote is an impartial and expansive mind.

12. The contentious mind: This is delighting in debating right and wrong, even arguing that what is crooked is straight. One does not realize that argument itself is contrary to meaning. The antidote is non-contention.

13. The disputatious mind: This is inward argument with oneself. Having reflected and reached a sound understanding, one raises further objections and spins out thought after thought. The antidote is to reflect on Ji Wenzi's practice of thinking three times before acting.

14. The mind of non-contention: This means abandoning both right and wrong, until one ends up having no position at all and cannot distinguish good from evil. The antidote is clear discernment and prompt decision.

15. The heavenly mind: This means having a natural habit of expecting every wish and need to be fulfilled, as with the pleasant karmic results in the heavenly realms, which arise naturally without exertion. One then brings this attitude into practice as well, expecting it to proceed naturally without arduous effort. This can obstruct bodhi. One should understand that nothing can arise naturally without causes; one must plant causes in order to obtain results. The antidote is not to crave saving effort.

16. The asura mind: Though one knows the benefit of liberation, one remains habituated to the karmic results of birth and death, sinking into them and failing to advance. The antidote is to contemplate the impermanence, suffering, and emptiness of the world.

17. The dragon mind: This is greed for wealth, possessions, and sensual pleasure, like that of dragons. The antidote is contentment.

18. The human mind: One sharply distinguishes kindness from resentment and is exacting in repaying favors or retaliating for wrongs, constantly setting self against others. The antidote is to turn toward the great Way.

19. The female mind: This is a mind of many desires. The antidote is contemplation of impurity.

20. The mind of self-mastery: One seeks for everything to accord with one's wishes and fulfill one's desires. One should contemplate that dharmas have no inherent nature and come together through causes and conditions; how could everything possibly conform to one's wishes? This is the antidote.

21. The merchant's mind: This means analyzing too minutely and making overly comprehensive calculations. One inevitably becomes bogged down in details, and this becomes a serious affliction. The antidote is to cultivate swift wisdom.

22. The farmer's mind: Like a farmer tilling the fields, one wants to know every detail before exerting effort. A student of the Dharma likewise first wishes to hear extensively before seeking the Dharma. Those who now study the Dharma Characteristics School merely hear and understand its principles while neglecting practical cultivation; they labor without result. One should consider that when a poisoned arrow enters the body, it must be treated urgently; one should not ask extensive questions before removing the arrow. Therefore, the antidote is to cultivate keen wisdom.

23. The river mind: This is like river water, relying on its two banks or drifting without stability; the mind is not one-pointed. The antidote is to concentrate the mind on a single object.

24. The pond mind: People greedily seek fame and profit without ever being satisfied, like water gathering together and receiving everything without exception. It is the same in studying the Dharma: craving too much prevents one from becoming proficient in any one thing. The antidote is few desires.

25. The well mind: One thinks in ever deeper and more profound ways, always seeking to be unfathomable to others. The antidote is to be straightforward, clear, and easy to understand.

26. The guarding mind: Worldly people protect their possessions and lives, like a turtle drawing in its head. This is a habitual tendency of the śrāvakas and cannot receive the great vehicle. The antidote is great compassion and benefiting all people universally.

27. The miserly mind: Everything one does is for oneself; even wholesome dharmas are cherished and kept secret rather than bestowed upon others. The antidote is to remember that all things are impermanent and that benefiting others is precisely benefiting oneself.

28. The cat's mind: This is lying in wait to catch birds and beasts, holding one's breath and waiting for an opportunity rather than advancing quickly, taking action only when circumstances are favorable. In relation to the Dharma, it is to uphold it

without practicing, hoping to wait for favorable conditions. It is also a cat's mind to receive kindness without remembering to repay it. The antidote is to practice promptly upon hearing the Dharma and always remember others' kindness.

29. The dog's mind: One is content with a little. With meager blessings and conditions, one's aspirations remain low. Having gained a little wholesome Dharma, one treats it as sufficient and seeks nothing higher. This too is a śrāvaka habit. The antidote is a mind as vast as the ocean.

30. The garuḍa mind: This bird constantly relies on its two wings for its power. Such a person enjoys gathering followers and building influence, taking these as a support, and thus has little inclination to advance independently. The antidote is independence: like the lion king, do not rely on companions or assistance.

31. The rat's mind: Such a person enjoys petty destruction, engaging in irrational and useless acts. When others have accomplished something, they like to create gaps through which to undermine and ruin it. The antidote is a vast and luminous mind.

32. The mind of singing and chanting: One delights in using ornate words and elegant phrases as Dharma giving, but cannot inwardly realize natural wisdom. One merely learns the superficial trappings and gains no real benefit. The antidote is to seek practical reality.

33. The dancing mind: One delights in spiritual powers and transformations, displaying all kinds of unprecedented marvels. This can obstruct the pure mind and is called an affliction. The antidote is not to crave minor worldly signs of efficacy.

34. The drum-beating mind: One arouses the resolve to warn sentient beings, but one's zeal is too hasty; pursuing small benefits obstructs the conditions for great matters. This too is an affliction. The antidote is to seek the ultimate Dharma in order to liberate sentient beings.

35. The house mind: This is like a house sheltering the body, keeping one far from all evils. It is the same as the guarding mind. The antidote is to benefit others.

36. The lion mind: In all cultivation, one has not the slightest timidity. Like the lion king, one sees no difficult task under heaven. The antidote is to recognize that there is neither superiority nor inferiority, that all are equal, and to wish that all sentient beings may universally prevail.

37. The owl mind: This is the mind of the owl, which thrives in the darkness of night. Those who like dwelling quietly and practicing in darkness behind closed doors resemble it. One should remember that light and darkness are nondual, stillness and bustle are not different, and not give rise to dualistic views. This is the antidote.

38. The bird mind: One is constantly fearful and anxious; even toward friendly people, one harbors suspicious fear and mistrust. The antidote is to cultivate a settled and fearless mind.

39. The rākṣasa mind: In the midst of a wholesome act, an unwholesome thought suddenly arises. For example, building a Buddha stūpa or temple is a great merit, but one suddenly fears harming small insects or burdening the donors and therefore stops. The antidote is to weigh the benefits and distinguish what is weightier from what is lighter.

40. The thorn mind: This is the disposition to give rise everywhere to harmful actions, causing much injury and obstruction and making those nearby uneasy. It is also like giving alms and then regretting it afterward. The antidote is to repent and eliminate it without delay.

41. The cave mind: This means seeking the arts of immortals for longevity and freedom from aging, waiting to see the Buddhas of the future, like dragons and asuras hidden deep beneath the sea in profound caves. The antidote is to hear the Dharma and realize the Way swiftly in this life; one should not linger uselessly.

42. The wind mind: One seeks every Dharma and plants wholesome roots everywhere, like the wind that reaches everywhere. Yet one does not realize that stony fields yield no crops, so seeds are wasted in vain. The antidote is careful discernment and freedom from craving for too much.

43. The water mind: Like water washing things, one insists on exposing and removing impurity. In practice, one's one-sided attachment to purity itself obstructs the pure mind. The antidote is to contemplate reality as originally undefiled: dualistic views arise from self-attachment, and these views themselves are the impurity.

44. The fire mind: One's nature is irritable and hasty like fire, excessively fierce and violent. One seeks the Dharma and wants immediate accomplishment, thereby causing much failure and injury. The antidote is the water of gentleness and kindness.

45. The mud mind: One is wholly ignorant, like mud, and one's nature is likewise muddy and bogged down. The antidote is to seek a good spiritual friend who can skillfully open one up.

46. The manifest-color mind: Like undyed silk thread, it takes on whatever color it encounters; according to the dye it manifests as red or purple, having no mastery of its own. On seeing evil deeds, it too follows along and enters into them. The antidote is self-mastery and not being turned by others.

47. The plank mind: A plank in water bears objects according to its capacity; when its limit is exceeded, it cannot bear them and eventually tips them off. A practitioner exclusively cultivates one Dharma, knows nothing of others, and no longer admires other wholesome teachings; from this point, one makes no further progress. The antidote is to arouse a vast mind and study bodhisattva conduct.

48. The deluded mind: This is inversion and confusion, as when one wishes to go west but instead turns east, owing to the scattering of the mind. The antidote is to make the mind one-pointed, carefully discerning, and peaceful.

49. The poisoned mind: Like one who dies from poisoning, it gives rise to neither wholesome nor unwholesome thoughts; numb and unfeeling, it follows circumstances as they turn. Generate great compassion and all wholesome qualities, and counteract it by abandoning the annihilationist view.

50. The silk-rope mind: Falling into an annihilationist view, the mind is not lively, as though bound by a silk rope. This is an especially grave obstruction. Give rise to right wisdom and cut off this wrong view as its remedy.

51. The shackled mind: Like feet in shackles, unable to advance, one delights in silent sitting and lifeless samādhi, remaining bound by the method itself. The antidote is to be freely responsive in every circumstance, with no gap in practice between stillness and disturbance.

52. The cloud mind: It is constantly full of anxious thoughts, like the man of Qi who worried that the sky would fall. Practice equanimity, and counteract it by leaving behind worldly sorrow and joy.

53. The field mind: Like a good field that is weeded of all wild growth and filth, seeking complete cleanliness, such a person delights in adorning the body and strives to make it bright, clean, and impressive. Reflect that this is useless, and counteract it by cultivating the field of blessings in the mind-ground.

54. The salt mind: Just as salt is salty by nature and becomes saltier the deeper it penetrates, this person's thoughts proceed ever more deeply by turns. Know that inquiry has no end and cannot be settled by conjecture; make a swift decision as its remedy.

55. The razor mind: One thinks that shaving the beard and hair is enough to leave home—what else is needed? This mind is especially harmful: it shaves away even wholesome roots so that they cannot grow. Some monastics think that observing outward precepts and deportment makes them the Saṅgha Jewel; they no longer seek the precepts of mind or to become true fields of merit. Laypeople likewise fail to distinguish the genuine from the false, respecting the monastic form rather than

the Jewel and fostering arrogance. The antidote is to shave away the poison of ignorance and practice true renunciation.

56. The Mount Meru mind: This mind is haughty and self-important, and does not even respect teachers, monastics, or parents. Counteract it with filial devotion, obedience, and humility.

57. The ocean mind: Like the ocean, which contains everything, it claims every excellent matter for itself: there is no one who can compare with it. Mount Meru seeks height; this mind seeks breadth. Counteract it with humility.

58. The mind like a vessel with a hole: Such a vessel leaks and is unfit for use. A person may initially arouse the resolve and receive the precepts fully, then gradually lapse in observance, like a broken vessel that cannot retain the water of Dharma. The antidote is to carry the practice through from beginning to end.

59. The rebirth mind: The meaning of this mind is not yet clear. Presumably, people cultivate in hopes of dedicating the merit toward future rebirth and obtaining its fruition, without distinguishing good from evil or black from white. Counteract it by cultivating only wholesome dharmas.

60. The monkey mind: This is the general characteristic of the sixty minds, describing in the strongest terms their various forms of grasping at conditions: unsettled, like a monkey's mind. This one mind is missing from the Sanskrit text. Counteract it by realizing the mind and seeing one’s true nature, seeking samādhi and opening wisdom.

The above sixty minds all concern habitual tendencies and are sufficient to obstruct the Way; hence they are also called obscurations. To remove these obscurations, one must first realize the mind. Only after realizing the mind does one have a place to begin working on the various turbid views. Yet after realizing the mind, habitual tendencies still remain, and one must begin working to eliminate them. Practitioners must not cling one-sidedly, thinking that once they have realized the mind, the matter is finished; there still remains the matter of grieving as though one's parents had died. Nor should others cling one-sidedly and conclude that someone has not realized the mind simply because that person's habitual tendencies have not yet been removed. Only the person themselves knows this by realization, or those who share the same view and practice can recognize its ultimate truth.

The sixty types of mind are as described above, and practitioners may use them to verify themselves.

I shall now set forth several direct and expedient methods for eliminating spiritual ailments:

Direct and Expedient Methods for Eliminating Spiritual Ailments

I. How Can One Be Selfless?

Mind-capacity is originally neither large nor small. But once there is a self, there are limits; the more firmly one clings to self, the narrower one's scope becomes. One should give rise to a vast mind to remedy this.

For example, of two people, one poor and one wealthy, the wealthy person sees and hears more broadly, and has greater means and a broader sphere of activity. The poor person's knowledge and experience are limited, and thus the mind-capacity is small. A slight loss, or a sudden gain in wealth, may be more than that person can bear. Therefore, the greater the power of emptiness without self, the greater one's merit and virtue. Contemplate all things in the world as equal, without enemies or intimates, and attachment to self and others will loosen.

Contemplate all things in the world as impermanent and unreal, and thoughts of gain and loss will fade. Contemplate all dharmas as like illusions and shadows, not to be grasped as real, yet not to be rejected one-sidedly, and attachment to dharmas will disappear. The self that I take as self includes a great self and a small self. Take the unborn and undying nature of the Tathāgata-garbha as the great self; then the self ultimately suffers not the slightest loss, nor is there the slightest thing that can increase it.

Regard all worldly things as useless. So-called fame, profit, and the like merely provide temporary play for me. Why rejoice at gaining them, or grieve at losing them? Naturally, one becomes detached from them. Worldly people take the false for true and suffer because they have never truly recognized it. If they truly recognized what is false, they would certainly not grasp or cling to it.

Of the twelve links of dependent origination, ignorance comes first, emphasizing the suffering of blindness. Therefore, the level of human beings is judged by the extent of their capacity to benefit others. Whoever is willing to benefit others relinquishes self; whoever does not relinquish self harms others. Harm need not necessarily consist of killing, stealing, or sexual misconduct.

A single thought of self establishes endless calamities. Suppose one gained the supernormal power of the divine ear and heard all the sounds and speech in the world—harmonious or coarse, intimate or hostile—and not one of them were unrelated to self. Alas! If you wish to know the causes of warfare in the world, simply listen to the resentful quarrels within families. When immeasurable views of self, attachments to self, greed for self, and contention for self are gathered as causes,

yet one seeks peace under heaven as their result, it is like carrying firewood to put out a fire: one only burns oneself, and the result is precisely the opposite. How foolish!

II. How Can One Cut Off Greed?

Greed concerns fruition and must first have something taken up as its cause. There are two causes: contact and habitual conditioning. Contact means that mind and object confront one another: the six external sense objects come into contact with the six internal sense faculties, and one unconsciously receives them. Comparative measurement and discrimination then form conception; as this conception turns into formation, one proceeds to recognize what thing or matter it is.

These form, feeling, conception, formation, and consciousness combine inseparably and are called the five aggregates; they are the active state in which mind and object make contact. The second cause is habitual conditioning. Such conditioning consists of preferences carried over from previous lives; the present circumstances stir up accumulated habits and further contribute to their formation.

Thus, when mind encounters objects, and even when habitual conditioning is present, greed has not yet formed. Only because ignorance and delusive obscurations leave external objects unemptied and the inner mind unemptied does this deepen gradually until, at the stage of fruition, one becomes greedy without realizing it. The method for eliminating greed is no more than seeing that the five aggregates are all empty. Yet this seeing is itself among the five aggregates; if the seeing has not been emptied, one still clings to dharmas. The empty characteristics of all dharmas mean that seeing is merely one empty dharma.

If seeing is empty, subject and object are naturally forgotten. This emptiness does not mean that there is no seeing, nor that there is no subject and object. When the practice matures, liberation comes naturally. The essential key lies in the single word knowing. Its skillful directness is inconceivable; I myself came to understand it while lecturing on the Sūtra of Perfect Enlightenment for the second time.

III. How Can One Eliminate Anger?

It is by having no attachments. There are two methods. First, at the causal stage, have no attachments, seeing hatred and love as nondual.

Second, at the stage of fruition, one should restrain and transform it. What is meant by restraining? Restraining means stopping it. First, consider its future disasters; second, consider how anger harms the body: it can shorten the breath and agitate the mind, deplete the blood and weary the spirit, thereby shortening life. Beginners should use this method. But it does not mean suppressing the anger and retaining

the energy, letting it knot in the chest and thereby cause illness. It should instead be transformed. Transformation means dissolving it invisibly.

First, contemplate that everything before you is nothing but a result. Where did its cause come from? The fault lies with me; then it is transformed. Second, contemplate that this is training my mind and is a cause and condition that aids the Way; one should even be grateful for it, and then it is transformed. Third, when there is absolutely no way to endure it, promptly recognize the moment and leave, or turn the mind elsewhere; this too transforms it. Practitioners may ask themselves how this is done. The sūtra says, "Yet, with regard to deluded mind, do not seek to extinguish it." Then ask: how does one not extinguish it?

IV. How Can One Be Free of Ignorance?

It is by completely illuminating the characteristics of pure awakening, thereby suddenly breaking through ignorance.

V. How Can One Have Certainty?

Having certainty in ordinary waking life does not count; having certainty in dreams does not count either. Even knowing intellectually where the master is when one sleeps dreamlessly does not count. To say that one has certainty is not certainty. Who, after all, has certainty? Only when one truly knows who it is does one have certainty.

VI. How Can One Be Ready to Die?

Knowing the unborn is the Way: if one hears the Way in the morning, one may die content in the evening.

VII. How Can One Discriminate Well?

For example, in a solemn place of the Three Jewels, someone offers a filthy vessel to the Buddha. Seeing it, one is neither startled nor afraid. Though one still discriminates, one does not move with the discrimination. This is good discrimination.

VIII. How Can One Avoid Being Bound by the Dharma?

Know that these lecture notes are indeed superfluous, no more than adding legs to a snake. Yet, to encourage people to apply themselves to practice, they cannot be dispensed with. Once one thoroughly awakens to effortless diligence, one is no longer bound by the Dharma.

IX. How Can One Be Liberated?

Originally there is no bondage. Do not seek liberation, and one is liberated.

I shall now briefly present one or two methods of answering inquiries, in order to inspire the functioning of prajñā.

1. Suppose someone asks, “What kind of person can even the Buddha not liberate through the Dharma?” Answer, “What kind of person can the Buddha liberate through the Dharma?” Then ask in return, “In the end, does the Buddha liberate sentient beings, or do sentient beings liberate themselves?” (The word “should” must not be rigidly understood as meaning that there is no alternative, for originally there is no fixed dharma.)

2. Suppose someone asks, “Those who practice the Heart-of-Heart Dharma often claim to have attained realization. What evidence is there?” Answer, “Those who practice and realize know it for themselves. Though they know it, they have no way to explain it to those who have not practiced.”

3. Suppose someone asks, “It takes three great asaṃkhyeya kalpas to cultivate Buddhahood—how is this to be understood?” Ask in return, “From what time does an asaṃkhyeya begin to be counted, and at what time does it end? And what do the three characters a-seng-qi mean?”

4. Suppose someone asks, “Why is it said that afflictions are bodhi?” Answer, “Because bodhi is affliction.” Or say, “Water freezes into ice, and ice melts again into water; they are not two different waters.”

5. If someone asks, “Why is it said that wishing to eliminate afflictions only adds to the illness?” answer, “Because of the wish to eliminate them.” Then explain: “This does not mean afflictions should remain. Without understanding the fundamental point, trying to eliminate them only adds to worldly entanglement. The old illness can end without forced removal; why invite a new one?”

6. Suppose someone asks, “What state are you in now?” Answer, “I eat my own meal; I do not know whether you are full.”

VII. Suppose someone asks, “After the Buddha’s passing, should the precepts be taken as fundamental?” Answer, “No.” They will surely be greatly startled. Then say further, “It is not a matter of precepts or no precepts, but only of whether they are upheld. The Buddhadharma will not perish; those of the Buddhadharma perish.”

VIII. Suppose someone asks, “Who are those of the Buddhadharma?” Answer, “The one now asking me is.”

IX. Suppose someone asks, “Why is the meaning of the treatise so lofty?” Answer, “Discourse is itself not meaning, and meaning is itself not lofty. If meaning can be

discoursed upon, there is conceptual thought; if there is high and low, how can there be equality? Why practice to become a Buddha? No contention, no contention."

X. Suppose someone asks, "What is an arrogant person?" Answer, "One who speaks of there being arrogant people."

XI. Suppose someone asks, "Why is the Chan school the foremost?" Answer, "The Chan school cannot speak; it has never called itself the foremost."

XII. Suppose someone asks, "Why does the Buddha have a special transmission outside the teachings?" Answer, "The Buddha never had a separate transmission, for he never established teachings, nor did he establish inside and outside. It is you, sir, who make such distinctions."

XIII. Suppose someone asks, "How can one become a Buddha?" Answer, "Only one who can enter the realm of Māra can become a Buddha." If asked how to enter the realm of Māra, answer, "The dualistic view is the Māra-view. From duality, enter nonduality, where there is neither Buddha nor Māra."

XIV. Suppose someone asks, "Why discuss the Chan school when practicing the Heart-of-Heart Dharma?" Answer, "Originally, it is neither Esoteric Buddhism nor Chan; yet it is not apart from Esoteric Buddhism and not apart from Chan. Still, it is not a combination of Chan and Esoteric Buddhism."

XV. Suppose someone asks, "Why do Chan practitioners have so many habits of mockery and sarcasm?" Answer, "This is a manner of approach and differs from habitual tendencies. Rigidly clinging to one manner and not understanding adaptation—this is habitual tendency."

XVI. Suppose someone asks, "Is Pure Land practice the most reliable?" Answer, "No." They will surely object. Then say further, "It is precisely because the Pure Land is so reliable that students become lax; they practice only one tenth of the Pure Land. Therefore, it is not."

XVII. Suppose someone asks, "Why do you especially say that attaining Buddhahood in this very life is easy?" Answer, "It is not I who say so, but the Buddha. In my foolish view, attaining Buddhahood in this very life is still only an expedient. My greed is strongest: I want to become a Buddha this very moment. The sūtras say, 'One should attain anuttarā-samyak-saṃbodhi.' Yet I have never seen anyone dare to read the character dang in the departing tone, thereby acknowledging Buddhahood in the present moment. Again, the sūtras say, 'Know that this person is the Tathāgata; with the Buddha's wisdom, he fully knows this person,' and so forth. Yet I

have never seen anyone dare to punctuate the sentence after 'Tathāgata,' thereby acknowledging oneself to be the Tathāgata."

XVIII. Suppose someone asks, "What is meant by 'wild Chan'?" Answer, "'Wild' is not Chan; wild has the sense of uncultivated. What the world calls wild Chan is this. But whether one is wild or not, whether one is uncultivated or not, is known through one's own realization and cannot be measured by others."

XIX. Suppose someone asks, "What is a good spiritual friend?" Answer, "One who can know oneself, and who can also recognize a good spiritual friend—such a person is a good spiritual friend."

XX. Suppose someone asks, "Why does the Chan school so often display startling actions?" Answer, "It is to make you give rise to doubt. Doubt means doubting yourself. When you can raise doubt yourself, you will be willing to seek instruction and investigate. The reason for such deliberately startling displays is to test whether you can be frightened or not, whether you will be taken in or not, and thereby whether you will awaken or not. It is all to make you leap out of this circle, not to compete with you over superiority or inferiority."

XXI. Suppose someone asks, "What is the practice of the Heart-of-Heart Dharma?" Answer, "When one realizes that the Pure Lands of the ten directions are unobtainable, it is not the purity of Pure Land, not the Chan of Chan, not the esoteric practice of Esoteric Buddhism, nor the dharma of the Heart-of-Heart Dharma. It is Heart-of-Heart."

XXII. Suppose someone asks, "How should one propagate the Heart-of-Heart Dharma?" Answer, "Seek only doubt and slander, not widespread praise; do only practical things, and do not engage in excessive disputation."

XXIII. Suppose someone asks, "How can one seal the mind?" Answer, "The mind is unobtainable—what is there to seal?"

The Buddhadharma has no fixed dharma; how could there be any dharma to expound? When you gentlemen can ask yourselves whether you are able to apply this prajñā dharma, take care not to speak of it lightly to those who cannot understand, lest you mislead them and cause them to lose heart. As for teachings adapted to capacities, methods of transmitting the Dharma, and the esoteric meaning of the tantric dual-body practice, you gentlemen already know these. They should not be discussed with those who have not practiced; therefore, they are not made public and should be omitted from the record.

Mencius said, "The way of learning has no other: it is simply to recover one's lost mind." Yet does one know whether what is recovered is truly what was lost? From

where is it recovered? After recovering it, how is it to be placed? If one knows that ultimately there is no mind to recover, then we people are indeed making much needless trouble. Do you understand?

Summary

The three sections discussed above cannot exhaust even one ten-thousandth of the matter.

The Section on Inspiring Potential is spoken for those who arouse the resolve, so that they may bring forth the supreme, vast mind and directly enter the Avataṃsaka Dharma realm, thereby setting their cause aright. A vessel is needed to receive something: a large vessel holds much, and a small vessel holds little.

The Avataṃsaka Sūtra takes buddha-nature as its principle. If people are to become Buddhas, they must first have their vast minds awakened. As it is said, this sūtra is not entrusted into the hands of other sentient beings, but only to great-minded ordinary beings. The Avataṃsaka's adornment of fragrance and light is meant to expand their mind-capacity, making it a vessel capable of receiving Buddhahood. Sentient beings do not believe that their own nature is vast and nondual with the Buddha; they are incapable of receiving this teaching and are not fit to be told of the subtle wonder of the Avataṃsaka.

Everyone can become a Yao or a Shun. To establish such a great vow is what the sages approve; it is called aspiring to lofty purpose, not arrogance. Arrogance is arrogance toward others. Yet if one strives to improve oneself, this too is called arrogant, conceited, and perverse—how absurd and petty that is may readily be seen. What is meant by a vessel? Although the Buddha taught the Avataṃsaka for bodhisattvas, his expectations for sentient beings were such as these. This is the Avataṃsaka's causes and conditions. When sentient beings repay the Buddha's kindness, it is certainly not enough merely to make offerings; they must arouse the great resolve and shoulder the responsibility.

Next comes the Section on Right Cultivation, spoken for those who are diligent. Its guiding principle is not confined to any particular method; it establishes no sectarian boundary, transmits the teaching according to the recipient's capacity, does not prize empty talk, carefully guards against every ailment, and prevents entry onto mistaken paths.

Then comes the Section on Verification of Realization, spoken for those seeking verification, to prevent their doubts and retreat midway and to provide a little material for comparison and confirmation.

In sum, a thousand words and ten thousand phrases are not as good as the practitioner's own decisive resolution. With such resolve, one immediately accomplishes the Buddha Way. Earlier, I used a dark room as an analogy: a person dwelling in it is no different from a blind person; however much effort is expended, it ultimately comes to nothing. Therefore, two great keys must be decisively established. First, turn on the light to see the grime, and close the back door to stop its source. Second, clear out the accumulated objects in the room, so that it will never again become dirty.

Only when the light is turned on does one first see the result of accumulated grime before one's eyes, and then see the cause by which grime enters through the back door. This first crucial step allows not the slightest concession. The present section on inspiring potential and establishing the cause enables one first to know the practices at the causal stage: they lie solely in awakening and wisdom. After realizing the mind and seeing one's true nature, one's eyes naturally become clear and bright. Once ignorance is shattered, the back door naturally closes; cause and effect become thoroughly clear, and grime no longer enters.

This is the distinctive intent, shared by the Chan and Esoteric schools and unlike that of other schools: to begin at the root.

The accumulated grime is the obscurations and habitual tendencies amassed since beginningless time. Although ignorance has been shattered, the habitual tendencies have not yet been affected, and there remains a state like mourning one's dead parents. One must therefore exert oneself fully in cleaning, gradually removing them completely. The sole instrument for cleaning is prajñā. This cannot be completed in a single lifetime; yet only after turning on the light and closing the door does everything become proper work, so that one may avoid blind cultivation and blind practice, laboring without result.

When practitioners themselves understand their original nature, see their own accumulated grime, and are able both to prevent its entry and to clean it away, they will naturally no longer permit themselves to shrink back or procrastinate. Why? The difficulty of splitting bamboo lies in the first joint. Once the first joint has been split, it naturally cleaves downward with the grain, and one cannot stop. A sūtra says, “At the very first arousal of the resolve, one immediately becomes a Buddha.” How much more so for one who has already understood the root!

The function of the Heart-of-Heart Dharma is to awaken the root: attaining samādhi, giving rise to wisdom, and realizing the mind and seeing one's true nature—this is turning on the light. It enters Chan through esoteric practice, arouses prajñā, and cleans away accumulated habits to remove the grime. Essence and function are unified; principle and phenomena interpenetrate. The teacher provides the

guidance that awakens one; putting it into practice is one's own responsibility. The value of these lecture notes is no more than that of a broom: use it for a time, and discard it when it is no longer needed.

If one can refrain from views of self, take up the task directly, rely on firsthand understanding rather than hearsay, and persevere despite difficulty, one can progress from resolve to diligence, and from diligence to practice and realization, putting these words into action. Through investigation and personal insight, one can then point out errors where my explanations are incomplete and supplement what I have left unsaid, thereby guiding future practitioners and joining in this great work of spreading the Dharma. This would truly repay the Buddha's kindness and honor the painstaking efforts of my revered teacher, Master Dayu, over the years.

As for the profound essentials of the secret treasury, and the practices of the stages of forbearance in the Benevolent Kings Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra, you may seek confirmation from Master Dayu; the causes and conditions must await another day. As for those who have not practiced the Heart-of-Heart Dharma, please do not first show them the Section on Verification of Realization. If such practitioners read it on their own, they should not give rise to doubts. Such doubts harm no one else; they only distress the reader. Take care.

Someone may ask: Earlier it was said that, if one tries letting go of the myriad conditions, one can immediately and suddenly transcend the ten bhūmis. But if there is a "letting go," how can it be the ten bhūmis? And if there are the "ten bhūmis," how can one speak of letting go? Please answer on my behalf.

Notes:

1. The Buddha-Heart Sūtra is the abbreviated title of The Buddha-Heart Sūtra, Also Corresponding to the Great Wish-Fulfilling Dhāraṇī.

2. The ten great vows: (1) Have full faith in every Buddha, find no obstruction in any method, and regard the pure Saṅgha as one's teacher. (2) Uphold the precepts without deficiency, keep the mind settled in samādhi, and recognize all phenomena as empty, impartially and without attachment. (3) Be compassionate to beings, diligently refrain from killing, regard beings as oneself, and be unable to bear eating their flesh. (4) Give impartially to those who ask; be gentle and humble, without arrogance. (5) Do not abandon one's original vows.

Always benefit oneself and others; do not praise oneself or dwell on others' faults. (6) Rich or poor, noble or lowly, all share a nondual nature. Speak gently, bringing joy; be honest and straightforward, free of flattery. Accord with people's circumstances and skillfully work with conventional truth. (7) Understand and carry out the Buddha's instructions. Protect the Buddhadharma as one's own life; protect

and liberate beings without seeking repayment. Even when beings are arrogant, do not retreat.

(8) Do not disparage the true Dharma or cause others to do so; do not slander the Three Jewels or lead others to slander them. Help those who disparage them through kind explanations, so that they enter through faith and avoid the net of wrong views. (9) Always guard right mindfulness and maintain integrity even in private. Be steadfast in excellent conduct and tireless in effort. Make vast vows, gather the mind without retreating, abide in the Mahāyāna, and dispel wrong views. (10) Practice every part of the prescribed method. Form the secret mudrās purely, without defilement. Practice for the benefit of self and others, never for fame or material gain.

3. The third chapter, “The Conduct of Bodhisattvas,” of the Benevolent Kings Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra for the Protection of the Nation states: “All bodhisattva mahāsattvas rely on the five kinds of forbearance as their practice: the forbearance of subduing, the forbearance of faith, the forbearance of conformity, and the forbearance of the unborn, each of which has superior, middling, and lesser grades; and the forbearance of quiescent cessation, which has higher and lower grades. This is called the bodhisattvas' practice of prajñāpāramitā.”

The initial stage of the forbearance of subduing is this: at the stage of the nature of habitual seeds, one cultivates the practices of the ten abodes; at the stage of the nature of innate seeds, one cultivates the ten pāramitās; and at the stage of the nature of the Way-seeds, one cultivates the ten dedications. Next, bodhisattvas of the forbearance of faith—namely, those at the bhūmis of Joy, Freedom from Defilement, and Emission of Light—can sever the bonds of the three obscurations of afflictions associated with form. Next, bodhisattvas of the forbearance of conformity —namely, those at the bhūmis of Blazing Wisdom, Difficult to Conquer, and Manifest Presence—can sever the bonds of the three obscurations of afflictions associated with mind.

Next, bodhisattvas of the forbearance of the unborn—namely, those at the bhūmis of Far-Going, Immovability, and Good Wisdom—can sever the habitual tendencies of the three obscurations associated with form and mind. Next, as for the forbearance of quiescent cessation, Buddhas and bodhisattvas alike rely upon this forbearance. In vajra-like samādhi, one abides at the lower stage of this forbearance and is called a bodhisattva; upon reaching its higher stage, one is called All-Knowing. Contemplating the ultimate truth and severing the marks of ignorance is called equal enlightenment.