

The Gates of Chan Buddhism

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What is Chan?

To begin, I would like to express my deep gratitude to the Abbot and executive directors of the Yufo (Jade Buddha) temple, the Sangha and the laity, for inviting me to this grand occasion in commemoration of the late Abbot Zhen Chan (1916 - 1995), who passed away five years ago. I feel honored to be given this opportunity to have an exchange of views on the Dharma. What I address here though, I suppose, is far from being a discourse on sutra, neither is it a formal commentary.

During the time of the later Qing Dynasty (1840 - 1911), the Republic (1911 - 1949), and the founding of New China in 1949 – and up until the present day, Shanghai was and still is a Buddhist center, a stronghold where Buddhism came and continues to come into full play. It is here in Shanghai that various venerable masters and elders proclaim the Dharma; many young masters are progressing daily; and what is more, such people as household followers and Buddhist scholars who study the Buddha's teachings and try to impart the Dharma to others, are by no means rare. I really feel quite uneasy about coming here to talk, because there are so many well-established masters and talented scholars in Shanghai. Fortunately, with the presence of several elders and, dedicated household followers here today at the temple, there

are many who, I am sure, will be kind enough to correct me in case I say something inappropriate or not quite right. It is my hope, by dint of the efforts of various venerable masters and elders, to make this Dharma talk a promising and opportune occasion for joyful and agreeable mutual dialogue and exchange.

The Yufo temple has carried out discourses on sutras for more than a year, and various masters have preached here. The title of the talk I have chosen to give on this occasion is “Lectures on Chan Cultivation”. It is subdivided into six parts, and I plan to deliver them one by one in six days. Everybody knows that Chan is beyond description, something very difficult to talk about, yet for the sake of helping beginners to understand we must endeavor to speak the unspeakable. Today, I come first to discuss what Chan is, and then to explain how to take to the path of Chan cultivation. Once again, I wish to make it clear that what I am going to talk about is not a discourse but an exchange of views and an opportunity to receive your comments.

Today, let us begin with the first sub-title “What is Chan?” or “What does Chan mean?” These are perennial and frequently debated questions. I am not sure how to talk about it or whether I can do it well. I look for your advice or comments.

The term Chan (Zen) I address here, is not that mentioned in the Six Paramitas, nor that mentioned in the Catvari-dhyanani. It is, rather, what the Chan School upholds. On the one hand, yes, this is the same thing as that referred to in the Six Paramitas, whilst simultaneously remaining independent

of them. Similarly, it is inseparable from, yet different to the one in the Catvari-dhyanani. We all know the maxim that Chan is a “special transmission, outside the scriptures, with no dependence on words and letters.” It is “a direct pointing at the human mind; seeing into one’s own nature and the attainment of Buddhahood.” This is the term Chan I am going to talk about today. As Chan is a “special transmission, outside the scriptures, with no dependence on words and letters”, language should also be discarded. Why am I here to talk then? The reason is that, without the help of language and words, it is very hard to take to the path of Chan cultivation; very hard to find a point of entry. This is why, in the “Tan Sutra” the Sixth Patriarch Hui Neng (638 - 713) explains that: the so-called “with no dependence on words and letters” does not mean not using words and letters. He said: “Some might argue that in the direct method (literally, the straight Path) letters are to be discarded. But would they realize and appreciate that the two words ‘are discarded’ are also letters?” In this case, “with no dependence on words and letters” means to be free from words and letters, but not to be separated from them. We have to use language and words as the finger that points to the moon. “We see the moon because of the finger, whereas we forget the finger because we have seen the moon.” That is the function of language and words.

Now, let us come to what Chan is. I would like to talk a bit about the origin of Chan first, in a succinct way, of course. Had I extended this subject into a more comprehensive one, I would have used up all these six days, yet might still not have been clearly understood. In addition, that would be

more like an academic approach, which is not suitable for this occasion.

On the origin of Chan, I want to explain it from its beginning in early Indian Buddhism through to its transmission in China. In India, as we all know, Chan's beginning is recounted as follows: one day on Mount Gridhrakuta the Buddha, realizing that his end was at hand, addressed an assembly of thousands; holding up a flower he blinked his eyes. Nobody amongst the audience recognized the true significance of what was happening yet there was one exception. At that very moment the only one who understood the message was Mahakashyapa, who smiled. The Buddha then said: "I have the Treasury of the True Dharma Eye, the serene Mind of Nirvana, the formless form of the Absolute Existence and the marvelous Path of Teachings. It does not rely on letters and it is transmitted outside the scriptures. I now hand it over to Mahakashyapa." This is the origin of Chan that the Chan School upholds. The intention of this Gong'an (koan), of course, does not define the origin academically, but stresses the fact that Chan is a "special transmission, outside the scriptures, with no dependence on words and letters"; it is "a direct pointing at the human mind; seeing into one's own nature and the attainment of Buddhahood." We'd better not review or analyze this event, the origin of this Gong'an, from its historical or textual background as people often do today. Whether there was or was not such an event, whether historical or legendary, I think none of these points relate to Chan itself. This is because what Chan expounds is neither

history nor legend; even if it was an historical event that event itself cannot explain what Chan is. This Gonggan, “the Buddha raising a flower to the assembly on Mount Gridhrakuta” is, then, taken as the beginning of the Chan School in India. Arya Mahakashyapa was the First Patriarch of the Chan School in India, after that the Dharma was handed down one by one, all the way down to Arya Bodhidharma, the 28th Patriarch.

Bodhidharma (? – 628 or 536), the 28th Patriarch in India and also the First Patriarch in China, came to China to proclaim the Dharma. He encountered and overcame all kinds of hardships. The time of his arrival in China coincided with the period of doctrinism that was then prospering throughout the country; dogma and intellect knowledge was also being stressed to a certain extent. In such circumstances, it was very difficult for him to disseminate the Chan tradition, that is, a “special transmission outside the scriptures, with no dependence on words or letters.” Upon his arrival in Nanjing he had a conversation with Emperor Wu of Liang. Evidently, neither he nor the emperor was particularly impressed with the other. He thus left Nanjing, traveled along the road toward Changan (present day Xi’an), and finally reached Mount Song in Henan. There he spent nine years sitting facing a wall in the Shaolin temple, waiting for a man to come. From this simple fact we can imagine how difficult it was to proclaim the Chan tradition at that time. It took him a full nine years before the Second Patriarch Shen Guang (487 - 593) came to Mount Song to be his disciple, and to seek for the path that could pacify the Mind. We see that, at the time,

it was not at all an easy task to teach the marvelous path of “a direct pointing at the human mind; seeing into one’s own nature and the attainment of Buddhahood.” Later on, Shen Guang was renamed Hui Ke by Bodhidharma. I suppose, you all know this Gongan well, so there is no need to take the time covering the whole message.

The Path of Pacifying the Mind was transmitted from Bodhidharma to Hui Ke. This was the beginning of the Chan School in China. After two hundred years the Dharma was handed down to the Sixth Patriarch Hui Neng. Before him, transmission took place between a master and his chief disciple, by what was called the “lantern transmission of six generations”. Why by means of individual transmission? Since a qualified heir was extremely rare, the Dharma could not be handed down to many people. In fact, during the times when the Second, Third and the Fourth Patriarch preached the teachings, there were only a few followers.

Master Dao Xin (580 - 651), on Mount Shuangfeng of Huangmei, was the Fourth Patriarch. Recently, the Zhengjue temple, the Bodhimandala of Master Dao Xin, has been completely rebuilt. It took approximately four years, and was supervised by the well-known master Ben Huan. The temple is situated in an auspicious and pleasant location, where many talented masters were and still are nurtured. It was Master Dao Xin who first tried to set up a Bodhimandala - a base for the dissemination of the Dharma. According to historical documents, it is said that Master Dao Xin “opened the door wide for Chan training and received the faithful from far and near.” That is to say, it was not until Master Dao

Xin that the Chan School had really come into being. From then on, on the one hand, greater prospects opened up for Dharma dissemination whilst, on the other, another way of living and earning one's livelihood was being stressed; that is, masters would support themselves by their own physical labor. By means of self-sufficiency, masters could actually extricate themselves from a difficult position in terms of Dharma dissemination.

From the proceeding points we can see that, at the time, lay followers under the guidance of masters who taught the Dharma, were few in number, and not many of these could understand the Mind-to-Mind approach. Without the human resource of followers, masters would have found life very difficult. In China, it did not work for masters to live by means of holding an alms bowl and begging for their bread. How then did they make a living? They had to do manual labor and attain support for themselves in the mountainous areas. It was claimed that 1,500 people had once lived in the Bodhimandala of the Fourth Patriarch Dao Xin. They ploughed the fields and sowed seeds with their own hands, living a self-sufficient life.

From that time on, the Dharma was handed down successively from the Fourth to the Fifth and, thence, to the Sixth Patriarch, thus resulting in a true full blossoming of Chan in China. This was the beginning of the Chan School in China. It could, then, be dated right back to the initial stage of the First Patriarch Bodhidharma, the transition stage of the Second Patriarch Hui Ke and the Third Patriarch Seng Can (? - 606), the developing stage of the Fourth Patriarch Dao Xin,

the Fifth Patriarch Hong Ren (602 - 675), and the Sixth Patriarch Hui Neng. Prior, then, to its widespread flourishing by the time of the Sixth Patriarch Hui Neng, Dharma transmission had been subject to a long, harsh and vigorous process of development for more than two hundred years. This concludes a brief summary of the early stages of the Chan School in China.

Now, let us come to the point: “What is Chan?” We may firstly define the term Chan, I suppose, in light of the “Six Paramitas” or “Catvari-dhyanani”. The term Chan that the Chan School upholds, however, is “a direct pointing at the human mind; seeing into one’s own nature and the attainment of Buddhahood.” It places no direct reliance on words and letters. It is not an issue that can be dealt with by logical thinking. It is, therefore, very difficult to talk about. I could only give you a rough idea by means of “using words to deal with words.” As to the question, “What is Chan?” or “What does Chan mean?”, each of us must attain his or her own personal experience.

What is Chan? Firstly, Chan is a state. There is a saying in the Chan School that: “When drinking water, the drinker knows how hot or how cold the water is.” What kind of a state is this? It is the state in which an enlightened person lives. The enlightened one is the Buddha, who was always in the state of Chan, whose every single act or every single word was nothing other than Chan. Hence the saying “hold on to the state of Chan in walking or sitting, enjoying the wholeness at depth of one’s being no matter whether giving a speech or keeping silent, no matter whether moving or

remaining still.” This is the life the enlightened person lives. This was the life the Buddha lived. That “the monk is in the state of meditation at all the times, without losing it for a single moment” is the state of Chan. We could only see the Buddha’s serenity, naturalness and great joy on the surface, but these qualities reflected the true depth of that pure enlightened state in which he lived. People who are enlightened yet do not attain Buddhahood might also reach such a state, but only on a secondary horizon or level. There is also a state, on the third horizon, which practitioners might reach. Those engaged in Buddhist practice or Chan cultivation might attain that state, which is, however, fragmented and disconnected, or reveals itself segment by segment, not as a continuous whole. In terms of gradation, such a state differs greatly from that of the Buddha.

We say that one comes to a realization that “the mind, the Buddha, and a living being are actually one” only if and when he has attained to the same level of enlightenment as that achieved by the Buddha. This implies that he has much experience only in the preparatory stage towards Buddhahood. This is by no means equivalent to a Buddha from the point of Buddha-fruit (degree of enlightenment or realization). The Chan School breaks down all theoretical frameworks and modes of dichotomous thinking; it is only after such a radical cognitive transformation that can one penetrate the state of Chan. In other words, so long as one completely tears down all forms of separation, the state of Chan can be revealed as right here at this very moment. It does not mean that one has to wait for a certain period of

time, and then the state of Chan is revealed. It is always here at the present moment. Each of us is invited to try for oneself. I suppose, one could experience such a state of Chan in a moment lasting one second, two seconds, or three seconds. From the perspective of attainment, Chan is a state that each of us truly needs to seek.

Secondly, Chan is experience, something received and applied in person. Just now, we said that as invisible and untouchable as Chan is, one can still penetrate and experience it by one's own efforts. The process of attainment is entirely personal such that it cannot be shared by others. Therefore, the practitioner or seeker is the only one who is able to experience Chan, and the spontaneity of Chan. One would have such experience and spontaneity if he were disciplined in the Chan tradition. In addition, attaining the state of Chan, one would be able to respond dynamically to the Dharma. For instance, in the dog days of June (according to the Chinese lunar calendar) we walk under the scorching sun. What do we want most at that time? For contemporary people, we naturally want to be inside an air-conditioned room. How would we feel after entering such a room? We would think, how cool and fresh it feels; how easy it is; how pleasant it is. You yourself are the only one that has such a feeling. But can you adequately express it? No. You could not successfully put it into words. Another person may only see that you are there in the room, serene and quiet, but he could never have the feeling you have experienced by yourself. This is because it is the actual experience - personally attained by each individual - that is of importance.

This, of course, is just a kind of feeling you have due to your change of location or environment.

As I said, Chan is straightforward, and is right here, right now at the present moment. It does not rely on the spatial shift, or temporal shift; it is right here as it is. This mode of being was given expression by an ancient poet; he wrote about how a Chan master felt on a burning hot summer's day. How did the poet express this? Perhaps you may already know the poem:

“To keep away from the scorching weather,
Everyone blindly hurries hither and thither.
The Chan master alone remains inside.
It means not that the master feels no heat.
Only he burns less due to a peaceful Mind.”

“To keep away from the scorching weather, everyone blindly hurries hither and thither” During the hot summer months people bustle about in a crazy way, trying to escape from the heat. “The Chan master alone remains inside.” Those engaged in Chan penetration, Chan practice, or Chan cultivation not blindly run around here and there. “It means not that the master feels no heat.” This does not suggest that the Chan master has no feeling or sensation of the obvious heat. “Only he burns less due to a peaceful Mind.” He feels less hot only because of a peaceful mind. With a quiet Mind, he naturally feels cooler. What is the state of a quiet Mind? As I mentioned before, as long as one remains free from

duality – from division or separation he does not care about how hot or how cold it is. But with division or separation he at once feels entirely different. What is this division, separation or duality we speak of here? It is our dichotomous Mind.

There is story about a venerable master, Zi Bai (1543 - 1603), of the Ming Dynasty (1368 - 1661). Master Zi Bai, named Zhen Ke, was one of the four great masters (Zi Bai, Han Shan, Lian Chi, and Ou Yi) in the later Ming Dynasty. One day he was reading a book until sunset, the time at which a lamp needed to be lit. Without a lamp, however, he kept on reading as clearly and distinctly as he had before. At this time, Master Han Shan, holding a lamp in hand, came to Zi Bai's room. On seeing that Zi Bai was still reading without a light, Han Shan asked: "It is late in the evening, how can you still read? Can you see?" Brought by Han Shan to an immediate awareness of his predicament, a dichotomous mentality returned to Zi Bai in an instant. At once he could not see at all, as if his eyes had been covered up at that very moment.

Such stories are numerous. In the Tang Dynasty (618 - 907) Master Yuan Xiao came to China from Xin Luo (a part of present day Korea) to seek the Dharma. At nightfall he, together with several others, traveled to a remote and lonely place. As there was neither a village nor an inn nearby where they could stay overnight, they had no other choice but to sleep in the open. They neither had water to drink nor any food to eat. During the night they tried blindly here and there to get water. By chance they found a bit of water in a tiny pit;

wasting no time, they immediately began to drink and felt pleasantly contented and refreshed. Next morning however, they could see that the water was actually dripping down from a coffin. Stricken by separation – by dichotomous thinking, they were at once vomiting incessantly. In both cases the event was the same: finding water. Nevertheless, there were two entirely different outcomes resulting from the two contrasting mental perspectives – separated, dichotomous thinking, and non-separated, non-dichotomous thinking. The moment prior to, above or beyond separation is the state of Chan, the experience of Chan. It is very obvious.

It is the same with a monk registered in a temple. If he comes and is led to a room where he feels at ease he is able to sleep soundly throughout the night. The next day, someone informs him that it was in that very room that a person died of a terrible illness or that a person hung himself the day before. After hearing the shocking news he does not dare to stay in that room again for fear of ghosts. Where are the ghosts? They are in his mind, in the mind of separation. Each and every one of us might come across such a situation. Therefore, we say, clinging to separation is utterly harmful. It is the sole root from which all problems in the world issue forth. We have to get rid of this first, if we want to attain Buddhahood. That is why we say: Chan is experience. It is a process of acquisition and application; and that in order to reach a state of oneness one needs to be free from separation. All things in the world are equal in nature. They are equivalent to one another. Separation is only the form whereas equality is the nature. We have to seek for the true

nature in the process of being, away from the form. Then the experience we gain through such a way will be down-to-earth.

Thirdly, Chan is an approach, a way of doing things. This reflects Chan's state of readiness, of spontaneity, but not from the perspective of the ultimate truth of Chan. The ultimate truth is, of course, not separated from the readiness, whereas the readiness is not separated from the ultimate truth. They are two in one; one in two. Chan, in nature, is an approach that is "a direct pointing at the human mind; seeing into one's own nature and the attainment of Buddhahood." The ultimate goal the Chan School offers is direct enlightenment; therefore, a practitioner need not go via a roundabout and circuitous route. How can one point directly at one's Mind? He has to believe completely that he himself is a Buddha. It should be a thoroughgoing belief, not half-hearted nor with even the slightest of doubts. Guided by such a faith, one has then to put what the Buddha taught into practice. That is what the message means and entails. "Seeing into one's own nature and the attainment of Buddhahood", in this context, means to forcefully drive this message home, to work on it and to realize it in one step. That is what it means.

This approach is not static but dynamic, varying from person to person, and in relation to time and place. This was the approach Shakyamuni adopted when raising the flower to the assembly, in response to which Mahakahshyapa, remaining profoundly silent, simply smiled. After the Dharma was transmitted to China, who else came to use this

same approach, the approach of ‘Shakyamuni’s flower’? In the Lantern Transmission Recordings or Quotations of Chan School, it appears that nobody used the same approach again. Since this particular and specific instance of the approach could not be blindly copied, that to do so would have been useless, none of the succeeding masters had tried it again. It would also have been useless, I suppose, if one smiled or was all smiles, because that would not indicate that he had seen into his own nature. Such an approach is a living and dynamic approach. How can one come to know whether or not a master’s single act or single move issues from an enlightened Mind? The answer is simply that for each great master a suitable disciple will come. Suppose a master and a disciple both possess paranormal vision, both agree with each other tacitly, and both have a deep and profound understanding of one another, then direct Mind-to-Mind transmission would be effective. Therefore, the way of Chan training is a living and dynamic approach. The Chan School maintains the principle that: “Do not offer people dead approaches.” This indicates that there does not exist a single fixed mode or format for the Chan approach. The ancient masters used a great variety of ways to receive and guide practitioners. According to a rough estimate, there are, in total, about one thousand seven hundred different Gongans. What are those Gongans? In general, they can be seen to represent one thousand seven hundred different and uniquely adapted ways. In fact, the number of ways is actually beyond that number, as we only take into account those documented in writing. There are, in addition, still many unwritten ones.

The approaches or methods used in Chan training are applied effectively relative to the period of time, the place, and the people; indeed, they have progressed and continue to progress right up to the present day. Following this transformation of approaches, the most recent approaches to have arisen are called “An Xiang (serenity in meaning) Chan”, and “Xian Dai (modern times) Chan”. Similarly, in Hebei Province, we promote the “Sheng Huo Chan (Chan in Daily Life)”. Nowadays, masters have to guide sentient beings using varied ways, according to the people, time, and place. Such ways should be in line with the Buddha’s teachings and reflect the particular social environment.

Fourthly, Chan is a Path. As Chan is an approach, there should exist a path towards its application. What is that path then? It is the path of seeking for profound wisdom. Within each and every one of us there is primordial wisdom and morality, but because of delusion and attachment we do not realize it. What kind of an approach then should we use in order to make progress? The Chan School teaches us that there is an approach right at our very fingertips, right in the palm of our hands and that we can: “make up our minds at this very moment and penetrate directly.” It is very simple, but by no means easy. It is called, “confronted by a high wall yet with no gate to enter.” In such circumstances one needs to have a bit of courage and to step forward resolutely.

Chan is also a way to break apart the shackles of convention. We are living in a relative world; the relative externals, like fetters and handcuffs, tie us firmly up and prevent us from acting or speaking freely. For instance, one

wishes to rest and sleep soundly at night, yet carried away by various anxieties he cannot fall asleep but, instead, lies in bed tossing and turning. The harder he tries to sleep the more awake he becomes. What prevents him from falling asleep? The culprit is none other than the delusive and separated Mind. There are also those people who are free from anxieties and can drop off to sleep the moment their head hits the pillow. However, a great many others get so used to thinking about this, that, or the other at night, that they make it very difficult for themselves to fall asleep. They very much envy those who can drop off the moment they lie down in bed. It is, however, quite useless to feel envious. Why? - because that envy alone is yet another attachment. One just directly goes to bed if one wants to sleep, and sleeps single-mindedly, free from the shackles of separation.

Chan is also a path one seeks for emancipation. The shackles of convention are fetters and handcuffs. If one breaks them apart, he becomes emancipated right at that very moment. This is what Chan offers. In terms of the ultimate end, Chan is a path that leads to a perfect life. Now, we are living a life full of self-made and self-inflicted faults and defects, yet this does not reflect our primordial state or nature. We are actually perfect, enlightened beings in nature, living a perfect and enlightened life. The reason why we are so full of faults and defects is that we can barely gain the slightest awareness of our own self-nature, can barely fathom the deepest recesses of our being; instead we are constantly driven outwards to seek the Dharma, or driven outwards by our enormous and utterly insatiable desires. That is why we

cannot be perfect, free, and emancipated. Regarding emancipation, shackles, and conditioning, we really should not look outwards for emancipation from these shackles, from this conditioning. That is, we should really not seek for Nirvana as existing as other than or as apart from life-death (The term “life-death” used here means Samsara in Sanskrit, which is in contrast to Nirvana.) itself. We should not seek for Bodhi (enlightenment) as apart or distinct from klesa (all the mental functions and morally defiling worldly passions and afflictions that prevent a person from becoming enlightened). Emancipation is a boundless freedom, a thoroughgoing freedom. Where does such a kind of freedom exist? This is to say that: the infinite can be realized within the finite; Nirvana does exist within life-death. In other words, life-death and Nirvana are not separated and, in like manner, neither are finite or infinite, nor Bodhi and klesa. They are united. What though, we may ask, is it that *does* seem to be between them? It is the ignorance, that is, our dichotomous Mind. The moment one goes beyond all separation, he at once realizes that there is no separation at all, that life-death is Nirvana, Bodhi is klesa, and limit is infinite. As long as one breaks up ignorance, realization comes in an instant. He could then know directly what “no-separation” is. This is the down-to-earth fact that the Chan approach seeks to communicate

Fifthly, Chan is the art of life, a way of living one’s life. In general, we ordinary people are usually unable to live our lives in such a natural and free style, nor are we able to experience a state of bliss and inner peace the same as that

experienced by an enlightened Chan practitioner. Caught up painfully in the day-to-day life, worrying about wood, rice, oil and salt, and the practicalities of caring for wife, children, the old and young, it is hardly surprising that our life can not be a kind of art. Monks or masters also have various klesa, which are, from the point of a noble aspiration, called “seeking for truth” or “visiting learned masters for advice.” It was said by ancient masters that: “One need not worry about a temple but about a Path.” This indicates that monks or masters hope to reach a certain degree of accomplishment in their practice, and in trying to achieve success along the Path of Buddhahood. As long as they have gravitated to the Buddha’s Path there should be no need to worry about a temple. Progress or otherwise along the Path, this is what monks or masters worry about. Regarding lay Buddhists, let us suppose that those engaged, today, in the study of scriptural teachings want to change immediately and instead engage in sitting meditation the moment they happen to come across this wonderful Chan practice. The very next day, however, when they hear from another source that the simple method of recitation of Amitabha’s name works well, they then immediately want to change again in the hope of being whisked off right away by Amitabha to the blissful Western Pure Land – liberated from this mortal world, a world full of sufferings. This is what lay Buddhists are anxious about. Those not engaged in Buddhist practice feel even more anxious, suffering even more. Indeed, their state can hardly be explained in a few words. With life going on like this, how can it be an art? Even if one were an artist, it would not

necessarily imply that his life was an art or a graceful performance. Acting out a performance is actually more relaxed and more relaxing.

The life of the Chan practitioner is really an art. We all know Master Bai Zhang (720 - 814). He once wrote a poem describing how a monk lives his life. The poem goes as follows:

“It is a good fortune to be a monk in kasaya (robe).

The whole universe gains an utterly free being.

Staying when the condition is right whilst going away
when it is not.

He is as free as white clouds being blown on the breeze.”

In the universe there then exists a free and unoccupied person. Such a life reveals a very high artistry. Puffs of cool breeze, wisps of white cloud, they are just like the way monks or masters live, the image and example they express. How natural it is; how free it is. In this way, we say, monks or masters really live an unconfined life. Sometimes we say that ordinary people live a free life. It is, however, unconvincing. How could we really live a free life? It is only the Chan practitioner who can live an ultimately free and unconfined life, a life full of artistry. That is why we say Chan is an art of living.

Now, I want to say a few words about Master Zhao Zhou (778 - 897), our specially honored National Master. He lived to the great age of 120 years. In reading his quotations, we can easily get the impression that he did in fact live his life in

an artistic way; he was really an excellent artistic image, free, unconfined, and without attachment. Once, someone came for the Dharma, asking him how to practice. He said, “please sit for a while, I will be back in a minute.” What did he do? He went to the toilet. Coming back to the room, he said to the visitor, “practicing the Path, you see, is something that can not be done for you by others. Even going to the bathroom, a petty thing as it is, could not be done by another on your behalf. In regard to such a great task as self-training, it is useless just to talk. One has to put it in action by himself.” This was the way Master Zhao Zhou used to preach the Dharma. If a person who was not as enlightened as Master Zhao Zhou was to proclaim the Dharma in such a manner, people would think him crazy. People, however, believe what Master Zhao Zhou said because of his reputation and ability to teach. How free and unconfined he was!

Once, a practitioner asked Master Zhao Zhou: “What is the meaning of Bodhidharma’s coming to China?” Pointing outside, Zhao Zhou answered: “The cypress tree in front of the yard.” The practitioner asked one question but appeared to receive a totally unrelated answer. In fact, Zhao Zhou clearly showed what the meaning of Bodhidharma’s coming to China was: all is right here as it is. There was another Gongan called “Go to have tea”. Once, when a practitioner came for a visit, Master Zhao Zhou asked him: “Is this your first or your second time here?” He replied: “I have come here for the first time.” Zhao Zhou said: “Go to have tea, please.” Later on, when another practitioner came, Zhao Zhou again asked the same question: “Is this your first or

your second time here?” The answer was: “It is my second time.” Again, Zhao Zhou also said: “Go to have tea, please.” The supervisor that stood by could not understand, saying: “It is all right to invite the one that came for the first time to have tea. To invite such a guest to do so on the occasion of a first visit is the polite and natural way to behave. However, the one that came again for a second time is not a guest; why did you also invite him to have tea?” Instead of explanation Zhao Zhou cried out the supervisor’s name, saying: “You too go to have tea, please!” What a nice artistic way that is! What a paranormal artistry it is! Master Zhao Zhou demonstrated and revealed the Dharma in such a free and unconfined way, differing greatly from what I am doing here. I am afraid I just keep on talking and talking so long, for six days; what will be the result? I myself feel doubtful. I am even unqualified to be a pupil of Master Zhao Zhou: what is the use of my talking? I really do not know.

Chan is an art of life, an art for life. Chan masters and practitioners live an artistic style of life. Chan is also a way of living. What is this way then? Since all is right here as it is, we just eat when we feel hungry and go to bed when we feel sleepy. In this case, we are all practicing the Path, aren’t we? No. When we eat we have various separations. This is nice to eat while that is not. This is sour while that is hot. This is sweet while that is bitter. When we sleep we keep worrying about this or that in every possible way, tossing and turning about in bed unable to fall asleep. In such a way, and in desperation, we try to force ourselves to sleep, but this then becomes a struggle and not really sleep. Likewise what we

eat are separations but not food. With a separated Mind, we would think, as this hot dish is made of bean curd, I will eat it. Therefore, and in contrast, Chan practitioners – however they may be occupied - live their life in the same way, that is, always naturally and beyond separation. In other words, they live a life free from separation. In general, when we have not actually reached this state, we'd better not just simply imitate the life style of Chan practitioners. If we did, it would be even worse. Since we have not yet reached that state we could not have that kind of experience. Such blind imitation can only result in ludicrous effects; we ourselves would get nothing out of it. That is why we say that Chan is an artistic style of life, a way of living. It is the manifestation and expression of how the talented and enlightened live their lives. It is this essential aspect that seekers and practitioners live to pursue and pursue to live.

Sixthly, Chan is an eternal happiness, a true blissfulness. The ultimate end of Chan is to reach the state of eternal happiness and attain the state of true bliss. It could be said that Chan is a serene and relaxed enjoyment, the perfection out of all separations, a great freedom beyond life and death, and the ultimate freedom that abides neither in life-death nor in Nirvana. As such, Chan can enable us to release all our intrinsic potentials. We all have perfectly within our nature the Ten Forces, Four Fearlessnesses, various merits and wisdom and, also, the Three Bodies as possessed by the Buddha himself. Yet, covered by worldly dust, how can they manifest themselves? Through Chan training, through the kind of paranormal vision of “a direct pointing at the human

mind” and “seeing into one’s own nature”, we can – if only we make the effort - release some of our intrinsic potentials and then, finally breaking up the mass of hindrance, of klesa, truly liberate ourselves from the Ten Directions. We would then stay when the condition is right and go away when it is not; we would then purify the Buddha Land and benefit all sentient beings.

The ultimate goal of the Chan School is the same as that of all scriptural Schools. The only difference is that they do not take the same kind of path. The scriptural teachings are not direct, but indirect through a continuous process. The Chan approach is immediate, straightaway. It is a bursting into enlightenment in one step. This is how the Chan approach differs from others. For the quick-witted and quick-minded, the state of eternal happiness and true bliss can be reached in the blink of an eye. Those that are slow-witted had better not imitate blindly. It is through successive accumulation that one becomes more talented and able to react both readily and appropriately. Lacking in accumulation one would naturally become slow-witted. It is just like business dealings. For example, suppose a large deal is to be made, to the score, let us say, of several billion Yuan/RMB. As one has accumulated and therefore possesses enough assets, he could easily sign such a contract, buying and selling successfully. On the surface it seems to happen all of a sudden yet, in fact, previously he has struggled hard. He has had to prepare himself over a long period of time spanning countless lives. Without accumulation, one would not possess sufficient assets, it is thus not easy for him to manage small business –

even a deal of a thousand Yuan/RMB. One has to accumulate bit by bit. In the same way, we run our self-training: we have thereby to cultivate our moral excellence bit by bit, welcome all sentient beings, and have a deep respect for them. What we pursue is to gradually accumulate and strengthen our practice of virtue and cultivate our spiritual discipline.

That is all for today's first topic of "What is Chan?" Lastly, however, I would like to end with a poem by Su Dongpo (1009 - 1066):

“The misty rain on Mount Lu and
the breathtaking waves in Zhejiang.
How deep is my regret at not having
visited these two sights.
It is all the same as it is after my sightseeing.
The misty rain on Mount Lu and
the breathtaking waves in Zhejiang.”

All is actually right here as it is. What I talk about is merely the process.

The Second Lecture

Bodhidharma's Gate

Chan (Zen) in fact is an “impregnable fortress”, without a gate to enter. Suppose there is really a gate, that gate would simply be a method of training to be taken up in the Chan tradition. That is why when a monk asked Master Zhao Zhou (778 - 897): “Has a dog Buddha-nature or not?” Master Zhao Zhou retorted: “Wu.” Later on, this Gongan (koan) formed part of a specific approach in the Chan School. During the Song Dynasty (960 - 1279), Master Wumen Huikai (1183 - 1260) wrote a book entitled “Wumenguan” (the Gateless Barrier) based on this specific word “Wu”. The very first sentence in the “Wumenguan” states that: “Mind is the essence of the Buddha’s teachings, while the gateless gate is the gate.” This is the gate we must use to enter. “Mind is the essence of the Buddha’s teachings”, is also one of the chapter titles in the Lankavatara Sutra, which reads, “All Buddha’s words are related to the Mind.” That “the gateless gate is the gate” might possibly be taken as a state that reveals itself in line with the truth, or as a real gateway to the Dharma. We all know that there is no fixed Dharma in the Buddhist teachings, or that the fixed Dharma is not truly the Dharma. Strictly speaking, therefore, at the level of higher intuition, there exists no gate to enter. Chan is as it is: a wall of iron. Under such a gateless condition, it was necessary for ancient

masters to open various gateways for practitioners. In this case, as gateless as it is, numerous gateways to the Dharma were opened up. Later on, the “one thousand and seven hundred Gongans” were formed. They are also gateways of the Chan tradition.

Today, we come to discuss the “Gates of Chan Buddhism”. To begin with, I would like to say a few words about how Bodhidharma (? - 628 or 536) taught us to cross the threshold of Chan. In China, Bodhidharma was the seminal figure of early Chan Buddhism. What Bodhidharma laid down was not only the Chan School tradition, but also the essential aspects or connotations of his thought, including the practical way of training that distinguish the Chan School from that of other Buddhist schools. We all know of his article specifically expounding upon the way of entrance: the “General Discourse on the Twofold Entrance to the Tao and the Four Acts of Mahayana.” It is also entitled the “General Discourse on the Four Acts of Mahayana” or simply “On the Twofold Entrance and the Four Acts.” The way of Chan training Bodhidharma taught was the “twofold entrance and the four acts”. The “twofold entrance” means the “Entrance by Reason” and “Entrance by Conduct”. The “four acts” include: a) To know how to requite hatred; b) To be obedient to karma; c) Not to crave anything; and d) To be in accord with the Dharma. All these constitute the fundamental principles and practical way as taught by Bodhidharma.

“The General Discourse” is not long, comprising of only about five hundred or more Chinese characters. The Discourse also contains a preface written by Master Tan Lin,

in which he delivered a very important message. Unfortunately, the Chan School and academic circles have not paid enough attention to this message. In the preface, Master Tan Lin not only wrote a brief account of Bodhidharma's biography and his achievements, but also presented something very important, the Bodhidharma's gate. It consists of four fixed phrases, which are crucial for the practice of any Buddhist training. The four pithy phrases are the four fixed formulae – each beginning using the form: act “in such a way as to...” The full text of these instructions that Bodhidharma gave directly to his two close disciples, Hui Ke (487 - 593) and Dao Yu, is as follows: Act “in such a way as to pacify the Mind; in such a way as to behave properly; in such a way as to be congenial to others; and in such a way as to be natural”.

What does “in such a way as to pacify the Mind” mean? I mentioned yesterday that the First Patriarch Bodhidharma had spent nine years sitting facing a wall on Mount Song. The Path of Pacifying the Mind that he taught was facing a wall. It is called “Facing a wall is the way to pacify the Mind”; this is the first formula. The second is, “in such a way as to behave properly”. This means, how to conduct oneself in the right way, that is, “The four acts are ways to behave properly”. The third is, “in such a way as to be congenial to others”, that is, “not to cause doubt in the mind of others is the way to be congenial to them”. The fourth is, “in such a way as to be natural”, that is, “to advice practitioners to remain free from all attachments is the natural way”. I think these four formulae, as directly taught by Bodhidharma, are

very important. In addition, thereafter, they came to be the very source of all the varied methods of training in the Chan tradition. At the time when Master Tan Lin wrote the preface, he realized that what Bodhidharma had taught in terms of the four formulae was truly practical. Now let us roughly analyze the formulae so as to see how Bodhidharma taught us to begin our training.

Let us first come to “Facing a wall is the way to pacify the Mind”. In the Tang dynasty (618 - 907), Master Guifeng Zongmi (780 - 841) wrote a well-known book entitled “Prelude to the Work on the Five Kinds of Chan Buddhism”. In that book Master Guifeng, summing up what Bodhidharma taught, said: Bodhidharma “taught practitioners to pacify their Mind by facing a wall.” What does “facing a wall” mean? It includes four aspects. Practitioners should be: “free from all attachments, and should breathe deeply and rhythmically, whilst making the Mind as peaceful as a wall, in such a way they can enter the Tao.” This is Master Guifeng’s explanation of what “facing a wall” means. That is, to pacify the Mind practitioners need to make it not like a wall of clay or mud, but like one of iron. Such a wall is called “the Mind as peaceful as a wall” – so strong and solid that even flies and mosquitoes can hardly enter, or so firm that even bacteria can hardly invade. This is actually a metaphor emphasizing that the Mind is as protective as a wall, preventing delusion, material desire, and the hurly-burly of life any means of entry.

We also have such a metaphor nowadays, that we must “build up a great wall in the Mind”. What does the “great

wall” do? As social beings, we need it to curb corruption. Regarding practitioners, to what use is such a wall to be put? It is used to help prevent them from succumbing to anxieties and delusions and from being affected by material desires. In order to make the Mind like a wall, we have to be “free from all attachments”, letting all things be in their own place without interference. In fact, we cannot be free from all attachments, yet the best way is to let all things be as they are naturally, whilst we ourselves do not cling to them. “There is nothing unusual in the universe, only the ignorant are anxious about it.” This is a right description of all things in the world. Nobody else makes us anxious except ourselves, because anxieties only arise simply because we cling to them. If we could let all things be exactly as they are, not clinging to them, this would be “free from all attachments”. What are these things to which we cling? They are our “sorrow and joy, grief and happiness, others and oneself, right and wrong” and so forth. It is easy to say, “be free from all attachments”, it is, however, very, very, very difficult to put these words into action! I have to use “very” three times here in order to stress the point.

Master Dongshan Liangjia (807 - 869), in one sentence of commentary, said that practitioners should prevent themselves from clinging to external things as if they had come to a place full of parasitic blood-sucking worms. In the olden days, such worms were common in Jiangsu and Guangdong Provinces; there, snail fever was prevalent and it was easy to become infected. If one took a mouthful of water or put his feet in the contaminated water, the worms would

have got into his body and stayed there all the time. Buddhist practitioners should regard the Mind that clings to externals like a parasitic blood-sucking worm. What should we do when we come to a place full of such worms? We'd better not drink the water, not even a mouthful. Suppose we could treat "sorrow and joy, grief and happiness, others and oneself, and right and wrong" in the same way, or "never drop our guard" as the present people say, we would then eventually achieve success. If we could act in such a way as we progress along the Path, our self-training would be full of hope and our Mind would be as peaceful as a wall. That is "free from all attachments".

Inwardly, we should "breathe deeply and rhythmically". From the perspective of actual practice, this entails two aspects: firstly, how to practice sitting wholeheartedly, and how to make the Mind become quieter and quieter. For instance, we may take up the way of counting the breaths. "There are all together four phases or types of breath: namely the wind, gasp, gas and breath." At the time of practice, we'd better not work on the first three of wind, gasp, and gas, because these are inharmonious. We have to work on the fourth, the "breaths", thereby we will breathe rhythmically and the incoming and outgoing breaths will proceed deeply and continuously. Then, we will feel as if one moment the breath is there and next moment it is not. This is the practical aspect of "breathing deeply and rhythmically". Secondly, we must continuously maintain a state of mindfulness or awareness, never letting it go. That is, we have to be mindful of what is going on right at the very moment, and keep this

awareness going continuously. This is also what “breathing deeply and rhythmically” means.

As long as we are “free from all attachments and breathe deeply and rhythmically”, our Mind will be as peaceful as a wall. If we can bring our Minds to be like this we would be able to see through attachments and interference both internally and externally. How to do it then? We have to come to a clear understanding as to the true nature and Absolute Existence of Dharma. This truth is that “as all phenomena are strictly dependent, conditioned, and relative, they are therefore impermanent.” This is the Absolute Existence of Dharma. If we have such a penetrative understanding of the nature of phenomena, of the notion of emptiness, we will enter the gateway of Chan, or align ourselves with the Tao. This is what Bodhidharma’s first formula, “facing a wall is the way to pacify the Mind”, teaches us.

Is “facing a wall”, however, the ultimate goal of practice? No, I do not think so. “Facing a wall”, means to connect with the Tao, it is only the starting point. I remember that the late Premier Zhou Enlai wrote a poem, in which one line relates this Gonggan about Bodhidharma: “Sitting facing a wall for nine years one aims to see through the wall.” The real objective, therefore, is not “facing a wall” but “seeing through the wall”. The verse is profound and meaningful. As for the present people, it means a great leap forward, a breakthrough. Regarding Buddhist training, it means enlightenment. As long as we make the Mind like a wall and then break up that wall, whilst continuously holding on to

that condition, we will become truly free beings, doing whatever we do in accordance with conditions. In this way we would achieve success and come to the very end of our practice.

The second formula is: “The four acts are ways to behave oneself.” “The four acts” actually refer to the state of Mind that we have to get hold of. The key point of the first act: “knowing how to requite hatred”, is to submit our whole being willingly and patiently to all our sufferings. Here, “hatred” refers to our feelings towards somebody or something hateful to us. How should we deal with something hateful when it comes around? The word “requite” means “to repay”; it need not imply retaliation. Bodhidharma taught us that, in dealing with what is hateful, we must bear in mind the Buddhist spirit of patience, forbearance, loving-kindness and compassion, making the best use of hatred whilst not behaving in a tit for tat manner. At this point, I think it is important to be clear that Buddhism places its primary emphasis upon the direct religious experience of each individual person. It puts human existence in the first place and emphasizes the direct first-hand experience of the individual. It is, therefore, a practice of self-training or self-cultivation. Strictly speaking, Buddhism is not involved in Sociology, it rarely analyzes things from a Sociological perspective - what this or that group of people should or should not do when dealing with another group. More often, it expounds upon what we should or should not do as individuals. Had we applied the idea of “requiting hatred” to our social life, people would have thought us unable to draw

a clear distinction between right and wrong. I want to stress that Buddhist teachings emphasize what we, as individuals, should do, and how we, as individuals, ought to behave. Following the practical path of moral and mental training, so long as everybody tackles his or her own problems - no matter whether big or small, and reaches a compromise with others, our society will be naturally stabilized and naturally consolidated. People will, in turn, live harmoniously together and social morality will be improved. In terms of “purifying our Mind and harmonizing our society”, everybody has to do his or her bit as well as possible, making it the standard of conduct. The Buddhist emphasis is on finding out for oneself, right now at this very moment. The “way to requite hatred”, therefore, seems passive but is actually a very active method. It can be used both to tackle the conflict between oneself and others, and between right and wrong.

In the Buddhist teachings, there are three states of Vadanah (sensation), those experienced as painful, as pleasurable, and those experienced as neither - free off both. According to this classification, the “way to requite hatred” mainly teaches us how to deal with the painful aspect.

The second act, “being obedient to karma”, however, mainly teaches us how to deal with the pleasurable aspect. At the time when something happens in accordance with our desires what should we do? We are happy aren't we? But what did Bodhidharma teach us in this regard? He taught us not to be carried away by such feelings. It is due to the Law of Dependent Origination that pleasurable events occur. They come into being, or cease to be, according to whether the

karmic conditions are right or not. What then is the point of being joyful about it? When something happens according to our desire, we should maintain a very peaceful state of Mind. Suppose we are carried away by it and behave in a proud and superior manner, it will transform the good thing into a bad one. Therefore, what Bodhidharma taught has profound meaning for guiding our behavior – how to act properly and how to do our work correctly.

The third act is, “not to crave anything”. Regarding the three states of Vadanah, no matter whether painful sensations, pleasurable sensations, or those that are free from both, we’d better not seek after them intently, but let them come and go as they are. In this world, whenever and wherever there is craving there is also pain. Being Buddhist practitioners we have to cease from craving and become peaceful. In other words, understanding that whatever dharmas are produced and caused by the interplay of karmic conditions, we are able to remain unperturbed with respect to whatever happens, and never become attached to any desire. The reason is that, without karmic conditions such desires would not come into being. It is, therefore, more sensible to create the condition – this awareness or understanding, bit by bit, rather than misguidedly looking too far ahead in anticipation of the ending or final outcome. At the time when all the necessary aggregates come together the fertile ground will exist for the arising of that dharma. When the condition is immature how can we arrive at what we seek?

Buddhism invites practitioners to practice virtuous and meritorious deeds, which in fact prepares the groundwork for

the necessary conditions. At the time when the seed of virtue is sowed, the bad ending is stopped; when the virtue is mature, the bad ending is delayed. On the contrary, if we do not willingly practice virtue and the performance of good deeds, bad endings will come before their time. This occurs in light of the Law of Cause and Effect, which we cannot turn aside according to our own will. The Law is an iron one: specific in its causes and exacting in its effects. We thus have to exert ourselves, making every effort to do only good things, striving to be as perfect as possible whilst never merely acting out of self-interest, for instance, to gain merit or to achieve some immediate and superficial goal. This is called, “caring about what we sow, but not what we reap.” It is the way to be free from all attachments. Some people find it easier and more convenient to act the opposite way: they are keen on reaping yet do not care about the sowing. Eventually they will get nothing out of it. If we could really live up to what the phrase “not craving anything” implies or expects of us, we would be much closer to the Tao, or we could say, the act itself would go together with the Tao.

The fourth act is, “to be in accord with the Dharma”. What is Dharma? It is the “source of our original pure Mind”. It also refers to the Law of Dependent Arising. Suppose we do whatever we do according to the Law, we are “in accord with the Dharma”. Concerning this point, Bodhidharma taught the Six Paramitas. Regarding the four acts as a whole, the aim of first three acts is to prevent us from wrongdoing, whilst this last one, “being in accord with the Dharma”, emphasizes the practice of virtue. In other words, the first three, though of

course vital, stress the avoidance of laying weak foundations – generating negative conditions, whereas the fourth stresses action firmly grounded in benevolence, virtue and other noble qualities, in terms of the Six Paramitas. Bodhidharma also taught us that, in practicing the Six Paramitas, we have to be above partiality and attachment, and not cling to the form, that is, the mental construct or idea, that we are engaged in any kind of meritorious deed. In his teaching of the Paramitas, Bodhidharma used the metaphor of giving to express this idea that: at the time of giving we have to understand the “threefold nature of emptiness”, understanding that the one who gives, the one who is given, and the intermediary, are all based on dependent arising. We’d better not take them as the Absolute Reality. If we do it the other way round and think that we are the one that gives, you are the one that is given, and that we have given you a lot, then we then cling to the form while giving. Doing so can only bring about limited results. If while giving we do not cling to the form, an infinite result will take place. So much for the second formula that “The four acts are ways to behave oneself.”

The third formula is, “not to cause others to doubt is the way to be congenial to them”; this is what Bodhidharma admonished masters and preachers to do. What does this admonishment entail? It is just the same as that vowed by Bodhisattva Samantabhadra, that is: to “be congenial to all sentient beings”. How then can we put it into action? We should live what we are taught, by “not causing others to doubt”. Whatever we do, we must not make sentient beings

feel doubt as to their faith, and we must not do anything harmful to the spirit of the Buddha's teachings. In the practice, we ought to "advise those who do not have faith in Buddhism to try it out, and admonish those who are already on the Path to penetrate more deeply." Suppose we do it the other way round, make the former doubtful and the latter give up their faith, this will bring about negative effects. People would think: "Oh, so much for monks and Buddhism, they are nothing special!" If this were to happen, we would be doing something negative, causing and allowing others to feel doubtful about Buddhism. This, in turn, would act counter to our aim, let alone the very objective of Buddhist teachings. The message of "being congenial to others", I think, is both of real practical importance and of deep meaning to present Buddhist circles and to the Sangha. I remember that Master Hong Yi (1880 - 1942) once said: "Keep away from female practitioners and do not make others doubt." I hope those Bhikkhunis and female lay Buddhists who are attending this lecture are not bothered about the exact words for, of course, it works both ways. That is, Bhikkhunis and female followers also have to "keep away from Bhikkhus and male followers and do not make others doubt." If we are congenial in this way, Buddhism will be able to grow in the manner of a virtuous circle. On the contrary, if we do not abide by the message, a vicious circle will be created, making the public doubtful about Buddhism, which would, in turn, destroy its image. The next stage would not be one of simple doubt; no, instead the public would actively think ill of Buddhism, those who had doubts

would go away, and those who were already Buddhists would lose their faith. Regarding this formula, we have to consider it deeply, again and again, and come to a full understanding of what Bodhidharma truly meant. We must bear it in mind at all times.

The fourth formula is, “advising practitioners to remain free from all attachments is the way to act naturally.” It teaches us how to benefit others and ourselves in whatever we do, but without ever clinging. Once we cling to something, we will look at it one-sidedly with a subjective point of view. Why? Because any attachment itself represents thinking in terms of personal desire; with such thinking comes a one-sided perspective that, in turn, deepens the will of attachment. There are just two categories of attachment; the first, “clinging to the sense of ‘I’, and the second, clinging to the Dharma” or “clinging to the ego and the Dharma”. As sentient beings we have paid a great deal of attention to the physical body which, itself, is made up of five Panca-Skandhas (aggregates). We think it is very dear to us. We erect or create the idea of “I”, a concept that seems to work in terms of the common-sense conventions of the everyday world, as we live our life from decade to decade. Commenting on the notion of “I”, it is as Mr. Wu Limin, Director of the State Institute of Buddhist Culture, once said: we often say “this is mine; that is mine, mine, mine, all is mine”. We always put “I” in the first place and never let it go, beginning from the moment we are born till the moment we breathe our last breath.

Once someone told a joke, although, actually, we do not

know whether it was a joke or a real story. It goes as follows: a man was on death's door, yet unwilling to close his eyes. Instead, he flung his hands about wildly; however, nobody in the family nor any of his colleagues could understand what he was trying to say. After a while someone suddenly realized what he meant. It was that, now he was an official of the 13th rank, but that he wanted to be promoted to the 12th. He knew that if he were of the 12th rank, as a high-ranking official, he would be treated differently. The news was reported to the director of his department, who agreed to promote him one rank higher. When the dying man knew he would be treated as a high-ranking official after his death, he at once closed his eyes and died.

This is “clinging to ‘I’, to the ego and the Dharma, and to ‘I’ and mine”. “I” refers to “clinging to the ego”, while “mine” refers to “clinging to the Dharma”. What makes us have such attachments? The reason is, we do not fully understand the Absolute Existence of dependent arising and emptiness. Everything in the phenomenal world exists on the basis of certain conditions. It is useless to cling to this or that because the conditions do not change according to our wishful desires. Therefore, at the time when we do something natural and beneficial to others, we must not cling to what we have done. But, please do not misunderstand the word “naturalness” that we talk about here. It does not mean we can do whatever we do randomly. Naturalness is wisdom, and when we apply it to practice we must not cling to it. Why do I say, “Naturalness is wisdom”? I think that all of us might still remember the words: “Bodhi Mind is the source; great

compassion (karuna) the essence; and naturalness the ultimate truth.” Naturalness is thus what we seek after. If we do everything naturally we come to the ultimate truth, if not there is no way to it. That is, naturalness is profound wisdom, but only on the condition and prerequisite that we do not cling to anything. Attachment results in one-sidedness that reveals ignorance but not wisdom. The reason why I talk about Bodhidharma’s four formulae is that, they are the essence of what is involved in taking part in Chan training, as well as in other Buddhist trainings. That is, “In such a way as to pacify the Mind; in such a way as to behave oneself; in such a way as to be congenial to others; and, in such a way as to act naturally.”

Now, let us consider the article written by Bodhidharma as a whole. It consists of about five hundred and ten Chinese characters, including the title “General Discourse on the Twofold Entrance to the Tao and Four Acts of Mahayana.” In ancient times, there was no fixed term for Chan such as we have today. At present, as Chan training proceeds a thousand and more years after the setup of Chan School, all terms are fixed. In ancient times however Chan was also called “Tao”, or “Mind”, or the “general meaning of Dharma”, or the “meaning of coming to China”, or the “meaning of Bodhidharma’s coming to China”, and so forth. But the term “Tao”, which means Bodhi in Sanskrit, was more popular at the time. Bodhi was therefore translated into “Tao”, and then also “enlighten” or “enlightenment”.

Why was Bodhi translated into “Tao”? It was from the point of view that Bodhi could be practiced, confirmed, and

put into action, and could lead us on the Path to success. Bodhi was thus translated into “Tao”, meaning “the Path”. Chan training is also a path, a path leading to the great ocean of Buddhist training. Therefore, Chan is also Tao. Hence, the article was entitled the “Twofold Entrance to the Tao and Four Acts of Mahayana”. The four acts are actually included in the “Entrance by Conduct”. Though there were many ways to begin Chan training, Bodhidharma taught that there were, on the whole, no more than two: “Entrance by Reason” and “Entrance by Conduct”. He said in the article that: “There are many ways to enter the Tao. To sum up, however, there are no more than two: entrance by reason and entrance by conduct.” Perhaps we can appreciate this more if we consider that: “Entrance by Reason” is the main act to start with, whilst “Entrance by conduct” can be considered as the assisting acts. Both the former and latter are interdependent. Although the “Entrance by Reason” goes first while the “Entrance by Conduct” comes second, we are not to stress one to the neglect or exclusion of the other – whilst remembering, of course, that “Entrance by Reason” is the essence.

What does “Entrance by Reason” mean? Bodhidharma made it very clear what we should do first; we should come to a “realization of the essence of Buddhism by the aid of scriptural teachings”. This is what “Entrance by Reason” means. In this respect we can see that Bodhidharma himself also stressed the study of scriptural teachings. He said: “The Chan School never departs from the scriptural teachings.” He put the scriptural teachings in the first place, making it a

guide and gate for those taking up the training.

The scriptural teachings refer to what the Buddha taught in ancient times. What Bodhidharma emphasized was that through study of the scriptural teachings we would come to grasp the True Nature of the external world. This is the ultimate goal of the Chan School. He emphasized both the “realization of ultimate truth” and the “study of scriptural teachings” and that they are equally important. The scriptural teachings are no more than a collective symbol; they can be taken as a finger pointing towards the moon. The quick-witted sees the moon, whilst the slow-witted sees only the finger. Directly seeing the moon through use of the pointing finger, is what we call the “realization of the essence of Buddhism by the aid of scriptural teachings”. On the contrary, if one sees only the finger but not the moon, then “he becomes confused about the ultimate truth by the scriptural teachings.” That is why we call the scriptural teachings the finger that points to the moon, yet not the real thing, not the moon itself. For instance, someone is going to eat a meal; “going to eat” is just a symbol that allows him to know what is going on. If he does not actually do it, that is, gets food and eats it, his stomach is always empty. The more he keeps talking about food, the more he feels a desire for food. Regarding the scriptural teachings, we’d better not reject them or cling to them tightly. This is the correct stand to take in the study of scriptural teachings.

All the conflicts and problems in the world are dealt with according to an endless circle of concepts and reasoning and, hence, words. What kind of serious effects would one’s

words bring about in this case? What else could this or that mean? What effects would this or that have on me? Is it harmful to me, and so forth? From the worldly point of view, what one says can really bring about different effects because of his attachment to it. With attachment he is tossed back and forth amongst symbols, and his own self-nature disappears or is covered up.

Bodhidharma said: “If a man, abandoning the false and embracing the true, in singleness of thought, practices sitting facing a wall, he will find that there is neither self nor others, neither ordinary mortals nor sages, that the masses and the worthies are of one essence, and he will hold firmly on to this belief, never departing from it. He will not then be a slave to the scriptural teachings.” Regarding the “realization of the essence of Buddhism by the aid of scriptural teachings”, then, we’d better not take the teachings as the Absolute Existence. Although according to the teachings, “the Mind, the Buddha, and a living being are actually one”, we’d better not cling to this. Suppose we really cling to it and think that we are equivalent to a Buddha, we are actually incorrect. Though “the Mind, the Buddha, and a living being are actually one”, our Mind is always carried away or covered up by delusions and ignorance. Now, we are still unable to control our own Mind, instead submitting to the external world. We must therefore commit ourselves to the practice, which is a gradual process of getting rid of delusions and ignorance. If we can do accordingly, we will naturally “be in silent communion with the reason itself, free from conceptual discrimination, serene and not-acting.” This is called “Entrance by Reason”.

The “Entrance by Reason” we talk about here, in fact refers to what we must uphold as the critical point, the crucial undertaking in our practice from the perspective of Chan’s right intention and right action. This is the case both concerning the actual intention to practice in the first place, and to the aspects of right action concerning that practice once begun. In training, the critical point is to get hold of, and hold onto the core, the Absolute Existence, the source and the essence of that training. If we forget the central aim of our training and approach it in a roundabout way through a preoccupation with the accompanying acts, then we attend to trifles at the expense of the source or essence, which, indeed, is essential; that is, we would be putting the cart before the horse. When we practice Chan training, therefore, we have to look for the essence first, doing so, we will enter the Tao. Otherwise, without the essence, we would by no means find the gateway to enter.

I have previously talked about the “Entrance by Conduct” and the four acts, so there is no need to repeat this again here. Now that we have a certain understanding of Bodhidharma’s thought, we can see how the training methods and beliefs of the Chan School are rooted in such thought; that is, their very source can be traced back to the teachings of Bodhidharma. Perhaps it may seem that in his short article: “On the Twofold Entrance and the Four Acts”, he does not refer to Chan training in a literal manner, yet it is intimately related to the training itself. The article, therefore, can be used as a valuable entrance to the methods of training. Considered as such, it can be seen as a fundamental piece of training

literature within the Chan School.

Just now, I mentioned that what we have to pay attention to in regard to the “Entrance by Reason”, is the “realization of the essence of Buddhism by the aid of scriptural teachings. By doing so we will develop a deep faith in the True Nature of reality – a Nature that is the same in and for all sentient beings”. The reason why this fact does not reveal itself to us is because it is “covered up by worldly dust”. To see it we have to “free ourselves from delusions and realize our own self-nature”. The only way to attain this goal is through “wall-gazing”, a method that makes our Mind like a wall, preventing us from being affected by the dust. The dust that casts its shadow over everything is no more than the concept of “I” and “others”, of “right” and “wrong” etc. How do we practice “wall-gazing”? The basic requirement is that we find out for ourselves that “there is neither self nor others, neither ordinary mortals nor sages, that the masses and the worthies are of one essence. We hold firmly on to this belief and never depart from it, never be a slave to the scriptural teachings.” This is what “wall-gazing” means.

Regarding the “Entrance by Conduct”, it is required practice in Chan training and in all other Buddhist trainings. It may seem that they are assisting acts playing a secondary function, nevertheless, we must pay attention to them. We may put it this way: the four acts in the “Entrance by Conduct” are involved in all Buddhist trainings; they may seem very simple, but do in fact have profound meaning, as can be seen once we have a deep understanding of them, once we discern their all-embracing vision.

All Buddhist trainings, including Chan training, are aimed at adjusting the state of our Mind. The reason why we do not have our Mind balanced, why we are not peaceful and unable to act freely, is because we have a discriminating, separated Mind, we draw a clear distinction between right and wrong, and we care about what we gain and what we lose. All these things are a massive psychological hindrance to successful Chan training. In fact, they have nothing at all to do with our true nature, but represent the worldly dust or anxieties that adhere to our Mind; hence referred to as “worldly dust”. If we consider our natural serene state of Mind as the host, then the dust and anxieties would be the guests. For practitioners or those who seek after truth or hope to acquire wisdom, it is essential to get rid of all this dust and anxiety, clearing it thoroughly and permanently away; without first doing so, it is virtually impossible to find a way to begin the practice, to acquire wisdom, to seek for truth, or to reveal our own Buddha-nature.

The dust and anxieties adhering to our Mind are endless yet, on the whole, no more than the three listed in the Bodhidharma’s article: bitterness, joyfulness, and the desire for material comforts, all of which are the very roots of our faults and defects. The ways by which we can deal with such dust and anxieties, however, are also endless. We say that of all the various anxieties that sentient beings have there are, in total, eighty four thousand. In Buddhism there are also the same number of ways or gates to receive and guide them; these are encompassed within the Six Paramitas. Taken together, the “Six Paramitas” means great wisdom to “reach

the opposite shore” or “the opposite shore is reached”, or simply “perfections”. They are six boats that take us across or that we need to reach the other shore from this shore. The “Six Paramitas”, we all know, are: “giving, keeping precepts, patience, effort, meditation, and wisdom.” The six ways, like six boats, can carry us from this shore of anxieties to the other shore of purity. Now, I hope that no lay Buddhist will mistakenly believe that these shores are separated by a great distance, for, actually, they are both in fact in the same space, at the same point. All masters understand what I am talking about; hopefully all lay Buddhists will be able to do the same.

There exists a sea of sufferings stretching from this shore to the other that we need to cross. What is this sea of sufferings? It is our ignorance, anxieties and attachments. In dealing with those sufferings, whether it is difficult or not depends on what we think about it. The Sixth Patriarch Hui Neng (638-713) said: “A foolish passing thought makes one an ordinary man, while an enlightened second thought makes him a Buddha.” How easy it is! Simply done in a moment, in a move of turning the palm up and down. I hope we may come to the ultimate truth of this path, which is that the other shore is actually at this shore, the blissful world is in this world, paradise is on the Earth, and that there is not the slightest distance between the Buddha and a sentient being. As our Mind in its original nature naturally contains the tenfold Dharma, we could become enlightened in an instant, then enlighten others, and finally reach the state of perfection. If we could do this in an instant we would come directly to

the state of Buddhahood. If we have a thought that brings about self-benefit and also benefits others, even though we have not put it into action or executed it to the best of our ability, we nevertheless directly come to the state of Bodhisattva. If we could be mindful and get rid of all anxieties and attachments in a moment, we would directly come to the state of Sravaka or Pratyeka-Buddha. On the contrary, being unable to step back from the flames of greed, hatred and delusion we would be led to the state of hell, hungry ghosts, or animals. All of these exist in a moment, hence this is called the “Mind naturally contains the tenfold Dharma.”

Today, I have only given a brief account of the four formulae Bodhidharma taught in order to guide us to the Tao. Let me repeat them once more: “Facing a wall is the way to pacify the Mind; the four acts are ways to behave oneself; not to cause doubt in the mind of others is the way to be congenial to them; and to advise practitioners to be free from all attachments is the way to act naturally.”

Now, if you have any comments or questions, please write them on a piece of paper and pass it on to me. It is my hope that I will not be able to satisfy you with my answers, which will show that you have reached a higher level than I have. In that case, the future of Buddhism is promising.

One lay Buddhist recalls that he once read the following statement in an article: “Those who are rational often find it difficult to feel the internal energy and have a happy and blissful experience, they can barely endure the practice, let alone see it to successful fruition. Those who are willful

often get bigoted and nervous so it is very difficult for them to feel joyful and free. Those who are very sensitive usually lack self-control, it is very difficult for them to feel at peace; instead, they may come to manifest harmful states of Mind. Those who feel peaceful and blissful usually achieve a little of success, yet they hardly get anything done in the interests of others.” It is true that the four mentioned cases all have something to do with attachments. In Buddhist teachings, it is essential to get rid of attachments. If one clings to anything he will get bigoted, or even depart from the Absolute Reality. Well, the article he read was probably not written by a Buddhist practitioner or a master proclaiming the teachings. From the perspective of Qi Gong (the Chinese way of cultivating the body’s internal energy), one might encounter the same problems. The objective of self-training is to free oneself from attachments. The entire process covers a series of actions performed in order to break up such attachments. Firstly, there is the attachment to “I”, then the attachment to the “Dharma”, and finally the attachment to the breaking up of attachments, to all that one can detach from and all that one could or has detached from. This is called the threefold emptiness. Were we to train accordingly, we would eventually free ourselves from the ego and the Dharma, and lastly from the wisdom that makes such freedom possible. What does all this mean? It means do not cling to anything.

Another lay Buddhist said that, when he practices sitting meditation, it is easier to make him peaceful in a temple, but difficult at home because of the change of environment. “Temple” in Chinese is also called “Bodhimandala”, a word

somewhat coincidentally similar to the present scientific term, the field of Dharma. Nowadays, there is a term “the magnetic field”, isn’t there? That is, the field of magnetism. This temple, a place where people come with a compassionate Mind, a Mind that seeks for the ultimate truth, and a place where such consciousness is likely to be concentrated, is a field of Dharma. What is consciousness? It is called Avijnapti-rupa, the “non-revealing”. Consciousness is a kind of invisible energy in the sphere of Rupadharma (the phenomenal world). It is this same consciousness that animates our faith and resolution to keep the precepts. It is also a non-revealing energy. If one truly has such faith and resolution, he will then hold on to it, never departing from the precepts because he is always charged by a powerful will. The Temple, or Bodhimandala, we say, is the field of the Dharma where the Sangha and practitioners carry on self-training, become enlightened, and affirm the truth. Among temples, the Yufo (Jade Buddha) temple – built some one hundred and twenty years ago, is perhaps the most recent. But if a man were to live that length of time, it would be quite something. Suppose a temple was one thousand two hundred years old, the power of its field would be enormous. Suppose more and more practitioners came to practice at the Yufo temple, though not as old, the power of the field in the temple would definitely increase and strengthen. At the time of Shakyamuni, the Astanga Samanvagatopavasa (the eightfold precept observed by lay Buddhists) was made. On fixed days lay Buddhists should come to the temple. Why? On the one hand, staying in a temple for the period of one

day and one night a person can experience what temple life is really like; on the other, he will find himself serene and peaceful, open and free, fearless and without anxiety. By practicing in a temple for one day, therefore, it is possible to get much more done than one would practicing at home for a whole year.

Dao Xin's Gate

Today, I am going to talk about the “Gate of Great Master Dao Xin”. We all know that Master Dao Xin, who lived from approximately 580 to 651, was the Fourth Patriarch of the Chan (Zen) School in China. He played a very important role, a key role, in the history of the Chan tradition. Why do I say this? It’s because having received the traditional legacy and various ways of Chan training, he then skillfully, pragmatically and insightfully sought to marry these to the conditions prevailing at that time. He was, then, a leading figure who inherited the past and ushered in the future. On the one hand, he inherited the traditional way of affirming the enlightened Mind by a master as described in the “Lankavatara Sutra” – a method that had been used since the time of Bodhidharma. On the other hand, he opened up a new way of training, “Ekavyuda-Samadhi” - Samadhi of Specific Mode, (The term Samadhi is used instead hereafter), as described in the “Discourse on the Prajnaparamita Sutra by Bodhisattva Manjusri”. What he did had a direct impact on the later development of the Fifth Patriarch Hong Ren’s (602 - 675) “Dongshan School”, and the Sixth Patriarch Hui Neng’s (638 - 713) “Caoxi Sudden School”. Today, the unique characteristics of his training are still very much in evidence.

During the whole process of self-training we have always to bear in mind the crucial importance of three things: insight, ability (the ability one obtains through dedicated practice), and the way of practice. Whatever training techniques we adopt in practice, these three things are what we have to deal with first, or what we truly have to work on. If we do not have clear insight, we will probably practice blindly. If we do not really maintain and develop ability, we will never reach our goal, even though our insight is as bright as it is. If we have both insight and ability yet train incorrectly, we will never achieve success. These three points, therefore, are what we as practitioners must pay close attention to. They are to be thought highly of and always to be borne in mind.

Yesterday, I gave a brief account of Bodhidharma's Gate, the "Twofold Entrance to the Tao and the Four Acts". The "Entrance by Reason" refers to insight while the "Entrance by Conduct" to ability. The "four acts" are basically involved with ability. The "Entrance by Reason" or "insight", in terms of the contemporary Chinese language, is more or less the same as a strategic plan. The "Entrance by Conduct" or "ability" then, is the tactical plan, the concrete outline or procedure. They could also be taken as theory and practice: the "Entrance by Reason" or "insight", as the theory, the world outlook, while the "Entrance by Conduct" or "ability", as the practice. Today, I am going to talk about what Master Dao Xin taught in light of the following three points: what is ability? What is insight? And, what is the way of practice?

As I mentioned just now, Dao Xin was a learned master. If I come to discuss his achievements and insights one by one, I

risk departing from the essence of his thought, and making today's talk somewhat insipid. Regarding Master Dao Xin's way of training, all of you are perhaps familiar with it or you may feel a little surprised when you hear what he advocated. Why? Because what Master Dao Xin proclaimed was the "Nian Fo (chanting the name of Buddha) Chan", or "Samadhi" as mentioned in the "Discourse on the Prajnaparamita Sutra by Bodhisattva Manjusri". "Samadhi" is in fact the "Nian Fo Chan".

The "Nian Fo Chan" Master Dao Xin advocated differs from that currently applied in the training of the Pure-Land School. It differs in that the Pure-Land School has made a definite choice to chant the name of Amitabha. During practice, practitioners have a clear objective in mind: chant the name of Amitabha and bring him back into the Mind in case attention is diverted. Then, conditions being right, practitioners would surely see him and, hence, be transported to the western blissful Pure Land. This is the very objective the Pure-Land training aims at nowadays. Regarding Master Dao Xin's "Nian Fo Chan", it was up to practitioners to make their own choice as to whether they chanted the name of Shakyamuni, Amitabha, Bhaisajyaguru, Aksobhya, or Susiddhikara - each considered equally beneficial.

On what basis did Master Dao Xin set up the "Nian Fo Chan"? In the firstly place, it derived from the "Lankavatara Sutra". This sutra begins with a chapter entitled "All Buddha's words are related to the Mind." The understanding of those words by Chan practitioners in the past differed from the way we understand them today.

Originally, “All Buddha’s words are related to the Mind” was the title of the first chapter; but Chan practitioners interpreted those words this way: “The Mind of all Buddhas comes first.” The first chapter then suggested that the Buddha’s Mind or the Mind of all Buddhas comes first. This is the principle of Nian Fo Chan set up by the “Lankavatara Sutra”, that the Mind of all Buddhas comes first. The Mind of all Buddhas is the Mind of all sentient beings and vice versa.

Secondly, it derives from of the “Pancavimsati Sahasrika Prajnaparamita Sutra” as explained by Bodhisattva Manjusri - generally called the “Discourse on the Prajnaparamita Sutra by Bodhisattva Manjusri”. This sutra mainly expounds the idea of Samadhi. What does Samadhi mean? Samadhi is also called meditation, or right mindfulness, or maintenance. Maintenance means keeping meditation and wisdom alive and in parallel, that is, simultaneously. Samadhi, therefore, is not simply meditation itself, it should be based on wisdom or guided by wisdom. There should be a balanced state between meditation and wisdom. Generally, when we speak highly of somebody for having done something perfectly, we say that he or she has truly got the Samadhi of it. This is an extended meaning of the term Samadhi which, nevertheless, suggests the vital importance it plays. What did Bodhisattva Manjusri say about Samadhi in his discourse? He said: “The Mind that thinks of a Buddha is a Buddha.” The moment the Mind chants the name of a Buddha is the moment the Mind is one with the Buddha or, expressed another way, the moment the Mind chants the name of a Buddha is the moment this Mind becomes fully a part of the Buddha. When we are carried

away by delusions, we are ordinary people. Why do we say that the Mind that chants the name of a Buddha is a Buddha? Because it is an enlightened Mind that always thinks of the Buddha. Delusions, on the contrary, come out of an ordinary Mind.

The basic requirement of “Samadhi” is that we should understand and believe that the Mind that chants the name of a Buddha is a Buddha. Under such a condition the “Mind chants only the name of a Buddha and keeps going without intermission.” This is similar to the training method or technique used in the Pure-Land School - the only difference being that Samadhi training has no fixed Buddha, whilst the Pure-Land School specifically chooses to chant Amitabha. In practice, we have to sit erect “facing towards or in the direction of the Buddha, thinking only of the Buddha whilst continuously chanting the name of the Buddha in silence.” We do this in accordance with what is written in the work “Maha-Sthama-Prapta’s Attainment of Buddhahood through Chanting the Name of a Buddha”. It says: “Let the six sense organs quiet down, and bring concentration to continuously bear upon a single Buddha.” When we choose a Buddha, we also know where that Buddha lives or in which direction that Buddha’s world is. For instance, we silently chant the name of Amitabha, the Buddha of the blissful western Pure Land. We have to sit erect, face the west, and bring all our concentration to bear on Amitabha, repeating the name of Amitabha to the exclusion of all else. During this process we will see all Buddhas in the past, present, and future. This is what Samadhi basically requires in practice.

At the time of practicing the Nian Fo Chan, there are also steps we have to follow. For instance, if we want to practice Samadhi or the Nian Fo Chan, the first point is that we should “sit erect and think only of the Absolute Existence”. What does this entail? It means that we have to begin by purifying our body and Mind. This is achieved through repenting of our past transgressions and defective behaviors – including those of our past lives, so as to strive and commit ourselves to the attainment of Buddhahood. This instruction comes from the “Samantabhadra Sutra”. The Fourth Patriarch Dao Xin, used this message to instruct us as to the fundamental importance of such prior cleanliness, for one can only reach the state of the Buddha with a truly purified body and Mind. The exact words of the sutra are as follows: “The karmic hindrances produced by various states of delusion, are endless. Those who really want to repent have to sit erect and think only of the Absolute Existence.” “To think only of the Absolute Existence” refers to the insight of emptiness in relation to all dharmas, that is, “penetrating all dharmas, we see that they are subject to the law of dependent origination and are thus empty in nature.” If we could really have such a deep insight, we would be able to purify our body and Mind right down to the very core. As long as we see through the dependent origination and emptiness of the phenomenal world we can understand what Absolute Existence is. We can destroy our attachments once and for all, never again becoming confused or acting inappropriately.

Now, I want to say a few words about the “emptiness” of all dharmas. All dharmas are right here exactly as they are.

Why then does Buddhism use the term “emptiness” to describe them? This is a point that people easily misunderstand. On what basis does Buddhism assert the “emptiness of all dharmas”? Simply, all dharmas are created by causes and exist interdependently. These causes are conditions under which all dharmas come into being. Based on this point of view, let us imagine whether there is anything that could exist, come about, and grow without conditions? No matter how big or small something may be, there is nothing in the universe that exists without conditions. As all dharmas are conditioned by one another, they are thus at their own place and never get disordered. This is called “As the dharmas are in their own place, the world is always as it is.” Since all dharmas exist interdependently, they are just transitory and insubstantial because of ever changing conditions. From this viewpoint, all dharmas are conditioned entities, existing when necessary conditions come together. They are therefore empty in nature, hence the notion of emptiness. It does not mean the sheer nothingness of a substance, but the emptiness of an actual entity. Well then, does substance have form? Yes, it does, but this is just the temporary condition; an actual entity does not have some kind of mysterious and separate something extra. When we study the Buddhist teachings, we have to thoroughly understand such fundamental principles as these – emptiness and matter, Ultimate Reality and form (for instance: water is the Ultimate Reality while wave is the form), existence and non-existence. It takes both a very long time, and continuous effort, to truly grasp the insight that everything exists

conditionally or without conditions nothing exists. Having grasped this we would then gradually come to understand what Buddhism really means when it talks about the principles of “clinging to the Ego and the Dharma”, “emptiness of oneself and the Dharma”, and “dependent origination and emptiness in nature”. It is impossible to grasp the spirit and quintessence of Buddhism if we do not make clear what the notion of emptiness really means.

Buddhism is a highly meaningful religion, because it transcends the false appearance of the phenomenal world and sees through to Absolute Existence or Ultimate Reality. With such transcendence we are “beyond this world”, while without it we are “in this world”. I mentioned yesterday that the world on this shore and that on the opposite shore are not two, but at the same point. If we see through to the Absolute Existence of a certain thing, we are beyond this world; if not we are in this world. If we do not see through to the Absolute Existence of a certain thing we are under delusions; if we do we are in Bodhi. This is called “We might be beyond this world while we are still in this world.” Yes, we could do this because this shore and that shore are one.

The words, “sitting erect and thinking only of Absolute Existence”, ask us to understand that all karmic hindrances are produced by delusions, while delusions are also submitted to various conditions, and to the Law of Dependent Origination. If we see through the dependent arising and emptiness of delusions and break up attachments, all karmic hindrances will melt away at once like an ice mountain under the scorching sun. This is why we say: “We repent of our

Mind because it is where a sin is committed. At the time when the Mind does not exist the sin does not exist. They are thereby both in the state of emptiness. This is true repentance.”

When we practice meditation (Samadhi), we have to sit erect and think only of Absolute Existence. This is the first requirement. The second point is based on the words of the “Pancavimsati Sahasrika Prajnaparamita Sutra”. Here we are told that: “Being unconcerned about anything in practice means truly praying to a Buddha.” That is, “The Mind that chants the name of a Buddha thinks of nothing.” This is a higher-level practice. To do exactly according to this message, we have to get beyond our personal gains or losses, or think of nothing when we chant the name of a Buddha. This is just as I mentioned yesterday, that when we pray we “Do care about what we sow, but not what we reap.” This is, “Being unconcerned about anything in practice means truly praying to a Buddha.” When we chant the name of a Buddha, we have to rid ourselves of thoughts as to what we may or may not gain. This is what the message really means. The moment we chant the name of a Buddha, our Mind directly comes to the state of the Buddha. What else need we seek for then? Nothing else. The Buddhist classics say: “There is no Buddha away from the Mind. There is no Mind away from the Buddha. To chant the name of a Buddha is to chant the Mind. To pray to the Mind is to pray to the Buddha.” If we do accordingly in our practice, we will naturally reach the state of Samadhi.

The third point is that we must not cling to anything when

practicing the Nian Fo Chan. What is the Mind that clings and that has certain attachments? It is the Mind that in meditating on and in praying to a Buddha hopes, for instance, to encounter that Buddha, or acquire paranormal powers. With such a Mind, we may indeed come to encounter the Buddha or develop paranormal powers, but only in an unreliable and unpredictable way. This is because such abilities might be either normal or abnormal. With such a Mind we leave ourselves vulnerable to manipulation, to an adverse encounter with certain external and invisible energies or forces. This kind of energy might be positive or negative, might be right or wrong, might be a Buddha or a devil. If we get out of control we give the devil a chance to come into our Mind. Hence the general thought that: In our practice we are misled by attachments. We'd better not cling to anything, instead let things go as they are, and always make it clear that, "to chant the name of a Buddha is to chant the Mind. To pray to the Mind is to pray to the Buddha." If we can fully understand these basic principles, we will stay away from negative or vicious things. This is the reason why we should not cling to external things, but treat them with an impartial Mind, not a separated or discriminating Mind. By doing so, we can avoid detours, or make such detours completely unnecessary.

The fourth point is that, at the time when we practice Samadhi, or the Nian Fo Chan, we should gradually put aside all notions concerning what the Mind may or may not be able to penetrate, or which Buddha the Mind ought to pray to and focus upon. That is, we should get rid of all ideas and

preconceptions as to what we can do and to whom. At the beginning, however, it is not possible to reach such a state directly. Therefore, at such times as our attention slips and the Mind wanders away on beguiling trains of thought and fantasy, it is necessary for us to concentrate the Mind by chanting the name of a Buddha. This whole process then, before we reach the stage of forgetting both self and Buddha, is a long and gradual one. It is only at such a time as we are able to put aside both the Mind that prays and the Buddha that the Mind prays to, whilst also putting aside all external conditions - including both positive and negative ones, that we will finally be free from all attachments and become one with the Buddha. The four points mentioned above, are what Master Dao Xin taught us to do in relation to the practice of Samadhi or Nian Fo Chan.

Based on the teachings of the “Sutra on the Sixteen Contemplations”, Master Dao Xin expounded the relation between the Mind and a Buddha in a direct way; a way that breaks down all barriers of separation and allows us to reach a transcendental state equal to a Buddha. It is called: “The Mind is a Buddha; it is this Mind that functions as a Buddha.” If we were to be fully aware of this point and have a clear understanding of the message that, “Mind is the source from which all thoughts flow”, our Mind would become enlightened by innumerable dharmas. We would truly reach the state described as: “The Mind, the Buddha, and a living being are one” - the state of Samadhi. This is the highest degree of attainment in the Nian Fo Chan practice. Only at that time can we directly know that the Buddha is the

Mind, that there is no other Buddha apart from the Mind, and that both the Mind and Buddha are one. At such a time we would experience exactly the same state as that reached and attained by the Buddha.

There are five conditions required in order to reach the state mentioned above. What are these five? First, we have to be aware what the Mind is. To see into our own Mind is a matter of insight. Our Mind is originally pure in nature and contains everything we need; the essence and seed of Buddhahood is already present. This is the inherent nature of the Mind. If we were to look for another Buddha, away from this inherent nature of the Mind, we would never achieve success.

Second, we have to know how the Mind functions, how it functions through our body. What is the Mind's function? It is a special kind of function that operates whilst remaining quiet and still. If the Mind were to become excited when it functions, it would be carried away by delusion, and would never be peaceful and mindful. It is only when the Mind remains quiet and still in its functioning that it can transform delusion into true Buddha-nature, and turn anxiety into Bodhi.

Third, we have to be mindful all the time, that is, to keep an enlightened and mindful state of Mind without intermission. What is the Dharma-dhatu taught by the Buddha? It is the Absolute Existence of the phenomenal world. If we make clear what the Absolute Existence is, our Mind will be in accord with it. We will thereby be able to maintain the state of mindfulness at all times.

Fourth, we should not attach ourselves to anything, that is, we should free ourselves from the idea of “a self, an entity, a living being, or a person”. This implies the inherent emptiness of existence and of our own being. Only then can we hold on to the state of peacefulness, free from all attachment and delusion.

Fifth, we must be single-minded. This is an issue concerning training method and technique. That is, our concentration ought to be brought to bear on a single object to the exclusion of all else. Once attention slips it is impossible to reach the state of Samadhi, the state of single-mindedness. On the contrary, once we lay all personal problems and preoccupations aside, whether in action or stillness, we are more easily brought to see our own Buddha-nature, or into the state of Samadhi. Regarding this point, I am going to talk about it in a bit more detail when I come to the way of training later on. For now, that is all I have to say about the ability Master Dao Xin proclaimed in relation to the Nian Fo Chan. Essentially, it guides practitioners in the single-minded chanting of a Buddha’s name so as to reach the state of Samadhi.

Now, let us come to another issue. What is the insight that Master Dao Xin proclaimed in respect to the Nian Fo Chan? The major principle of Nian Fo Chan that Master Dao Xin laid down can be explained in one phrase: “All dharmas come out of the Mind”. Master Dao Xin described the Mind using a metaphor: the Mind does not refer to the heart yet it never breaks away from or separates itself from the heart. This is the state of our Mind. It is not the heart but does not

leave the heart. It is neither something inside nor outside, nor something in between. For what purpose, however, did Master Dao Xin stress this message that “all dharmas come out of the Mind”? The reason is that it allows us to concentrate on a single point in our practice, so that we can easily reach the state of Samadhi, the state of Chan meditation.

At the time when Master Dao Xin was guiding Niutou Farong (594 – 657), he expressed an insight that was both deep and extremely precious. Niutou Farong was another chief disciple of Master Dao Xin besides the Fifth Patriarch Hong Ren (602 - 675). That is, Master Dao Xin had actually transmitted down both the Chan School and the Niutou School. The Niutou School was handed down over many generations, and the school produced several historically renowned masters. The insightful statement Master Dao Xin delivered to Niutou Farong is as follows: “ The hundreds of gates to the Tao all come from the Mind. Excellent merits, as many as the countless grains of sand, all derive from the Mind. The gates of precept, meditation, and wisdom, varied as they are, are all to be found occurring naturally in our Mind; they are never separate or apart from our Mind.” This is a matter of insight. We should be capable of such an insight, that we have everything we need as part of our nature, yet being covered up by delusions it does not reveal itself. Without such an insight all our efforts in self-training are wasted. This is just like unearthing buried treasure. First though, we have to make clear where it is buried, only then can we start the digging. Otherwise, digging in the wrong

place, we would find nothing. It would be a waste of time wouldn't it? We must, therefore, fully understand the message that "the hundreds of gates to the Tao all come from the Mind". The hundreds of gates are not apart or separate from the Mind; there is no Buddha away from, apart or separate from the Mind or, again, there is no Mind away or distinct from the Buddha. That is, the Mind is a Buddha; it is this Mind that functions as a Buddha. Excellent merits, including the thirty-two phases, eighty good deeds, ten powers, and four fearlessnesses, all derive from the Mind, never being away from or other than the Mind. In our self-training we begin by practicing the precepts, meditation, and wisdom, which are all various gates to the Tao. We were born with all those merits and all that wisdom as part of our Mind; it is our natural and inherent state.

Though we are naturally endowed with all these excellences, yet still we live our everyday lives full of frustration, conflict, and suffering. We have to address all these problems before we can become truly enlightened, no matter whether we are a Bhikkhu (monk), Bhikkhuni (nun) or a lay Buddhist. Because in such a ceaselessly shifting phenomenal world of appearances we have so little say, we cannot but help continuing to live according to the dictates of this surface play of phenomena. In order to break free from all this frustration, conflict, and suffering, we must practice self-training. Otherwise, we will never achieve release. Master Dao Xin taught us to "not look at the phenomenal world with a separated Mind; then suchness will reveal itself". As all thoughts issue from the Mind, what should we

do when faced with conflicts and frustrations? We must break down all sense of separation and come to see through to the Absolute Existence of the phenomenal world. This is how the phenomenal world is before conceptual thoughts begin to reify and organize it. This is what Tathagata (suchness) is. Frustrations and anxieties, thereby, derive from nowhere other than our separated, discriminating Mind.

Now, let us come to an account of what the phenomenal world really is. It is not what we think it is as a concrete event. Our perception of the world as constituted by our collection of thoughts and memories is distorted. Those thoughts and memories are just transitory and insubstantial. We feel anxious everyday, however, it is not the external world but, rather, our Mind that makes us think like this. For instance, if the fact is that everybody is friendly towards you, it is you yourself that confusedly and mistakenly think that someone is ignoring or turning aside from you, because, so it seems, he thinks ill of you. All those thoughts come out of your own Mind, the separated Mind. Each of us, no matter whether young or old, has to think it over. It is our Mind that makes us unhappy.

Master Dao Xin said that the external things are “environmental conditions”, they are neither good nor bad. What is the good or bad? Something good or bad comes out of our Mind, the separated Mind. In my first lecture I told you two stories, one about Master Zi Bai (1543 – 1603) reading in the evening, and the other about Master Yuan Xiao and his followers traveling to a lonely place. Those characters reacted quite differently due to having or not

having a separated Mind. “If the Mind does not willfully name external things, where could delusions come from?” In fact, our Mind always does name external things: good or bad, yellow or white, fat or thin, this person or that person. Amongst all these false names, we are swept away by delusions. Suppose we do not name them, constitute them, or make them nominal, where then would delusions come from? We are, therefore, doing something harmful to ourselves.

The phenomenal world, comprised of words, signs, and concepts, makes us confused. Buddhism calls it a world of name and form. Name and form are no more than concepts. Therefore we do not live our everyday lives in a real world, but in a world of concepts. Within the last few years there was a popular song called “Keep going by personal feeling”. However, we can’t. Instead we are propelled along by a series of concepts and are unable, therefore, to keep going according to our feeling. Feeling is direct first-hand experience, yet we often keep going by something indirect. That is, we are not led by the true nature of things but by the name and form we have given to them, by concepts we have kept in mind about them. In the Buddhist teachings, we are invited to perceive the Law of Dependent Origination. “Those who have truly understood the Law of Dependent Origination see the Dharma; those who have seen the Dharma see the Buddha.” What does it mean? It means that when we awake to the Law we see the true nature of a certain thing and truly encounter that thing. For instance, now I close my eyes and touch something by hand. Without separation, it is just direct first-hand experience. Opening my eyes and

finding a microphone in hand, my mind becomes carried away by discrimination: how much does it cost? Can I take it back home when there is nobody around? This is the way we so frequently are, the way we so often relate to the world. We live in a world full of concepts, and subscribe blindly to the consensus view and never give it so much as a second thought. With such a distorted perception of the world how can we truly live our lives?

Suppose our Mind does not give the external things various names and forms, delusions would never bother us. “If delusions did not bother us the true nature of Mind would be there as it is.” The true nature of Mind then, like a mirror, would show us the true nature of things. This is mindfulness guided by wisdom, but not separation by conceptual thought. When we look at the world with such mindfulness, everything is marvelous and perfect. When we look at the world with a separated Mind or a self-centered Mind, everything is full of distress. One would think that someone is friendly to me while another is not; this thing is to my advantage whilst that thing is not. Thinking in this manner, living in this manner, he would be trapped in a very small self-centered circle. Not seeing through to the true nature of things, such a person looks at the world with a delusive Mind, not with “the true nature of Mind” being always there as it is.

Regarding the insight of Nian Fo Chan as taught by Master Dao Xin, the fundamental point is reflected in his saying: “The hundreds of gates to the Tao all come from the Mind. Excellent merits, as many as countless grains of sand, all derive from the Mind.” This is the key point emphasized by

Master Dao Xin.

Next, I am going to talk about the third aspect, the practical way of Nian Fo Chan, or the way to reach the state of Samadhi. The way of training Master Dao Xin proclaimed is “to be always single-minded”. This, I think, is not only the secret of self-training, but also the secret of running any business. Aiming at a certain target unswervingly and striving hard, is the only way to get business done or to bring projects to successful fruition. Where did this way of training originate? It was initiated by Master Shanhui Fuxi (497 – 569) in the Southern and Northern Dynasties (420 – 589) and inherited by Master Dao Xin. Master Dao Xin said that the training methods listed in the sutras were varied, but what Master Fuxi proclaimed was simply “being always single-minded” in the training. Master Fuxi was the finest talent during the reign of Emperor Wu of Liang. It is said he was the incarnation of Bodhisattva Maitreya. The Nirmanakaya (incarnation) of Bodhisattva Maitreya was Master Fuxi in the reign of Emperor Wu of Liang during the Northern and Southern Dynasties; and was Master Qici (? – 916) in the Five Dynasty period (684-705).

Master Fuxi said, “being always single-minded refers to looking at everything with a peaceful and purified Mind, wholeheartedly and unswervingly throughout both night and day. If the Mind is carried away by delusions, bring it back at once ‘by hand’. This is just like tying a piece of string or cord to a bird’s leg so as to prevent it from flying away whenever it wants. If we go on practicing in such a way day and night, our Mind naturally reaches the state of Samadhi” “A peaceful

and purified Mind” refers to the purified eyes (also called dharma-eyes) that can see and penetrate the emptiness of all dharmas. On the contrary, if we fail to see the essential emptiness of all dharmas, then we do not have a peaceful and purified Mind or purified eyes. “Looking at everything with a peaceful and purified Mind” refers to gazing at a certain thing with dharma-eyes one-pointedly. That is “being always single-minded”. There is a way of contemplation described in the “Sutra on the Sixteen Contemplations” that instructs us to imagine looking at the sun, contemplating the sun, and in our practice observing it from different angles both near and far. Based on this method, Master Dao Xin taught us to contemplate a hypothetical sun; in this way our Mind would gradually come to a single point. This training method begins with an external thing and ends without it; it begins from the point or perspective of something external and ends or leads to the state of one-pointedness. Chanting the name of a Buddha, wholeheartedly without intermission, is the same as gazing at a certain thing with the Mind. “Keep going wholeheartedly and unswervingly day and night” means we have to go on practicing day and night without intermission, be single-minded and unshakeable, and make every conscious effort to achieve success. This is the basic requirement. What should we do if the Mind becomes disturbed? “If the Mind is carried away, get it back at once ‘by hand’.” At such a time as our Mind becomes carried away by delusions, what should we do? Master Fuxi said, in a figurative way, that we should stretch out immediately to get it back. If a delusive thought comes to Mind, it is okay so

long as we are not carried away by that thought. However, if we are, we must immediately get the Mind back. Here, Master Fuxi used a metaphor: “This is just like tying a piece of string or cord to a bird’s leg so as to prevent it from flying away whenever it wants.” Being tied to the spot with string, how could the bird fly away? As soon as the bird wants to fly away, the string will stop it. The bird metaphorically expresses the Mind, the string the very thought and process of chanting the name of a Buddha. As our attention slips we get it back by chanting, by actively concentrating on that chanting. “If we go on practicing in such a way day and night, our Mind naturally reaches the state of Samadhi.” By continuously practicing in this way everyday, wholeheartedly and unswervingly, we would be able to cut through all delusions and discover the land of clarity and peace. When delusions are stopped, our Mind is naturally in the state of meditation. At this stage of “single-mindedness”, of course, the Mind still works consciously, not unconsciously. The perspectives of subjective and objective still exist for us. At the beginning of our practice, we have to set out with an awareness of what we can do and what can be done in our Mind. By and by, we forget both these dualistic perspectives. At this final stage we truly reach the state of Samadhi.

“To be always single-minded”, I think, has been applied to various ways of training up until now. It is a continuance of the Chan training taught by Master Fuxi and is, in fact, the fundamental approach of all trainings. Generally speaking then, this way of training is called “single-mindedness” in Chan practice. When we practice, concentration is brought to

bear on a single object to the exclusion of all else. This way of training is the defining aspect of traditional Chan practice.

So far I have talked about ability, insight, and the way of training pertaining to Master Dao Xin's gate with respect to three main points: "the Ekavyuda-Samadhi", "All dharmas come out of the Mind", and "to be always single-minded". Now, I want to make a brief account of Master Dao Xin.

Master Dao Xin became a novice at the age of seven, and was guided by the Third Patriarch Seng Can (? – 606) from the age of twelve to twenty four. During those twelve years, he devotedly carried out the way of training his master taught him. After that time his master went to live in seclusion on Luofu Mountain, Guangdong Province. Master Dao Xin then inherited the Dharma, but had not yet taken the final vows to be a Bhikkhu. This was similar to the situation of the Sixth Patriarch Hui Neng. Hui Neng, being a Dharma heir, lived in seclusion for fifteen years and then took the precepts of a Bhikkhu. In relation to ourselves the Dharma is inherently equal, pertaining to everybody, no matter whether a lay Buddhist or a Bhikkhu. If a lay Buddhist sees into his own Buddha-nature, he attains Buddhahood. The two cases above clearly express the great and equal spirit of Buddhadharma. Regarding the Dharma preaching, one should be a monk or Bhikkhu first and then he can preach the Buddhist teachings, because Shakyamuni himself proclaimed the Dharma as a Bhikkhu.

Master Dao Xin, in his thirties, finally settled down, residing on the Mount Shuangfeng in Huangmei. Master Dao Xin, on the one hand, established a way of training, on the

other hand, he also made a fundamental contribution towards the formation and development of the Chan School. He had actually first changed the traditional method of Dharma dissemination. Previously, masters often built a thatched cottage by a hillside or under a cliff and lived there. Master Dao Xin opened up a new way by building a large temple at the foot of Mount Shuangfeng. There, several hundred practitioners lived together in the temple for the purpose of Dharma dissemination. With the temple as a base, they practiced together for the first time. This brought about a favorable condition for the formation and development of a Sangha or a religious school. If practitioners lived separately, it was not easy to disseminate the Dharma, nor could they easily work together in any sort of joint effort or endeavor. This is the first point.

The second is that in the old days Huangmei was an economically very backward place. Even now it is not particularly prosperous. At that time, when several hundred people lived together, the problem of how to feed them became a critical issue. Ever since Buddhism moved from India to China, there had been a conflict between Confucianism and Buddhism concerning how best to feed the Sangha. Confucians felt strongly about this issue and often argued with Buddhists about the fact that monks neither produced what they ate nor what they wore. Those who have studied Buddhist history know that the critical debate revolved around the issue of self-sufficiency. In order to solve this problem, Master Dao Xin promoted the way of supporting themselves by their own hands. They ploughed

the fields and sowed seeds, maintaining the principle of “no work no food”. Thus, being able to live a self-sufficient life, they could continue with their practice.

By means of physical labor, Master Dao Xin found a solution to the basic living requirements of the Sangha. This was a revolutionary idea in Chinese Buddhist history, without which probably no Buddhism would exist today. Why do I say this? I think that without the innovative introduction of self-sufficient methods Buddhism would have completely come to an end. Certainly, it would not have stood up against the Huichang setback that occurred in the period of Emperor Wuzong (841 – 846), during the later Tang Dynasty (618 - 907). Buddhism survived only because Chan masters – wherever they resided, by the waters or in the forest. - did not rely on offerings but supported themselves by their own labor. It was Master Baizhang Huaihai (720 – 814) who solved this issue of basic livelihood by laying down the principle of: “A day without work is a day without food.” With the problem of basic needs solved, the number one hindrance to the growth of the Sangha had been removed. This issue is worthy of reconsideration at the present time. If we do not learn from the past, we may find ourselves confronted by difficulties. This is not an exaggerated statement, but a matter I myself often consider. Chan Buddhism in China still upholds that: “A day without work is a day without food” – this is one of the finest Buddhist traditions. The upholding of this principle became increasingly important and relevant after the founding of the New China in 1949. Through consistently putting this traditional idea into action, Buddhism has

managed to survive, and indeed grow day by day. It was by performing manual labor with hoes to plough the fields that the Sangha became self-supporting. In direct consequence the Buddhist robe, scriptures, and traditions were kept very much alive, and are thus reflected in today's Buddhism. Hence we clearly learned an important and serious lesson and gained valuable experience. It was only because of Master Dao Xin's principle of "no work no food" that Master Baizhang was later able to compile the rules and regulations that manifested the spirit of Buddhism; it was down to Master Dao Xin's example of "setting up of a temple and housing monks together" that Master Mazu Daoyi (709 – 788) later began building temples. In the history of Buddhism and that of the Chan School in China, these events: the building of temples by Master Mazu and the laying down of the rules and regulations by Master Baizhang, were extraordinarily great innovations. Without them, Buddhism would not be as it is today. What then allowed for those innovations to be realized at that time? They occurred in accordance with the changing conditions in China. China was an agricultural country that emphasized manual labor, a place where people seldom showed respect for those who begged for food. Those begging alms from door to door were considered no better or different from ordinary beggars; how could people show respect for such persons? People generally thought that it was only those who "could not perform manual labor and could not tell the five cereals one from the other" who begged for food. The local conditions and customs here in China were quite different from that in India. People in India respected

those who begged alms as truth-seekers, however, people in China would think such people unwilling to work, thinking: “As young as they are, why don’t they do any work, instead relying on begging for support?” It is very interesting. These innovations were made according to the cultural background and social system in China at that time. In retrospect we can see that it was the only way to innovate in order to firmly establish Buddhism in China.

That is why we say that Master Dao Xin’s work has contributed enormously to the setup and growth of the Chan School in China. The set of principles or ideals he put forward and laid-down, and the way of self-sufficiency he upheld, laid solid ideological, structural, and economic foundations for the further development of Buddhism thereafter. What he bequeathed then, can be seen as a vital inheritance to both the Fifth Patriarch Hong Ren and, later, to the Sixth Patriarch Hui Neng.

Yesterday, someone handed in a note asking the difference between the Chan School and the Pure-Land School. What is the Chan School? What is the Pure-Land School? The way of chanting the name of a Buddha is not necessarily connected only with the Pure-Land School. Regarding the “Nian Fo Chan”, chanting the name of a Buddha itself is a way of Chan training. As to what Chan is, I talked a lot about it in my first lecture the day before yesterday. The Buddha said in the “Saddharma Pundarika Sutra” (the Lotus Sutra) that: “The Buddha’s teachings spread all over Mahayana; they are what the Buddha himself has attained in person. To work hard on Samadhi (meditation) and Prajna (wisdom) at the

same time is the way by which the Buddha delivers all sentient beings.” I hope you will think these words over. What the Buddha attained in person was “working hard on Samadhi and Prajna at the same time”, which is, simultaneously the essence of Chan. The Sixth Patriarch Hui Neng made it very clear in the “Tan Sutra” what Chan is. It is that, “at the very moment we attain Samadhi, Prajna is therein; at the very moment we attain Prajna, Samadhi is therein.” This is called Chan. Regarding Mahayana, the Buddha’s basic teachings are focused on “working hard on Samadhi and Prajna simultaneously”. This is Chan, the ultimate truth of Dharma. In other words, Chan is the ultimate truth of Dharma. Samadhi and Prajna at one time; work hard on them; this is Chan.

What is the Pure-Land School? I hope all of you remember that the aim and objective of training in the Pure-Land School, or the Pure-Land sect, is to use all one has attained (such as Samadhi and wisdom etc.) for the purpose of repaying all sentient beings, so as to achieve rebirth in the Pure-Land of ultimate bliss. That is to say the faithful of the Pure-Land School are asked to serve all beings and finally to be reborn in the Pure-Land. If we think that chanting the name of Amitabha alone defines the Pure-Land School, whilst the Chan School is solely defined by the practice of meditation, then that is not correct. Whether or not the faithful wish to be reborn in the Pure-Land is the criterion to tell the Pure-Land School from the Chan School. In fact, in Pure-Land training meditation is also a must. At the time of going to the Pure-Land one has, firstly, to be in deep

Samadhi, otherwise he will not be reborn there. I hope that none of you mistakenly believe that the training of the Pure-Land School is very easy and direct. The ticket to the western blissful world comes at a high price; it requires a person to devote all his time and energy to the training in this lifetime. Without such effort he would not be able to get it. ‘Ticket’ is just a metaphor, referring to what one has attained in training. Without such a ticket the Pure-Land forever remains a distant land. Please do not think that chanting the name of Amitabha only belongs to the Pure-Land School, while sitting meditation belongs only to the Chan School. If someone practices sitting meditation and also vows to be reborn in the western Pure-Land, he is training according to the Pure-Land School. This is the way to tell the difference between the two schools.

Is it possible for a person to practice the two schools at the same time, as we say, “practicing the Chan and Pure-Land simultaneously”? Nowadays, quite a lot of people have such an idea. This idea is generally based on a mistake concerning the “Si Liao Jian” (“Four Criteria”) by Yongmin Yanshou (904 – 975), which has been continuously perpetuated ever since. Master Yongmin Yanshou lived in the Five Dynasties period (684 – 960), yet the “Si Liao Jian” came later during the Yuan Dynasty (1206 – 1368). We can see then that there is no temporal relation between the master and the book. In the book, it is said that: if one practices “both the Chan and Pure-Land Schools at the same time, one would be as bold and powerful as a tiger with horns.” I think this is why people mistakenly carry on the idea of “practicing the Chan

and Pure-Land simultaneously”.

Can the two trainings be put together in practice? Methodologically, they could be. For instance, someone practices “being always single-minded”, as taught by the Fourth Patriarch Dao Xin in his “Nian Fo Chan”, thereby gaining a greater understanding as to the insight of “all dharmas come out of the Mind” and, also, takes a vow to be reborn in the western Pure-Land. Such a person would then have changed Chan training into Pure-Land training. This is all right from a methodological perspective. However, the ultimate goals are not necessarily the same. The Chan and Pure-Land Schools aim at quite different endings, and these can’t be combined. The Chan School upholds that one has not necessarily to go to the western blissful world. In fact one can go wherever in the ten dimensional world he wishes. In the Chan School there was a master who took a vow to be reborn as another type of being, not a human being. We all know Master Yangshan Huiji (807 – 883) who initiated the Weiyang sect. He said once: “After I die I will go to the foot of the mountain and become a buffalo.” On hearing these words all those present were quite shocked. Why had Master Yangshan taken such a vow not to go to the western blissful world but, instead, wished to become a buffalo? I think you all know that when we speak highly of Shakyamuni, we praise him as: the “guide master of the three realms, the loving father of the four types of birth, the incarnation of the three species of beings, and the lord teacher of all human and heavenly beings.” The “incarnation of the three species of beings” means one can go wherever he

wishes. If one had the power to hold on to Samadhi, then even being reborn as hundreds of billions of different life forms, he would not get lost. If one does not have such power, then he'd better not carelessly make such a vow as to become a buffalo. Before one says such words, he has to be sure of himself. If not, better not say so. This is because of the fact that when one says such words, it means he takes a vow. When he is under a vow he has to live it, he must not break it.

From the viewpoint of Chan, the Mind and the Pure-Land are not two. If one could purify his own Mind, the Buddha-Land would also be purified. Therefore, there is no need to vow to go to the eastern or the western world. The Pure-Land is right here as it is. This is the viewpoint the Chan School takes. Generally, the faithful amongst the Pure-Land practitioners uphold that besides the Mind there is the Pure-Land, so they vow to go there. That is because they believe in the "Amitabha Sutra" which says clearly that there is a blissful world far to the west. Even though it is so, we could also think that the Buddha-Land – a land of billion upon billions of Buddhas, is not far away. Indeed, that it is right here and now as it is. This is what the Chan School upholds, but not the Pure-Land School. The two schools have advantages, respectively. They are equally reflective of the Buddha's teachings, and both are legitimate ways to help practitioners attain Buddhahood. They are both superbly crafted rafts able to deliver all sentient beings from this shore to the other shore. Therefore, one school has to speak highly, but not ill, of the other. I think this is the correct attitude for

Chan practitioners to maintain. It also should be the inclusive way of thinking to which all Buddhists practitioners subscribe.

Hui Neng's Gate

Today, I am going to talk about the “Sixth Patriarch Hui Neng’s Gate”. Each of us knows the Sixth Patriarch Hui Neng (638 – 713) is a seminal figure in the history of the Chan (Zen) School in China. He played a decisive role in the history of the Chan School, indeed, in the history of Chinese Buddhism as a whole. Without him Buddhist history would have developed along a different path. It was only because of him - a highly accomplished master - that the wisdom of Buddhism and of Buddhadharma, here in China, continued for the two thousand years up until the present day.

Before I come to Hui Neng’s gate, I want to say a few words about two important points. First there were three great masters in history who made tremendous contributions to Buddhism’s growth in China. For the development and transmission of a particular religion or culture from one locality to another, there must be a process of acclimatization and accommodation, that is, a period of integration. When Buddhism was introduced from India to China, Chinese Buddhists did not just simply copy or imitate all aspects of the Indian tradition. Had they done so Buddhism would not have taken root and grown in China. Instead, Buddhism came to root, blossom, and fruit in China only due to the innovative work of many great and talented masters who,

with both great pragmatism and insight, foresaw the need to renovate the new inheritance so as to be in harmony with the actual prevailing conditions. All over the world it is now known that China is the second homeland of Buddhism. On the contrary, Buddhism came to an end a thousand years ago in India, its relative absence is a surprising historical development. Although it is said that there is a current resurgence of Buddhism in India, it no longer plays an important role there. There are several Buddhist temples in India now, yet were rebuilt by Buddhists from other countries. In fact, many of the Buddhist communities in India today depend for their growth and continued existence upon support from outside the country. This is also somewhat interesting. Buddhism is, on the contrary, flourishing in other countries.

At the beginning when Buddhism was first introduced into China it encountered considerable difficulties. All the masters here today, having studied Chinese Buddhist history whilst attending the Buddhist Institute, will know that at first, Buddhism only grew very slowly. If someone delivered a sermon on any sutra or translated a thin scripture, his name would be written down in the historical records with capitalized letters. This suggests that things were not easy at first. This situation is simply not comparable to that of the present day. Why do I say so? At that time, Buddhism had just been introduced into China and, consequently, was very difficult for the Chinese people to accept. In today's scholarly words, Buddhism had been introduced into China as an alien culture, a culture at stark variance to the basic outlook of the

Chinese people. As such, it was not readily accepted by officialdom, the literati, or by the common people. In order to firmly transplant, successfully root and facilitate the growth of Buddhism in this alien soil, there needed to be a rigorous process of cultural acclimatization and assimilation. In other words, Buddhism originated in India; hence, in order for it to grow in China it needed to be given Chinese characteristics, otherwise the common people would not willingly accept it. The hard lessons learnt by Buddhism were well noted by other alien traditions, including such religions as Catholicism and Christianity. In consequence, these traditions subsequently sought to assimilate themselves and grow in China according to the dictates of her cultural environment.

After Buddhism's initial introduction to China, the following three to four hundred years proved to be its most difficult period. Dao An (312 or 314 – 385) was not only a master of great accomplishments in Chinese literature, but also a master who acquired a thorough understanding of Buddhist teachings through an all round study of them. Master Dao An lived in the period when Buddhism had been introduced into China for four or five hundred years and had accumulated rich experience. As such he and his followers made a valuable and lasting contribution to that experience.

In order for Buddhism to be successfully assimilated and integrated into Chinese culture it needed to be modified so as to be theoretically in tune with the dominant Confucian culture of the time. Otherwise it would not have been accepted. For instance there was a precept in relation to filial piety in Buddhism. It states that if a son entered the Buddhist

monastic order he would no longer pay formal visits to his parents. In leaving home to serve the Buddha, he had effectively annulled that relationship, including its commitments and obligations. Even ancestor worship was no longer required of him. That is to say, being a monk, his service would be to the Buddhist teachings; his filial duty would, therefore, be limited to his 'parents' in this life. Indeed, he would devote himself to and respect all sentient beings. That is: "All men are my fathers and all women my mothers" - an outlook of all-inclusive rather than limited piety. That filial piety to one's parents might fade out was unacceptable to most Chinese people. Hence, in this respect, a lot of modifications were made to the Buddhist scriptures at the time of their translation from the original Sanskrit, and also later on in line with Buddhism's continuing growth and development in China. In the "Brahamajala Sutra" the words "filial piety is the precept" were emphasized. As a result the words were acceptable to Confucians who thought that, stated in this manner, people would not defy their superiors or initiate a rebellion – for those who were not in accord with filial piety would surely do so. A conception the Chinese people had was that, in choosing an official for any high position that person had to be loyal to the sovereign. In other words, a loyal official had to be a true son. If one was not a true son he would not be a loyal official; and, without loyal officials the State would become unstable. Hence, in this respect, modifications were made to Buddhist doctrines in accordance with local traditions.

Regarding the issue of livelihood, modifications were also

made. At the beginning, when Buddhism was first introduced into China, monks begged for alms, yet nobody offered them food. They went about barefooted, yet the weather was too cold to do so. They wanted to live under trees, yet it was not safe and, again, the weather was simply too cold. All these points needed to be modified to some extent, otherwise monks could not go on living. Consequently, it was necessary to build houses and own a certain area of land on which to grow crops. These are the kind of practical modifications that the monks had to consider. We can see then that for Buddhism to grow in China modifications concerning livelihood were also necessary.

In respect to Buddhist rites, as these related to Buddhist teachings, rules and means of livelihood, again, Master Dao An innovatively adapted them by means of appropriate modifications. On the whole, Buddhism consists of two parts: doctrine and canon. What Master Dao An's innovations fostered in these two domains was a general acceptance of Buddhism by the people according to the Chinese customs of the time. In addition, Master Dao An also set up the initial rules of the Sangha, of Dharma dissemination, and of communal – temple - living. It was due to the vital and foundational work carried out by Master Dao An that Buddhism in China, now firmly rooted, could flourish and grow.

After Master Dao An there were several great masters. For instance, one of these – and a disciple of Master Dao An – was Master Lushan Huiyuan (334 – 416), a seminal figure of the Pure-Land School. In addition there were also other

learned masters. It is clear that Master Dao An played a crucial and pivotal role in Chinese Buddhist history. He not only embodied the experience of Chinese Buddhism's growth in the earlier preceding centuries, but also opened up new horizons for its continual development thereafter. Master Dao An is thus taken as the first milestone in the process of Buddhism's introduction, development and subsequent adaptive assimilation in China.

The second leading figure was, and is, the Sixth Patriarch Hui Neng. Under what kind of conditions did Master Hui Neng continue to further integrate Buddhism into Chinese culture? Master Hui Neng lived during a period when several Buddhist schools were set up one after another. Also, at that time the understanding and interpretation of Buddhist teachings and doctrines had developed to a fairly high and complex degree. In practice, education in terms of intellectual knowledge was emphasized in Southern China, whilst sitting meditation was emphasized in the North. In the eyes of Master Hui Neng, regarding both Buddhist study and practice at the time, there was still not a truly direct path, one that taught practitioners how to see into their own nature. There was another master, a contemporary of Master Hui Neng, named Yongjia Xuanjue (665 – 713). He was already a learned master of the Tiantai School, and had achieved much. Nevertheless, in order to seek an ultimately direct path to enlightenment, he journeyed from Zhejiang – a great distance, to seek Master Hui Neng's guidance. After the meeting Master Yongjia Xuanjue confessed the following: "I have been engaged in learning and studying the Buddhist classics

ever since I was young, and have delved deep into the Sutras and Sastras (classical Buddhist scriptures) searching for truth. And, although becoming endlessly ensnared and entangled in name and form, I continued unceasingly. I made myself bewildered; just like diving into the ocean and trying to count all the grains of sand there. This, I know, is not what the Buddha taught, and it is no surprise that I was rebuked, for what was the use of reckoning treasures that were not mine?” We see then, that in his early years of study he emphasized Buddhist doctrine alone, merely finding himself going around in circles, ensnared by concepts, name, and form. This was equivalent to trying to count all the grains of sand in the sea. Do you know how many grains of sand there are in the sea? There is simply no way to count. Even a handful of sand will take you several days to count, not to mention all the sand in the sea. It is impossible. After meeting Master Hui Neng, he felt that what he had previously learnt was not the true essence of Buddhism. He had not discovered a direct path to enlightenment. It was on the basis of such a background that the Sixth Patriarch Hui Neng set up the Sudden School in Southern China, after the Dharma transmission down to him by the Fifth Patriarch Hong Ren (602 - 675) at Huangmei.

“A direct pointing at the human Mind and the attainment of Buddhahood” is what the Sixth Patriarch Hui Neng taught in his Sudden School. He simplified all complicated doctrine and all over-elaborated canon, laying emphasis fully on self-training, enlightenment, and the understanding of one’s entire being. The “Tan Sutra” is what he left behind. For

Buddhists, it is truly a great treasure. In fact, it holds great appeal for Buddhists, the laity, scholars and ordinary monks alike. Even our late President Mao Zedong held it in high regard. When President Mao was alive, he always brought along a lot of books with him wherever he went. There were only two Buddhist classics among them, the “Diamond Sutra” and the “Tan Sutra”. Why did he take them with him? Thinking from a Marxist perspective, he considered that those two scriptures were imbued with dialectical and philosophical wisdom.

In formally establishing the Chan School, a new and broad road was opened up by the Sixth Patriarch Hui Neng for the further growth of Buddhism in China. With its simple, direct way of practice and plain living, with its correct attitude towards labor that, “a day without work is a day without food”, and with the natural and free manner in which monks conducted themselves, the Chan School flourished all over the country. Nearly all temples were changed into that of the Chan School. Such a tendency, like an invigorating and refreshing breeze, swept away the general inclination to stress merely intellect knowledge that prevailed at the time. With the encumbering weight of man-made complications blown away, doctrine was revitalized and Buddhism took a great stride forward.

Also of great benefit to Buddhism was the fact that, throughout the Sui (581 – 618) and Tang (618 – 907) Dynasties, the State thought highly of it. With support given by the State, and offerings by people from all walks of life, each temple was able to acquire and maintain its own

farmland. So, at that time monks lived a better life than before. This period of growth and abundance, as is often the case, produced two opposite and incongruous outcomes. First, full use of this material wealth was made available for the further growth and deep-rooted integration of Buddhism into the Chinese cultural soil. Also, under these favorable conditions practitioners were able to reap the benefits of improved self-training. Secondly and in addition however, this level of material prosperity caused masters and monks alike to forget who they were, and what their mission was. In other words they no longer considered where the money came from, and no longer bore in mind the necessity to be weary of its potentially corrupting and evil influence. Hence they did indeed become corrupt. In the Tang Dynasty, particularly in the period before Emperor Wu Zong (841 – 846), corrupt practices were widespread - even though, of course, there were masters and monks who preserved their purity and integrity. This led to the great calamity to befall Buddhism, an event known historically as the “Huichang Setback”. In actual fact it only lasted for seven days; but within that short period of time all the monasteries and temples in the country were destroyed – despite the transportation facilities and, hence, means of communication being extremely poor. In fact, without broadcast stations, newspapers, and computer networks – as we have now, communication was completely out of the question. Nevertheless, in spite of this, all monasteries and temples were gone within a week. You can see then how fierce the event was. Why? With a deep-seated hatred for the corrupted

monks and temples the common people had eagerly looked forward to the downfall of Buddhism.

At that time, a group of scholars headed by Han Yu (768 – 824) spoke openly about their point of view. They proposed three measures to deal with Buddhists: by means of “Changing their social status” (to force all monks and nuns to return to lay life); “transforming their houses” (to change all the monasteries and temples into residential quarters for the common people); and “burning their books” (to destroy all Buddhist scriptures and books). The copper Buddha statues and incense burners were also smashed up for the making of guns and cannons. After the setback, the Chan School was the only one that could save Buddhism from dying out in China altogether. Why? Because what monks wore in the old days was not as restrictive as it is these days. Now, a Bhikkhu or Bhikkhuni’s garments differ greatly from the clothing worn by the general public. In former times the common people, as well as monks, wore the same kind of garments. The only identifiable difference was the monk’s shaved head. In order to protect themselves and the Buddhadharma, they bought caps to cover their heads. In this way they could escape from persecution. These monks dispersed to quiet and undisturbed dwelling places – by rivers, streams or in the forest, supporting themselves by their own hands, continuing with their self-training in their simple thatched huts. In such a way the Chan School survived. Masters of other schools who had depended solely on the intellectual study of Buddhist classics could not but return to lay life. Because of the changed conditions they had no books to read, nowhere to

live, and no means to support themselves.

After the “Huichang Setback” Buddhism was unable to recover. According to the historical records, several schools, such as the Dharmalaksana School, Avatamsaka School, Taintai School, and Three-Sastra School that depended on the scriptural study, totally collapsed. It was only later, in the Five Dynasties period (684 – 705), that Buddhist scriptures were gradually brought back to China again from other countries - Japan and Korea, for example. *This reintroduction of Buddhist scriptures into China at that time, was again necessary after the Cultural Revolution. During the revolution the Buddhist classics were destroyed; again, we gradually reacquired them from abroad.* Up until the later Qing Dynasty (1840 - 1911) a lay Buddhist, Yang Renshan, continued in his efforts to bring the classics back to China from Japan. This process of rebuilding the classics lasted nearly a thousand years. It is obvious that this setback, from which Buddhism took so long a period to recover – about a thousand years, was really a severe and tragic event for Chinese Buddhism. Bit by bit a great many of the scriptures have been returned. Nevertheless, there are still many that are still to be recovered and brought back. These include, in particular, those books concerning temple rules, regulations, and other important documents. Those books taken abroad during the Tang and Song (960 – 1279) Dynasties are now preserved in Japan. We Chinese have none of them. If Chinese scholars want to carry out research in a particular area, say a study of actual monastic canon, they have to obtain the information concerned from archives stored in

Japanese libraries, or from some old Japanese temple. Nevertheless, it is true to say that the monks reaped what they sowed. They had not adhered strictly to their own rules and had, instead, putting self-respect aside, succumbed to the corrupting influence of material prosperity and comfortable living.

Fortunately, owing to the teachings – the gate – of the Sixth Patriarch Hi Neng, Buddhism was kept alive in China. When the official ban was lifted after the “Huichang Setback”, Chan masters from every corner of the country showed up again. Temples all of a sudden made a move toward Chan conversion. Following this, five sects and seven branches were set up one after the other. Therefore we say that Buddhism after the setback would not be as it is today without the Sixth Patriarch Hui Neng. He was a pioneer, an outstanding master who made a profound contribution toward the growth of Buddhism in China. That is, he is one of the crucial milestones of Chinese Buddhist history.

The third great forerunner of recent times was, and is, Master Tai Xu (1889 – 1947). Today, history, culture and the way common people think, progress together with the development of Buddhism with each passing day. Whether or not Buddhism itself should move forward according to this general pattern, so as to be applicable to the ever changing and developing social circumstances is a perennial question. Nevertheless, I think the answer must be that it should. From the mid to late Qing Dynasty such a trend of new culture had a powerful impact on the old one. The new trend, with its irresistibility, smashed the door of old culture open. In

Buddhist circles, therefore, there was a great shock in relation to Master Tai Xu's response, his proposed "Three Great Reforms": a reform of Buddhist teachings, a reform of Buddhist rules and regulations, and a reform of Buddhist properties. At that time, only a few people responded to his call, the majority went against him.

The "living Buddhism" or "Buddhism in this world" we uphold today, was what Master Tai Xu advocated then. Though most people could not fully understand or accept it at that time, it still grew vigorously. The Yufo (Jade Buddha) temple, I think, was on intimate terms with Master Tai Xu, because he passed away here. A great many of his good works were connected with the Yufo temple and with Shanghai. Several masters in charge of the Yufo temple were Master Tai Xu's disciples. Hence he was able to preach and live here. Other temples, subscribing to more traditional ways, refused to offer food even to his disciples, let alone to Master Tai Xu himself. During that period, Master Tai Xu opened up a Buddhist Institute in Wuchang. However, it was not in a temple. A lay Buddhist called Li Kaixian offered his own house to Master Tai Xu, and it was in this house that the Institute was set up. Students in the Institute wanted to have lunch in the nearby Guiyuan temple, but were refused by the monks in charge of reception. They said: "Please go back to your Institute and have lunch there. We have no food for you." From this example we can see that, at the time, both Buddhist circles and society at large maintained a very conservative outlook. Such a perspective was resistant to anything new, refusing to accommodate to change or

seemingly novel cultural developments. Today, when we review what Master Tai Xu upheld, we have to say that all we have done and are doing now reflects nothing other than a following in his footsteps, a putting of his teachings, bit by bit, into practice. There is still much work to be done in the future. We are still far from achieving the goal he set. Perhaps we have only traveled along one percent of that great path?

During Master Tai Xu's time the impact of Western culture, science and technology, and life-style, had led to some sort of reform in the various subdivisions of Chinese culture. For instance, Confucians put forward a new ideology and Buddhists upheld the "Three Great Reforms" whilst at the same time laying an emphasis upon "Buddhism in this world". In doing so they hoped to match the trend and to remain alive and relevant. Since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, it has only been within the last twenty or so years that the idea of "Buddhism in this world" has again been proposed. During the "Cultural Revolution" no one dared to speak openly about such an idea. Suppose somebody did so, he or she would be accused of "trying hard to glorify religion". Since the end of the Revolution, people have become comparatively open-minded, and think that religions are also relevant to a socialist society. How has Buddhism adapted to it? It is by means of the idea of "Buddhism in this world" that Buddhism has been able to suite contemporary society.

During the three periods of history mentioned above there were, respectively, three accomplished pioneers. Today, I am

going to talk about the Sixth Patriarch Hui Neng, who was and still is the most important master of the Chan School in China. So much then for the first part of my talk.

Now, let us come to the second part: the Sixth Patriarch Hui Neng's gate. To begin, I must first say a few words about his "Tan Sutra", because I will mention it on quite a few occasions.

As I said just now, the "Tan Sutra" is highly regarded by both Buddhists and the laity alike. It is commonly accepted to be a book full of wisdom, a book that teaches how to correctly carry on one's self-training, and a book that can guide one towards the understanding of one's whole being. Because of its obvious importance, it both covers and generates many issues. Why do I say this? It is because doubts and suspicions are often cast upon it, simply because we, the contemporary people, think highly of it and study it from various perspectives. As a result, there are numerous different editions: a detailed one or a brief, an ancient one or a contemporary. People enthusiastically carry out researches on these various editions from an academic, cultural, and/or historical point of view.

In recent times, Mr. Hu Shi (1891 – 1962), a daring vanguard in the "May the Fourth New Culture Movement", was the first to carry out a study on the "Tan Sutra". He regarded himself as a leading figure of the "May the Fourth Movement" (Due to various considerations whether or not he can be taken as the leading figure is another question.) He encountered many problems and frustrations in his study of the new culture. Similarly he experienced a series of

frustrations in his writings on the “Philosophical History of China”. However, when he came to the period of the Sui and Tang Dynasties he could not go on writing. Why? Because he did not know about Buddhism and, in particular, he knew nothing of Chinese Buddhism. Even so, from that point on he endeavored to study it. It was in his study of Buddhism that he came to encounter the Chan Sect. To study Buddhism or philosophy in China one has to study the Chan Sect first, otherwise it is difficult to know where to begin, let alone how to achieve an in-depth and penetrative study. For a thousand years or so, that is, throughout the period from the mid Tang and Song Dynasties through to the Yuan (1271 – 1368) Dynasty, Confucian and Chan cultures coexisted. There were at that time a great variety of ideological systems. Consequently, in order to study the ideology of Confucian or Buddhist scholars of that period, one must know about the Chan sect first. Without such knowledge one would not understand their ideological origins. Therefore, Mr. Hu Shi began to study the Chan Sect. In particular, he began to study the Sixth Patriarch Hui Neng, because Hui Neng was the seminal figure of Chinese Chan. In order to understand Hui Neng, he first studied the “Tan Sutra”. In actual fact it is true to say that in recent times and, in particular, modern times, Mr. Hu Shiu can be credited with opening a new chapter in the study of Chinese and Chan Buddhism. Because of his study, on the one hand, more and more people have made the “Tan Sutra” the focus of their attention; on the other hand, many questions concerning the sutra have arisen. This is the first point.

The second point concerns the matter of the “Tan Sutra’s” various editions. Besides the popular edition generally seen in the Buddhist Scripture Distributing Centers, there was another simplified edition buried in the Dun Huang Grotto. About a hundred years ago a Taoist monk found numerous Buddhist scriptures buried in an inner cave at Dun Huang. He came across them completely by chance. He lived in a cave named the “Cave of a Thousand Buddhas”, where he smoked a pipe everyday. The pipe, being long, it was necessary to knock it against the wall in order to empty the residue left after finishing each hold of pipe tobacco, and before loading another. Randomly he knocked it against the wall here and there, day by day, until he happened to knock at a point that sounded differently. He knocked again and discovered that it was not solid but hollow. If it was hollow, he thought, something might be buried within. Secretly, he removed a brick and looked through with the faint light of a small oil lamp. He was greatly thrilled by the variety of scriptures he saw inside. At that time many explorers came to Dun Huang from France, Britain, Japan, Italy, and Russia for the purpose of stealing our historical and cultural relics. These explorers eventually ganged up with the Taoist who sold them volume after volume of precious scripture, day in and day out. Later on, a British explorer named Stein simply handed out bribes to the Taoist, opened up the inner cave, and went inside. Stein then chose the finest collections of scripture, brocade, and paintings, and took them back home. It is said that Stein’s collection comprised of several cartloads. This was indeed a great calamity for Chinese culture.

Inside this inner cave were two hand-written copies of the “Tan Sutra” which were also taken away by foreign explorers. Later on, at the time of cleaning up the remains, another copy was found. This copy was kept in China. The contents of the three copies was more or less the same, each comprised of nine thousand or so Chinese characters. The currently popular edition of the “Tan Sutra” consists of twenty-one thousand or more characters, much longer than the Dun Huang edition. The discovery of the Dun Huang edition has made academics puzzled about the “Tan Sutra”. They think that the popular ancient Caoxi edition, the original Caoxi edition, and the Zongbao edition are all questionable, lacking authenticity due to misrepresentation by later generations. They think the Dun Huang edition is the only original “Tan Sutra”. Well, when was the Dun Huang grotto sealed up? The event occurred about nine hundred years ago. At that time, people in the region of today’s Gansu, as well as people in the various kingdoms in Western China, believed in Buddhism. After the Islamic invasion they were forced to change their religious belief, otherwise they would have been killed. In order to protect Buddhist culture some of them hurriedly concealed scriptures in these caves and then sealed them up. This happened around nine hundred years ago. Whether or not the Dun Huang edition is the oldest one or the original one is therefore questionable. The “Tan Sutra”, however, came out much earlier, as long as one thousand three hundred years ago. Consequently a debate about these different editions arose in China, Japan, and Western countries. It is still very much a live issue at the present time.

We Chinese Buddhists, think that the Caoxi edition that past down from generation to generation is the true, original “Tan Sutra”, whilst the Dun Huang edition is only a simplified one. It contains only the Dharma talks and excludes all else, such as the stories. It is similar to the “Sutra of Forty-Two Chapters”, in which no details are included. The “Tan Sutra”, however, does cover some events. Anyhow, concerning this issue, what Buddhist circles uphold differs greatly from that of academics. I, myself, wrote two articles in the early 80s discussing how to distinguish between the competing editions, and which one might be the original. I think we have to believe in the authenticity of the Caoxi edition. Why? The Caoxi edition, in fact, is preserved at Coaxi. It was carved on printing blocks used for generations at Caoxi, where the Sixth Patriarch Hui Neng’s embalmed body is kept. For the past one thousand three hundred years, through both ups and downs, and particularly throughout the tragic event of “Cultural Revolution”, and, indeed, up to the present day, his body has been well kept and looked after. It is both reasonable and entirely understandable that the people of Caoxi have tried hard to preserve the teachings of the Sixth Patriarch Hui Neng. We believe the Caoxi edition is the original “Tan Sutra”. Even though it might contain a small amount of supplementary material, we think nevertheless that it is still authentic. The Coaxi edition is comprised of ten chapters, making the content complete. The Buddhist Association of Hebei Province has checked the authoritativeness of the text on many occasions before circulating it in print. Now there are many different editions

all over the country, including the one printed here by the Nanjing Scripture Distributing Center. For study or research on the “Tan Sutra”, I think you’d better use the more complete Caoxi edition and not the simplified Dun Huang edition. Regarding the “Tan Sutra” itself, I have not made any remarks as to its meaning, but have just mentioned the fact that it attracts much public attention, and that it is also often misrepresented somehow.

Next, let me come to the third point, that is, the three statements made by the Sixth Patriarch Hui Neng in the “Tan Sutra”. This sutra is extraordinarily meaningful. Whatever fine words we used to praise it, I think, are not enough. Today, because of time constraints I cannot cover all of his teachings, but will instead emphasize the three statements he made in the sutra; they are as follows: “It has been the tradition of our school to take ‘thoughtlessness’ as the objective, ‘non-objectivity’ as the basis, and ‘non-attachment’ as the fundamental principle.” Those three statements represent the fundamental essence of his thoughts.

What is ‘thoughtlessness’? The term ‘thoughtlessness’ is a well-accepted concept in Buddhism. Yesterday, when I came to the Fourth Patriarch Dao Xin’s gate, I mentioned that he had once cited the words of the “Pancavimsati Sahasrika Prajnaparamita Sutra” that: “Abiding nowhere means truly praying to the Buddha. What does ‘abiding nowhere’ mean? It means the Mind that prays to the Buddha is ‘thoughtless’.” This is actually the state of ‘thoughtlessness’. Among the three statements ‘thoughtlessness’ is related to the subjectivity of our thought. Thought is the Mind that thinks,

while ‘thoughtlessness’ the mind that is indifferent to casual, temporary conditions. ‘Thoughtlessness’, then, does not mean making no response like a log or block of stone, but responding to somebody or something without separation. That is, it entails knowing what dharmas represent and keeping the Mind untouched. It is said in the “Diamond Sutra” that: “When one practices charity one should not cherish any idea, that is to say, one is not to cherish the idea of sound, smell, taste, touch, or Dharma. He should thus practice charity without cherishing any idea of form.” The message of “practicing charity without cherishing any idea of form” is ‘thoughtlessness’. When we think in a manner free from worldly delusion and separation, and in accord with Tathagata (suchness), that is ‘thoughtless’. Master Guifeng Zongmi (780 – 841), in his “Prelude for the Works on the Five Sects of Chan Buddhism”, said that, if we truly understand the emptiness of all external things, our Mind is naturally free from separation or discrimination and is ‘thoughtless’. “Maintaining the state of mindfulness at every arising thought, the thought will disappear at once. This is the true path of self-training. For all ways of training ‘thoughtlessness’ is, therefore, the only objective.” That is to say, when we practice any kind of training we must always be free from separation and always hold on to that state of Mind. If our Mind could truly be in perfect agreement with Tathagata, then we would always be in the state of meditation. If at the time when we are engaged in any kind of practice, we can remain free from both notions of Dharma and of self, then we would truly be in the state of ‘thoughtlessness’. Or,

again, if in practicing charity one remains free and unattached to the notions of “it is I who gives, it is he who receives, and it is this or that that is given”, then we are truly in the state of ‘thoughtlessness’. This does not mean we have no thoughts but, rather, we have no thoughts of separation. ‘Thoughtlessness’, therefore, is the most important of the Sixth Patriarch Hui Neng’s three statements.

What is “non-objectivity as the basis”? The term ‘thought’, as discussed above, means the Mind that has a thought, while objectivity (or object) refers to the picture or image that the Mind thinks/creates. “Non-objectivity” means to free oneself from absorption in external objects. That is, at the time when encountering a certain thing we do not add something external to it, but stick to its own nature. To free oneself from an absorption in external things, therefore, is non-objectivity. If we could act in accordance with this principle our Mind would be pure. This is because all dharmas, naturally, as they are, are free from objectification and name, and free from the Mind that has a thought or the image that the Mind thinks/creates. All those named objects are such only subjectively, from our own perspective, but are not in and of themselves. They are not this thing or that thing in their own nature. That is why we have to evade being caught up by the external world. The term “non-objectivity” refers to the complete eradication of all subjective separation so as to make the nature of Dharma pure. The nature of Dharma is as it is for all things. All dharmas, or we could say all objects, are pure in nature. We give all sorts of names to them because of our attachment, ignorance, and separation. If we

could get away from objects and names, and attachments as well, we would see with our own eyes the Absolute Existence of all dharmas. What is “non-objectivity”? It is the state of Absolute Existence or, simply, the Absolute Existence. All dharmas are based on the Absolute Existence. Therefore, in relation to the Chan School, we say, “non-objectivity as the basis”.

The Fourth Patriarch Dao Xin, in his “Easy Path of Pacifying the Mind to Enter the Tao”, said that: “As sentient beings grow in endless ways dharmas are endless. As dharmas are endless the meanings of them are endless. As the meanings of dharmas are endless all come out of the Dharma.” What is the Dharma? It is non-objectivity. It is the Absolute Existence of all dharmas. As there is no negative counterpart to non-objectivity, it is then the Absolute Existence. Here, non-objectivity is the common feature of all dharmas. Although all dharmas seem to be isolated, in fact they each have a specific and unique feature and, at the same time, a feature common to all. Suppose all dharmas had only their specific feature and not a common one, we would not be able to get hold of them or grasp them.

The next statement is: “non-attachment as the fundamental principle”. The “Vimalakirti Nirdeśa Sutra” says that: “All dharmas come into being from the point of non-attachment.” That is, non-attachment is the fundamental aspect of all dharmas. It is the Ultimate Reality of all dharmas, and the natural state of human beings. Why do I say so? It is because non-attachment is another name for the Dharma-Nature of Tathagata. Therefore we say that, non-attachment is as the

fundamental principle, or all dharmas come out of non-attachment. All dharmas have Dharma nature and Dharma phase. The Dharma phase is concrete while the Dharma nature abstract. The former is the specific aspect whilst the latter is the common one. The former is the discrepancy among all dharmas whilst the latter the equality of all dharmas. The former is a certain thing while the latter its regular pattern. As all dharmas have their regular patterns to follow, we can thus get a hold on them, understand them, and analyze them. If we tried to analyze things one by one we would face the same dilemma encountered in trying to count all the grains of sand in the sea. We have to hold on to the common feature of all dharmas first, only then can we hope to get hold of their essence. When the Sixth Patriarch Hui Neng talked about “non-attachment as the fundamental principle” he said: “isolate each arising thought from the previous one”. That is, do not think of the past event with a separated Mind. “Our thoughts - the past, present, and forthcoming, proceed in unending succession.” This refers to the fact that our Mind is often carried away by external conditions, so that we are unable to obtain release from all dharmas. Our external conditions consist of constantly changing dharmas, and are thereby impermanent and without a fixed character. When looking at the phenomenal world we'd better not view or understand such externals according to fixed concepts or characteristics. This is what the “emptiness of all dharmas” refers to, and is the basis upon which the Prajna theory was built.

“Non-attachment” is a fundamental and important

theoretical issue in Buddhism. The “Vimalakirti Nirdesa Sutra” says: “All dharmas come into being from the point of non-attachment.” This sutra was translated by Kumarajiva (344 – 413 or 350 – 409), and is the edition we now have in circulation. Master Seng Zhao (384 – 414), a contemporary and disciple of Kumarajiva, undertook the translation work together with and under the guidance of Kumarajiva. We have to say that his annotated edition of the “Vimalakirti Nirdesa Sutra” truly reflects Kumarajiva’s understanding of it at that time. So, if we want to study the sutra now, we’d better familiarize ourselves with Master Seng Zhao’s edition. This is a very important matter. When Master Seng Zhao came to the words “All dharmas come into being from the point of non-attachment”, what did he annotate? He said: “There is no identity for the Dharma. It reveals itself because of dependent origination. At the arising stage it is moving about here and there. Wandering from place to place, as it is, it does not attach to anything. Because of this feature it is neither existent nor non-existent. This feature of ‘neither existence nor non-existence’ is the fundamental principle of existence or non-existence.” This is what the statement, “All dharmas come into being from the point of non-attachment”, really means. All dharmas by their very nature are impermanent. This explains why there is no identity for the Dharma. Suppose the Dharma has identity, then all dharmas could not come into being, or there would be no way for all of them to mutually coexisted in one space. It is only because of this characteristic that the law of non-identity is the origin of all dharmas, and the Nature of Dharma.

In the Mahayana tradition the idea of “non-attachment” is extended to “not attaching oneself to Nirvana” and “not attaching oneself to Samadhi”. Not being attached to Nirvana is the highest attainment, or Buddha-fruit, of the Mahayana Bodhisattva. Through loving kindness and compassion a Mahayana Bodhisattva helps all sentient beings, heart and soul, thus he does not attach himself to Nirvana. In addition, by means of great wisdom he obliterates both the internal and external hindrances so that he no longer attaches himself to life-death. This is the highest attainment for those who study the Buddha’s teachings. As practitioners we generally wish to attain the state of Nirvana by the end of our self-training; however, we forget the fact that we were previously among those sentient beings who were suffering from pain and delusion. As we come to hear the Truth, and put it into practice, we gradually progress along the path. Bit by bit, we might slowly come to a higher level. As we progress in our attainments we often forget the path we have traversed. What should we do at this stage? We must remember we suffered a great deal before our release from those sufferings. Having attained our goal, should we take care of those who are still suffering? I think we should. Therefore we say that, through great wisdom, a Bhodhisattva can destroy both internal and external hindrances, remain free from life-death, and that through great compassion and loving kindness he does not attach himself to Nirvana. This is the extraordinarily noble spirit of Mahayana Bodhisattva. What is Bodhisattva? This is Bodhisattva. What is Mahayana? This is Mahayana. Suppose someone wants to attain Nirvana but does not attach himself

to life-death, that is, does not vow to be reborn, he would, then, be a follower of the Hinayana but not the Mahayana tradition. Suppose someone only wants to be in the circle of Samsara and does not know what Nirvana is, he or she is an ordinary person, but not a Buddhist. To go beyond Nirvana and life-death is the ultimate goal for Buddhists, the highest achievement for those who live what the Buddha taught. Yesterday, I mentioned Master Yangshan Huiji (807 – 883) who vowed to be a buffalo at the foot of mountain after his death. It is such a spirit of going beyond Nirvana and life-death, and serving all sentient beings under whatever conditions, that reflects the highest state of Mahayana.

The three statements: “thoughtlessness as the objective; non-objectivity as the basis; and, non-attachment as the fundamental principle”, are what the Sixth Patriarch Hui Neng taught in his gate. It is my hope that we can truly get hold of them and thoroughly incorporate them into our self-training, into Dharma dissemination and into the serving of all sentient beings, indeed, into whatever we do and whatever we say. Suppose we really could take those words as our guiding light; our life would then be full of hope and the Buddhadharmā, our society, and all we do or intend to do would in turn be full of hope. In so far as we remain free from preconceptions, one-sided views, and separative thinking in respect to self and others, we can truly live together as one peaceful, warm – and very large - family. This is the embodiment of a worldly Pure-Land.

The Fifth Lecture

Wumenguan

The topic I am going to talk about today is “Wumenguan” (the Gateless Barrier). Buddhism teaches that our original nature is pure. “Anything said will be illusive.” What we say is just a description of the thing, but hardly makes contact with its true nature, the nature of Chan (Zen). It is therefore very difficult to talk about “Wumenguan”. In order to describe what Chan is, and to explain the meaning of “Wumenguan”, I have to use words and letters by way of giving a brief introduction. I know that to speak or talk about what can’t be spoken is just like drawing a snake with feet added on. Here I have no choice but to try.

Firstly, let me come to the word “Wu”. “Wu” not only stands for the ultimate state of Buddhist philosophy and Buddhist training, but also the highest level of Confucian or Taoist philosophy in China. Confucian or Taoist philosophy upholds that the “Tao is gateless”, whilst Buddhism attributes the primitive origin of all things as coming from the word “Wu”. “Wu” is the very first letter ‘a’ in Sanskrit. In the Mantra School it is said that: “The letter ‘a’ is No-Birth in nature.” As all dharmas come into being interdependently, each arises in accordance with its causal conditions. As each condition derives from all prior dependent conditions, all prior dependent conditions come out of still more dependent

conditions. In this way – residing in infinity, no dharma can be traced back to its point of origin or supposed original cause. Let us take this Dharma talk as an example. What has led to us meeting for it here? The various reasons could be traced back all the way to the time when Shakyamuni addressed an assembly of thousands on Mount Grdhrakuta. It could even be traced from Grdhrakuta back to the Buddha's asamkhya period when he himself practiced self-mortification. From this perspective, we could say, this Dharma talk is without a beginning. Suppose we take this Dharma talk as a point and search for its effects from now on, it would have an influence on the coming events one after another, it would thus be endless. Everything in the world is just as it is with neither beginning nor ending. From such a viewpoint, Buddhism upholds the principle of “No-birth for all dharmas”, because it is impossible to find out whence in the past they began and where in the future they will end. This is the Buddhist perspective on the world.

Other religions uphold that there was a beginning for all things in the world. What was it? Brahmanism in India says everything was created by Mahabrahmadeva, but cannot answer the question as to who or what exactly created Mahabrahmadeva. Christianity and Catholicism in the West also think there was a beginning for all things, with an almighty God as the Creator. Well, who or what created such a God then? We are unable to find the answer. This is a very interesting matter. I once heard a brief anecdote, it went as follows: students in an American school were given a lesson on comparative religion. After they had studied the basic

foundations of Christianity, Catholicism, and Buddhism the teacher asked them what the difference between Buddhism and Christianity was. They answered simply that Buddhism thought that the very first egg was laid by a chicken, whilst Christianity and Catholicism, on the other hand, did not. This vivid and clever answer clearly reflects the difference between them. Christianity and Catholicism think the very first egg was laid by God but not by a chicken. Buddhism, however, thinks that the very first egg *was* laid by a chicken. This process could be traced endlessly far back to an unknown time without a beginning. This is called “Having neither beginning nor end, being located neither inside nor outside, it is hard to give it any name other than the Dharma-dhatu.” Students in the Buddhist Institute have all read the “Buddhist Three-Characters Sutra” which begins with those words. It is applicable to everything in the world.

The letter ‘a’ in the message: “The letter ‘a’ is No-Birth in nature”, is translated into “Wu” in Chinese. “Wu” is the ultimate state of Prajna (wisdom), the highest state of Buddhadharma. In Chinese Buddhist history there was a well-known master, Master Seng Zhao (384 – 414). He wrote four papers, one of which was entitled “On the Unknowable Nature of Prajna”. Prajna, in nature, is the direct first-hand experience of truth, the highest wisdom. When Master Seng Zhao talked about the “unknowable nature of Prajna”, he used the term “Wu” to sum up the highest wisdom of Buddhism.

We’d better not randomly interpret the word “Wu”. Do not refer to it as either existence or non-existence, thinking “Wu”

is mere nothingness. No, this is not what the word means. Here, “Wu” is the “emptiness” that the Prajna theory puts forward. We all know the “Middle Path” of Three-Sastra School in which there is a stanza (appreciatory verse) that says: “Because of emptiness all dharmas can be as they are.” It is only because of “Wu”, because of emptiness, that all dharmas reveal themselves as they are. What does the term “Wu” mean? It means the selflessness of all dharmas. Because all dharmas are without self-identity, they exist simply as conditions in which any dharma can come to live and grow. Suppose each dharma had its own self-identity and, hence, all differed from one another, there would not be any ground of mutual combination. It is only because of their inherent selflessness that all dharmas can come together in accordance with causal conditions. The combination of various dharmas gives visible form to the Buddhist outlook that “ The Dharma reveals itself as it is.” What a happy coincidence it is that we live with a nose pointing downwards, two ears on both sides, two eyes that can look here and there, and a stomach that digests what we eat. All of them can be explained from a scientific point of view. Such an explanation, however, might be unconvincing. Why do we live with a nose, two ears, two eyes, and a stomach? As the Dharma reveals itself as it is, Buddhism maintains that we should have a nose, two ears, two eyes, and a stomach and should not conform to any secondary pattern. It is as it is. In explaining things, the whys and wherefores, the facts and occurrences like this, it is reasonable to say that Buddhism can provide the most insightful and wise answers. Buddhism

has summed them up in terms of the philosophical concept of Dependent Origination and Emptiness of Ultimate Reality, or in one word “Wu”.

So far I have made a brief account of the important role and value the term “Wu” plays in Buddhism; its importance similarly impacts upon the philosophy of both Lao Zi and Zhuang Zi. Next, I am going to talk about “Wumenguan”. Where did the term “Wumenguan” come from? Those who have read various Gongans (koans) in the Chan School all know the well-known Gongan by Master Zhaozhou Congshen (778 – 897). A monk came to meet Master Zhaozhou asking: “Has a dog Buddha-nature or not?” Master Zhaozhou retorted: “Wu!” A dog does not have Buddha-nature. The monk asked again: “All sentient beings have Buddha-nature. Why then doesn’t a dog?” Master Zhaozhou said: “Because it has delusions.” This is how the Gongan goes.

If someone who knows a bit about Buddhist teachings were to judge this Gongan, he would surely think that Master Zhaozhou’s answer is contrary to the commonly held Buddhist outlook. Buddhism teaches us that all sentient beings have Buddha-nature. Why then does a dog not have such a nature? We should not forget that “Wu” is neither existence nor non-existence, it is beyond existence and non-existence, hence you are forced to contemplate the matter. Under normal circumstances you could think about it over and over again. Master Zhaozhou’s answer, however, like a sluice gate damming up water, suddenly cuts off or blocks up the flow of your thoughts. As your thoughts are

blocked up, you seem to face an incredibly high wall. There is no way through. In other words, you are driven to the edge of a steep cliff, one step forward and you would fall over the edge. “Letting go one’s hold on the cliff”, is an expression used in the Chan school to describe the situation where, if at the very moment of contemplation you are able to allow yourself to fall in such a way, you truly obtains release. This is how Chan training works. It works by means of such questions and answers, blocking up your thoughts all of a sudden so that you cannot go on thinking. At such a moment as this, faced with an extraordinarily high wall, if you could find some way out or find some way to turnaround, you would be able to pass through even though there is no gate. If, however, you continue to go around in circles of intellectual knowledge and rational thought, you will never find a point of entry.

There was another important Gongyan spoken by Master Fa Yan (? – 1104), the fifth Dharma holder of Linji Sect. It sounds slightly vulgar, yet its meaning is very instructive nonetheless. This is the way Chan training works. It compels you to enter where there is no gate. It enables you to turnaround and free yourself. This is the capability that Chan training both fosters and facilitates. The following Gongyan provides a very good example.

Long, long ago there was a thief who had a son. As the years went by the father would always take his son with him on the job. *In the old days what a thief did was quite different from what a thief does nowadays, such as breaking open locks, stealing peoples’ purses, or robbing banks. In the past*

a thief would simply have drilled a hole in the wall of a building he wished to enter. Suppose you lived in a house, and suppose a thief wanted to steal something from you, he would drill a hole in the wall first and then steal into your house. Old men like me remember such things, but the youngsters don't. They only know that a thief breaks open locks or even, perhaps, smashes down the door. In the past, especially in rural areas, a thief would simply drill a hole in the wall and get into the house. The son grew up to be seventeen or eighteen years old. One day he said to his father: "Father, everyday when you go out to rob and steal you take me with you. I simply follow what you do. But what can I do by myself if you are in poor health someday? You'd better teach me one or two important skills so that I can make a living by myself." After hearing these words, the father was very happy. He thought his son intended to do the job alone. This meant, he thought, that in the future his son might become a clever thief. The father did not say a word about when or what he was going to teach, but kept on taking his son out as usual. One day they drilled a hole in the wall of a very rich family's house and stole inside. They had entered a room in which there was a large wardrobe. *Wardrobes in the old days were not like the ones we have today. They were very tall, and to put something in it one had to go inside.* The father quietly opened the wardrobe and asked his son to see what was inside. As soon as the son got inside the father shut it up and locked him in. Immediately, the father left the house through the hole in the wall, blocking it up with a bundle of brambles as he went. He then started banging on the front

door, shouting out to the host that there was a thief inside and that he'd better catch him at once. *In the words of the Chan School this is called, "Cornering someone to see whether or not he can escape at the critical moment."* The son was very anxious indeed. He could not understand how his father did this to him; his father had quite simply doomed him to a certain death. At that moment he thought of how to escape. At first he mimicked the noise of a rat in the wardrobe. On hearing the noise for quite a long time the old grandma of the family lit a lamp and slowly opened the wardrobe. In a flash the little thief blew out the light and ran out as quickly as he could towards the hole. However he could not get through because the hole had been carefully blocked up. Fortunately he found a urine bucket nearby. He poured the urine out, put it on his head, and making a dash towards the brambles, managed to burst through to the other side. He had had a narrow escape from the room, but still the villagers chased him as he fled in the direction of a nearby well. With the villagers gaining ground and hot on his heels he happened to notice a big stone lying on the ground. With no time to spare he grabbed it, lifted it up and threw it into the well. It was a dark night, and on hearing the sound from the well the villagers thought the thief had fallen in and drowned. After making his way home he began to curse his father saying, "How could you do such a thing to me? You virtually condemned me to death!" His father asked him how he had managed to escape. The son, complaining all the while, explained what had happened over again. His father said: "Well then, I have already taught you a valuable skill. *That*

was the valuable skill.”

To practice sitting meditation is, in a sense, somewhat akin to this story. You are driven to a dead-end and forced somehow to extricate yourself from a seemingly impossible situation, yet that very extrication, that positive outcome, is none other than enlightenment itself. Though it is rather a crude and immoral tale the lesson it provides is worthy of our consideration, if we really want to free ourselves from life and death and obtain release. Therefore the Gongan “Wu”, as well as many other Gongan, function in such a way as to leave us with no intellectual space in which to move.

There is another well-known Gongan related to Master Zhaozhou, called “What is the meaning of Bodhidharma’s coming to China?” Coming from India to China, what did Bodhidharma preach? What was his aim and objective? This has been a key issue in Chan thought throughout the ages; an issue that has caused and generated a great deal of reflection. Regarding this question, there are answers perhaps running into the thousand. What was the answer given by Master Zhaozhou then? Someone asked Master Zhaozhou: “What is the meaning of Bodhidharma’s coming to China?” He said: “Cypress trees in front of the hall.” Can you see how Cypress trees could be related to the meaning of Bodhidharma’s coming to China? If we take it from the perspective of intellectual knowledge it is simply an irrelevant answer. Those who truly understand what Chan is know clearly the earnest intention Master Zhaozhou had by giving such an answer. His intention was to put the questioner in a hopeless situation, thereby forcing that person to try hard to find his or

her own penetrative point of entry into Chan.

Some other masters asked what the Buddha was. An old master asked Master Dongshan liangjia (807 – 869): “What is the Buddha?” He said: “one and a half kilograms of yarn and a roll of cloth.” This was what he said about the Buddha. Can you see how the two could be related to each other? It makes use of the same method we have been talking about; it drives away all aspects of intellectual separation; one’s thoughts are thus broken off. When one’s thoughts are cut off, it is like facing an extraordinarily high wall, yet, as we have seen, in such a situation, and as often happens, a brand new state of Mind can be reached. Those who are engaged in literary or poetic writing often have such experiences – in a flash of inspiration. However, they do not usually last very long and, consequently, they do not attain to a higher level or make a cognitive leap of lasting significance.

“Wumenguan”, the ultimate state of enlightenment in the Chan School, was brought about by Master Zhaozhou’s “A dog does not have Buddha-nature.” Practitioners working on it spread it far and wide. It then became a recognized and accepted Gongan. Like working on a legal case in the court, it is impossible to analyze cases one by one without reference to others. Each individual Gongan of the Chan School is just like this. It is basically fixed or standardized, and there exist a great many books relating to the various Gongan.

Until the Song Dynasty (960 – 1279) Gongan was called “Gu” (age-old). Sometimes country people, particularly those in Hubei Province, would often refer to “talking Gu” rather than “telling a story”. If they wanted someone to tell a story,

they would say: “Please tell us a Gu Zai.” People in Guangdong also used the term “Gu Zai” to refer to a story, again, often saying, “Please tell us a Gu Zai.” Later on Gongan came to be called “Gu”.

At the time of writing a stanza in praise of Gu many Chan masters often wrote down four or eight lines to describe a Gongan. Master Xuedou Chongxian (980 – 1052) of the Yunmen Sect in the Northern Song Dynasty (960 – 1127) chose a hundred Gongan, compiled them together with appreciatory verses, and entitled the work “A Hundred Stanzas in Praise of Gu”. Later on, Master Yuanwu Keqin (1063 – 1136) of the Linji Sect, added footnotes, explanations and commentary to each Gongan in the book. This was the making of the book the “Blue Cliff Record” or “Blue Cliff Collection”. The two Chinese characters “Bi Yan” (blue cliff), which were on the wall of Lingquan Temple at Mount Jia, Hunan Province, actually referred to the name of the temple’s abbot at the time. People called the abbot Bi Yan instead of his Dharma name. Why? The founder of Lingquan Temple, Master Shan Hui, described his enlightenment with the following two lines: “Apes run back to the green mountain with their little ones in their arms. Birds return home in front of the blue cliff holding flowers in their beaks.” Consequently, people took the two words “blue cliff” from these two lines and used them to name the abbot. Master Yuanwu Keqin collected many Gongan and worked on them there in the late abbot’s room. He finally named the collection the “Blue Cliff Record”.

The “Blue Cliff Record”, at that time, was referred to as

“the Chan School’s number one book.” Each person, no matter whether those who lived in the temple or those who simply practiced the training, had a copy at hand. If they ran out of printed copies practitioners would make handwritten ones. The “Blue Cliff Record” is such a well-known book because its writer, Master Xuedou Chongxian, was an enlightened master of great accomplishment in both words and literature. His book, “A Hundred Stanzas in Praise of Gu”, with its lucid and graceful style, expounded his views on enlightenment at a transcendent level. Furthermore, his extraordinary way of writing helped rank the book as one of first class in terms of its attention grabbing qualities and, also, in respect to the number of practitioners it attracted. Master Yuanwu Keqin was also an outstanding master. The commentaries he wrote in the “Blue Cliff Record” were considered excellent, so the book became very popular at the time. As the book won the popularity of readers it became part of “Wen Zi (words and literature) Chan”. However, practitioners did not continue practicing sitting meditation as before but, instead, tried hard to find lines in the book to debate back and forth. Hence “Wen Zi Chan” or “Ge Teng (talk round) Chan” came into being. Master Dahui Zonggao (1089 – 1163), a disciple of Master Yuanwu Keqin, noticed that such a trend tended to lead practitioners blindly. Consequently, and without hesitation, he destroyed the “Blue Cliff Record” printing blocks, such that the book subsequently became out of print. It was certainly an unusual event for a disciple to do such a thing to his master. In the eyes of contemporary people what the disciple did was

outrageous. At that time, then, Master Dahui Zonggao destroyed all the printing blocks, nevertheless, years later, people cut new ones and the book came into circulation once again.

The “Blue Cliff Record” was a key text of the Linji Sect, and consists of a hundred different Gong’an. There was, also, another text, this time of the Caodong Sect; it consists of one hundred Gong’an as well, and was called “Cong Rong (in a natural state) Record”. The two texts, although with overlapping contents, reflected different ways of thinking, that is, the “Kan Hua (working on words) Chan” of the Linji Sect and the “Mo Zhao (silent mindfulness) Chan” of the Caodong Sect respectively. Because of their different perspectives they explained some Gong’an differently. Nevertheless, the two texts both included the Gong’an of Master Zhaozhou: “A dog does not have Buddha-nature”.

About a hundred years later, Master Wumen Huikai (1183 – 1260) of the Linji Sect had selected forty-eight Gong’an from the two hundred included in the two texts, thus producing the book “Wumenguan”. The very first Gong’an in the book was “Zhaozhou’s dog”. In that book, Master Wumen wrote these pertinent and insightful words: “One has to penetrate through the barrier set up by the old master whilst practicing sitting meditation. Before true enlightenment can be obtained his Mind must first be cornered and driven to a dead-end. If he is unable to penetrate through the barrier, and his Mind is not driven to such a dead-end, then he will never be able to reach the state of enlightenment. Instead, what he gains is a mere and

apparent spiritual experience, this is something lesser, something entirely different. What then was this barrier set up by the old master? It is the term ‘Wu’, the very first barrier of the Chan tradition. That is how ‘Wumenguan’ is entitled as such in the Chan Sect.” The term “Wumwnguan” derives from the words of Master Wumen. The term “Wu”, in Master Zhaozhou’s Gong’an “A dog does not have Buddha-nature”, acts as a barrier for the sect. Those who practice sitting meditation and attempt to become enlightened have to take “Wu” as the gate; that is to say the gateless gate is the gate. To practice Chan training one must act with and in such a spirit.

The book “Wumenguan” attracted the attention of many Chan practitioners after it came out; this was particularly the case when it was introduced into Japan. It came to be carved and printed time and again. Japanese scholars frequently study it and speak very highly of it. In China however, for quite some time now, it has been somewhat neglected. Nevertheless, in recent years, and under the influence of Japanese scholars, people have begun to pay more attention to the book. In Taiwan the book has been the focus of a number of research studies. Besides Japan, the book has provoked a lot of interest in European countries and the United States, since the introduction of Chan Buddhism to those countries. It is then both natural and reasonable for those countries to have an English version of the text. For me it was a wonderful surprise to find a Hungarian version based on the English one in Hungary. In 1997, when I visited a Buddhist college in Hungary, I noticed a book in the native

language. Though I could not read the language I immediately spotted the Chinese character “Guan” (barrier) on the cover. The ancient Japanese master’s beautiful handwriting was printed on the cover of the book, but with “Wumen” in Hungarian and “Guan” in Chinese. That’s also “Wumenguan”, but comprised of two languages. I asked what the book was. They said it was “Wumenguan”. How I felt ashamed of being Chinese at that moment! We have not truly understood the value of this book written by our forefather, yet it is warmly welcomed abroad.

In recent years I have led several intensive meditation practices called “Chan Qi” (sesshin) at the Bailin temple. It is natural for us to work on various Gongan by Master Zhaozhou, and Gongan “Wu” is included. Since the later Qing Dynasty (1840 – 1911) people have seldom worked on “Wu”. Before the Ming Dynasty (1368 –1661) people frequently worked on “Wu”, but came, later on, to focus upon the Gongan: “Who is it that prays to the Buddha?” Because of the actual combined training of the Chan School and Pure-Land School, masters adapted their methods of guidance accordingly. *Since you pray to Amitabha, could you please let me know who it is that prays to the Buddha?* In this way the relevant Gongan came into being. However, the oldest Gongan is not “Who is it that prays to the Buddha” but “Wu”.

Nowadays, in Japan, practitioners do not work on “Who is it that prays to the Buddha?” but on “Wu”. In 1992 the “Hall of All-Illuminating Light” was dedicated and a ceremony - “opening the eyes of Shakyamuni Buddha’s statue” was held

at the Bailin temple. We invited a Japanese master of the Linji Sect for the ceremony. After the ceremony, he went to burn incense in front of Master Zhaozhou's Stupa - in praise of the old master and also as a holy offering to him. He then spoke four lines of appreciatory verse, known as "incense words". In China we called them "Dharma words", but people in Japan and Korea call them "incense words". After he had said the verses, he shouted out a word in a very loud voice. What did he shout? It was that very word "Wu". Because he shouted the word with all his might and main, it was really quite a shock to all those on the spot. His Dharma name is Qingdao. He might have been here to the Yufu temple before. His English is very good and he could lecture about Chan in English. When he shouted "Wu" with all his physical strength, it was as if all the tiles on the roofs were shaken and would fall off. So we can see that, now, Japanese practitioners still work on "Wu", "Wu" as based on the "Wumenguan" or "A dog does not have Buddha-nature".

The three Chinese characters "Zhou Yun Wu" are very much favored by Japanese masters when they write an inscription. "Zhou" means 'Master Zhaozhou', while "Yun" means 'to say', and then of course "Wu" we know. As everybody knows, this Gong'an runs as follows: a monk asked Master Zhaozhou "Has a dog Buddha-nature or not?" Master Zhaozhou retorted: "Wu"; Japanese masters make it shorter - into three characters: "Zhou Yun Wu" which, itself clearly reflects the Chan style.

Being a Bhikkhu, I think, one must understand what Chan is. In other words, he should maintain an open-mind

regarding the Chan tradition. In this way he would be alert and quick-witted; without such a Mind continued growth is not possible and he would simply become a shallow person. The fact is that Chan is deep and meaningful, something both pointing towards the Mind yet also, when it is successfully penetrated, something quite open. No matter whether it is deep, inward, or open, it is always free and natural.

So far I've mentioned the origin of "Wumenguan". Next, I am going to talk about how to work on "Wumenguan", or how to work on "Wu". Master Dahui Zonggao of the Song Dynasty (960 – 1279) was a well-known master who had actively advocated working on "Wumenguan". Amongst his quotations we find many commentaries concerning how to work on "Wumenguan". In regard to "Wu", he said: do not construe it as nothingness nor conceive of it in terms of existence or non-existence, do not interpret or understand it literally or intellectually. In all, he mentioned eight factors that could help guide practitioners in how to become free from separation whilst working on "Wu". He said that "Wu" must be grasped like an iron ball that you then bite down hard on with your teeth. The ball is made of iron and is tasteless, yet still you must bite until, trying harder and harder, you are finally able to break it up. At that very moment you come to know the truth. This is just a metaphor that expresses the seemingly insurmountable difficulties you might encounter when working on "Wu". He also used another similar metaphor, saying: it is like a dog nipping at a hot glutinous-rice cake. Being extremely sticky and too hot the dog can neither swallow it down nor disgorge it. Under

such circumstances a way must be found out of the dilemma. The third metaphor Master Dahui Zonggao made use of related to the little thief in the story I recounted earlier. The family members were trying hard to catch him, and yet with the hole in the wall completely blocked up by a bundle of thorny brambles, and with no other means of escape, how could he possibly get out? This is the spirit of Chan, the spirit of “Wu”, and also, I think, the spirit of self-training. It is only by means of such a spirit in our practice that any kind of self-training we engage in can be meaningful, that is, successfully producing the required fruit. As “Wumenguan” is a barrier, our Buddhist training is also a barrier. In order to break down this barrier we have to maintain an attitude of unceasing effort and unflinching determination. We must strive, to the utmost of our abilities, to force upon truth the possibility that it will burst forth from the point of our Mind’s utter hopelessness - life from death.

Next, I am going to talk about the true meaning of “Wu” in Buddhist teachings. At such times as we discuss Chan, the issue of how to comprehend the relation between intellectual knowledge and Absolute Existence proves to be a key one. For instance, I am drinking tea now and you see what I am doing. The feeling, however, is quite different. From the perspective of those watching, a lot of conceptual questions may spring to Mind: What kind of tea is he drinking? How does it taste? Is it hot or cold? - and so on and so forth. For me, such questions would be meaningless, because I am the drinker, I simply know its taste, its type and its temperature. This is called “A drinker knows how hot or how cold the

water is.”

No matter hot or cold, this is its true nature, the self-phase of the water. When we come to a certain thing we often look at it from the common phase. The common phase belongs to intellectual knowledge while the self-phase is the true nature of the thing, the thing as it is, the thing itself. To get to know anything we have to know its common phase first, so that, from there, we can see through and beyond those common characteristics. To get a true understanding of a certain thing we have to know the self-phase or its specific characters too. The self-phase makes the thing as it is. With the common phase we can only know the equality of all things while with the self-phase we are able to know and distinguish the difference between them. The self-phase of a certain thing makes it different from another. Zhang San (John) and Li Si (Sam) are the names of two persons. When you call one of them using the general term “person”, neither Zhang San nor Li Si will respond to you, because “person” is the common phase. As you distinguish their self-phase and, instead, call specifically for Zhang San or Li Si, they will respond to you respectively. This is the self-phase or difference of all things. On the whole, both of them, the equality and difference, self-phase and common phase, specific characters and common characters can never be completely separated. The self-phase is crucial for an understanding of the thing itself.

The self-phase is something as it is, something indescribable, something we directly contact but can't explain in words. Because it is indescribable we cannot but use the term “Wu” or some other terms when attempting to

speak about it. Even the Buddha himself could not explain why the world is as it is. What else could the Buddha say? - “The world is just as it is.” “Once enlightened one lives one’s life beyond delusions.” “With a delusive Mind one lives one’s life in the phenomenal world.” “As everything is as it is the world is always stable”, and so on and so forth. He could not but use such words. If we try to deduce everything from a very first cause all the way to some imagined final ending, we will only entangle ourselves in endless troubles. This is inevitable because there is neither a first beginning point nor an end. That’s why we cannot adequately explain, write or talk about the world. To attempt to understand a certain thing is the same. If we move step by step, by inference, eventually we will be ensnared by words. Therefore, everything is as it is.

We say the Buddha knew everything and could do everything, yet the Buddha himself said: “Buddha knows and can do only seventy per cent of the whole, but he neither knows nor does the other thirty per cent.” There was thirty per cent then that the Buddha could not help with. For instance, sentient beings are infinite in number and their good or evil deeds are also infinite in number. The Buddha said he could show the way to deliver all sentient beings from this shore to the other shore. Nevertheless, it was another question as to whether or not all sentient beings could be so delivered. Encountered with this fact, the Buddha had no alternative but to make such a statement. Why? The reason is that each person in his or her lifetime has done certain good or evil deeds. Because of the different karmic effects (the

power of karma to produce good or evil fruit) generated by their actions – effects that traverse the flow of life and death, they could not go to the blissful Pure Land at the same time nor attain the bliss of Nirvana the same day. Facing such a fact the Buddha had no choice but said: “The Buddha does not deliver those who are negatively compelled by hetu-pratyaya (factors of dependent origination).” Because of their immaturity in relation to hetu-pratyaya, what they have done will make them suffer in Samsara. This is why it is termed “The world is as it is”. This, then, is also what the message means. Each person has to solve his or her own problems by him or her self. The Buddha could only tell us about the Path and make it known. If a person did not take it the Buddha could do nothing for him or her. This is similar to the case where a doctor asks you to take some medicine, but when you get back home you do not take it. The doctor has shown you the way, the method, but if you do not take it or cooperate he cannot help you any further. The reasons why the world is as it is are mentioned at various places in the Buddhist scriptures.

A Japanese Master, Baiyin, living at the turn of the sixteenth and seventeenth century, wrote a poem to express this indescribable matter: the world is as it is. He wrote:

“Such sutra about the world being as it is
had not been collected in Pippali-guha.
Kumarajiva could not interpret it,
Ananda had never heard of it.
The north wind blows window-paper,

the southern wild geese make the reeds white.
The moonlight on the mountain is cold, serene, and lonely,
the drifting clouds in the winter seem to fall down.
Even though a thousand Buddhas have attained
enlightenment,
It is just as it is with neither addition nor subtraction
of even the smallest bit.”

We all know that in Pippali-guha, India, five hundred of the Buddhas’s enlightened disciples held the first conference to collect his teachings and preserve them for posterity. Master Baiyin said: The reason why ‘the world is as it is’ had not be collected in Pippali-guha, is because it could not be expressed in words. Kumarajiva (344 – 413 or 350 – 409), though a great and accomplished translator, could not explain why the world is as it is even with his skillful wording. Hence the line “Kumarajiva could not interpret it.” Next, “Ananda had never heard of it”, that is, due to its indescribable nature, Ananda had never heard of such a sutra addressed by the Buddha. The next lines indicate the phenomena of the world as they are. For instance “The north wind blows window-paper” - the north wind noisily blows the paper stuck on window lattices. People then know that the cold wind is blowing. Could you explain why? No, you couldn’t do so. This is the world as it is. Such a scene is normal in the north, but in the south it would be “The southern wild geese make the reeds white.” Wild geese are white in color. When a flock of wild geese descend upon the waters of a reed-bed, they make the scene as white as snow.

What makes it as it is? Why are wild geese white in color? Such questions cannot be answered. “The moonlight on the mountain is cold, serene, and lonely, the drifting clouds in the winter seem to fall down.” The moonlight on the mountain makes people feel cold, but also peaceful and lonely. This is just the kind of experience people have in respect to such a scene. During the freezing weather the clouds in the sky seem to drift very quickly as if they would soon fall in flakes. All these phenomena are encompassed within the scope of “The world is as it is.” Why are things like this? How can we explain them? Even if we could examine and analyze everything, we have no choice, things will be as they are. We have to let it as it is because there is no second pattern to change it. That is why Master Baiyin ended his poem with the words that “Even though a thousand Buddhas have attained enlightenment, it is just as it is with neither addition nor subtraction of even the smallest bit.” Even though a thousand Buddhas have achieved the state of ultimate realization they can do nothing to the world as it is, they cannot add anything nor take anything away. They can do none other than be in accordance with it, with the state revealed by “Wu”. They must simply (although the way is seldom simple) confirm such a fact and take it as the Absolute Existence.

Today, in talking about “Wumenguan” I have used words and letters to explain the state of “Wu”. Is “Wumenguan” the same as this? It is not exactly the same. Because, “When we put it into words it becomes an illusion”, we are then in the state of illusion and separation. Illusion and separation,

however, can sometimes function a bit like the finger which points at the moon. Suppose we could not only see the finger but also the moon directly, the finger that pointed at the moon would then have been useful. Suppose someone takes the finger to be the moon, as the explanation of “Wumenguan” in this case, it would be harmful to others. This is by no means a complete account of the meaning of “Wumenguan”! Regarding “Wumenguan” we have to work on it, we have to penetrate it, and we have to find a crevice to enter at the time when we are confronting an extraordinarily high wall.

The Sixth Lecture

Sheng Huo Chan

(Chan in Daily Life)

Today's lecture is the last in this exchange of views on the Dharma. I have said time and again that Chan needs to be practiced, penetrated, and enlightened on one's own, and it does not rely on words or letters. Words and letters cannot explain what Chan is, but we have no alternative other than to use them. To explain why Chan is not dependent on words and letters we cannot but use words and letters.

Historically, there have been a great many different ways and approaches to Chan training. On the occasion that Shakyamuni addressed the assembled thousands on Mount Grdhrakuta and held up a flower, Mahakashyapa alone smiled and recognized what was happening. The transmission of the Dharma took place at that very moment. The Buddha's holding up of a flower and Mahakashyapa's reciprocating smile were just the ways, the simplest ways, to show what was going on. After Buddhism was introduced into China, the First Patriarch Bodhidharma (? – 628 or 536) taught the Second Patriarch Hui Ke (487 – 593) how to pacify the Mind at the Shaolin Temple, Mount Song. Having to overcome a great many difficulties, it took them considerable time until all difficulties transcended, the actual transmission was, again, achieved in an instant. That was also

one of the ways. The Sixth Patriarch Hui Neng (638 – 713) came from the South to meet the Fifth Patriarch Hone Ren (602 – 675) at Huangmei, Hubei, for his teaching. One day, after eight months as a novice, Hui Neng had the “Diamond Sutra” read to him by the Fifth Patriarch Hone Ren; on hearing it he instantly recognized the profound meaning of Chan. The Dharma was then handed down to him and he went back to the South. That, too, was another way. From then on, numerous ways were included in Chan training – for instance, lifting a finger, shouting out a word, or giving someone several blows with a stick. In all these various ways Chan masters simply helped guide practitioners to be free from all delusion and suffering and, thereby, to reach the state of enlightenment. As time went by, ways of training came to incorporate – we might say somewhat disrespectfully - all kinds of strange things. Yet, of course, considered respectfully – in their true light - we would say that because dharmas are infinite the ways of Chan training are also infinite. As I have mentioned nearly everyday during my stay here, according to statistics, in the Chan School there are altogether one thousand seven hundred different Gongan; they are all gates used in the training. That is to say, there are one thousand seven hundred different ways or approaches by which to enter the Chan tradition.

In recent times, because the Pure-Land School has been the predominant one in Buddhist circles, Chan masters have not but been able to guide practitioners to work on the Gongan “Who is it that prays to the Buddha.” In the last two or three hundred years this way of training has probably been

the most practicable one, and to some extent the most reliable one. Ever since practitioners began to work on “Who is it that prays to the Buddha”, it seems that the way of Chan training has become stable. When we consider this issue in depth we might wonder whether or not Chan training has come to an end? Recently though, the fact is that different ways of Buddhist training have been progressing - yet Chan training is still kept inside the meditation hall. In an effort to encourage training to be done outside the hall, and outside the temple – such that it makes relevant contact with everyday life, some accomplished masters and lay Buddhists have proposed new and innovative ways of practice, and developed many new concepts. We all know that “An Xiang (serenity) Chan”, as proposed and initiated by Mr. Li Gengyun, has been greatly welcomed, and is currently the most influential one in Taiwan. Lay Buddhists, especially those in cultural circles, eagerly practice his “An Xing Chan”, as do many young people. Another lay Buddhist, Mr. Li Yuansong, proposed and introduced “Xian Dai (modern times) Chan”. He has also realized that if Chan training is maintained only as it was in the old days, then perhaps someday it will die out. This is the reason why he has put forth the “Xian Dai Chan”.

The “Xian Dai Chan”, an influential way of training that some Buddhists and laity have both paid considerable attention to, has been developing over the last ten years or so. In the process of its development, however, a few Buddhists have come to have their doubts and certain reservations about it. This is because some of Mr. Li Yuansong’s ideas and his

drastic teachings, in certain areas, have departed somewhat from the traditional teachings of Buddhism. Being aware of this, and following the development of this controversy, we can see from the existence of various articles published in Taiwanese Buddhist journals in recent years, that “Xian Dai Chan” is now being challenged from within Buddhist circles, and by a number of scholars. Once, around six or seven years ago, I met Mr. Li Yuansong when he came on a special visit to Beijing. He recorded the occasion of our discussion about Chan in his book. Mr. Li greatly respects Master Xu Yun (1840 – 1959) – more popularly known in the West, according to the Chinese meaning of his Dharma name, as Empty Cloud. And, in fact, Mr. Li himself practices for seven or eight hours a day. Practitioners in his “Xian Dai Chan” community are very dedicated, and have attained a comparatively high degree of accomplishment. At the same time, a number of monks have taken part in the community, making a strong impact on society. The community, with a complete set of rules and regulations for its Sangha, possesses its own meditation hall and also a publishing house that publishes many books, newspapers and journals. Mr. Li has considerably extended the meaning and concept of the Sangha by opening it up to lay Buddhists. This is the point that has raised doubts in Buddhist circles. The debate on this issue is still very much a live one. We will have to wait and see how it develops and where it goes in the future.

At the age of eighteen, as one of Master Xu Yun’s disciples, I myself began to be on intimate terms with him. I should then, I suppose, have inherited the traditional way of Chan

training. In fact, due to the limited and limiting conditions of the time, I was not able to strive as hard as is necessary in order to achieve further progress in my self-training. Although for ten years or so I was very close to Master Xu Yun, for about five years we were busy with all sorts of labor, such as carrying water and chopping wood, compacting ground and building houses, sowing in the spring and harvesting in autumn, all according to the dictates of earning a livelihood and supporting ourselves. I still remember, at the age of sixteen or seventeen - like those young masters attending this lecture, I climbed a hill to chop wood, sold it all, and then brought back rice for dinner. It was only after dinner that I had any time to read sutras. Because during the daytime I had to do manual labor, I could do such reading only in the evening with the aid of a small oil lamp. Without physical labor I could not support myself, so the evening was the only time available for reading. Because the living conditions were difficult then, to carry out a systematic study or self-training was out of the question. After another three or four years I went to study at the State Buddhist Institute, and was all of a sudden involved in the political movements of the time. In 1959 Master Xu Yun passed away, which was felt as a great loss in Buddhist circles. During that period, for about ten odd years or so - and nearly twenty years before the “Cultural Revolution”, yet also during the “Cultural Revolution” itself, I was moved back and forth like a chess piece by all sorts of political maneuverings. Nevertheless, and in spite of these events, having entered the Buddhist monastic order at an early age, I always cherished and

aspired to realize the ultimate truth.

In fact, the issue of how to make the Chan Sect applicable to present society is, at the same time, the issue of how to make Buddhism applicable to modern times. It is not just a question of knowledge. Although, of course, through Dharma talks, it is vital to let people know what the Buddha taught, it is even more important to help contemporary people put that knowledge into practice, to teach them how to change self-centered views, and how to realize the ultimate truth through Buddhist teachings and practices. This is the reason why Buddhism should be applicable to the present society or why Buddhism should be modernized. As far as I remember, Professor Wang – who is present here today, has frequently addressed this topic under the title of, “The modernization of Buddhism for the sake of serving the needs of modern times”. How exactly then can we get Buddhism to serve the needs of modern times? We, the contemporary people, yearn for the Buddha’s teachings. Yet, even if there existed only one person interested in the teachings it would be the obligation of Buddhism to teach and guide that person. This is what the message, “bring Buddhism to serve the needs of modern times”, both means and entails. Even so, it cannot be taken as an all round solution to everything, as if it will completely transform present society. The message does not mean that. Today, Buddhism should meet the requirements of all those people who believe in Buddhism. As long as you believe in Buddhism, Buddhism is obligated to teach and guide you. However, that belief must be correctly guided. In other words, it is only under such proper guidance that belief can be active

and meaningful, can make valuable contributions to Buddhism, the country, society, people, and, in addition, benefit us as well. In order to instruct practitioners correctly, Buddhism needs to be subject to certain modifications, otherwise its applicability to today's society will be inadequate or inappropriate. I would therefore like to ask all of you to please think this over, from the perspectives of Dharma dissemination, religious belief, and, crucially, actual practice.

For the last twenty years or so, since the end of "Cultural Revolution", I have been carrying out work related to the dissemination of Buddhist culture and Buddhist education, such as editing and publishing a Buddhist journal. The work has its own limitations yet it is very beneficial to me. Doing my job as a chief editor, I get the opportunity to know what various readers want most, as they often write to us suggesting this and that or expressing their own ideas. In the process of doing my job, I am forced to think hard about how to guide or instruct the contemporary people, especially those who are in a state of hesitation concerning their belief in relation to Buddhism. This is a very important issue, I think.

After the "Cultural Revolution", compared to other religions, more and more people have become interested in Chan Buddhism and want to explore and study it. In any bookstore, we can find many books on the subject. I have not done the relevant statistics myself, but I have a strong impression that amongst all Buddhist books formally published, those relating to Chan Buddhism are certainly the most numerous. Those books, of course, are related to the

various different ways of training, such as the “Ru Lai (suchness) Chan”, “Zu Shi (Bodhidharma) Chan”, “Wen Zi (words and letters) Chan”, and “Ye Hu (wild fox) Chan”, and therefore express and elaborate upon different styles and their corresponding explanations. Given that there is much heated debate in relation to Chan Buddhism nowadays, it is not appropriate for those in Buddhist circles to remain silent. It is a Buddhist belief that by remaining silent one expresses agreement. “By maintaining silence in relation to something, that something will simply be as it is.” In this way we will accept whatever people say. This is not a correct attitude towards the issue. We have to respond to it. I think the response from within Buddhist circles has generally not been sufficient, that response being inadequate in terms of proportion, strength, and relevance; it has also been rather predictable. To my eyes it is clear that, on the one hand, people are now showing an increasing interest in Chan Buddhism whilst, on the other hand, they are tending to distort it to a certain extent. Under such circumstances, from the perspective of the Buddha’s teachings and, also, on the basis of what successive old masters have said, I have gained the insight that self-training should be conducted in everyday life. I thus propose the “Sheng Huo Chan” (or to be more precise what may be called in English “Chan in Daily Life”).

The notion of “Sheng Huo Chan” was first put forward in 1991, yet the idea was only formally presented at the First Summer Camp of Sheng Huo Chan held in 1993. I was very cautious at the time because I was afraid of being opposed by Buddhists and the laity. If that had been the case, the loss

would have been more than I could have stood. In fact, the idea is not against but in accord with the spirit of Buddhadharma, not against but in accord with the spirit of the Chan tradition, as such it has been attracting a lot of interest and winning support both within Buddhist circles and without. The Summer Camp of Sheng Huo Chan has been held continuously for the last eight years, and is continuing to have a stronger and stronger impact on society year after year.

So far I have mentioned the reason why I put forward the idea of Sheng Huo Chan. Now, let us come to what it is, the actual basis of Sheng Huo Chan. In relation to Sheng Huo Chan, there exist many ways of training. This is because Chan can be related to the Buddhadharma in many different ways. At the Bailin temple earlier this year, Mr. Wu Limin delivered a month-long series of lectures on the “Lankavatara Sutra”. The focus of the “Lankavatara Sutra” is the “five phenomena and three identities, eight consciousnesses and two selflessnesses”. When Mr. Wu Limin talked about the “five phenomena” he addressed a section entitled “The five phenomena and the Sheng Huo Chan”. I think that what he said was extremely relevant and it has greatly inspired us. Today, I am going to elaborate upon the Sheng Huo Chan on the basis of what he said. Why do I say so? I say this because most of you present here have studied Buddhist doctrine; also, masters, monks, and lay Buddhists here in Shanghai have reached a high level in the training. Therefore, it is better for me to address it in light of the doctrine – otherwise you might form a wrong impression, that Sheng Huo Chan is entirely of

my own making and not drawn or based, as it is, upon accepted doctrine.

The “five phenomena” then are the key focus of the “Lankavatara Sutra”, whilst the sutra itself was the very classical scripture that Master Bodhidharma used to confirm an enlightened Mind. The subject matter of the sutra is, as I mentioned above, the “five phenomena and three identities, the eight consciousnesses and two selflessnesses, and emptiness/non-emptiness and suchness”, with the “five phenomena” being the main topic. I think the best way to proceed is for me to address the Sheng Huo Chan on the basis of the “five phenomena”, and because the “Lankavatara Sutra” that addresses these was the classic used by Master Bodhidharma for Mind-to-Mind transmission. Also, I chose this sutra when compiling the “Seven Classical Sutras of Chan Buddhism”.

What are the “five phenomena”? They are “form, name, separation, wisdom, and suchness.” The first three are related to our life in the delusive world while the last two are related to life in the enlightened world. “Form, name, and separation” are the phenomena of ordinary life, while “wisdom and suchness” are the phenomena of Chan. The five phenomena are not arranged in any sequential order because they naturally overlap. In other words, they are one thing, not five different things. As long as a thing has form there will be a corresponding name for it. In so far as a particular thing has a name, we can get to know it. Knowing it at first with a separated and delusive Mind, it is referred to knowing from an unenlightened point of view. Suppose we look at a thing

from an enlightened perspective, that knowing then becomes wisdom. Seeing a thing in the light of wisdom is to see it as it exists, as it is, in accord with Absolute Existence. That is “suchness”. Anything, therefore, can be analyzed in terms of the five phenomena.

“Form” is the object we get to know. Form is the object-nature, indeed, the objective nature of all dharmas. It is the thing we give a name to. Name is simply the name of form. Take this teacup for example, we do not specifically say that it is a teacup; firstly we say that it is a cup and only then that it is a teacup. “Tea” here is the “name”. Based on the form and name, we then come to know the thing. This is separation, a cognitive process grounded in what is sometimes called delusion. This is because it is not a direct understanding of the thing itself from the point of dependent origination but, rather, a cognition of it guided by attachments; such cognition then is based on delusion and discrimination. It does not coincide with the Absolute Existence based as this is on dependent origination and emptiness. Nevertheless, it is possible to directly comprehend a thing’s nature and its Absolute Existence, that is, we can know this teacup as the combination of all its necessary conditions. After stripping all those conditions away one by one, we may ask: “Where then is the teacup?” It has no self-identity; it is simply a combination of causative conditions. In this way we can see through to the absolute nature of the thing. Such insight is wisdom. What we observe when looking with such an insight is “suchness” itself, the true actuality, the ultimate truth and Absolute Existence.

“Form, name, and separation” are life but also Chan, while “wisdom and suchness” are Chan but also life. If we were to separate the two completely this would not be what Sheng Huo Chan is about. What Sheng Huo Chan seeks to express and put forward is that life is Chan while Chan is life. Because all things, without exception, are involved in life and in Chan as well, life is therefore Chan and Chan is also life. How then can the five phenomena help to explain what Chan is? As the five phenomena are related to both the world and beyond, to both pure and impure aspects, I have been able to arrange my talk systematically based on them. Having previously talking about Sheng Huo Chan many times, I have gradually been able to sum up several key notions or “fundamental principles”. There are altogether four key notions: first, the Bodhi Mind; second, the insight of Prajna; third, the path of counting the breaths; and fourth, the Sheng Huo Chan. These days, those four “fundamental principles” are just what I have been talking about from the perspective of “insight” and “ability” (the ability one obtains through dedicated practice). The Bodhi Mind and the insight of Prajna belong to the category of “insight”, whilst the path of counting the breaths and Sheng Huo Chan belong to the “ability”. However, because in actual fact it is not so clear-cut, this is just a rough classification. We cannot simply say that the Bodhi Mind corresponds to or reflects only insight, because if one possesses the Bodhi Mind and also puts it into action, he then possesses “ability” as well. The insight of Prajna, the all round wisdom, the perfect wisdom, seems to stress “insight”, yet if we apply it to our life and use

it to instruct and guide our life it is, then, the “ability”. These considerations apply equally to the path of counting breaths and the Sheng Huo Chan.

We all know that the Bodhi Mind is the foundation, starting point and root of all Buddhist teachings, especially of the Mahayana teachings. If one practices any kind of training without a Bodhi Mind he will only be able to reach the state of Sravaka and Pratyeka-buddha; in fact, guided by mistaken ideas he may even begin to lose his way along a wrong or confused path. In short, the Bodhi Mind is none other than the four great vows we take everyday: “However innumerable beings are, I vow to save them. However inexhaustible the passions are, I vow to extinguish them. However immeasurable the dharmas are, I vow to master them. However incomparable the Buddha-truth is, I vow to attain it.” This is the actual embodiment of Bodhi Mind, the very content of Bodhi Mind. In addition, the ten vows of Bodhisattva Samantabhadra we read everyday in our morning practice are also the Bodhi Mind. A person without a Bodhi Mind could not – at the same time - have wisdom, loving-kindness (maitri), and compassion (karuna). In particular, he could not have loving-kindness and compassion, because he has not the will or determination of mind to deliver all sentient beings, to devote himself to society, mankind, and all its people, and to fear no sacrifice for the sake of all beings. Without a Bodhi Mind, his practice is no more than for the sake of his own peace and freedom.

I think, compared to all sentient beings, one person by him or herself, no matter who he or she may be, can only be

considered as secondary. This however, is an insight that contemporary Buddhists seldom comprehend or penetrate in practice. When we practice Buddhist training we often think only in personal terms of what I can or should do or what I can or would get; we seldom think of how to cultivate a Bodhi Mind through practice. To have a Bodhi Mind, we have to put Buddhist teachings into practice for the sake of saving all sentient beings, to lift them out of their sufferings and bring them happiness. That is: “When all beings are released from suffering and enjoy happiness I myself am amongst them.” Grounding our study and practice upon such motivation we will, also, have a broad and open-minded perspective and, having the same objectives, aspirations and benefits, we will enjoy the support and mutual understanding existing between one another. The Bodhi Mind will serve us as a guide, a target and motivation for us to take up the path, to practice the training, to disseminate the Dharma and, indeed, to do whatever we do. That is why we must have a Bodhi Mind. In the Buddhist scriptures there are a great many sayings related to the Bodhi Mind. Why? It is because the Buddha and successive old masters stressed time and again the importance of Bodhi Mind.

Next there is the “insight of Prajna”. Having a Bodhi Mind, we then need to use Prajna, the correct view, to evaluate what we say and what we do. The wisdom we demonstrate, confirm, and attain after eradicating the attachments of ego, and the attachments to Dharma itself, is Prajna, the insight of Prajna. Have or have not Buddhists, including myself, eliminated such attachments? Is our insight a correct view or

not? To put it another way: every Buddhist, whether or not he or she has reached such a state already, should bear in mind the idea that, “even if it is beyond what seems achievable, the aspiration should always be there in my mind.” Stick to this idea and do not depart from it, otherwise we will make mistakes. As long as we constantly maintains this aspiration in mind, we will eventually achieve success.

Metaphorically, we refer to the insight of Prajna as the “eyes”. For instance, we refer to the three trainings of precept, meditation, and wisdom as the “feet of precepts, the body of meditation, and the eyes of wisdom”. That is, the precepts are represented by the two feet, meditation by the body, and wisdom by the eyes. With only feet and body but no eyes where could we go? Without feet and body the correct view would find no support, and nothing to carry or transport it; how then could it find a way to be put into practice? The three trainings should therefore be stressed at the same time. The insight of Prajna, the correct view, is what we must keep in mind during any kind of training. On the noble eightfold path, the correct view stands in first place; it is very important. Prajna is the last of the Six Paramitas, as such it stands in a position of control, again, it is also very important.

Thirdly there is the path of counting the breaths. This issue is relatively complicated, and can't be easily explained in words. Ever since the time of the Buddha, up through the period of successive old masters, and until now, the path of counting the breaths was, and still is, our basic training method. In Sanskrit the term for counting the breaths is

“Anapana”. Just breathing, how natural; you can see then the natural grace and excellence that the state of Chan itself reflects. Even so, to practice we have to follow a simple way of training. In fact, very often the greater something’s depth and profundity, the more normal it actually is; the more normal it is, perhaps, the harder it is to achieve. The matter of counting breaths, the inhalation and exhalation, is so immediate and so intimate to us that we feel it at every moment. What gives us life? What sustains that life? It is the breaths. Old monks often say: “As soon as breathing stops another round of life begins.” You see, the breath, the inhalation and exhalation, is so important to us. But when we try to distinguish, understand or count these important and simple breaths that are so vital to us, it is by no means an easy task.

The most excellent and detailed explanation for the way of counting the breaths is provided by the Tiantai School. We have an expert of the Tiantai School, Professor Wang Leiquan, here today. In the Tiantai School there are five or six books specifically dedicated to the Chan Paramita. The path of counting the breaths is a major concern of the Chan Paramita. In our training we need to have a farsighted objective and correct view. As for the actual way of practice, it should be both extremely practicable and reliable so that our self-training can proceed in the right direction, and produce meaningful consequences or results. At the Ulka-mukha ceremony of feeding the hungry ghosts, when we call for the disgraced monks (who have become hungry ghosts due to their ill deeds), we chant: “Do not indulge in

empty discussion, by using common words like ‘yellow flowers’ and ‘green bamboo’, to talk about the true explanation as to what is the ultimate ground of being.” We should not indulge in such empty talk; it cannot help us truly understanding the meaning of life and death. We have to apply the profound teachings to our daily practice and purify our Mind through the training. This is the very objective of self-training.

Our Mind and body exist as an inseparable whole. There are a great many ways to purify the body and Mind. For us, the path of counting the breaths is the simplest and dearest one. Regarding contemporary people, no matter whether they are Buddhists or the laity, this way of training is neutral in the sense that it need not necessarily be a religious practice or, indeed, even be considered as having any religious characteristics or connotations. In practicing it, you will achieve and attain something both meaningful and beneficial. It produces concrete results no matter whether you believe it or not. Even if you do not believe in Buddhism you can still practice counting and following the breaths. In doing so you will certainly attain benefits. Through what you have attained you will come to see that what the Buddha taught is true. At that time, it would not be too late for you to believe in it. The Buddha’s teachings instruct us to practice the path of counting the breaths so as to purify our Minds and, also teach us to practice Asthi-samjna (the way of contemplating the impurity of skeleton) so as to purify our bodies. Today, I will lay stress upon the path of counting the breaths.

What I have just been speaking about is part of the oldest

way of training, called the “five contemplations to cut off delusions and hindrances”. The five contemplations are: Asubha smṛti (contemplating impurity), Maitri smṛti (contemplating loving-kindness and compassion), Idampratyayata pratiyasamutpada smṛti (contemplating dependent origination), Dhatuprabhedā smṛti (contemplating egolessness), and Anapana smṛti (contemplating the breaths). They are techniques used to cut off delusions and hindrances and make the Mind peaceful. For those who have a distracted Mind it is better to practice the path of counting the breaths. How then do we practice it? We have to closely combine or harmonize our thoughts, consciousness, and breaths together. Buddhist meditation is a practice common to all schools, all of which, including the Chan School, stress the path of counting the breaths. The Fourth and Fifth Patriarchs taught us time and time again how to regulate our breathing. Bodhidharma’s way of “breathing both deeply and rhythmically” was one such path for counting the breaths, in its case, emphasizing the “ability”. The aim of “breathing both deeply and rhythmically” is to transform both inharmonic inhalation and exhalation into harmonious inhalation and exhalation. The wind, gasp, and gas breath phases are inharmonic whilst only the last type, the breath phase, is harmonious. “Breathing both deeply and rhythmically” is of course related not only to “ability” but also to “insight”. From the perspective of “ability”, what Bodhidharma taught was also the path of counting the breaths. Bodhidharma taught: “Facing a wall is the way to pacify the Mind.” To gaze at a wall is to make the breaths

harmonious.

To practice Buddhist meditation we have to focus our attention on the point, the shift, between inhalation and exhalation. What is this moment of transition between inhalation and exhalation? It is the moment that the breath stays inside. The breath consists of three stages: incoming, shift - staying inside, and outgoing. We have to focus our attention at the stage of the breath's internal residing and then our Mind can be truly pacified. For those who are relatively mature and advanced in self-training, the longer the moment they maintain between inhalation and exhalation the more possibility there is for them to reach Samadhi or, in other words, the closer they are to the state of Samadhi. If we could hold this moment of transition between inhalation and exhalation, we would at once reach the state of Samadhi. Therefore, we have to clearly distinguish between now the incoming, now the internally residing, and now the outgoing breaths, so as to maintain our consciousness awareness as coinciding with the breaths, that is, we must allow the two – breathing and consciousness - to become synchronized.

In our practice what should we count? we can count either the inhalation or exhalation, both will do. In general though, it is better to count the exhalations. Why? Because we have foul or stagnant air inside our body, so it is better to let it out. When we focus our attention on exhalation, we then purposely let it out from all our body organs. Count the exhalation alone and do not be concerned about the inhalation or holding but be clearly aware of the process - now the breath is incoming, now it is residing inside, now it

is outgoing. Where and how should we keep the breath? It is a gradual process of practice. At the beginning, it is impossible for us to breathe deeply into the pubic region - two and a half inches below the naval. The longer we practice the more mature we become. Then our breathing will gradually change from a shallow, rough, and short pattern into a deep, smooth, and long pattern. At first we may breathe in the chest region, by and by we should breathe deep down to the pubic region, there is no need to lead the breaths further down. We should consider this point, because in fact we cannot breathe any further down. In practice, we cannot start breathing down into the pubic region overnight. It takes at least three to five months of intensive training to be able to properly breathe deep down to the pubic region. If we cannot do it at first, what should we do? No matter how shallow the breaths are do not practice by force. To do so may be harmful. We have to practice step by step, making our breaths deeper, smoother, and longer, gradually leading them further down to the pubic region and then getting them suffused into the entire body. In this way we would be able to breathe without our nose, because all the eighty-four thousand pores of our body would become passages for our breaths. Actually they are in fact passages for our breaths. Though without having truly achieved success in our training it is hardly likely that we will be able to get those pores adequately functioning.

Having reached a certain degree of accomplishment in our training, we can bring our body's potential into play. As a result, our Mind would be pacified and our body's potential would gradually reveal itself. At this stage, we are in good

health, full of vitality, with developed wisdom, and perhaps occasionally encountering paranormal powers. If we really do encounter such powers we have to be careful to use them appropriately. Suppose someone could see clearly how much money there was in another's pocket, he then uses the transporting technique he has learnt to remove it from the pocket. We do not support the use of such techniques. Occasionally we may see something invisible, yet we cannot simply use the paranormal powers willy-nilly. If we did so we would lose them. This is, of course, just a joke. The most important thing in our training is to pacify the Mind, to develop our wisdom, and to wean ourselves away from all delusions and passions. As long as we can cut off delusions and sever our attachments to our various desires, we need not bother about whether or not we have acquired wisdom or whether or not we have reached the state of Samadhi - these are surely what we would attain. As long as delusions and passions are slowly killed off there is a corresponding increase in Samadhi and wisdom. Delusions and passions cast their shadow over wisdom so that wisdom is unable to reveal itself. At such a time as we destroy or get rid of our delusions and passions our primordial Mind or primitive wisdom will reveal itself.

In the books of the Tiantai School concerning the five contemplations, the way of counting the breaths is also called "adjusting the breaths". When practicing sitting meditation, at first we have to pay attention to the "five aspects of adjustment". They are: sleep, food, body, breath, and the Mind. Today, my emphasis is upon adjusting the breaths. At

the beginning when we practice the way of counting the breaths, we breathe in a short, rough manner; sometimes we can hardly breathe through the nose at all and our breaths are labored, rather like blowing air through bellows. This is called the wind phase of breaths; it is an inharmonious phase. As we continue to practice for a period of time the wind phase changes into the gasp phase. This is irregular: now quicker, now slower; it is also an uneven and inharmonious phase. Then comes the third phase, gas. What is the difference between the gasp phase and the gas phase? At the gas phase stage the incoming and outgoing breaths are more or less stable, but we can clearly feel them because they are thick. These three phases of wind, gasp, and gas are referred to as the “inharmonious phases”. In the fourth one, called “breath”, the breaths are long, slender, and continuous, we only partly feel them. At this stage the breaths are relatively even, thin, and peaceful. Please bear in mind what I have mentioned so that you can get your breaths well adjusted and regulated. This is the breath phase.

In practice, it takes a certain period of time for us to gradually adjust the breaths, changing the three inharmonious phases into a harmonious one. The way of adjusting breaths is a prerequisite for all Buddhist trainings; it is not just practiced by the Chan School for the attainment of Samadhi. Those who pray to Amitabha also have to regulate the breaths. Without doing so they could hardly achieve a peaceful state of Mind and would, consequently, have difficulty in praying to Amitabha. I once gave a talk in the Guangji temple entitled “Praying to Amitabha and the five aspects of adjustments”. In

that talk, I mentioned how to effectively coordinate and regulate the breaths whilst chanting the name Amitabha. Those who practice the Pure-Land School can try to apply it. It will surely be conducive to the peacefulness of both their body and Mind. I think I need not go into further details about the path of counting the breaths; let us now turn instead to the Sheng Huo Chan.

Fourthly then there is the Sheng Huo Chan. Through my personal study and practice during recent years, I have been able to formulate four major principles in relation to Sheng Huo Chan training. Most of you here will probably have heard of them. What are these four? The first major principle is, “live what we believe.” Why do I say this? I think this is the most important issue for Buddhist practitioners. Usually we do not relate our belief to everyday life, and do not put that belief into everyday life. We often separate our faith from our life, thinking that the moment we are in a temple we are faithful, and that when we get back home we may act in another way. We are Buddhists in our meditation room at home yet someone else when we buy vegetables at the marketplace, or when we mix with other people. This shows that we do not live what we believe. For a person who truly lives what he believes, the practice of self-training is a full-time occupation - every moment, every second, twenty four hours a day. Therefore, this first principle, of “living what we believe”, is very important, a most important issue for Buddhist practitioners.

The second major principle is, “practice self-training right now at the present moment.” Do not think that self-training is

only to be practiced when we have daily monastic lessons, when we practice sitting meditation in the meditation hall, when we burn incense during Buddhist activities, or when we chant sutras in the morning or in the evening at home. If that were the case, the time we devoted to our self-training would be too short, too little time. In the temple monks usually spend most of the daytime studying and in doing their jobs; they chant sutras only in their morning and evening sutra chanting lessons, lasting two hours all together. What should they do at the time when they are not chanting sutras? For those elder, retired lay Buddhists, they might possibly pray to Amitabha all day long, counting their beads. For young people, however, there is the necessity of having to go to work everyday. How should they carry on their self-training? To deal with this matter, as long as they are always mindful at every moment, always aware of the present moment, then they would surely be engaged in self-training right then and in the present moment. As long as they always begin at the present moment, always live in the present moment and make the present moment as the first step, then they would surely have self-training practiced at all times. To be mindful right now at the present moment, second by second, all day long, means to practice self-training all the time, continuously, without interruption or exception. This is the only way by which we can truly become a part of the Buddhadharma, the only way we can truly personify the Buddhadharma. Mr. Li Gengyun, the initiator of “An Xiang (serenity) Chan”, argues for the personification of Buddhadharma. To personify the Buddhadharma means to

remain peaceful at all times with the Buddhadharma. This is a principle we can readily apply. The only thing is to try to remember it and gradually put it into action; then, each time we do forget we must make it clear once again, and again put it into practice.

The third major principle is, “integrate the Buddhadharma with this world.” The Buddhadharma is not something to be kept just inside temples, something we can clearly distinguish or separate from the phenomenal world. In fact, in the absence of the world there would be no Buddhadharma. The phenomenal world represents the Buddhadharma itself. The phenomenal world can only be purified through the Buddhadharma; only then can we act transcendently. All of us well remember, or even recite fluently, what the Sixth Patriarch Hui Neng (638 – 713) said; yet we cannot put his words into action. He said: “The kingdom of Buddha is in this world, within which enlightenment is to be sought. To seek enlightenment by separating from this world is as absurd as asking for a rabbit’s horn.” This means that if we wish to be enlightened in anywhere apart from this world, we are no more than asking for a rabbit’s horn. A rabbit has no horns. Suppose it had it would not be a rabbit. Separated from this world, the Buddhadharma would be something else, or we could say, there would be no Buddhadharma. Where is the Buddhadharma? It exists in all daily experiences, in what we wear and what we eat, in all these kinds of normal aspects of day-to-day life. We seem hardly to understand this point of view; instead, we often think that these kinds of normal aspects of day-to-day life are not Buddhadharma but, rather,

something else in the phenomenal world. What is the Buddhadharma then? What the Buddhadharma reveals is the same as that revealed in this world, but it is really the Buddhadharma. I am giving this lecture here and you are listening. What is it? It is something happening in the phenomenal world, but it is also the Buddhadharma. As long as we can appreciate it in the light of the Buddhadharma we will be able to integrate it with this world.

Suppose we can't integrate the Buddhadharma with the world, suppose we take the Buddhadharma only as something existing inside temples, or even purposely seek to lock it up inside temples, the Buddhadharma would then cease to develop. Regarding the issue of how to disseminate the Buddhadharma or how to integrate it with this world, there is still quite a long way, indeed a very long way, for us to go! In this respect, we have to learn from Christianity and Catholicism, both of whom are very much eager to spread the Word of Almighty God, the Creator of the universe. They take every opportunity to disseminate their religious doctrines. With their proactive and positive attitude towards their faith, they set a fine example for us to follow. We, monks and lay Buddhists, on the contrary, would be impatient if we were asked questions about Buddhism by three different persons. We would simply tell them to pray to Amitabha, but without explaining why. Young masters, in particular, tend to blush with embarrassment when someone inquires of them time and again about Buddhism. Maybe they are unable to provide answers in the face of such questioning or, perhaps, they do not want to give an answer.

We have to change such attitudes and behavior; otherwise the Buddhist voice will become weaker and weaker.

The area covered by the old Yufo temple, together with the additional piece of land you have bought, is small and limited. Could we enclose the Buddhadharma within this small area? No, we could not. We have to let it grow outside the temple. Now, as far as political regulations go, all religious activities should be carried out in monasteries and temples or in places specifically set aside or designated for religious activities. When people come to our temple, we must receive them warmly and tell them the Buddha's teachings in an active way, so as to make them feel happy and motivated to learn the teachings. As we stay in the temple nearly all the time we have to disseminate the teachings amongst those who willingly come to the temple. We have to print more scriptures or pamphlets expressing the basic teachings and practices in the hope of getting more and more people known about Buddhism. When people come to our temple, we can give each of them a free copy. Whether or not they do in fact read it is not our primary concern; we give according to the saying: "*Do* care about what we sow but *not* what we reap." As long as each person takes a copy away, someone will eventually read it. It is all right even if he does throw it away. Do not feel bad, thinking: "Hey, how could he throw the scripture away? It is really an unpardonable sin!" Do not bring such ideas to mind, because there are still many issues we have not fully understood concerning the Buddhist teachings. For instance, the sin of shedding the blood of a Buddha, is one of the five great sins yet, nevertheless, there is

a confining context for it: “the sin of shedding the blood of a Buddha through ill will.” Had someone destroyed the scripture, messed up the Buddha statue, or even ruined the statue, we would take it as something terrible, as “shedding the blood of a Buddha”. This would also horrify all those present at the time. In fact, he might conceivably have done these things accidentally and feel immediately repentant at what he has done. If so, it is okay. There is no need for us to be worried about this kind of thing. Better to print as many scriptures and pamphlets as possible, so as to let the public learn the Buddhist teachings. This is both a job of education and, simultaneously, a job of public relations. We have to do this job well, under the guidance of Buddhadharma.

As far as I know, when people, from all walks of life – no matter whether they are government officials or members of the general public - come to visit our Bailin (cypress trees) temple, they do not ask for anything other than books. They often ask us to prepare books for them. Why? They want to know about Buddhism. They want to understand what the doctrine really means because such a large temple has been constructed recently in which many monks, young monks in particular, live. They want to be aware of what is going on inside. As they do not know, they want to learn through books. We, on the other hand, have to let them know, and also welcome the opportunity to let them study. As long as we have plenty of books or booklets concerning the basic teachings and practices printed, people will be able to take a copy when they come to worship and burn incense. Monasteries and temples in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and

Singapore have done an excellent job in this respect. They prepare piles of books there for taking away free of charge. When we print, it is not necessary to pay too much attention to delicate workmanship. At the same time, in order to encourage people to read, we have to be aware of printing quality. Without good quality printing people may be discouraged from reading. In addition, books or booklets we are going to print should be easy to understand, should be in line with what the Buddha taught, and should befit the social environment of the times and the mental disposition of the people. By paying careful attention to these matters we can gradually help the Buddhadharma to become integrated with the world.

As I often mention, the religious policy of our country does not allow us to spread the Buddha's teachings outside of monasteries and temples, but the Government does not prohibit or constrain us from doing so inside. Regarding the policy given to us, we have to make the best use of it. To fully implement what the policy permits is in fact to show the freedom we Chinese people enjoy in the pursuit of religion. This suggests that the religious policy is not a forced one. We have freedom to choose our own religious faith. When people, no matter whether they are Chinese or foreigners, come to our monasteries or temples, if we offer books or booklets to them they will feel very happy. I think, because the Yufu temple is located in Shanghai, it can act as a window to the outside world. It is a good idea to try to get the information we have available in Chinese translated into English versions. For instance, produce an English version of the history of the

Yufu temple or the contributions made by Master Zhen Chan (1916 – 1995) to both Buddhism and society. Produce an English version of the basic Buddhist teachings and practices. Then, with the information available in English, when foreign guests come for a visit we can offer them copies in English. In this way we can help them to know and better understand about Buddhism in China today. This latter point is also very important. We have to let people outside of our country see the very fact of Buddhism's existence and growth here. This is important because some of those people frequently condemn us for our lack of religious freedom and our perceived lack of human rights. There is a lot of work we could do in this respect, all of which is within the scope of Sheng Huo Chan.

The fourth major principle is, to “keep close links with all beings.” This is something we have to constantly bear in mind, because no single individual could live alone without other beings. This is a fact of common sense that everybody knows. However, the point is that to know about it is not the same thing as putting it into action. What does the message “keep close links with all beings” mean? Separate from all beings there could be no individual existence. We live our lives in society and in a community that is like a net, with us the meshes. Suppose there is no net, how then could the meshes exist? How could an individual live alone? In other words, each of us is just like a drop of water in a vast ocean. To isolate a drop of water from the ocean would cause it to dry up in less than an hour. An individual is small and negligible. Collective power is infinite. Therefore, at all

times, we have to bear in mind that each one of us is just one amongst countless beings. A person cannot depart somewhere, away from all beings, but must live together with all others. The Buddha himself once said “I am among the monks.” This means he took himself to be one of the Sangha. In his teachings the Buddha also made use of this metaphor, that a drop of water cannot be isolated from the ocean. Once the drop of water is removed or separated from the ocean, it will dry up. A person can’t live without collective supports. A person can do nothing if he or she separates him or herself apart from all beings.

Now, let me repeat the four major principles of Sheng Huo Chan training once again. They are as follows: 1) Live what we believe; 2) Practice self-training right now at the present moment; 3) Integrate the Buddhadharma with this world; and 4) Keep close links with all beings.

Next, there is also a four-line statement I’d like to mention as a motto we should keep in mind. Being Buddhist practitioners, what do we truly believe in? We say that we believe in Buddhism. However, often we think that to worship Buddha statues made of clay or wood is to act in accordance with our belief. We think we are Buddhists because we have entered the Buddhist monastic order and become disciples of certain masters. We think we are faithful because we are practicing some sort of training. All these things, of course, are ways to express our belief, but they do not cover its full meaning. We have at least to live up to the four-line motto, so as to truly realize what we believe in, and to embody what a right faith is. The four lines of this motto

are as follows.

First, “take the Triratna (the Three Treasures: Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha) as the very core of right faith.” That is, the Three Treasures are the key foundations upon which we set up our right faith.

Second, “take the Law of Cause and Effect as the criterion of right faith.” Those who believe in Buddhism must feel sure of the Law of Cause and Effect. If not, how can they say they are Buddhists? There is a joke in Buddhist circles. It is a hurtful joke that I, personally, do not wish to have heard. However, some people do tell it. It goes like that: “Lay Buddhists are afraid of the Law of Cause and Effect; monks are afraid of lay Buddhists; and the Law of Cause and Effect is afraid of monks.” This joke makes us feel extremely embarrassed. “The Law of Cause and Effect is afraid of monks” implies that monks do not feel certain about the Law. I hope we will do our best to turn this unfortunate tendency around. Every monk must believe, totally, in the Law. Whatever he does he must bear the Law in mind, and must not blame the Law wrongly or mistakenly. It is very good for lay Buddhists to completely believe in the Law. They learn the Buddha’s teachings from monks. Monks, therefore, have to believe in the Law first. As long as we monks truly believe in and follow the Law we can truly set fine examples for others; we can truly act as models for the four types of Buddhist community. Whatever we do we must take the Law as the criterion, because the Law is a standard, a specified scale against which our belief can be judged and measured.

Third, “take Prajna (wisdom) as the Dharma eyes of right

faith.” There should be a specific form of insight by which we show our right faith. That is Prajna - wisdom.

Fourth, “take Nirvana as the ultimate destination of right faith”. Being Buddhist practitioners, each of us wants to eventually attain release. What is release? It is going beyond our passions, going beyond worldly matters, and going beyond life and death. It is not a matter of attaining release to or in some other place, but about achieving release right here at this very moment. Suppose we all went elsewhere, who then would manage this world? Who would deliver all beings from their sufferings? To attain or achieve release is to go beyond. To attain release is to be purified. Going beyond this world, going beyond life and death, and going beyond all the passions is both what release refers to and what it is.

The above mentioned four-line motto is what we as Buddhist practitioners should live up to. Today’s lecture is the last in this series of exchanges. I have simply spoken out as the ideas have come to my mind. It is, therefore, somewhat out of order. Lastly, I want to briefly summarize the meaning of Sheng Huo Chan.

The objective of Chan training is no more than the cutting off of sufferings. Where do those sufferings come from? They come from our ignorance and delusion. With enlightenment and the guidance of wisdom we would no longer feel such pain. What is enlightenment? It is the state of being enlightened. It is right view, right intention, and right mindfulness. In our daily life we must attempt to gradually achieve enlightenment through an approach of being always mindful in the present moment. That state of

mindfulness must then be kept going in a continuous and steady way. This is what we should do in order to maintain the practice in our everyday life. In other words, we have to maintain our practice progressing in a continuous and steady way, harmonizing the practice with everyday life. This way of training is what the Sheng Huo Chan proposes, that is, to keep practicing in our everyday life, to be always mindful to the basic truths of existence, to be always well aware of our every act and every thought, moment by moment, and to have right view, right intention and right mindfulness at all times throughout our life. This is what the Sheng Huo Chan represents.

As long as we can be always mindful in the present moment, in whatever we do and in whatever we say, as long as we can maintain our Mind in accord with the Buddha, Dharma, and precepts, we are right now in the Pure-Land. When we speak with such enlightenment, what we say must be pure and soft and full of loving-kindness and compassion. This is the way by which we are able to maintain the purity of what we say, and to purify what we say. When we act with such enlightenment what we do must involve selfless devotion, helping others, and being friendly towards others. This is the way by which we are able to maintain the purity of our actions, and to purify what we do. With enlightenment we can maintain a clear and dynamic Mind; we can break up our three inner poisons of greed, hatred, and ignorance; we can reach a merciful and benevolent state of Mind; and, we can willingly dedicate ourselves to others. This is the way by which we are able to maintain the purity of our thoughts, and

to purify what we think. Diligently practice the three trainings (precepts, meditation, and wisdom), gradually break up the three poisons (greed, hatred, and ignorance), and purify the three actions (what we say, what we do, and what we think). These are tasks for our Buddhist trainings, and tasks we have to implement in our everyday life. The Buddha's teachings are not apart from this world. The aim of the teachings is to purify, upgrade, and transcend this world. Chan training, by the same token, cannot be apart from this world; it cannot be apart from our life. Away from our life, away from this world, what could we break up and what could we achieve in our training? Away from our life, away from this world, our training would have no target, like a castle in the air high above solid ground. We have, therefore, to be fully aware of this point, that Buddhism should benefit the needs of society and contemporary practitioners. Buddhism should disseminate the Dharma and help all beings in line with what the Buddha taught and what the present society and people need. For all these above mentioned reasons, we have to make further improvements. We actively advocate Living Buddhism and the Sheng Huo Chan, which requires practitioners to conduct self-training in everyday life and to live life in an enlightened way.

Lastly, I want to emphasize once again what I often talk about, that is, the four basic aspects an individual - no matter whether a Buddhist or member of the public - must bear clearly in mind. They are faith, cause-and-effect, conscience, and morality. A person who has religious belief should put those four aspects into action. Those who do not have any

religious belief should do what their conscience asks them to do and should do everything in accord with morality, because this is the basic quality of a human being. What kind of role does Buddhism play in society? I often say that the role Buddhism plays in society is to assure people of their conscience. As long as each person has a clear and active conscience our society can be stable, can develop, and can progress day by day. Without such a clear and active conscience, the whole of society will invariably tend towards increasing disorder, conflict and growing corruption. I hope that all the monks and lay Buddhists here today, including myself, will do our best to play the role of assuring people of their conscience.

Amitabha!

Thank you!

Postscript

This manuscript was transcribed from the recordings made when I delivered these six lectures at the Yufo temple in Shanghai. In order to keep the oral characteristic there are a number of unnecessary repetitions or phrases that aren't grammatically perfect. It was my personal intention to revise the manuscript before publication. I could not actually find time to review it because we were in a hurry to get it printed for participants of the Ninth Summer Camp of Sheng Huo Chan. I sincerely hope that readers will let us know of any errors or misprints in the book, so that we can correct them when we get it reprinted again.

Jing Hui
Abbot of Bailin Temple

Hebei, CHINA
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Glossary

The First Lecture: What is Chan

六度	Six Paramitas
四禅八定	Catvari-dhyanani
佛	the Buddha, or Shakyamuni
摩诃迦叶	Mahakashyapa
菩提达磨	Bodhidharma (?-628 or 536)
公案	Gongan (koan)
义理	doctrinism
安心法门	Path of Pacifying the Mind
道场	Bodhimandala
契理契机	be in line with the Buddha's teachings and in light of the social environment of the times and the mental disposition of people
生死	life-death (The term "life-death" used here means Samsara in Sanskrit, which is in contrast to Nirvana.)
烦恼	klesa (all the mental functions and morally defiling worldly passions and afflictions that prevent a person from being enlightened)
阿弥陀佛	Amitabha
福田衣	kasapa (robe)

十力	Ten Forces
四无所畏	Four Fearlessnesses
三身	Three Bodies
十方世界	Ten Directions of space
庄严国土利乐有情	purify the Buddha-Land and benefit all sentient beings

The Second Lecture: Bodhidharma's Gate

楞伽经	Lankavatara Sutra
话头	specific word
禅机	state that reveals itself in line with the truth
二入四行	twofold entrance to the Tao and four acts
理入	Entrance by Reason
行入	Entrance by Conduct
三受	three states of Vadanah (sensation)
缘起法	Law of Dependent Origination, or Law of Dependent Arising
因果律	Law of Cause and Effect
十大愿王	Bodhisattva Samantabhadra
实有	Absolute Reality
五蕴	five Panca-Skandhas (aggregates)
实相	Absolute Existence
缘起性空	dependent arising and emptiness in

真性	nature
十法界	True Nature
声闻	tenfold Dharma
缘觉	Sravaka
真实	Pratyeka-buddha
无表色	Absolute Reality
色法	Avijnapti-rupa (the non-revealable)
戒体	Rupadharma (the phenomenal world)
八关斋戒	faith and resolution to keep precepts
	Astanga Samanvagatopavasa (the
	eightfold precepts observed by lay
	Buddhists

The Third Lecture: Dao Xin's Gate

达摩	Bodhidharma (? - 628 or 536)
楞伽经	Lankavatara Sutra
印心	affirmation of an enlightened Mind by
	a master
一行三昧	Ekavyuda-Samadhi (Samadhi of
	Specific Mode)
文殊说般若经	Discourse on the Prajnaparamita Sutra by
	Bodhisattva Manjusri
见地	insight
功夫	ability (the ability one obtains

理入	through dedicated practice)
行入	Entrance by Reason
念佛禅	Entrance by Conduct
	Nian Fo (chanting the name of a Buddha) Chan
释迦佛	Shakyamuni
阿弥陀佛	Amitabha
药师佛	Bhaisajyaguru
阿众佛	Aksobhya
成就佛	Susiddhikara
文殊师利	Bodhisattva Manjusri
摩诃般若波罗密经	Pancavimsati Sahasrika Prajnaparamita Sutra
等持	maintenance
大势至菩萨念佛圆通章	Maha-Sthama-Prapta's
Attainment	of Buddhahood through Chanting the Name of a Buddha
实相	Absolute Existence
普贤观经	Samantabhadra Sutra
空与有	emptiness and matter
性与相	Ultimate Reality and form
缘起性空	dependent origination and emptiness in nature
大品般若经	Pancavimsati Sahasrika Prajnaparamita Sutra

观无量寿经	Sutra on the Sixteen Contemplations
十六观经	Sutra on the Sixteen Contemplations
法界	Dharma-dhatu
三十二相	thirty-two phases
八十种好	eighty good deeds
十力	ten powers
四无畏	four fearlessnesses
出家人	Bhikkhu (monk) or Bhikkhuni (nun)
真如	Tathagata
傅大士	Shanhui Fuxi (497 – 569)
弥勒菩萨	Bodhisattva Meitreya
应化	sambhoga-kaya
布袋和尚	Master Qici (? – 916)
法华经	Saddharma Pundarika Sutra (the Lotus Sutra)
坛经	Tan Sutra
三界	three realms
四生	four types of birth
三类	three species of beings
阿弥陀经	Amitabha Sutra

The Fourth Lecture: Hui Neng's Gate

梵网经	Brahmajala Sutra
义学	(education in terms of the intellectual knowledge)
如来	Tathagata
法相宗	Dharmalakṣana School
华严宗	Avatamsaka School
天台宗	Tiantai School
三论宗	Three-Sastra School
知客	monk in charge of reception
坛经	Tan Sutra
四十二章经	Sutra of Forty-Two Chapters
无念	thoughtlessness
无相	non-objectivity
无住	non-attachment
大品般若经	Pancavimsati Sahasrika Prajnaparamita Sutra
金刚经	Diamond Sutra
真如	Tathagata
禅源诸诠集都序	Prelude for the Works on the Five Sects of Chan Buddhism
实相	Absolute Existence
入道安心要方便门	Easy Path of Pacifying the Mind to the Tao

维摩经	Vimalakirti Nirdesa Sutra
般若理论	Prajna theory
鸠摩罗什	Kumarajiva (344 – 413 or 350 – 409)
二障	internal and external hindrances
大乘	Mahayana
小乘	Hinayana

The Fifth Lecture: Wumenguan

密宗	Mantra School
灵山	Grdhrakuta
三阿僧祇劫	Asamkhya
婆罗门教	Brahmanism
梵天	Mahabrahmadeva
法界	Dharma-dhatu
般若无知论	On Unknowable Nature of Prajna
三论宗	Three-Sastra School
偈子	stanza (appreciatory verses)
缘起性空	Dependent Origination and Emptiness of Ultimate Reality
公案	Gongan (koan)
业识	delusions
颂古百则	A Hundred Stanzas in Praise of Gu
碧岩录	Blue Cliff Record
文字禅	Wen Zi (words and literature) Chan

葛藤禅	Ge Teng (talk round) Chan
从容录	Cong Rong (in the natural state) Record
禅七	Chan Qi (sesshin)
实相	Absolute Existence
自相	self phase
共相	common phase
业力	karmic effects (the power of karma to produce good or evil fruit)
涅槃	Nirvana
因缘	hetu-pratyaya (factors of dependent origination)
轮回	Samsara
毕波罗窟	Pippali-guha
童寿 (鳩摩罗什)	Kumarajiva (344 – 413 or 350 – 409)
阿难	Ananda

The Sixth Lecture: The Sheng Huo Chan

灵山	Grdhrakuta
释迦牟尼	Shakyamuni
迦叶尊者	Mahakashyapa
达摩	Bodhidharma (? – 628 or 536)
金刚经	Diamond Sutra
安祥禅	An Xiang (serenity) Chan
如来禅	Ru Lai (suchness) Chan

祖师禅	Zu Shi (Bodhidharma) Chan
文字禅	Wen Zi (words and literature) Chan
野狐禅	Ye Hu (wild fox) Chan
生活禅	Sheng Huo Chan (Chan in Daily Life)
楞伽经	Lankavatara Sutra
五法	five phenomena
三自性	three identities
八识	eight consciousnesses
二无我	two selflessness
如来藏	suchness
实相	Absolute Existence
般若	Prajna
大乘	Mahayana
二乘	Sravaka and Pratyeka-buddha
普贤菩萨	Bodhisattva Samantabhadra
八正道	noble eightfold path
六度	Six Paramitas
天台宗	Tiantai School
禅波罗密	Chan paramita
放焰口	Ulka-mukha ceremony of feeding the hungry ghosts
白骨观	Asthi-samjna (the way of contemplating impurity of skeleton)
五停心观	five contemplations to cut off delusions
功夫	ability (the ability one obtains through dedicated practice)

见地	insight
丹田	pubic region, two and half inches below the navel
神通	paranormal powers
契理契机	be in line with what the Buddha taught and befit the social environment of the times and the mental disposition of people
三宝	Triratna (the Three Treasures: Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha)
四众	four types of monastic community
正见	right view
正知	right intention
正念	right mindfulness
三毒	three poisons (greed, hatred, and ignorance)
三学	three trainings (precepts, meditation, and wisdom)
三业	three actions (what we say, we do, and we think)

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