

BUDDHISM

The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch

The autobiography and teachings of Hui-Neng, the illiterate woodcutter who became the Sixth Patriarch of Chan (Zen) Buddhism, covering his enlightenment, his teaching on Prajna and sudden enlightenment, and his final instructions before death. Presents Wong Mou-lam's 1930 translation as edited and abridged by Dwight Goddard for A Buddhist Bible (1932) -- a readable rather than strictly literal rendering, and (unlike most texts on this site) of genuinely uncertain public-domain status given its 1930 Shanghai publication.

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Preface

¹ THIS VERSION is based upon the English translation entitled: SUTRA SPOKEN BY THE SIXTH PATRIARCH, WEI LANG, ON THE HIGH SEAT OF THE GEM OF LAW made by Mr. Wong Mou-lam of Shanghai, and published by the Yu Ching Press. To Mr. Wong great praise and credit should be given for his most excellent reproduction of the meaning and spirit of the original. Mr. Wong has very graciously given the editor permission to make changes in its English dress, and to delete passages that a reasonable amount of literary and historical criticism appear to make necessary, or that are of slight interest to our times. As Mr. Wong is in far away Ceylon to better fit himself for further translation work, there has been no chance to talk over the changes with him and to secure his approval; the editor, therefore, holds himself wholly responsible for them. Mr. Wong's translation is technically more complete and accurate and for scholarly research is to be preferred to this Version, but there is great need for a simpler and more readable Version, for which need this was provided.

² The Sixth Chinese Patriarch lived fifteen hundred years ago (637-713), but his kindly and straightforward insistence on the one thing: "Self-realisation of your own mind-essence," places him among the world's great teachers, and marks him out as one still worthy of attention.

Chapter I: Autobiography of Hui-Neng

¹ ONCE WHEN THE PATRIARCH had come to Pao-lam Monastery, Prefect Wai of Shiu-chow and other officials came there to invite him to deliver public lectures on Buddhism in the hall of Tai-fan Temple in the city (Canton).

² When the time came, there were assembled Prefect Wai, government officials and Confucian scholars about thirty each, bhikshu, bhikshuni, Taoists and laymen, nearly a thousand in all. After the Patriarch had taken his seat, the congregation in a body paid him homage and asked him to speak on the fundamental truths of Buddhism. Whereupon, His Eminence delivered the following address:--

³ Learned Audience, our self-nature which is the seed or kernel of Bodhi (the Wisdom that comes with enlightenment) is pure by nature and by making right use of it we can reach Buddhahood directly. Let me tell you something about my own life and how I came into possession of this inner teaching of our Ch'an School.

⁴ My father, a native of Fan-yang, was dismissed from his official post and banished to become a commoner in Sun-chow in Kwang-tung. My father died when I was quite young leaving my mother poor and miserable, to my great misfortune. We moved to Kwang-chow (now

⁵ Canton) and lived in very bad circumstances. I was selling firewood in the market one day when one of my customers ordered some to be sent to his shop. Upon delivery and payment for the same as I went outside I found a man reciting a Sutra. No sooner had I heard the text of this Sutra then my mind became at once enlightened. I asked the man the name of the book he was reciting and was told that it was the "Diamond Sutra" (Vajrakkhedika). I asked him where he came from and why he recited this particular Sutra. He replied that he came from the Tung-tsan Monastery in the Wong-mui

District of Kee-chow; that the Abbot in charge of this temple was Hwang-yan who was the Fifth Patriarch and had about a thousand disciples under him; and that when he went there to pay homage to the Patriarch, he found him lecturing on this Diamond Sutra. He further told me that his Eminence was in the habit of encouraging the laity as well as his monks to recite this scripture, as by so doing they might realise their own essence-of-mind and thereby reach Buddhahood directly.

⁶ It must be due to my good karma accumulated from past lives that I heard about this and that later on I was given ten taels for the maintenance of my mother by a man who advised me to go to Wong-mui to interview the Fifth Patriarch. After arrangements had been made for my mother's support, I left for Wong-mui which took me about thirty days to reach.

⁷ I paid homage to the Patriarch and was asked where I came from and what I expected to get from him. I replied that I was a commoner from Sun-chow in Kwang-tung and had travelled far to pay my respects

⁸ to him, and then said, "I ask for nothing but Buddhahood."

⁹ The Patriarch replied: "So you are a native of Kwang-tung, are you? You evidently belong to the aborigines; how can you expect to become a Buddha?"

¹⁰ I replied: "Although there are Northern men and Southern men, but North or South make no difference in their Buddha-nature. An aboriginee is different from your Eminence physically, but there is no difference in our Buddha-nature."

¹¹ He was going to speak further to me but the presence of other disciples made him hesitate and he told me to join the other laborers at their tasks. "May I tell Your Eminence," I urged, "that Prajna (transcendental Wisdom) constantly rises in my mind. As one cannot go astray from his own nature one may be rightly called, 'a field of merit' (this is a title of honor given to monks as a monk affords the best of opportunities to others, 'to sow the seed of merit'). I do not know what work Your Eminence would ask me to do."

¹² "This aboriginee is very witty" he remarked. "Go to the work-rooms and say no more." I then withdrew to the rear where the work of the monastery was carried on and was told by a lay brother to split firewood and hull rice.

¹³ More than eight months after the Patriarch met me one day and said, "I know that your knowledge of Buddhism is very sound, but I have to refrain from speaking with you lest evil men should harm you. Do you understand?" "Yes Sir, I understand," I replied. "And I will not go near your hall, lest people take notice of me."

¹⁴ One day the Patriarch assembled all his disciples and said to them: "The question of incessant rebirth is a very momentous one, but instead of trying to free yourselves from that bitter sea of life and death, you men, day after day, seem to be going after tainted merits only. Merit will be of no help to you if your essence of mind is polluted and clouded. Go now and seek for the transcendental wisdom that is within your own minds and then write me a stanza about it. He who gets the clearest idea of what Mind-essence is will be given the insignia of the Patriarch; I will give him the secret teaching of the Dharma, and will appoint him to be the Sixth Patriarch. Go away quickly, now, and do not delay in writing the stanza; deliberation is quite unnecessary and will be of no use. The one who has realised Essence of Mind can testify to it at once as soon as he is spoken to about it. He cannot lose sight of it, even if he were engaged in a battle."

¹⁵ Having received this instruction, the disciples withdrew and said to one another, "There is no use of our making an effort to write a stanza and submit it to His Eminence; the Patriarchship is bound to go to Elder Shin-shau, our Master, anyway. Why go through the form of writing, it will only be a waste of energy." Hearing this they decided to write nothing, saying, "Why should we take the trouble to do it? Hereafter we will simply follow our Master Shin-shau wherever he goes and will look to him for guidance."

¹⁶ Shin-shau reasoned within himself, "Considering that I am their Master, none of them will take part in competition. I wonder whether I should write a stanza and submit it to His Eminence, or not. If I do not, how

¹⁷ can the Patriarch know how deep or how superficial my knowledge is? If my object is to get the Dharma, my motive is pure. If it is to get the Patriarchship, then it is bad; my mind would be that of a worldling and my action would amount to a theft of the Patriarch's holy seat. But if I do not submit the stanza, I will lose my chance of getting the Dharma. It is very difficult to know what to do."

¹⁸ In front of the Patriarch's hall there were three corridors the walls of which were to be painted by a court artist named Lo-chun, with pictures suggested by the Lankavatara Sutra depicting the transfiguration of the assembly, and with scenes showing the genealogy of the five Patriarchs, for the information and veneration of the public. When Shin-shau had composed his stanza he made several attempts to submit it, but his mind was so perturbed that he was prevented from doing it. Then he suggested to himself, "It would be better for me to write it on the wall of the corridor and let the Patriarch find it himself. If he approves it, then I will go to pay him homage and tell him that it was done by me; but if he disapproves it,--well, then I have wasted several years' time in this mountain receiving homage which I did not deserve. If I fail, what progress have I made in learning Buddhism?"

¹⁹ At midnight of that night, he went secretly to write his stanza on the wall of the south corridor, so that the Patriarch might know to what spiritual insight he had attained. The stanza read:--

²⁰ "Our body may be compared to the Bodhi-tree; While our mind is a mirror bright. Carefully we cleanse and watch them hour by hour, And let no dust collect upon them."

²¹ As soon as he had written it he returned at once to his room, so no one knew what he had done. In the quiet of his room he pondered: "When the Patriarch sees my stanza tomorrow, if he is pleased with it it will show that I am (spiritually) ready for the Dharma; but if he disapproves of it, then it will mean that I am unfit for the Dharma owing to misdeeds in previous lives and karmic accumulations that so thickly becloud my mind. What will the Patriarch say about it? How difficult it is to speculate." He could neither sleep nor sit at ease; and so in this vein he kept on thinking until dawn.

²² In the morning the Patriarch sent for Lo, the court artist, to have the walls painted with pictures and went with him to the south corridor. The Patriarch noticed the stanza and said to the artist, "I am sorry to have troubled you to come so far, but the walls do not need to be painted now. The Sutra says, 'All forms and phenomena are transient and illusive'; we will leave the stanza here so that people may study the stanza and recite it. If they put its teachings into actual practice, they will be saved from the misery of being born in evil realms of existence. Any one who practices it will gain great merit." The Patriarch ordered incense to be burnt before it, and instructed all his disciples to

pay homage to it and to recite it, so that they might realise Essence of Mind. After his disciples had recited it, they all exclaimed, "Well done!"

²³ That midnight the Patriarch sent for Shin-shau and asked if he had written the stanza. Shin-shau admitted that he had written it and then added: "I am not so vain as to expect to get the Patriarchship, but I wish

²⁴ Your Eminence would kindly tell me whether my stanza shows the least grain of wisdom."

²⁵ "To attain supreme enlightenment," replied the Patriarch, "one must be able to know spontaneously one's own self-nature which is neither created nor can it be annihilated. From one momentary sensation to another, one should always be able to realise Essence of Mind; then all things will be free from restraint. Once the self-nature of Mind-essence is realised, forever after one will be free from delusion, and under all circumstances, one's mind will remain in a state of 'Suchness' (tathata). Such a state of mind is absolute truth. If you can see things in such a state of mind you have realised Essence of Mind, which is the supreme enlightenment. You had better return now and think it over for a couple of days and then submit another stanza. In case the new stanza shows that you have entered 'the door of enlightenment,' I will transmit to you the robe and the Dharma."

²⁶ Shin-shau made obeisance to the Patriarch and went away. For several days he tried in vain to write another stanza, which upset his mind so much that he was as ill at ease as though he was in a nightmare; he could find comfort neither in sitting nor walking.

²⁷ Two days after, it happened that a boy who was passing by the room where I was hulling rice, was loudly reciting the stanza written by Shin-shau. As soon as I heard it I knew at once that its composer had not yet realised Essence of Mind. Although at that time I never had had instruction about it, I already had a general idea of it. "What stanza is this," I asked the boy. "You aboriginee," he said, "don't you know about

²⁸ it? The Patriarch told his disciples that the question of rebirth was a momentous one, and those who wished to inherit his robe and the Dharma should write him a stanza and the one who had the true idea of Mind-essence would get them and become the Sixth Patriarch. Elder Shin-shau wrote this 'formless' stanza on the wall of the south corridor and the Patriarch told us to recite it. He also said that those who put its teachings into actual practice would attain great merit and be saved from being born in the evil realms of existence."

²⁹ I told the boy that I wished to learn the stanza also, so that I might have the benefit of it in future life. Although I had been hulling rice for eight months, I had never been to the hall, so I asked the boy to show me where the stanza was written, so that I might make obeisance to it. The boy took me there and as I was illiterate, I asked him to read it to me. A petty officer of the Kong-chow District, named Chang Fat-yung, who happened to be there, then read it clearly. When he had finished reading, I told him that I, also, had composed a stanza and asked him to write it for me. "Extraordinary," he exclaimed, "that you, also, can compose a stanza."

³⁰ "If you are a seeker of supreme enlightenment, you will not despise a beginner," I said.

³¹ "Please recite your stanza," said he, "I will write it down for you, but if you should succeed in getting the Dharma, do not forget to deliver me."

³² My stanza read as follows:

³³ "Neither is there Bohi-tree, Nor case of mirror bright. Since intrinsically all is void Where can dust collect?"

³⁴ Later on seeing that a crowd was collecting, the Patriarch came out and erased the stanza with his shoe lest jealous ones should do me injury. Judging by this, the crowd took it for granted that the author of it had also not yet realised Mind-essence.

³⁵ Next day the Patriarch came secretly to the room where the rice was being hulled and seeing me at work with the stone pestle, said, "A seeker of the Path risks his life for the Dharma. Should he do so?" Then he asked, "Is the rice ready?" "Ready long ago," I replied, "only waiting for the sieve." He knocked the mortar thrice with his stick and went away.

³⁶ Knowing what his signal meant, in the third watch of the night, I went to his room. Using his robe as a screen so that no one would see us, he expounded the Diamond Sutra to me. When he came to the sentence, "One should use one's mind in such a way that it will be free from any attachment," I suddenly became thoroughly enlightened and realised that all things in the universe are Mind-essence itself.

³⁷ I said to the Patriarch, "Who could have conceived that Mind-essence is intrinsically pure! Who could have conceived that Mind-essence is intrinsically free from becoming and annihilation! That Mind-essence is intrinsically self-sufficient, and free from change! Who could have conceived that all things are manifestations of Mind-essence!"

³⁸ Thus at midnight, to the knowledge of no one, was the Dharma transmitted to me, and I consequently became the inheritor of the teachings of the "Sudden" School, and the possessor of the robe and the begging-bowl.

³⁹ "You are now the Sixth Patriarch," said His Eminence. "Take good care of yourself and deliver as many sentient beings as possible. Spread the teaching; keep the teaching alive; do not let it come to an end. Listen to my stanza:

⁴⁰ 'Sentient beings who sow seed of Enlightenment In the field of causation, will reap the fruit of Buddhahood. Inanimate objects which are void of Buddha-nature Sow not and reap not.'

⁴¹ His Eminence further said: "When Patriarch Bodhidharma first came to China, few Chinese had confidence in him and so this robe has been handed down as a testimony from one Patriarch to another. As to the Dharma, as a rule it is transmitted from heart to heart and the recipient is expected to understand it and to realise it by his own efforts. From time immemorial, it has been the practice for one Buddha to pass on to his successor the quintessence of the Dharma, and for one Patriarch to transmit to another, from mind to mind, the esoteric teaching. As the robe may give cause for dispute, you will be the last one to inherit it. If you should again hand it down to a successor, your life would be in imminent danger. You must now leave this place as quickly as you can, lest some one should harm you."

⁴² I asked him, "Where shall I go?" and he replied, "Stop at Wei and seclude yourself at Wui."

⁴³ As it was the middle of the night when I thus received

⁴⁴ the begging-bowl and the robe, I told the Patriarch that as I was a Southerner I did not know the mountain trails and it would be impossible for me to get down to the river. "You need not worry," he replied, "I will go with you." He then accompanied me to the Kiu-kiang landing where we got a boat. As he started to do the rowing himself, I asked him to be seated and let me handle the oar. He replied,

"It is only right for me to get you across." (This is an illusion to the sea of birth and death which one has to cross before the shore of Nirvana can be reached.) To this I replied, "(So long as I was) under illusion, I was dependent on you to get me across, but now it is different. It was my fortune to be born on the frontier and my education is very deficient, but I have had the honor to inherit the Dharma from you; since I am now enlightened, it is only right for me to cross the sea of birth and death by my own effort to realise my own Essence of Mind."

⁴⁵ "Quite so, quite so," he agreed. "Beginning with you (Ch'an) Buddhism will become very widespread. Three years from your leaving me I shall pass from this world. You may start on your journey now; go as fast as you can toward the South. Do not begin preaching too soon; (Ch'an) Buddhism is not to be easily spread."

⁴⁶ After saying good-bye, I left him and walked toward the South. In about two months I reached the Tai-yu Mountain where I noticed several hundred men were in pursuit of me with the intention of recovering the robe and begging-bowl. Among them, the most vigilant was a monk of the name of Wei-ming whose surname was Chen. In lay-life he had been a general of the fourth rank. His manner was rough and his temper

⁴⁷ hot. When he overtook me, I threw the robe and the begging-bowl on a rock, saying, "This robe is nothing but a testimonial; what is the use of taking it away by force?" When he reached the rock, he tried to pick them up but could not. Then in astonishment he shouted, "Lay Brother, Lay Brother, (Hui-neng, although appointed the Sixth Patriarch, had not yet formally been admitted to the Order), I have come for the Dharma; I do not care for the robe." Whereupon I came from my hiding place and took the position on the rock of a Patriarch. He made obeisance and said, "Lay Brother, I beg you to teach me."

⁴⁸ "Since the object of your coming is for the Dharma," said I, "please refrain from thinking about anything and try to keep your mind perfectly empty and receptive. I will then teach you." When he had done this for a considerable time, I said, "Venerable Sir, at the particular moment when you are thinking of neither good nor evil, what is your real self-nature (the word is, physiognomy)?"

⁴⁹ As soon as he heard this he at once became enlightened, but he asked, "Apart from these sayings and ideas handed down by the Patriarchs from generation to generation, are there still any esoteric teachings?"

⁵⁰ "What I can tell you is not esoteric," I replied, "If you turn your light inward, you will find what is esoteric within your own mind."

⁵¹ "In spite of my stay in Wong-mui," said he, "I did not realise my own self-nature. Now, thanks to your guidance, I realise it in the same way a water-drinker knows how hot and how cold the water is. Lay Brother, I am now your disciple." I replied, "If this is the case,

⁵² then you and I are fellow disciples of the Fifth Patriarch. Please take good care of yourself." He paid homage and departed.

⁵³ Some time after I reached Tso-kai, but as evil-doers were again persecuting me, I took refuge in Sze-wui where I staid with a party of hunters for fifteen years. They used to put me to watch their nets, but when I found living creatures entangled in them I would set them free. At meal time I would put vegetables in the same pan in which they cooked their meat. Some of them questioned me and I explained to them that I could only eat vegetables. Occasionally I talked to them in a way that

befitted their understanding. One day I bethought myself that I ought not to pass so secluded a life all the time; I felt that the time had come for me to propagate the Dharma. Accordingly I left there and went to the Fat-shin Temple in Canton.

⁵⁴ At the time I reached that temple, the monk Yen-chung, Master of Dharma, was lecturing on the Maha Parinirvana Sutra. It happened one day when a pennant was being blown about by the wind, that two monks entered into a dispute as to what was in motion, the wind or the pennant. As they failed to settle their difference, I suggested that it was neither; that what actually moved was their own mind. The whole group was surprised by what I said and the Master Yen-chung invited me to a seat of honor and questioned me about various knotty points in the Sutra. Seeing that my answers were precise and accurate, that they inferred more than book knowledge, he said to me, "Lay Brother, you must be an extraordinary man. I was told long ago that the inheritor of the Fifth Patriarch's

⁵⁵ robe and Dharma had come to the South; very likely you are the man?"

⁵⁶ To this I politely assented. He made obeisance and courteously asked me to show to the assembly the robe and begging-bowl which I had inherited. He further asked what instructions I had received at the time the Fifth Patriarch had transmitted the Dharma to me.

⁵⁷ I replied, "Apart from a discussion on the realisation of Mind-essence, he gave me no other instruction. He did not refer to Dhyana nor to Emancipation." The Master asked, "Why not?" I replied, "Because that would mean there were two ways in Buddhism. There cannot be two ways; in Buddhism there is only one way." The Master then asked, "What is the only way?"

⁵⁸ I replied, "The Maha Parinirvana Sutra which you are expounding teaches that Buddha-nature is the only way. For example: in that Sutra King-ko-kwai-tak, a Bodhisattva, asked the Buddha whether those who commit the four serious sins, or the five deadly sins, or are heretics, etc., would thereby root out their 'element of goodness' and their Buddha-nature. Buddha replied, 'There are two kinds of 'goodness-elements': an eternal element, and a non-eternal. Since Buddha-nature is neither eternal nor non-eternal, their 'element of goodness' is not eradicated. There are good ways and evil ways, but since Buddha-nature is neither good nor evil, Buddhism is known as having no two ways. From the point of view of ordinary folks, the component parts of a personality and the factors of consciousness are two separate aggregates, but enlightened men know and understand that they are not

⁵⁹ dual in nature. It is that nature of non-duality that is Buddha-nature."

⁶⁰ Master Yen-chung was pleased with my answer. Putting his hands together in token of respect, he said, "My interpretation of the Sutra is as worthless as a heap of debris, while your discourse is as valuable as pure gold." Subsequently he conducted a ceremony of initiation, receiving me into the order, and then asked me to accept him as a pupil.

⁶¹ Thenceforth under the Bodhi-tree I have discoursed about the teachings of the Fourth and Fifth Patriarchs. Since the Dharma was transmitted to me in Tung Mountain, I have gone through many hardships and often my life seemed to be hanging by a thread. Today I have had the honor of meeting Your Highness, and you, officials, monks and nuns, Taoists and laymen, in this great assembly. I must ascribe this good fortune to our happy connection in previous kalpas, as well as to our common accumulated merits in making offerings to various Buddhas in our past incarnations. Otherwise we would have had no chance of hearing the teachings of the "Sudden" School of Ch'an and thereby laying the foundation of our present success in understanding the Dharma.

⁶² This teaching is not a system of my own invention, but has been handed down by the Patriarchs. Those who wish to hear the teaching should first purify their own minds; and after hearing it, each must clear up his own doubts, even as the Sages have done in the past.

⁶³ At the end of the address, the assembly felt rejoiced, made obeidance and departed.

Chapter II: Discourse on Prajna

¹ ON THE FOLLOWING DAY Prefect Wai asked Patriarch to give another address. Having taken his seat, the Patriarch asked the assembly to first purify their minds (by a period of dhyana-silence) and then to join in reciting the Maha Prajna-paramita Sutra, after which he gave the following address:--

² Learned Audience: Prajna, the Wisdom of Enlightenment, is inherent in every one of us. It is because of the delusions under which our minds labor that we fail to realise its presence, and that we have to seek the advice and the guidance of the more highly enlightened before we can realise it in our mind's Essence. You should know that as far as Buddha-nature is concerned, there is no difference between an enlightened man and an ignorant one. What makes the difference is that one realises it and the other is ignorant of it. Let me speak

³ to you now about the Maha Prajna-paramita Sutra, so that each of you may attain wisdom. Listen carefully while I speak.

⁴ Learned Audience: There are many people who recite the word, Prajna, the whole day long, who do not seem to know that Prajna is inherent in their own nature. The mere talking about food will not appease hunger, but that is the very thing these people are doing. We may talk about the "Doctrine of Voidness" for myriads of kalpas, but merely talking about it will not enable one to realise it in his Mind-essence, and the talking will serve no good purpose in the end.

⁵ The name, Maha Prajna-paramita, is Sanskrit and means, "great Wisdom to reach the opposite shore." Now, what we ought to do with it is to carry it into practice with our mind; whether we recite it or do not recite it matters little. Mere reciting without mental practice, may be likened to a phantasm, a magical delusion, a flash of lighting, or a dew-drop. On the other hand, if we do both, then our mind will be in accord with what we repeat orally. Our very self-nature is Buddha, and apart from this nature there is no other Buddha.

⁶ What is Maha? Maha means, "great." The capacity of the mind is as great as that of space. It is infinite, it is neither round nor square, neither great nor small, neither green nor yellow, neither red nor white, neither above nor below, neither long nor short, neither angry nor happy, neither right nor wrong, neither good nor evil, neither first nor last. All Buddha-lands are as void as space. Intrinsically our transcendental nature is void and not a single dharma can be

⁷ attained. It is the same with Mind-essence which is a state of the "voidness of non-voidity."

⁸ Learned Audience: when you hear me speak about the void, do not fall into the idea that I mean vacuity. It is of the utmost importance that we should not fall into that idea, because then when a man sits quietly and keeps his mind blank he would be abiding in a state of the "voidness of indifference." The illimitable void of the Universe its capable of holding myriads of things of various shapes and form, such as the sun and the moon, and the stars, worlds, mountains, rivers, rivulets, springs, woods,

bushes, good men, bad men, laws pertaining to goodness and to badness, heavenly planes and hells, great oceans and all the mountains of Mahameru. Space takes in all these, and so does the voidness of our nature. We say that Essence of Mind is great because it embraces all things since all things are within our nature. When we see the goodness or the badness of other people, and are not attracted by it, nor repulsed by it, nor attached to it, then the attitude of our mind is as void as space. In that we see the greatness of our minds, therefore we call Mind-essence, Maha.

⁹ Learned Audience: When ignorant people have ideas they merely talk about them, but wise men keep them within their own minds and put them into practice. There is also a class of foolish people who sit quietly and try to keep their minds blank; they refrain from thinking of anything and then call themselves "great." Concerning this heretical view, I have no patience to speak. You should know that the capacity of the mind is very great since it pervades the whole

¹⁰ Universe wherever the domain of Law extends. When we use the mind we can consider everything; when we use Mind to its full capacity, we shall know all. All under one principle, one principle in all. When Mind works without hindrance and is at perfect liberty to come" or to "go," then Mind is Prajna.

¹¹ Prajna comes from Mind-essence and not from any exterior source. Do not have any mistaken notion about that. To cherish mistaken notions about that is to make a "selfish use of True Nature." Once the "True Nature" of Mind-essence is realised, one will be forever free from delusion. Since the capacity of Mind is for great things, we should not busy it with trivial acts. (That is, the mind that can realise Mind-essence through the right practice of dhyana, ought not to be sitting quietly with a blank mind nor wasting its resources on idle talk.) Do not talk all day about "the void, without practising it in the mind. One who does this may be likened to a self-styled king who is really a commoner. Prajna can never be attained in that way and those who act like that are not my disciples.

¹² What is Prajna? It means, Transcendental Wisdom. If we steadily, at all times and in all places, keep our thoughts free from foolish desire and act wisely on all occasions, then we are practising the Paramita of Prajna. One foolish notion is enough to shut-off Prajna; one wise thought will bring it forth again. People in ignorance or under delusion do not see this; they talk about it with their tongue but in their mind they are ignorant of it. They are always saying that they practice Prajna, and they talk incessantly about "vacuity," but they have not realised the True Void.

¹³ Prajna is Wisdom's Heart; it has neither form nor characteristic. If we interpret it in this way, then it is, indeed, the Wisdom of Prajna.

¹⁴ What is Paramita? It is a Sanskrit word (commonly translated, "ideal") that means, "to the opposite shore." Figuratively it means, "beyond existence and non-existence." By clinging to sense things, existence and non-existence are like the ups and downs of the billowy sea. Such a state, metaphorically is called, "this shore"; while beyond existence and non-existence there is a state characterised by non-attachment that has the undisturbed calmness of running water, that is called, "the opposite shore." This is why Prajna is called, Paramita.

¹⁵ Learned Audience: People under illusion recite the Maha Prajna-paramita with their tongue and, while they are reciting it, erroneous and evil thoughts arise; but if they put it into practice unremittingly they will come to realise its True Nature. To know this Dharma is to know the Law of Prajna; and to practice it is to practice Ideal Wisdom. He who does not practice it is an ordinary man; he who concentrates his mind on its practice, even if it be but for a moment only, he is the equal of

Buddha. An ordinary man is Buddha! and defilement is Enlightenment (Bodhi). A passing foolish thought makes one an ordinary man, while an enlightened thought makes one a Buddha. A passing thought that clings to sense-objects is defilement; a second thought that frees one from attachment is Enlightenment.

¹⁶ Maha Prajna-paramita! The Great Transcendental-Wisdom Ideal, supreme, most exalted, foremost. It

¹⁷ neither stays, nor goes, nor comes. By it Buddhas of the present, the past and future generations attain Buddhahood. We should use this Perfect Wisdom to break up the five bundles of aggregates that make up our personality, and thus get rid of the pollutions and contaminations. To follow such a practice ensures the attainment of Buddhahood. The three poisonous elements (greed, anger and infatuation) will then be turned into good conduct (sila) and self-realisation (samadhi) and wisdom (Prajna). When one is free from defilement, Wisdom reveals itself steadily and cannot be distinguished from Mind-essence. Those who understand this Dharma will be free from idle thoughts. To be free from discriminations, from clinging to desires, from illusions; to set free one's true nature; to use Prajna for contemplation; to take an attitude of neither indifference nor attachment towards all things--that is what is meant by realising one's true Essence of Mind and (in its perfection) is the attainment of Buddhahood.

¹⁸ Learned Audience: If you wish to penetrate the deepest mystery of the Dharma-world and experience the deepest realisation (samadhi) of Prajna, you should practice Prajna by reciting and studying the Diamond Sutra (the Vajrakkhedika) which will enable you to realise Essence of Mind . You should know that the merit for studying this Sutra is distinctly set forth in the text in laudatory terms; it is immeasurable and illimitable and cannot be enumerated in detail. This Sutra expounds the highest thought of Buddhism and our Lord Buddha delivered it specially for the very wise and quick-witted. The less wise and the slow-witted

¹⁹ doubt its credibility. Why? For example: When it rains through the power of the celestial Naga on the plains of India, cities, towns and villages are drifted about as if they were only leaves of the date tree; but should it rain on the great ocean, the level of the seas of the whole world would not be affected by it. When the followers of the highest school of Mahayana study the Diamond Sutra, their minds become enlightened as they realise that Prajna is immanent in their own Mind-essence. Since they have their own access to highest wisdom through the constant practice of concentration and contemplation (dhyana and samadhi) they realise that they no longer need to rely on scriptural authority.

²⁰ The Prajna immanent in the minds of every one may be likened to the rain, the moisture of which refreshes every living thing, trees and plants as well as sentient creatures. When rivers and streams reach the sea, the water carried by them merges into the one body, which is a good analogy. When rain falls in a deluge, plants which are not deep-rooted are washed away and eventually they perish. It is the same with the slow-witted when they hear about the teachings of the "Sudden School." The Prajna immanent in them is exactly the same as that in very wise men, but when the Dharma is made known to them they fail to enlighten themselves. Why is it? It is because their minds are thickly veiled by erroneous views and deeply rooted infections, just as the sun is often thickly veiled by clouds and unable to show its splendor until the wind blows the clouds away. Prajna does not vary with different persons; what makes the seeming difference is

²¹ the question whether one's mind is enlightened or is beclouded. He who does not realise his own Mind-essence, and rests under the delusion that Buddhahood can be attained by outward religious rites, is rightly called the slow-witted. He who knows the teachings of the "Sudden School," and who attaches no importance to ritual, and whose mind always functions under right views so that he is absolutely free of defilement and contamination, such an one may be said to have realised his Mind-essence.

²² Learned Audience: The mind should be framed in such a way that it will be independent of external and internal things, at liberty to come and go, free from attachment, thoroughly enlightened, without the least obscuration. He whose mind is thus framed is able to measure up to the standard of the Prajna Sutras. The sutras and the scriptures of both the Mahayana and the Hinayana, as well as the twelve sections of the canonical writings, were provided to suit the different needs and temperaments of various people. It is upon the principle that Prajna is latent in every man that the doctrines expounded in these scriptures are established. If there were no human beings, there would be no teachings; hence we know that all teachings are made for man and that all the Sutras owe their existence to preachers. Some men are wise, the so called superior men, and some are ignorant, the so called inferior men; the wise preach to the ignorant when they are asked to do so. Through this the ignorant may attain sudden enlightenment and their minds will become illuminated thereby; then they are no longer different from wise men. Without enlightenment there

²³ would be a difference between a Buddha and any other living being; a gleam of enlightenment is enough to make a living being the equal of a Buddha. Since all truth (Dharmas) is immanent in our minds, there is no reason why we should not realise intuitively the real nature of Mind-essence (tathata). The Bodhisattva Sila Sutra says, "Our Essence of Mind is intrinsically pure; if we knew our mind perfectly and realised what our self-nature truly is, all of us would attain Buddhahood." The Vimalakirti Nirdeśa Sutra says, "At once they become enlightened and regain their true mind."

²⁴ When the Fifth Patriarch preached to me I became enlightened immediately after he had spoken and spontaneously I realised the real nature of Mind-essence (tathata). For this reason it is my particular object to propagate the teaching of the "Sudden" School so that learners may know enlightenment at once and realise their true nature by introspection of mind. Should they fail to enlighten themselves they ought to ask some very pious and learned Buddhist who understands the teachings of this highest school to show them the right way. The office of a pious and learned Buddhist who guides others to realise Essence of Mind, is an exalted position. Through his assistance one may be initiated into all meritorious Dharmas. The wisdom of Buddhas, past, present and future, as well as the teachings of the twelve sections of the canon are immanent in the mind, but in case we fail to enlighten ourselves, we have to seek the guidance of the pious and learned. On the other hand those who enlighten themselves need no extraneous help. It is wrong to insist upon the idea that we cannot obtain liberation without

²⁵ the assistance of the pious and learned. It is by our innate wisdom that we enlighten ourselves, and even the extraneous help and instruction of a pious and learned friend would be of no use so long as one is deluded by false doctrines and erroneous views. As we introspect our minds with Prajna, all erroneous views will disappear of themselves, and just as soon as we realise Essence of Mind we will immediately arrive at the Buddha stage.

²⁶ When we use Prajna for introspection we are illuminated within and without and are in position to know our own nature. To realise our own nature is to obtain fundamental liberation. To obtain liberation is to attain the Samadhi of Prajna, which is intuitive insight. What is intuitive insight? Intuitive insight is to see and to realise all dharmas (things as well as truths) with a mind free from attachment. In action Prajna is everywhere present yet it "sticks" nowhere. What we have to do is to so purify the mind that the six aspects of consciousness (sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, mentation) in passing through their six sense-gates will neither be defiled by nor attached to their six sense-objects. When our mind works freely without any hindrance and is at liberty "to come" or "to go," then we have attained the intuitive insight of Prajna, which is emancipation. To enable one to attain such a mental state of freedom is the function of intuitive insight. To refrain from thinking of anything, in the sense that all mental activity is suppressed, is to be Dharma-ridden; this is an extremely erroneous view. (Discriminative thought which leads to desire and attachment, or to aversion and defilement, is to be

²⁷ controlled in the interests of intuitive thought which leads to self-realisation and freedom.)

²⁸ Those who understand the way of intuitive insight will know everything; they will have the experience that all the Buddhas have had, and they will attain Buddhahood. In the future, if an initiate of my school should make a vow in company with his fellow-disciples to devote his whole life without retrogression to the practice and commemoration of the teachings of this "Sudden" School, in the same spirit as if he were serving the Buddha, he would attain without failure the Path that leads to Bodhisattvahood and Buddhahood. He should transmit from heart the instructions handed down from one Patriarch to another, and no attempt should be made to conceal the orthodox teaching.

²⁹ Learned Audience: I have a Stanza for all of you to recite. Both laity and monks should put its teachings into practice, without which it would be useless to remember the words alone. Listen to this stanza:--

³⁰ A master of the Buddhist canon As well as the teachings of the Dhyana school Should teach nothing but the Dharma for realising Essence of Mind. We can hardly classify dharmas into "sudden" and "gradual," But some men will attain enlightenment quicker than others. For example: this system for realising Essence of Mind Is beyond the comprehension of the ignorant. We may explain it in ten thousand ways, But all these explanations may be traced back to one principle, To illumine our gloomy mind, stained by defilement, We should constantly set up the Sun of Wisdom. Erroneous views keep us in defilement, But right views remove us far from it. But when we are in a position to discard both defilement and purity Then are we absolutely free. Bodhi is immanent in our Mind-essence; Any attempt to look for it elsewhere is foolish. Within our defiled minds, purity is to be found, And once our mind is set right, we are free from the bonds Of defilement, of evil karma, of expiation. If we are treading the Path of Enlightenment, We need not be worried by stumbling-blocks. If we keep an eye constantly on our own faults, We cannot go far astray from the right path. Every species of life has its own way of salvation; They will not be antagonistic one to another. If we leave our own path and seek for another way Of salvation, we shall never find it. Though we plod on till death overtake us We shall find only penitence at the end. If one wishes to find the true way, Right action will lead him to it directly. If one has not a mind to aim at Buddhahood, One will grope in the dark and never find it. He who treads the Path in earnest Sees not the mistakes of the world. If

we find fault with others, We ourselves are also in the wrong; When other people are in the wrong we should ignore it; It is wrong for one to find fault with others. By getting rid of the habit of fault-finding, We get rid of one source of defilement. When neither hatred nor love disturb the mind, Serene and restful is our sleep. Those who intend to be teachers of others Should themselves be skillful in the various expedients that lead to enlightenment. When the disciple is free from all doubts Then it indicates that his Mind-essence is unclouded. This world is the Buddha-world Within which enlightenment may be sought. To seek enlightenment by separating from this world Is as foolish as to search for a rabbit's horn. Right views are called "transcendental," Erroneous views are called "worldly," But when all views, both right and erroneous, are discarded, Then the essence of Wisdom manifests itself. Kalpa after kalpa a man may be under illusion, But once enlightened, it takes him but a moment to attain Buddhahood.

³¹ After hearing what the Patriarch had to say, Prefect Wai, the government officials, Taoists, monks and laymen, were all enlightened. They made obeisance in a body and exclaimed unanimously, "Well done! Well done! Who would have expected that a Buddha would be born in Kwongtung?"

Chapter III: Discourse on Dhyana and Samadhi

¹ THE PATRIARCH, on another occasion, addressed the assembly as follows:--

² Learned Audience: Samadhi and Prajna are fundamental. But you must not be under the wrong impression that they are independent of each other, for they are not two entities, they are inseparably united. Samadhi is the quintessence of Prajna, while Prajna is the activity of Samadhi. At the very moment that one attains Prajna, Samadhi is present; when one enters Samadhi, Prajna is present. If you understand this, you understand the "Oneness" of Samadhi and Prajna. A disciple should not think that there is a distinction between "Samadhi begets Prajna," and "Prajna begets Samadhi." To hold such an opinion would imply that these are two characteristics in the Dharma.

³ For one whose tongue is ready with good words but

⁴ whose heart is impure, Samadhi and Prajna are useless because they are not in balance. On the other hand, when one is good in mind as well as in word, and when the outward appearance and inner feelings are in harmony with each other, then Samadhi and Prajna are in balance.

⁵ To an enlightened disciple (who has realised Prajna in Samadhi) discussion about it is unnecessary. To argue about Prajna or Samadhi as to which comes first, places one in the same position with those who are under delusion. Argument implies a desire to win, it strengthens egoism, it binds one to belief in the idea of "a self, a being, a living being and a person." But we may liken Samadhi and Prajna to a glowing lamp and its light: with the glowing lamp there is light; without it there is darkness. Light is the quintessence of the glowing lamp, the glowing lamp is the expression of light. In name they are two things, but in reality they are one and the same. It is the same with Samadhi and Prajna.

⁶ The Patriarch continued: To practice samadhi is to make it a rule to have the mind in concentrated attention on all occasions (that is, not to let the mind wander from the thing in hand),--no matter what we are doing, walking, standing, sitting or reclining. The Vimalakirti Nirdeśa Sutra says: "Straightforwardness is the holy place, the Pure Land." Do not let your mind be "crooked" and try to

be straightforward with your lips only. People should practice straightforwardness but should not attach themselves to anything. People under delusion believe obstinately that there is a substance behind appearances and so they are stubborn

⁷ in holding to their own way of interpreting the samadhi of specific mode, which they define as, "sitting quietly and continuously without letting any idea arise in the mind." Such an interpretation would class us with inanimate objects; it is a stumbling-block to the right Path and the Path should be kept open. How can we block the Path? By attachment to any definite thought; if we free our minds from attachments, the Path will be clear, otherwise we are in bondage. If that practice of "sitting quietly without letting any idea arise in the mind," is correct, why on one occasion was Saraputra reprimanded by Vimalakirti for sitting quietly in the forest? (That is, it is not thinking that blocks the Path, but attachment to definite thoughts.)

⁸ Some teachers of concentration instructed their disciples to keep a watch on their minds and secure tranquillity by the cessation of all thought, and henceforth their disciples gave up all effort to concentrate the mind and ignorant persons who did not understand the distinction became insane from trying to carry out the instruction literally. Such cases are not rare and it is a great mistake to teach the practice.

⁹ It has been the tradition of our school to make "non-objectivity" as our basis, "idea-lessness" as our object, and "non-attachment" as our fundamental principle. "Non-objectivity" means, not to be absorbed in objects when in contact with objects; "idea-lessness" means, not to be carried away by any particular idea in our exercise of the mental faculty; ("non-attachment" means, not to cherish any desire for or aversion to any particular thing or idea). "Non-attachment" is the characteristic of Mind-essence.

¹⁰ We should treat all things--good or bad, beautiful or ugly--as void (of any self-substance). Even in time of dispute and quarrel, we should treat intimates and enemies alike and never think of retaliation. In the thinking faculty, let the past be dead. If we allow our thoughts, past, present and future, to become linked up into a series, we put ourselves under restraint. On the other hand, if we never let our mind become attached at any time to any thing, we gain emancipation. For this reason we make "non-attachment" our fundamental principle.

¹¹ To free ourselves from dependence upon externals is called, "non-objectivity." In as far as we are in position to do this, the path of the Dharma is free. That is why we make "non-objectivity" our basis.

¹² To keep our mind free from defilement under all circumstances is called "idea-lessness." Our mind should always stand aloof and on no account should we allow circumstances to influence the functioning of the mind. It is a great mistake to suppress all thinking. Even if we succeed, and die immediately thereafter, still, there is reincarnation. Mark this, pilgrims of the Path! It is bad enough for a man to commit blunders by cherishing false ideas of the Dharma, how much worse to teach others. Being deluded, he is blind himself, and in addition he misrepresents and puts to shame the Buddhist scriptures. Therefore we make "idea-lessness" our object.

¹³ There is a type of man who is under delusion who boasts of his realisation of Mind-essence; but being influenced by circumstances ideas rise in his mind, followed by erroneous views, which in turn become the

¹⁴ source of attachment and defilement. In Essence of Mind, intrinsically, there is nothing to be attained. To boast of attainment and to talk foolishly of merits and demerits is erroneous and defiling. For this reason we make "idea-lessness" the object of our school.

¹⁵ (If "idea-lessness" is not the cessation of all thought) what ideas should we get rid of, and on what ideas should we focus our mind? We should get rid of all "pairs of opposites" of all conceptions of goodness and badness (that is, of all discriminative thinking). We should focus our mind on the true nature of reality. (The word used is "Tathata," which means, "True Nature," or Mind-essence, or Prajna, or "Oneness," or "Suchness," or anything else that is ultimate.) Tathata (considered as the ultimate "suchness" of Mind-essence) is the quintessence of "idea"; "idea" is the manifestation of Tathata. It is the function of Tathata to give rise to "ideas." It is not the sense-organs that do so. Tathata (considered as the Intellective Principle) reproduces its own attribute, therefore, it can give rise to "idea." Without Tathata, sense-organs and sense-objects would disappear immediately. Because it is an attribute of Tathata to give rise to ideas, our sense-organs, in spite of their functioning in seeing, hearing, touching, smelling and knowing, are not tainted and defiled under all circumstances. (It is the cherishing of "attachments" that defiles.) Our true-nature is "self-manifesting" all the time. (The Path to self-realisation of Mind-essence through Samadhi and Prajna is present to all, even though for some it may be blocked for a time by "attachments.") Therefore, the Sutra says: "He who is an adept in appreciation of that which lies

¹⁶ behind things and phenomena, is established upon the Ultimate Principle (Prajna).

¹⁷ The Patriarch one day preached to an assembly as follows:

¹⁸ In our system of Dhyana, we neither dwell upon our mind nor upon its purity; neither do we seek to suppress its activity. As to dwelling on the mind: the (functional) mind is primarily delusive and as we come to realise that it is only a phantasm we see that there is no reason for dwelling upon it. As to dwelling upon its purity: our nature is intrinsically pure, and just as far as we get rid of discriminative thinking, there will remain nothing but purity in our nature; it is these delusive ideas that obscure our realisation of True reality (Tathata). If we direct our mind to dwell upon purity, we are only creating another delusion: the delusion of purity. Since delusion has no abiding place, it is deluding to dwell upon it. Purity has neither shape nor form, but some people go so far as to invent the "Form of Purity" and then treat it as a problem for solution.' Holding such an opinion, these people become purity-ridden and their Essence of Mind is thereby obscured. Those who are training themselves for serenity of mind, in their contact with the many types of men, should not notice the faults of others. They should be indifferent as to whether others are good or bad, or whether they deserve merit or demerit. To assume a discriminatory attitude toward others is to invite perturbation of mind. An unenlightened man may seem outwardly unperturbed, but as soon as he opens his mouth and criticises others and talks about

¹⁹ their merit or demerit, their ability or weakness, their goodness or badness, he shows that he has deviated from the right course. On the other hand, to dwell upon our own mind and its purity is also a stumbling-block in the true Path.

²⁰ At another assembly the Patriarch spoke as follows: What is dhyana? It means, first, to gain full freedom of mind and to be entirely unperturbed under all outward circumstances, be they good or otherwise. What is the difference between Dhyana and Samadhi? Dhyana is the effort to be mentally free from any attachment to outer objects. Samadhi is the realisation of that freedom in inward peace.

If we are attached to outer objects the inner mind will be perturbed. When we are free from attachment to all outer objects, the mind will be at peace. Our Essence of Mind is intrinsically pure; the reason we become perturbed is simply because we allow ourselves to be carried away by the circumstances we are under. He who is able to keep his mind serene, irrespective of circumstances, has attained true Samadhi.

²¹ To be free from attachment is Dhyana; to realise inner peace is Samadhi. When we are able to hold the mind concentrated, and to rest in inner peace, then we have attained both Dhyana and Samadhi. The Bodhisattva Sila Sutra says: "Our Essence of Mind is intrinsically pure." Learned Audience: let us each realise this for himself from one momentary sensation to another. Let us practice it by ourselves, let us train ourselves, and thus by our own effort attain Buddhahood.

Chapter IV: Discourse on Repentance

¹ AT ONE TIME there was a large gathering of literary men and commoners gathered from Kwong-chow, Shiu-chow and other places, to listen to the Patriarch's words at his monastery of Tso-kai. The Patriarch ascended his platform and delivered the following address:--

² Come, good people. In Buddhism we should start from our Essence of Mind. Let us purify our minds always and from one momentary sensation to another. Let us follow the Path by our own effort, recognise our own Essence-body, realise that our own mind is Buddha, and free ourselves by a voluntary observance of the disciplinary rules,--then this gathering will not be in vain. You have all come from distant places: and your gathering here shows the affinity that exists among us. Let us now sit down together in the Indian fashion for Dhyana, while I first lead you in the ritual of Repentance (Ksamayati).

³ When they were seated the Patriarch continued:--The first is the Sila Incense (Behavior), which symbolises that our minds are free from all taint of misdeeds, evil, jealousy, avarice, anger, spoilation and hatred. The second is Samadhi Incense, which symbolises that our mind is serene under all circumstances--favorable or unfavorable. The third is Prajna Incense, which means that our minds are free from all impediments; that we constantly seek to realise our Mind-essence with wisdom; that we refrain from all evil; that we do all kinds of good acts with no attachment to the fruit of such action; and that we are respectful toward our superiors, considerate of our inferiors, and sympathetic for the destitute and those in trouble. The fourth is the Incense of Liberation, which means that our minds are in such a perfectly free state that they cling to nothing and bother themselves neither with good nor evil. The fifth is the Incense of "Knowledge gained because of the attainment of Liberation." When our minds cling to neither good nor evil, we should take care not to let them go to the other extreme of vacuity and remain in a state of inertia. At this point we should study and seek to broaden our knowledge so that we can understand our own minds, thoroughly understand the principles of Buddhism, be considerate of others in our dealings with them, get rid of the idea of "self" and "existence," and realise that up to the time when we obtain enlightenment (Bodhi) our true nature (Tathata) is immutable.

⁴ Learned Audience:--This five-fold Incense perfumes us from within; we should not seek it without. Now I want to explain to you this Ritual of Repentance

⁵ which is designed to expiate our sins whether committed in the present, the past or future lives; and whether physical, or by word, or by thought. (In Buddhist thought, sin is considered not in a legal sense as something to be punished, or forgiven, or atoned for by sacrifice, but in its cause-and-effect aspect of Karma and its maturing.)

⁶ Please follow me carefully and repeat together what I am going to say. May we, disciples (from such and such a village), be always free from the taint of ignorance and delusion. We repent of all our past, present and future sins and evil deeds committed under delusion or in ignorance. May their karma be expiated at once and may they never rise again.

⁷ May we, disciples (from such and such a village), be always free from taint of arrogance and dishonesty. We repent of all our past, present and future evil deeds done in an arrogant or dishonest spirit. May their karma be expiated at once and may they never rise again.

⁸ May we, disciples (from such and such a village), be always free from taint of envy and jealousy. We repent of all our past, present and future evil deeds done in an envious or jealous spirit. May their karma be expiated at once and may they never rise again.

⁹ As you will notice, there are two aspects to this repentance ritual: One refers to repentance for past sin; we ought to repent for all our past sins and evil deeds committed under delusion or ignorance, arrogance or dishonesty, jealousy or envy, so as to put an end to all of them. This is one aspect of repentance. The other aspect refers to future conduct. Having realised the

¹⁰ evil nature of our transgression we make a vow that hereafter we will put an end to all evil deeds committed under delusion or ignorance, arrogance or dishonesty, envy or jealousy, and that we will never sin again. This is the second aspect of repentance. On account of ignorance and delusion, common people do not always appreciate that in repentance they must not only feel sorry for their past sins, but must also refrain from sinning in the future. Since they often take no heed as to their future conduct, they commit the same sins over again almost before the past ones are expiated. How can we call that repentance?

¹¹ Learned Audience: Having repented of our sins, we should take the following all-embracing vows: Listen very carefully:--

¹² Our Mind-essence is potential of an infinite number of sentient beings. We vow to bring them all unto deliverance.

¹³ We vow to get rid of the evil passions of our minds, inexhaustible though they seem.

¹⁴ We vow to learn the countless systems of Dharma in our Mind-essence.

¹⁵ We vow to attain the Supreme Buddhahood of our Mind-essence.

¹⁶ We have now vowed to deliver an infinite number of sentient beings; but what does that mean? It does not mean that I, Hui-neng is going to deliver them. And who are these sentient beings, potential within our minds? They are the delusive mind, the deceitful mind, the evil mind, and such like--all these are sentient beings. Each of them has to be delivered by oneself by means of his own Essence of Mind; only by his own deliverance, is it genuine.

¹⁷ Now, what does it mean, "delivering oneself by one's own Essence of Mind?" It means the deliverance of the ignorant, delusive, and the vexatious beings that spring up within our own mind, by means of Right Views. With the aid of Right Views and Prajna, the barriers thrown up by these delusive and ignorant beings may be broken down; so that each of us will be in a position to deliver

himself by his own efforts. The false will be delivered by truthfulness; the delusive by enlightenment; the ignorant by wisdom; and the malevolent by benevolence; such is genuine deliverance.

¹⁸ As to the vow; "to get rid of the inexhaustible evil passions," that refers to the transcendence of our unreliable and illusive thinking faculty by the transcendental Wisdom (Prajna) of our Mind-essence. As to the vow: "to learn the countless systems of Dharma"; there will be no true knowledge until we have been brought face to face with our Essence of Mind, by our conforming to the orthodox Dharma on all occasions. As to the vow, "to attain Supreme Buddhahood"; I wish to point out that when we are able to control our mind to follow the true and orthodox Dharma on all occasions, and when Prajna always rises in our minds, so that we can hold aloof from both ignorance and enlightenment, and can do away with falsehood as well as truth, then we may consider ourselves as having realised our Buddha-nature, or, in other words, having attained Buddhahood.

¹⁹ Learned Audience: we should always bear in mind that we are following the Path for thereby strength is added to our vows. Now, since we have all taken the four-fold vows, I will teach you the Ritual of the threefold Guidance.

²⁰ We take "Enlightenment" as our Guide, because it is the fruit of both merit (Punya) and Wisdom (Prajna).

²¹ We take "Orthodoxy" as our Guide, because it is the best way to get rid of desire.

²² We take "Purity" as our Guide, because it is the noblest quality of mankind.

²³ Hereafter let Shakyamuni, the Enlightened One, be our guide and on no account should we listen to the suggestions of Mara, the evil one, of any heretic. We should testify to ourselves by constantly appealing to the "Three Gems" or our Essence of Mind, in which I advise you to take refuge. They are:

²⁴ Buddha, which stands for Enlightenment; Dharma, which stands for Orthodoxy; Sangha, which stands for Purity.

²⁵ To take refuge in Enlightenment so that evil and delusive notions do not arise, so that desire decreases, discontent becomes unknown, and lust and greed no longer bind us--this is the fruitage of Punya and Prajna. To take refuge in Orthodoxy so that from momentary sensation to another we will be free from wrong views--this is the best means of getting rid of desires. To take refuge in Purity so that no matter under what circumstance we may be, we will not become contaminated by wearisome sense objects, by craving nor by desire--this is the noblest quality of mankind. To practise the "Three-fold Guidance" as thus outlined means to take refuge in one's Mind-essence. Ignorant people often take the "Three-fold Guidance" without understanding it. They say that they take

²⁶ refuge in Buddha: do they know where he is? If they cannot conceive Buddha, how can they take refuge in him? Would not such an assertion amount to self-deception? Each of you should examine this point for himself, so that his energy may not be misapplied through ignorance. The Sutra distinctly says that each should take refuge in the Buddha within himself. It does not refer to any other Buddhas, hence if we do not take refuge in the Buddha of our own Mind-essence, there is nowhere else for us to go. Having cleared this point, let each of us take refuge in the "Three jewels" of his own mind. Within, each should control his own mind; without, each should be respectful toward others--this is the way to take refuge within ourselves.

²⁷ I have a stanza, the reciting and practising of which will at once dispel the delusions and expiate the sins accumulated during many kalpas. This is the stanza:--

²⁸ People under delusion accumulate tainted merit but tread not the Path. They are under the illusion that to accumulate merit and to tread the Path are one and the same thing. Their merit for alms-giving and offerings may be infinite, But they fail to realise that the ultimate source of sin lies in the greed, hatred and infatuation within their own mind. They expect to expiate their sin by the accumulation of merit, Without knowing that the felicities to be gained thereby in future lives, Have nothing to do with expiation of sin. If we get rid of the sin within our own mind Then it is a case of true repentance. One who realises suddenly what constitutes true repentance in the Mahayana sense, And who ceases to do evil and practises righteousness, is free from sin.

²⁹ Essence of Mind (Tathata) is the real Buddha, While heretical views and the three poisonous elements are Mara. Enlightened by Right Views, we call forth the Buddha within us. When our nature is dominated by the three poisonous elements, as the result of heretical views, We are said to be possessed by Mara; But when Right Views free our minds of these poison elements, Mara will, be transformed into a real Buddha. A follower of the Path who keeps constant watch on his Mind-essence Is in the same class with the many Buddhas. Our Patriarchs transmitted no other system but this of "Sudden Enlightenment." If you are seeking Dharmakaya, Search for it apart from the world of things and phenomena, Then your mind will be pure and free. Exert yourself in order to come face to face with Mind-essence and relax not; For death may come suddenly and put an end to your earthly existence.

³⁰ Learned Audience:--All of you should recite this stanza and put it into practice. If you succeed in realising Essence of Mind, then you may think of yourselves as being in my presence though you may be a thousand miles away. But should you be unable to do so, though we were face to face with each other, we would really be thousands of miles apart. In that case what is the use of your taking the trouble to come here from such a long distance? Take good care of yourselves. I bid you good-bye.

Chapter V: Discourse on the Three Bodies of Buddha

¹ SOME TIME after the foregoing Discourse on Repentance had been delivered to "commoners" when the Patriarch had gathered his disciples together for instruction, a senior disciple, Fat-hoi, said to the Patriarch, "Sir, will you please leave to posterity certain instruction whereby people under delusion may realise their Buddha-nature?"

² "Listen to me," replied the Patriarch. It is possible for those who are under delusion to realise their Buddha-nature, provided they acquaint themselves with the nature of ordinary sentient beings. Without such knowledge, to seek Buddhahood would be in vain, even if one spent aeons of time in doing so.

³ First, let me show you how to get acquainted with the nature of the sentient beings within your mind, whereby one can realise the Buddha-nature latent in everyone. Knowing Buddha means nothing else than knowing sentient beings. It is sentient beings who are blind to the fact that they are potentially Buddhas, whereas a Buddha sees no difference between himself and other beings. When

sentient beings realise their Essence of Mind, they are Buddhas. If a Buddha is under delusion as to his Essence of Mind, he is then only an ordinary being. Seeing everything as equal in Essence of Mind makes ordinary beings Buddhas. Seeing inequalities in Essence of Mind transforms a Buddha into an ordinary being. When one's mind is crooked or depraved, then he is only an ordinary being

⁴ with Buddha-nature latent within him. On the other hand, if one concentrates his mind on equality and straightforwardness, even for one moment only, then he is a Buddha.

⁵ Within our mind there is Buddha, and that Buddha within is the real Buddha. If Buddha is not to be found within our mind, then where shall we seek for the real Buddha? Doubt not that Buddha is within your own mind, apart from which nothing can exist. Since all things and phenomena are the product of mind, the Sutra says: "When mental activity rises, various things exist; when mental activity ceases, various things exist not."

⁶ Our physical body may be likened to an inn where we can remain only temporarily, we cannot make it a refuge. The Trikaya of Buddha is to be found within our Mind-essence which is the common possession of everybody. It is because the mind of an ordinary man labors under delusion that he does not know his own inner nature, the result is that he ignores the Trikaya that is within himself and seeks for it without. Please listen; I am going to show you that you can realise the Trikaya within yourself, which being a manifestation of Mind-essence cannot be found anywhere else.

⁷ Within our physical body we take refuge in the Pure Dharmakaya (Essence-body) of Buddha; Within our physical body we take refuge in the Perfect Sambhoga-kaya (the Empirical, or Bliss-body) of Buddha; Within our physical body we take refuge in the Myriad Nirmanakaya (Bodies of transformation, or of incarnations of Buddha.

⁸ What is the Pure Dharmakaya? Our Mind-essence is intrinsically pure, that is, all things are manifestations of mind. Good deeds and evil deeds are but the manifestation of good thoughts and evil thoughts respectively. Thus within Essence of Mind all things, like the azure of the sky and the radiance of the sun and moon which, when obscured by passing clouds, may appear as if their brightness had been dimmed, but as soon as the clouds are blown away, their brightness reappears and all objects are again fully illuminated. Foolish thoughts may be likened to the clouds, while sagacity and Wisdom are the moon and the Sun. When we become attached to discriminated objects, our Mind-essence becomes clouded by drifting thoughts which prevent sagacity and Wisdom from sending forth their light. We were fortunate that we found learned and pious teachers to make known the orthodox Dharma to us so that we may, by our own effort do away with ignorance and delusion, and by so doing we will become enlightened both within and without, and our true nature within our Essence of Mind will manifest itself. This is precisely what happens with those who come face to face with their Essence of Mind. This is what is called the Pure Dharmakaya of Buddha.

⁹ To take refuge in the true Buddha is to take refuge in our own Essence of Mind, He who takes refuge within himself must first get rid of the evil-mind and the jealous-mind, the flattering and crooked-mind, deceit, and falsehood, and fallacious views, egotism, snobbishness, contemptuousness, arrogance, and all other evils that may arise at any time, To take refuge

¹⁰ within ourselves is to be always on the alert to prevent our own mistakes and to refrain from criticism of other's faults. He who is humble and patient on all occasions and is courteous to every

one, has truly realised his Mind-essence, so truly in fact that his Path is free from further obstacles. This is the way to take refuge in (the Buddha of) oneself.

¹¹ What is the Perfect Sambhogakaya? Let us take the illustration of a lamp. Since the light of a lamp can dissipate darkness that has been there for a thousand years, so a ray of Wisdom can do away with ignorance that has lasted for ages. We need not bother about the past, for the past is gone and is irrecoverable. What demands our attention is the present and future, so let our thoughts, from one momentary sensation to another, be clear and pure and let us see face to face our Mind-essence. Goodness and evil are opposite to each other, but in essence they cannot be dualistic. This non-dualistic nature is called "true nature," it can neither be contaminated by evil, nor affected by goodness. This is what is called the Sambhogakaya of Buddha. One single evil thought clouding our Essence of Mind will undo the good merit accumulated in aeons of time; while a good thought can expiate all our sins though they be as many as the sands of the river Ganges. To realise our Essence of Mind from one momentary sensation to another and without intermission until we attain Supreme Enlightenment (Bodhi) so that we are in a perpetual state of Right Mindfulness, is the Sambhogakaya.

¹² Now, what is the Myriad Nirmanakaya? When we subject ourselves to the least differentiation or particularisation,

¹³ transformation takes place: otherwise all things would be as void as space, as they inherently are. By letting our minds dwell on evil things, hell arises. By letting our minds dwell upon good acts, paradise is manifested. Dragons and snakes are the transformations of venomous hatred; while Bodhisattvas are compassionate thoughts made manifest. The various heavens are the projection of Prajna; while underworlds are the transformations of ignorance and infatuation. Un-numbered, indeed, are the transformations of Mind-essence. People under delusion are as if asleep; they do not understand; their minds naturally turn toward evil and, as a rule, they practice evil. But should they turn their minds from evil to righteousness, even for one moment, Prajna shines forth. This is what is called the Nirmanakaya of the Buddha of Mind-essence.

¹⁴ The Dharmakaya is intrinsically self-sufficient. To see our own Essence of Mind clearly and without interruption, is the Sambhogakaya of Buddha. To let our mind dwell on the Sambogahakaya, so that Prajna radiates forth in manifestation is Nirmanakaya. To attain enlightenment by one's own effort and to practise by one's self the goodness that is inherent in our Essence of Mind, is a genuine case of "taking refuge." Our physical body consisting of flesh and skin, etc., is nothing more than a tenement or an inn; it is no place of refuge. Let us realise the Trikaya of our own Mind-essence, then we shall know the Buddha of our own nature.

¹⁵ In closing let me leave with you a stanza, entitled: "The Real Buddha of Mind-essence." Accordingly as

¹⁶ they heed it people of future generations who can understand its meaning will realise their Mind-essence and attain Buddhahood. This is the stanza:--

¹⁷ Those who understand the Mahayana teaching And are thus able to realise Mind-essence Should reverently and fervently seek for a realisation of Dharmakaya. The Dharmakaya, the Sambhogakaya, the Nirmanakaya-- These three Bodies emanate from Oneness. He who is able to realise this fact intuitively Has sown the seed and will reap the fruit of Enlightenment. It is from Nirmanakaya that our "pure nature" emerges; Within the former the latter is always to be found. Guided by its "pure

nature" Nirmanakaya follows the right path, And will some day culminate In a Body of Bliss, perfect and infinite. Pure Nature is hidden by our sensual instincts; By getting rid of sensuality, we realise Pure Dharmakaya. When our temperament is such that we are no longer the slave of the five sense-objects, And when we have realised Mind-essence, even for one moment, then Tathata is known to us. Those who are so fortunate as to be followers of the Sudden School Shall suddenly, in this life, see the Blessed One in their own Mind-essence. He who has not realised Essence of Mind and seeks for Buddha without, Is on a wrong path and is acting foolishly. He who seeks Buddha by practising certain doctrines Knows not the place where the real Buddha is to be found. He who is seeking to realise Buddha within his own mind, He only is sowing the seed of Buddhahood.

Chapter VI: Dialogues Suggested by Various Temperaments and Circumstances

¹ UPON THE PATRIARCH'S RETURN to the village of Tso-hau in Shiu-chow from Wong-mui, where the Dharma had been transmitted to him, he was an unknown man. At that time, it was a Confucian scholar, named Liu Chi-luk, who first gave him a warm welcome and appreciation. It came about in this manner. Chi-luk had an aunt, named Wu Chun-chong who was a Buddhist nun, who was in the habit of reciting the Maha Parinirvana Sutra. One day the Patriarch heard her reciting it, and after listening for only a short time, grasped the profound meaning of the Sutra, and began to explain it to her, whereupon she brought the book and asked him the meaning of certain passages.

² "I am not very well educated," he replied, "but if you wish to understand the purport of the book, I will do the best I can." "How can you understand the meaning of the text," she rejoined, "if you do not know the words?" To this he replied: "The profound teaching of the various Buddhas, has nothing to do with the written language."

³ This answer surprised her very much, and recognising that he was no ordinary man, she spoke of him freely to the pious elders of the village, saying: "He is a sage. We should get his permission to supply him with food and lodgings, and urge him to remain with us."

⁴ Whereupon a descendant of Marquis Wu of the Ai Dynasty, named, Tso Shuk-leung, came one afternoon with other villagers to offer homage to the Patriarch. At that time the historic Po-lam Monastery, which had been devastated by war at the end of the Chu Dynasty, was reduced to a heap of ruins. The villagers rebuilt it on the old site, and asked the Patriarch to make it his home. Afterwards it became a very famous temple.

⁵ THE MONK, FAT-HOI, a native of Hook-kong in Shui-chow, in his first interview with the Patriarch, asked the meaning of the well-known saying, "That which Mind is, Buddha is." The Patriarch replied, "Let not a vagrant thought rise up again, is 'Mind.' Let not a coming thought be repulsed, is 'Buddha.' To manifest all kind of phenomena, is 'Mind.' To be free from all form, is Buddha. If I were to give you a full explanation, it would take the full time of a kalpa. But listen to this stanza:

⁶ "Prajna is 'That which mind is'; Samadhi is 'what Buddha is.' In practising Prajna and Samadhi, let each keep pace with the other, Then our thoughts will be pure. This teaching can be understood Only

through the 'habit of practice.' Samadhi functions, but inherently it is not. The orthodox teaching is, to practice Prajna as well as Samadhi."

⁷ After considering what the Patriarch had said, Fat-hoi was enlightened and he praised the Patriarch in the following stanza:

⁸ "That which mind is, Buddha is; how true it is, indeed! I put myself to shame by not understanding it. Now I understand the principle of Prajna and Samadhi, Both of which I shall practice to set myself free from all confining forms."

⁹ THE MONK FAT-TAT, a native of Hung-chow, who joined the order at the early age of seven, used to recite the Lotus of the Good Law Sutra. When he came to offer homage to the Patriarch, he failed in offering due respect to him, for which the Patriarch reproved him, saying, If you object to offer due respect, would it not be better to omit the salutation entirely? There must be something in your mind that makes you feel that way. Please tell me what you do in your daily religious exercise?

¹⁰ "I recite the Lotus of the Good Law (Saddharma Pundarika) Sutra," replied Fat-tat; I have read the whole text three thousand times."

¹¹ "If you had fully understood the meaning of the Sutra," remarked the Patriarch, "You would not have assumed such a lofty bearing, even if you had read it ten thousand times. When you understand it, you will be following the same Path with me. But now, all that you have accomplished is to make yourself conceited. Moreover, you do not seem to realise that you are in the wrong. Listen to this stanza:

¹² "Since the object of ceremony is to curb arrogance, Why did you fail to offer due respect? To take pride in oneself, is a source of sin, But to learn to treat any attainment as 'void,' is to attain incomparable merit."

¹³ The Patriarch then asked him for his name, and upon being told that his name was Fat-tat (which means "law-understanding"), he remarked, "Your name is Fat-tat, but you have not yet understood the Law." Then the Patriarch intending to conclude the interview, recited the following stanza:

¹⁴ "Your name is Fat-tat. Diligently and faithfully you recite the Sutra. Lip-repetition of the text ends with its pronunciation, But he whose mind is enlightened, by grasping its meaning, becomes a Bodhisattva. On account of conditions of affinity which may be traced to our past lives, Let me explain this to you. If you can only understand that Buddha speaks no words, Then the Lotus will blossom from your mouth. (Truth is inscrutable and ineffable; words fail, But the Lotus blossoms and radiates its perfume.)

¹⁵ Having heard this stanza, Fat-tat became ashamed and apologised to the Patriarch. He added, "Hereafter I will be humble and polite on all occasions. It is true: I do not quite understand the meaning of the Sutra as

¹⁶ I recite it, so I am often doubtful as to its proper interpretation. From your profound knowledge and high Wisdom, will you kindly give me a short explanation?"

¹⁷ The Patriarch replied: "Tat-tat, the Good Law is quite clear; it is your mind that is not clear. The Sutra is free from doubtful passages; it is only your mind that makes them seem doubtful. Do you know the principal object of the Sutra?"

¹⁸ "How can I know, Sir," replied Fat-tat, "since I am so dull and stupid? All I know is to recite it word by word."

¹⁹ The Patriarch then said, "Will you please recite the Sutra? I am unable to read it myself. Then I will explain its meaning to you."

²⁰ Fat-tat recited the Sutra loudly. When he came to the section entitled, "parables," the Patriarch stopped him, saying, "The theme of this Sutra is to set forth the aim and object of a Buddha's incarnation into this world. Though parables and illustrations are numerous in it, none of them go beyond this pivotal point. Now, what is that aim? and what is that object? The Sutra says, 'It is for a sole object, it is for a sole aim, but truly a lofty object and a lofty aim, that a Buddha appears in this world.' Now that sole object, that sole aim, that is so exalted, is the realisation of Buddha-knowledge.

²¹ "Common people attach themselves to external objects, thinking them to be real, and within, they fall into the wrong idea that external things come to an end. When they are able to free themselves from attachment to objects when in contact with objects, and to free themselves from the fallacious view that

²² 'Emptiness' means annihilation, then they are free from illusions without and delusions within. He who understands this and whose mind is thus suddenly enlightened, is said to have opened his eyes to the sight of Buddha-Knowledge.

²³ "The word, 'Buddha' is equivalent to 'Enlightenment' and is dealt with under four heads:--Opening the eyes for the sight of Enlightenment-knowledge; seeing the sight of Enlightenment-knowledge; understanding Enlightenment-knowledge; becoming firmly established in Enlightenment-knowledge. If we are able, upon being taught, to grasp and thoroughly understand the teaching of Enlightenment-knowledge, then our inherent quality of 'true-nature' will have an opportunity to manifest itself. You should not misinterpret the text and come to the conclusion that Buddha-knowledge is something special to Buddha and not common to us, just because you happen to find in the Sutra these passages: 'To open the eyes for the sight of Buddha-knowledge,' 'To see the sight of Buddha-knowledge, etc.' Such a misinterpretation would be slandering Buddha and blaspheming the Sutra. Since one is (potentially) a Buddha, he is already in possession of this Enlightenment-knowledge, and there is no occasion for him to open his eyes for it. You should therefore accept the interpretation that Buddha-knowledge is the Buddha-knowledge of your own mind and not that of any other Buddha.

²⁴ "Being infatuated with sense-objects and thereby shutting themselves from their own light, all sentient beings, tormented by outer circumstances and inner vexations, act voluntarily as slaves to their own desires.

²⁵ Seeing this, our Lord Buddha took the trouble of rising from his Samadhi in order to exhort them by earnest preaching of various kinds to suppress their desires and to refrain from seeking happiness from without, so that they may enter into their rights of Buddhahood. For this reason the Sutra says, 'To open the eyes for Buddha-knowledge etc.' I advise people to thus constantly open their eyes for the Buddha-knowledge within their own minds. But in their perversity they commit sins under delusion and ignorance; they are kind in words but wicked in mind; they are greedy, malignant, jealous, crooked, flattering, egoistic, offensive to men and destructive to inanimate objects. Thus they open their eyes to 'common-people-knowledge' instead. Should they rectify their heart so that wisdom rises spontaneously, the mind is under introspection and the practice of doing good takes the place of evil. Thus they would initiate themselves into Buddha-knowledge.

²⁶ "You should, therefore, from one momentary sensation to another, open your eyes, not for 'common-people-knowledge,' which is worldly, but for the Buddha-knowledge that is supra-

mundane. On the other hand, if you stick to the arbitrary concept that mere recitation as a daily exercise is good enough, then you are infatuated, like the yak by its own tail."

²⁷ Fat-tat then said: "If that is so, then we only have to know the meaning of the Sutra and there will be no further necessity for reciting it. Is that right, Sir?" The Patriarch replied, "There is nothing wrong with the Sutra that you need to refrain from reciting it. Whether sutra-reciting will enlighten you or not, or

²⁸ benefit you or not, all depends upon yourself. He who recites the Sutra with his tongue and puts its teachings into actual practice with his mind, masters the Sutra. Listen to this stanza:

²⁹ "When our mind is under delusion, the Saddhama Pundarika Sutra is our master. When our mind is enlightened, we are the master of the Sutra. To recite the Sutra for a long time without knowing its principal object Indicates that one is a stranger to its meaning. To recite the Sutra without holding any arbitrary belief, is the correct way; To do otherwise is wrong. He whose mind is above 'affirmation' and 'negation' Rides permanently in the 'Buddha-vehicle.'"

³⁰ Having heard this stanza, Fat-tat was enlightened and was unconsciously moved to tears. "it is quite true," he exclaimed, "heretofore I have been unable to master the Sutra, rather it has been my master."

³¹ Fat-tat then raised another difficulty. "The Sutra says, 'From various disciples up to Bodhisattva, though they were to speculate with their combined effort, they would be unable to comprehend Buddha-knowledge.' But you, Sir, give me to understand that if an ordinary man realises his own mind, he is said to have attained Buddha-knowledge. I am afraid, Sir, that with the exception of those gifted with superior mental dispositions, others may doubt your remark. Further, the Sutra mentions three kinds of carts: goat carts (the vehicle of disciples); deer carts (for Arahats); and bullock

³² carts (for Bodhisattvas). How are these to be distinguished from the White Bullock carts of the Buddhas? Will you please tell me)"

³³ The Patriarch replied: "The Sutra is quite plain on this point; it is you who fail to understand it. The reason why disciples, Arahats and Bodhisattvas fail to comprehend Buddha-knowledge is because they speculate about it (with their thinking mind which is limited and polluted); they may combine their efforts, but the more they speculate the farther they are from Truth. (Buddha-knowledge is to be realised within, not thought about as though it was something external.) It was not to Buddhas but to ordinary men that Buddha Gautama preached this Sutra. You do not seem to appreciate that since we are already riding in the White Bullock cart of the Buddhas, that there is no necessity for us to look for other vehicles. Moreover, the Sutra plainly teaches that there is only the one Buddha vehicle; that there are no others, no second, no third. It is because there is only one vehicle that Buddha had to preach to us with innumerable skillful means such as various reasons and argument, various parables and illustrations, etc. Do you not understand that the other three vehicles are makeshifts, useful for the past only; while the sole vehicle, the Buddha vehicle, is for the present because it is ultimate?

³⁴ "The Sutra teaches to dispense with the makeshifts and depend on the ultimate. Having resorted to the ultimate, you will find that even the very name 'ultimate' disappears. You should appreciate that you are the sole owner of these treasures and that they are entirely subject to your disposal. (This is in allusion to

³⁵ another Parable, the Buddhist Prodigal Son, in the Sutra.) But moreover, it is not until you are able to free yourself from the arbitrary conceptions that there are any treasures belonging to the Father or to the son, or subject to so and so's disposal, that you really know the right way to recite the Sutra. When you so understand it, the Sutra will be in your hand from eternity to eternity, and from morning to midnight you will be reciting the Sutra all the time."

³⁶ Being thus awakened, Fat-tat praised the Patriarch in a transport of joy with the following stanza:--

³⁷ "The delusion that I had attained great merit by reciting the Sutra three thousand times Is all dispelled by a single utterance of the Master of Tso-kai. He who has not yet under-stood the object of the Buddha's incarnation Is unable to suppress the wild passions accumulated in many lives. The three vehicles are makeshifts only; And the three stages in which the scholars expound the Dharma are ingeniously spoken, indeed; But how few appreciate that it is within the burning house itself That the Truth of Dharma is to be found."

³⁸ The Patriarch then told him that before he had rebuked him for being a "sutra-reciting monk," but that hereafter he would praise him for the same reason. After that interview, Fat-tat was able to grasp the profound meaning of Buddhism, and yet he continued to recite the Sutra as before.

³⁹ THE MONK, SHI-TONG, a native of Shau-chow of An-fung, had read over the Lankavatara Sutra nearly a thousand times, but could not understand the meaning of the Trikaya nor the four Prajnas. One day he called upon the Patriarch for an explanation of them.

⁴⁰ "As to the 'Three Bodies,'" explained the Patriarch, "The Pure Dharmakaya is your nature, The Perfect Sambhogakaya is your wisdom; and the Myriad Nirmanakayas are your actions. If you deal with these three bodies apart from your Mind-essence, they would be bodies without wisdom. If you realise that these three: self-nature, self-wisdom and self-action, have no substance of their own (being only manifestations of Mind-essence) then you have attained the enlightenment of the four Prajnas. Listen to this stanza:--

⁴¹ "The Three-bodies are inherent in our Essence of Mind, By the radiation of which the four Prajnas are manifested. Thus, without closing your eyes and your ears to shut out the external world, You may reach Buddhahood directly. Now that I have made this plain to you, If you believe it implicitly, you will be forever free from delusion. Follow not those who seek for 'enlightenment' from without: Such people talk about Bodhi all the time, but do it vainly."

⁴² For the second time, Chi-tong asked, "May I know something about the four Prajnas?" "If you understand the Three-Bodies," replied the Patriarch, "you should know the four Prajnas as well; your question is quite unnecessary. If you deal with the four Prajnas apart from the Three-Bodies, there would be Prajnas without bodies; in such a case, they would not be Prajnas. (Prajna is the Ultimate Principle of the Three-Bodies, which is Ultimate Reality.) The Patriarch then uttered this stanza:--

⁴³ "Mirror-like Wisdom is pure by nature; Wisdom that comprehends all things equally, frees the mind from all impediments; All-discerning Wisdom sees things intuitively; All-performing Wisdom, like Mirror-Wisdom, is free from prejudice. Perception-consciousness of the five-sense-vijnanas, And the Universal Consciousness of the Alaya-vijnana, Are not 'transmuted' to Prajna, until the Buddha-stage; While the intellectual-consciousness of the Manas, And the discriminative-consciousness of the Manovijnana, Are 'transmitted' in the Bodhisattva-stage. When you are able to

free yourself entirely from attachments to sense-objects as these 'transmutations' take place, Then you will forever abide in the never-ceasing Naga Samadhi." 1

⁴⁴ Suddenly Chi-tong realised the Prajna of his Mind-essence and submitted the following stanza to the Patriarch:--

⁴⁵ "Intrinsically, the Three-Bodies are within our Essence of Mind. When our mind is enlightened, the four Prajnas will appear. When 'Bodies' and Prajna appear as one identity, Then are we able to respond to the appeal of all beings, no matter what form they take. To make an effort to find the Trikaya and the four Prajnas is to take an entirely wrong course; To try to 'discriminate' and 'grasp' them is to misunderstand their intrinsic nature. Through you, Sir, I am now able to realise the profundity of their meaning; Henceforth, I may discard for ever their false and arbitrary names."

⁴⁶ THE MONK, CHI-SHEUNG, a native of Kwai-kai of Shun-chow, joined the order in his childhood and was very zealous in his efforts to realise Mind-essence. One day he came to pay homage to the Patriarch and was asked by the latter whence and for what he came. Chi-sheung replied:--

⁴⁷ "I have recently been at the White Cliff Monastery in Hung-chow, to study with the Master Ta-tung who was good enough to teach me how to realise Mind-essence and thereby to gain Buddhahood, but as I still have some doubts, I have travelled far to come here to pay my respects to you. Will you kindly clear away my doubts, Sir?"

⁴⁸ The Patriarch asked, "What instruction did he give you? Will you please repeat it."

⁴⁹ Chi-sheung replied: "After staying there three months without receiving any instruction, and being zealous for the Dharma, I went alone one night to his chamber and asked him, what my essence of mind was. He asked me, 'Do you see the illimitable void?' 'Yes, I do,' I replied. Then he asked me whether the void had any particular form, and on replying that the void must be formless and therefore can not have any particular form, he said: 'Your Essence of Mind is exactly like the void. To realise that there is nothing to be seen, is Right View. To realise that nothing is knowable, is True Knowledge. To realise that it is neither green nor yellow, neither long nor short; that it is pure by nature; that its quintessence is perfect and clear; is to realise Essence of Mind and thereby to attain Buddhahood. This is also called, Buddha-knowledge.' As I do not quite understand this teaching, will you please enlighten me, Sir?"

⁵⁰ "His teaching indicates," said the Patriarch, "that he still retains the arbitrary concepts of 'Views' and 'Knowledge'; that explains why he failed to make it clear to you. Listen to this stanza:--

⁵¹ "To realise that nothing can be seen, but to retain the concept of 'invisibility' Is somewhat like passing clouds obscuring the face of the sun. To realise that nothing is knowable, but to retain the concept of 'unknowability' May be likened to the clear sky disfigured by a flash of lightning. To let these arbitrary concepts rise spontaneously in the mind Indicates that you have not yet realised Essence of Mind, And that you have not yet found the skillful means to realise it. If you realise for one moment that these arbitrary concepts are wrong, Then your own spiritual light will shine forth unhindered."

⁵² Having heard this, Chi-sheung at once felt that his mind was enlightened. Thereupon, he submitted to the Patriarch, the following stanza:--

⁵³ "To allow the concepts of 'invisibility' and 'unknowability' to rise spontaneously in the mind Is to seek Bodhi without freeing oneself from the arbitrary concepts of phenomena. He who is puffed-up by the slightest impression, 'I am now enlightened' Is no farther advanced than one under delusion. Had I not put myself at the feet of Your Eminence, I would have remained bewildered, ignorant of the right way to go."

⁵⁴ One day Chi-sheung asked the Patriarch, "Buddha preached the doctrine of 'Three Vehicles' and also that of the 'Supreme Vehicle.' I do not understand them; will you please explain them to me?"

⁵⁵ The Patriarch replied, "(In trying to understand these) you should introspect your own mind and ignore outward things and phenomena. The distinction of these four vehicles does not exist in the Dharma itself, but in the differentiations of people's minds. To see and to hear and to recite the Sutras, is the Small Vehicle. To know the Dharma and to understand its meaning is the Middle Vehicle. To put the Dharma into actual practice, is the Great Vehicle. To understand all Dharmas (intuitively), to become part of them, to be free from all attachments, to be independent of things and phenomena; to be in possession of nothing, that is the Supreme Vehicle.

⁵⁶ "Essence of Mind is always a state of tranquillity. Since the word 'vehicle,' means, 'motion,' discussion is out of place. All depends on intuitive self-practice. Do not ask any more questions."

⁵⁷ Chi-sheung made obeisance and thanked the Patriarch and, thereafter served as one of the Patriarch's personal attendants until his death.

⁵⁸ THE MONK, CHI-WANG, a follower of the Dhyana school, had a consultation with the Fifth Patriarch and afterward considered himself to have attained Samadhi. For twenty years he confined himself to a small temple and all the time kept the Dhyana posture. Un-chak, a disciple of the Sixth Patriarch, on a pilgrimage to the northern bank of the Hoang-ho, heard about him and called at his temple.

⁵⁹ "What are you doing here?" enquired Un-chak.

⁶⁰ "I am abiding in Samadhi," replied Chi-wang.

⁶¹ "Abiding in Samadhi, did you say?" Observed Un-chak. "I wish to enquire whether you are doing it consciously or unconsciously? If you are doing it unconsciously, it would mean that it is possible for all inanimate objects, such as earthen ware, stones, trees and weeds, to attain Samadhi. On the other hand, if you do it consciously, then any animate object or sentient being might abide in Samadhi, also."

⁶² Chi-wang then said, "When I am in Samadhi, I know neither consciousness nor unconsciousness."

⁶³ "In that case," observed Un-chak, "it is a perpetual quietude, in which there is neither abiding nor leaving. A state of samadhi in which you can abide or come out of at will, can not be a perfect Samadhi."

⁶⁴ Chi-wang was nonplused. After a long time, he asked, "May I know who is your teacher?"

⁶⁵ "My teacher is the Sixth Patriarch, of Tso-kai," replied Un-chak.

⁶⁶ "How does he define Dhyana and Samadhi?" enquired Chi-wang.

⁶⁷ "According to his teaching," replied Un-chak, "the Dharmakaya is perfect and serene and unchanging; its

⁶⁸ quintessence and its function are in a state of 'Suchness.' The five aggregates are intrinsically void and the six sense-objects are non-existent. There is neither abiding nor leaving in Samadhi; there is neither quietude nor perturbation. The nature of Dhyana is non-abiding, so we should seek to transcend the state of 'abiding in the calmness of Dhyana.' The nature of Dhyana is uncreative, so we should transcend the notion of 'creating a state of Dhyana.' Essence of Mind is like space without the limitations of space."

⁶⁹ After this interview, Chi-wang went to Tso-kai to interview the Sixth Patriarch. Upon being asked whence he came, Chi-wang told the Patriarch the details of his conversation with Un-chak.

⁷⁰ The Patriarch said, "What Un-chak said is quite right. Let your mind be in a state like the illimitable void, but do not think of it as 'vacuity.' Let the mind function freely, but whether it is in activity or at rest, let it abide nowhere. Forget all discriminations: see no distinction between a sage and an ordinary man; ignore the distinction between subject and object; let Essence of Mind and all phenomena and objects be alike in a state of 'Suchness.' Then you will truly be in Samadhi all the time."

⁷¹ Chi-wang was thereby fully enlightened. What he had considered for the past twenty years as an attainment, now all vanished. He remained with the Patriarch for a time and then returned to Ho-Pei where he taught many people, monks as well as laymen.

⁷² THE MONK, CHI-TAO, a native of Nam-hoi of Kwongtung, came to the Patriarch for instruction, saying, "Since I joined the order, I have read the Maha Parinirvana Sutra for more than ten years, but I have not yet grasped its teaching. Will you please teach me."

⁷³ "What part of it do you not understand?" enquired the Patriarch.

⁷⁴ "It is this part, Sir: 'All things are impermanent and so they belong to the Dharma of Becoming and Cessation. When both Becoming and Cessation cease to operate, Cessation of Change with its bliss of Perfect Rest (Nirvana) arises.'"

⁷⁵ "What obscurity is there in that?" enquired the Patriarch.

⁷⁶ Chi-tao replied, "All beings have two bodies: the physical body and an essence body. The former is impermanent--it exists and it deceases. The latter is permanent, but it knows not and feels not. Now the Sutra says, 'When both Becoming and Cessation cease to operate, the bliss of Perfect Rest and Cessation of Change arises.' I can not understand which body ceases to exist, and which body enjoys the bliss. It cannot be the physical body that enjoys, because when it dies, the material elements disintegrate and disintegration is suffering, the very opposite of bliss. If it is the essence body that ceases to exist, it would be in the same 'unfeeling' state as inanimate objects, such as the grass, trees and stones. Who, then, will be the enjoyer?"

⁷⁷ "Moreover, essence-nature is the quintessence of 'Becoming and Cessation' whose manifestation is the union of the five 'aggregates' (body, sensation, perception, consciousness and intellection). That is to say,

⁷⁸ from one essence, five functions arise. This process of Becoming and Cessation is everlasting. When function and operation 'arise' from the quintessence, it becomes; when operation and function are 'absorbed' back into the quintessence, it ceases to exist. If reincarnation is admitted, there will be no Cessation of Changes, as in the case of sentient beings. If reincarnation is out of the question, then things will remain forever in a state of lifeless quintessence, like the case of inanimate objects. When

this is the case, under the limitations and restrictions of Nirvana, even existence would be impossible to all things, much less enjoyment."

⁷⁹ "You are a Bhikkhu," said the Patriarch, "how can you adopt the fallacious views of Eternalism and Annihilationism that are held by heretics, and venture to criticise the teaching of the Supreme Vehicle? Your argument implies that apart from the physical body, there is an essence body; and that Perfect Rest and Cessation of Change may be sought apart from 'Becoming and Cessation.' Further, from the statement, 'Nirvana is everlasting rest,' you infer that there must be somebody to play the part of enjoyer.

⁸⁰ "It is exactly these fallacious views that makes people crave for sentient existence and worldly pleasure. These people are the victims of ignorance; they identify the union of the five aggregates as the 'self' and regard all other things as 'not-self'; they crave for individual existence and have an aversion to death; they are drifting about from one momentary sensation to another in the whirlpool of life and death without realising the emptiness of mundane existence which is only a dream and an illusion; they commit themselves

⁸¹ to unnecessary suffering by binding themselves to rebirth; they mistake the state of everlasting joy of Nirvana to be a mode of suffering; they are always seeking after sensual pleasures. It was for these people, victims of ignorance, that the compassionate Buddha preached the real bliss of Nirvana.

⁸² "Never for a moment was Nirvana either the phenomena of Becoming and Cessation, or the ceasing of Becoming and Cessation. It is the perfect manifestation of Rest and Cessation of Change, and at the 'time' of manifestation, there is no such thing as manifestation. It is called 'everlasting' joy because it has neither enjoyer nor non-enjoyer.

⁸³ "There is no such thing as 'one quintessence and five manifestations.' You are slandering Buddha and blaspheming the Dharma, when you go so far as to state that under the limitation and restriction of Nirvana, living is impossible to all beings. Listen to this stanza:--

⁸⁴ "The Supreme Maha Parinirvana Is perfect, permanent, calm, radiantly illuminative. Common and ignorant people miscall it death. While heretics arbitrarily declare it to be annihilation. Those who belong to the Small Vehicle and to the Middle Vehicle Regard Nirvana as 'non-action.' All these are merely intellectual speculations, And they form the basis of the sixty-two fallacious views. Since they are merely names, invented for the occasion, They have nothing to do with Absolute Truth. Only those of super-eminent mind Can understand thoroughly what Nirvana is, And take an attitude toward it of neither attachment nor indifference. They know that the five aggregates, And the so-called 'self' arising from the aggregates, Together with all external forms and objects, And the various phenomena of words and voice, Are all equally unreal, like a dream or an illusion. They make no discrimination between a sage and an ordinary man, Nor do they have any arbitrary Concept of Nirvana. They are above 'affirmation' and 'negation'; They break the barriers between the past, the present, and the future. They use their sense organs when occasion requires, But the concept of 'using' does not arise. They may particularise on all sorts of things. But the concept of 'particularisation' arises not. Even during the cataclysmic fire at the end of a kalpa. When ocean beds are burnt dry; Or during the blowing of catastrophic winds, when mountains topple; The everlasting bliss of Perfect Rest and Cessation of Change that is Nirvana Remains the same and changes not."

⁸⁵ The Patriarch then said to Chi-tao, "I am trying to describe to you something that intrinsically is ineffable, in order to help you to get rid of fallacious views. If you do not interpret my words too literally you may perhaps know a wee bit of Nirvana."

⁸⁶ Chi-tao became highly enlightened and, in a rapturous mood he made obeisance and departed.

Chapter VII: Sudden Enlightenment and Gradual Attainment

¹ CONTEMPORANEOUS WITH the Patriarch when he was living at Po-lam Monastery was Grand Master Shin-shau who was preaching in Yuk-chuen Monastery of King-nam. At that time the two schools of Hui-neng in the South and of Shin-shau in the North were both flourishing. As the two schools were distinguished from each other by the names, Sudden, and Gradual, some Buddhist scholars were troubled as to which school to follow.

² One day the Patriarch addressed his assembly as follows:--

³ "So far as the Dharma is concerned, there can be only one school. If a distinction is made, it exists in

⁴ the fact that the founder of one school was a Northern man, and the founder of the other was a Southern man. While there is only one system of Dharma, some disciples realise it quicker than others but the reason why the names, 'Sudden' and 'Gradual,' are given is because some disciples are superior to others in their mental dispositions. So far as the Dharma is concerned, the distinction of Sudden and Gradual does not exist."

⁵ (Between the two leaders there was mutual respect but) the followers of Shin-shau often criticised the Patriarch. They discredited him by saying that he was illiterate and could not distinguish himself in any respect. Shin-shau, on the other hand, admitted that he was inferior to the Patriarch in one respect, namely, that Hui-neng thoroughly understood the teachings of the Mahayana, even if he had attained that wisdom without the aid of a teacher. "Moreover," he added, "my Master, the Fifth Patriarch, would not have personally transmitted the robe and bowl to him without good cause: I regret that, owing to the patronage of the

⁶ Court, which I by no means deserve, I am unable to travel far to receive instruction from him personally. You should go to Tso-kai to consult him. Do not tarry."

⁷ One day, Shin-shau said to his disciple, Chi-shing, "You are clever and witty; I wish you would go to Tso-kai and attend the lectures there. Try your best to keep in mind what you hear, so that on your return you may repeat it to me."

⁸ Acting on his teacher's instruction, Chi-shing arrived at Tso-kai. Without saying anything about where he came from, he joined the company attending the Patriarch's lectures. When the Patriarch came to address the assembly, he said, "Some one has come here secretly to learn my teaching and later to plagiarise it." Chi-shing at once came forward, made obeisance, and told the Patriarch what his mission was.

⁹ "You come from Yuk-chuen Monastery, do you?" said the Patriarch. "Then you must be a spy."

¹⁰ "No, I am not," replied Chi-shing. "Why not?" asked the Patriarch. "If I had not told you, I would have been a spy," said Chi-shing. "Since I have told you who I am, I am no spy."

¹¹ "Tell me, how does your teacher instruct his disciples?" asked the Patriarch.

¹² "He often tells them to concentrate their minds in a meditation on 'purity'; to keep up the dhyana position constantly, and not to lie down."

¹³ Said the Patriarch, "To concentrate the mind on a meditation on 'purity' is an infirmity and is not Dhyana. To restrict oneself to the cross-legged position all the time is logically unprofitable. Listen to this stanza:--

¹⁴ "A living man sits and does not lie down; But a dead man lies down and does not sit. On this physical body of ours, why should we impose the task of sitting crosslegged?"

¹⁵ Making obeisance a second time, Chi-shing remarked, "Though I have studied Buddhism for nine years under Grand Master Shin-shau, my mind was not awakened for enlightenment, but as soon as you speak to me, my mind is enlightened. As the question of continuous re-birth is an important one, I wish you would take pity on me and give me instruction as to that question."

¹⁶ The Patriarch said, "I understand that your Master gives his disciples instruction as to 'disciplinary rules' (sila), meditation (dhyana), and Wisdom (Prajna). Will you please, tell me how he defines these terms?"

¹⁷ "According to his teaching," replied Chi-shing, "to refrain from all evil action, is Sila; to practise whatever is good, is Prajna; and to purify one's mind, is Dhyana. This is the way he teaches us. May I ask what your system is?"

¹⁸ The Patriarch replied, "If I should tell you that I had a system of Dhyana to transmit to others, I would be deceiving you. What I try to do to my disciples, is to liberate them from their own bondage, by such device as each case requires. To use a name, which after all is nothing but a makeshift, it may be called 'Samadhi.' The way your Master teaches Sila, Dhyana, Prajna, is wonderful; but my way is different."

¹⁹ "How can it be different, Sir, when there is only one form of Sila, Dhyana and Prajna?"

²⁰ "The teaching of your Master," replied the Patriarch, "is for the guidance of the general followers of the Mahayana; my teaching is for the more advanced followers. It is because some realise the Dharma quicker and deeper than others, that there is a difference of interpretation. Listen while I explain and see if you think my instruction is the same as his. In expounding the Dharma, I do not deviate from the authority of my intuitive mind. To do otherwise would indicate that the expositor's Mind-essence was obscured, and that he was competent to teach only the phenomenal side of the Dharma (but not its essence). The true teaching of Sila, Dhyana and Prajna, should be based on the principle that the function of all things derives its virtue from its essence. Listen to this stanza:--

²¹ "To free the mind from all improprieties is the Sila of Mind-essence; To free the mind from all perturbations is the Dhyana of Mind-essence. That which neither increases nor decreases is the 'diamond' of Mind-essence. 'Going' and 'coming' are only phases of Samadhi."

²² Having heard this instruction, Chi-shing felt humiliated and thanked the Patriarch for the instruction.

²³ The Patriarch continued: "The teaching of your Master on Sila, Dhyana and Prajna, is fitted for minds of wise men, it is true, but my teaching is intended for minds of a more advanced type. He who has realised Mind-essence, himself, may dispense with such doctrines as Bodhi, Nirvana, and Knowledge of Emancipation.

²⁴ It is only those who do not possess a single system of Dhyana, who can formulate all systems of Dhyana; these who understand what this means, may rightly use such terms as Buddhakaya, Bodhi, Nirvana, Knowledge of Emancipation. To those who have realised Mind-essence, it makes no difference whether they formulate all systems of Dhyana, or dispense with all of them. (Because of this non-attachment) they are at liberty to come or to go; they are free from all obstacles and impediments. As circumstances arise, they take appropriate action; they give suitable answers according to the varying temperament of their questioner. They see with a comprehensive glance that all 'Bodies of Transformation' are inseparable from Essence of Mind. They attain liberation, psychic powers, and Samadhi, which enables them to perform the arduous task of universal salvation as easily as if they were only playing. Such are the men who have realised Mind-essence.

²⁵ "By what principle are we guided in dispensing with all systems of Dhyana?" was Chi-shing's next question.

²⁶ The Patriarch replied:--"When our Mind-essence is free from improprieties, infatuations and perturbations; when we look inward from each momentary sensation to another, with Prajna; and when we no longer cherish attachment to objects, or to words, or to ideas; then are we forever emancipated. Why should we formulate any system of Dhyana when our goal may be reached no matter whether we turn to the right or to

²⁷ the left? Since it is by our own effort that we realise Mind-essence, and since the realisation and practise of Dhyana are both spontaneous and instantaneous, the formulation of any system of Dhyana is unnecessary. All Dharmas are intrinsically Nirvanic, how can there be gradation in them?"

²⁸ Chi-shing made obeisance and volunteered to be an attendant of the Patriarch, in which capacity he served faithfully.

²⁹ SINCE THE Two Dhyana Schools, that of Hui-neng in the South and Shin-shau in the North, were flourishing at the same time, in spite of the tolerant spirit shown by both Masters who hardly knew what egotism was, there naturally developed a strong sectarian feeling among the disciples. Calling their own Master, Shin-shau, the Sixth Patriarch on no better authority than their own wishes, the followers of the Northern School were jealous of the rightful owner of that title whose claim was supported by the possession of the insignia, the robe etc., and was generally acknowledged. (In order to get rid of the rightful Patriarch) they sent a lay member of the order whose secular name was Chang Hang-chong, a native of Kiang-si, and who as a young man had been fond of adventure, to get rid of him.

³⁰ With his psychic power of mind-reading, the Patriarch was able to know of the plot. One evening Chang entered the Patriarch's room intending to carry out his instructions. The Patriarch, after placing ten taels near his side, bent his neck forward and waited the

³¹ blow. Chang made three attempts, but strange to say no wound was made. Then the Patriarch spoke to him, saying,

³² "A straight sword is not crooked; A crooked sword is not straight. I owe you money only, but life I do not owe you."

³³ Chang -was taken by surprise and, remorseful and penitent, he asked for mercy and volunteered to join the order at once, but the Patriarch handed him the money and said; "If my followers should learn of it, they would harm you; you must not remain here. Some other time come to see me in

disguise and I will take good care of you." As directed, Chang ran away that night and subsequently joined the order under another Master. Upon being fully ordained, he proved himself to be a very diligent monk.

³⁴ One day recollecting what the Patriarch had said, he made the long journey to see him and to pay him homage. "Why have you waited so long?" said the Patriarch, "I have been expecting you all the time."

³⁵ Said Chang, "Since that night you so graciously pardoned my crime, I have become a monk and have studied Buddhism diligently. I can only show my gratitude adequately by spreading the Dharma for the deliverance of all sentient beings." Then he asked a question as to the meaning of "eternal and non-eternal," which the Patriarch answered and then said, "You have now thoroughly realised Mind-essence; hereafter you may call yourself, Chi-chai."

³⁶ Chi-chai made obeisance and departed.

Chapter VIII: Royal Patronage

¹ AN EDICT DATED the 15th day of the First Moon of the 1st year of Shin Lung, issued by the Empress Dowager Chek Tin and the Emperor Chung Chung, read as follows:--

² "Since we have invited Grand Masters Wei-on and Shin-shau to stay in the Palace and receive our offerings, we have continued to study under them as far as we could find time after attending to our imperial duties. Out of sheer modesty, these two Masters recommended that we should seek the advice of Dhyana Master Hui-neng of the South, who had inherited the secret Dharma and the robe of the Fifth Patriarch as well as the 'Heart Seal' of the Lord Buddha.

³ "We hereby send Eunuch, Sit Kan, as the courier of this Edict to invite His Eminence to come, and we trust His Eminence will graciously favor us with an early visit, etc., etc."

⁴ On the ground of illness, the Patriarch sent a reply declining the royal invitation and craved permission to be allowed to spend his remaining years in the "forest."

⁵ (In due time Sit Kan, the imperial envoy, arrived at Tso-kai and interviewed the Patriarch as follows):

⁶ "In the capitol, Dhyana experts unanimously advise people to meditate in the 'crosslegged' position to attain Samadhi; they say that this is the only way to realise the 'Norm' and that it is impossible for any one to obtain liberation without going through this meditation

⁷ exercise. May I know your way of teaching, Sir?"

⁸ "The Norm is to be realised by the mind," replied the Patriarch, "it does not depend upon the crosslegged position. The Vajrakkhedika Sutra says that it is wrong 'for any one to assert that Tathagata comes or goes, sits or reclines.' Why? Because Tathagata's Dhyana of Purity implies neither coming from anywhere nor going to anywhere, neither becoming nor annihilation. All Dharmas are calm and void, such is Tathagata's Seat of Purity. Strictly speaking, there is no such thing as 'attainment'; why should we bother ourselves about the crosslegged position?"

⁹ "Upon my return," said Sit Kan, "Their Majesties will ask me to make a report. Sir, will you kindly give me some hints as to your essential teachings, so that I may make them known, not only to Their

Majesties, but also to all Buddhist scholars at the Capital. As the flame of one lamp may kindle hundreds of thousands of others, the ignorant will be enlightened and light will produce light without end."

¹⁰ "The Norm implies neither light nor darkness," replied the Patriarch. "Light and darkness signify the idea of alternation. (It is not correct to say) 'light will produce light without end'; since light and darkness are a pair of opposites, there must be an end as well as a beginning. The Vimalakirti Nirdeśa Sutra says, 'The Norm has no analogy; it is not a relative term.'"

¹¹ "Light signifies wisdom, and darkness signifies defilement. If a pilgrim of the Path does not get rid of defilement by wisdom, how is he going to free himself from the 'wheel of birth and death,' which is beginningless?"

¹² The Patriarch continued, "Defilement (klesa) is wisdom (bodhi); The two are the same and are not different from each other. To break up klesa by Bodhi is only a teaching of the followers of the 'Small' and 'Middle' vehicles. To those of keen intellect and superior mental attainment, such teaching is disapproved."

¹³ "What, then, is the teaching of the Mahayana?"

¹⁴ "From the point of ordinary men," replied the Patriarch, "enlightenment and ignorance are two separate things. Wise men who thoroughly realise Mind-essence, know that they are of the same nature. This sameness of nature, that is, this non-duality of nature, is what is called 'true nature'; it neither decreases in the case of an ordinary man and ignorant person, nor increases in the case of an enlightened sage; it is undisturbed in an annoying situation, and is calm in Samadhi. It is neither eternal, nor not-eternal; it neither goes, nor comes, it is to be found neither in the interior, nor in exterior, nor in the space intervening between. It is beyond existence and nonexistence; its nature and its phenomena are always in a state of 'tathata'; it is both permanent and immutable. Such is the Norm."

¹⁵ Sit Kan asked, "You speak of it as beyond existence and non-existence. How do you differentiate it from the teaching of the heretics, who teach the same thing?"

¹⁶ The Patriarch replied: "In the teaching of the heretics, non-existence means the 'end' of existence, while existence is used in contrast with non-existence. What they mean by 'non-existence' is not actual annihilation,

¹⁷ and what they mean by 'existence' really does not exist. What I mean by 'beyond existence and non-existence' is this: intrinsically it exists not, and at the present moment it is not annihilated. Such is the difference between my teaching and the teaching of the heretics. If you wish to know the essentials of my teaching, you should free yourself from all thought--good ones as well as bad ones--then your mind will be in a state of purity, ever calm and serene, the usefulness of which will be as apparent as the sands of the Ganges."

¹⁸ This preaching of the Patriarch, awoke Sit Kan to full enlightenment. He made obeisance to the Patriarch and bade him, adieu. Upon his return to the Palace, he reported to Their Majesties, what the Patriarch had said.

¹⁹ In that same year on the 3d day of the 9th Moon, an Edict was issued commending the Patriarch in the following terms:--

²⁰ "On the ground of old age and poor health, the Patriarch declined our invitation to the Capital. Devoting his life, as he does, to the practice of Buddhism for the benefit of us all, he is, indeed, 'a field of merit' for the nation. Following the example of Vimalakirti who recuperated in Vaisali, he widely spreads the Mahayana-teaching, transmitting the doctrines of the Dhyana School, expounding especially the 'non-dual' Dharma. Through the medium of Sit Kan to whom the Patriarch imparted the 'Buddha-knowledge,' we are fortunate enough to have an opportunity to understand clearly his teachings of Higher Buddhism. This must be due to the accumulated merit and our 'root of

²¹ goodness' planted in past lives, otherwise we would not be contemporaries of His Eminence.

²² "In appreciation of the graciousness of the Patriarch, we find ourselves hardly able to express our gratitude. (As a token of our great regard for him) we present him herewith a Korean Mo-la robe and a crystal bowl. The Prefect of Shiu-chow is hereby ordered to renovate his monastery, and to convert his old residence into a temple which is to be named, Kwok-yen. By royal favor, etc., etc."

Chapter IX: Final Words and Death of the Patriarch

¹ ON THE 1ST DAY of the 7th Moon, the Patriarch assembled his disciples and addressed them as follows:--

² 'I am going to leave this world by the 8th Moon. Should any of you have doubts about the teaching, please ask me soon, so that I may clear them away before I go. You may not find any one to teach you after I am gone.' (The sad news moved many of them to tears. The Patriarch spoke to them at some length) and then added:--

³ "Under all circumstances you should free yourselves from attachment to objects; toward them your attitude should be neutral and indifferent. Let neither success nor failure, neither profit nor loss, worry you. Be ever calm and serene, modest and helpful, simple and dispassionate. The Dharma is non-dual as is the mind also. The Path is pure and above all 'form.' You are especially warned not to let the exercise for concentration of mind, fall into mere quiet thinking or into an effort to keep the mind in a blank state. The mind is by nature pure, there is nothing for us to crave or give up."

⁴ Realising that the Patriarch would pass away in the near future, Elder Fat-hoi after prostrating himself twice asked, "Sir, upon your entering into Parinirvana, who will be the inheritor of the robe and the (secret) Dharma?"

⁵ "(As for the Dharma) all my sermons from the time I preached in the Tai-fan Monastery up to now, may

⁶ be copied out for circulation. You should take good care of it and hand it down from generation to generation for the salvation of all sentient beings. He who preaches in accordance with its teaching preaches the Orthodox Dharma. I have already made known to you, all the Dharma I know.

⁷ "As to the transmission of the robe, this practice is to be discontinued. Why? Because you all have implicit faith in my teaching, you are all free from doubts, therefore, you are all able to carry out the lofty object of our school. It is in accordance with the meaning of the stanza, handed down by Bodhidharma, the First Patriarch, that the robe be no longer handed down to posterity. The verse says:--

⁸ 'The object of my coming to China, Was to transmit the Dharma of deliverance to all under delusion. In five petals, the flower will be complete; Thereafter, fruit will come to maturity naturally.'

⁹ "Do your best each of you; go wherever circumstances lead you. Listen to this stanza:--

¹⁰ "With those who are sympathetic You may have discussion about Buddhism. As to those whose point of view differs from ours, Treat them politely and try to make them happy. Disputes are alien to our school, They are incompatible with its spirit. To be bigoted and to argue with others in disregard of this rule Is to subject one's Mind-essence to the bitterness of this mundane existence."

¹¹ On the 8th day of the 7th Moon, the Patriarch suddenly gave an order to his disciples to get a boat ready for his return to Sun-chow, (his native place). They entreated him earnestly to remain where he was, but in vain.

¹² "It is only natural," said the Patriarch, "death is the inevitable outcome of birth. Even the Buddhas as they appear in this world must manifest an earthly death before they enter Parinirvana. There will be no exception with me; my physical body must be laid down somewhere. Fallen leaves go back to the place where the root is."

¹³ On the 3rd day of the 8th Moon of the Year Kwai Tsau, the 2nd year of the Sin Tan Era, after eating with his disciples at the Kwok-yen Monastery (Sun-chow), the Patriarch spoke as follows:--

¹⁴ "Please sit down in order of seniority; I am going to say good bye to you. After my passing away, do not follow the worldly custom of crying and lamenting. Neither should messages of condolence be accepted, nor should mourning be worn. These things are contrary to orthodox teaching; he who does them is not my disciple. What you should do is to know your own mind

¹⁵ and realise your own Buddha-nature, Which neither rests nor moves, neither becomes nor ceases to be, neither comes nor goes, neither affirms nor denies, neither remains nor departs. I repeat this to you that you may surely realise your Mind-essence. If you carry out my instructions after my death and practise them, then my going away will make no difference with you. On the other hand, if you go against my teachings, even if I remained with you, no benefit would be yours." Then he uttered this stanza:--

¹⁶ "Undisturbed and serene, the wise man practises no virtue; Self-possessed and dispassionate, he commits no sin; Calm and silent, he gives up seeing and hearing; Even and upright his mind abides nowhere."

¹⁷ Having uttered the stanza, he sat reverently until the third watch of the night, then he said abruptly, "I am going now," and in a moment passed away. At that time, a peculiar fragrance pervaded the room and a lunar rainbow appeared to link the earth and heaven; the trees in the grove turned pale and birds and animals cried mournfully.

¹⁸ In the 11th Moon of that year, the question of the Patriarch's resting place gave rise to a dispute among the government officials of Kwong-chow, Shiu-chow and Sun-chow, each party being anxious to have the remains of the Patriarch removed to his own district.

¹⁹ The Patriarch's disciples together with other Bhikkhus and laymen, took part in the controversy. Being unable to come to any agreement, they burnt incense and prayed to the Patriarch to indicate by the drift of the smoke the place he himself would like to rest. As the smoke turned directly to Tso-kai, the sacred shrine together with the inherited robe and bowl were accordingly removed back there on the 13th day of the 11th Moon.

²⁰ Next year on the 25th day of the 7th Moon, the body was taken from the shrine and re-embalmed and placed in the stupa, and by imperial order, tablets were erected to record the life of the Patriarch.

²¹ The Patriarch inherited the robe when he was 24; he was ordained at 39; and died at the age of 76. For thirty-seven years he preached to the benefit of all sentient beings. Forty-three of his disciples inherited the Dharma; while those who attained (a measure of) enlightenment and thereby got out of the rut of the ordinary life were too many to be numbered. The robe transmitted by the First Patriarch, Bodhidharma, as the insignia of the Patriarchship, the Mo La robe and the crystal bowl presented by the Emperor Chung Chung, the Patriarch's image carved by Fong-pin, and other sacred things, were given into the care of the keeper of the stupa. They were to be kept permanently at Polam Monastery to guard the welfare of the temple. The Sutra spoken by the Patriarch was published and circulated to make known the principles of

²² the Dhyana School. All these steps were taken for the prosperity of the "Three jewels," Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, as well as for the general welfare of all sentient beings.