

# **The Zen Teaching of Instantaneous Awakening**

*By Hui Hai*

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## **THE ESSENTIAL GATEWAY TO TRUTH BY MEANS OF INSTANTANEOUS AWAKENING**

Being a translation of Ch'an Master Hui Hai's own shastra, the Tun Wu ju Tao Yao MOn Lun or A Treatise on the Essential Gateway to Truth by Means of Instantaneous Awakening.

1. Humbly I prostrate myself before the Buddhas of the ten quarters' and the excellent company of Bodhisattvas. In setting forth this treatise, I am apprehensive that I may fail correctly to interpret the sacred mind. if so, may I be given a chance for repentance and reform. However, if I do succeed in imparting the sacred truth, I dedicate the resultant merit to all living beings in the hope that each of them will attain Buddhahood in their next life.

Q: What method must we practice in order to attain deliverance?2 A: It can be attained only through a sudden illumination.1

Q: What is a sudden illumination?

A: 'Sudden' means ridding yourselves of deluded thoughts' instantaneously. 'Illumination' means the realization that illumination is not something to be attained.

Q: From where do we start this practice?

A: You must start from the very root.

Q: And what is that?

A: Mind is the root.

Q: How can this be known?

A: [The Lankavatara Sutra](#) says: 'When mental processes (hsin) arise, then do all dharms (phenomena) spring forth; and when mental processes cease, then do all dharms cease likewise.' [The Vimalakirti Sutra](#) says:

'Those desiring to attain the Pure Land' must first purify their own minds, for the purification of mind is the purity of the Buddha Land. The Sutra (of the Doctrine

Bequeathed by the Buddha) says: just by mind control, all things become possible to us.' In another sutra it says: 'Sages seek from mind, not from the Buddha; fools seek from the Buddha instead of seeking from mind. Wise men regulate their minds rather than their persons; fools regulate their persons rather than their minds.' The Sutra of the Names of the Buddha states: 'Evil springs forth from the mind, and by the mind is evil overcome.' Thus, we may know that all good and evil proceed from our minds and that mind is therefore the root. If you desire deliverance, you must first know all about the root. Unless you can penetrate to this truth, all your efforts will be vain; for, while you are still seeking something from forms external to yourselves, you will never attain. The Dhyana-paramita Sutra says:

'For as long as you direct your search to the forms around you, you will not attain your goal even after aeon upon aeon; whereas, by contemplating your inner awareness, you can achieve Buddhahood in a single flash of thought.' Q: By what means is the root-practice to be performed? A: Only by sitting in meditation, for it is accomplished by dhyana (ch'an) and samadhi (ting). The Dhyana-paramita Sutra says: 'Dhyana and samadhi are essential to the search for the sacred knowledge of the Buddhas; for, without these, the thoughts remain in tumult and the roots of goodness suffer damage.'

Q: Please describe dhyana and samadhi.

A: When wrong thinking ceases, that is dhyana; when you sit contemplating your original nature,<sup>6</sup> that is samadhi, for indeed that original nature is your eternal mind. By samadhi, you withdraw your minds from their surroundings, thereby making them impervious to the eight winds, that is to say, impervious to gain and loss, calumny and eulogy, praise and blame, sorrow and joy. By concentrating in this way, even ordinary people may enter the state of Buddhahood. How can that be so? The Sutra of the bodhisattva-Precepts says: 'All beings who observe the Buddha-precept thereby enter Buddhahood.' Other names for this are 'deliverance', 'gaining the further shore', 'transcending the six states of mortal being 'overleaping the three worlds', or becoming a mighty Bodhisattva, an omnipotent sage, a conqueror'!

3.Q: Whereon should the mind settle and dwell?

A: It should settle upon nondwelling and there dwell.

Q: What is this nondwelling?

A: It means not allowing the mind to dwell upon any-thing whatsoever.

Q: And what is the meaning of that?

A: Dwelling upon nothing means that the mind is not fixed upon good or evil, being or nonbeing, inside or outside, or somewhere between the two, void or nonvoid, concentration or distraction. This dwelling upon nothing is the state in which it should dwell; those who attain to it are said to have nondwelling minds - in other words, they have Buddha-minds!

Q: What does mind resemble?

A: Mind has no colour, such as green or yellow, red or white; it is not long or short; it does not vanish or appear; it is free from purity and impurity alike; and its duration is eternal. It is utter stillness. Such, then, is the form and shape of our original mind, which is also our original body - the Buddhakaya! Q: By what means do this body or mind perceive? Can they perceive with the eyes, ears, nose, sense of touch and consciousness?

A: No, there are not several means of perception like that.

Q: Then, what sort of perception is involved, since it is unlike any of those already mentioned?

A: It is perception by means of your own nature (sva-bhava). How so? Because your own nature being essentially pure and utterly still, its immaterial and motionless 'substance' is capable of this perception."

Q: Yet, since that pure 'substance' cannot be found, where does such perception come from?

A: We may liken it to a bright mirror which, though it contains no forms, can nevertheless 'perceive' all forms. Why? just because it is free from mental activity. if you students of the Way had minds unstained," they would not give rise to falsehood and their attachment to the subjective ego and to objective externals would vanish; then purity would arise of itself and you would thereby be capable of such perception. The Dharmapada Sutra says: 'To establish ourselves amid perfect voidness in a single flash is excellent wisdom indeed!'

4.Q: According to the Vajra-body chapter of the Maba-patinirvana Sutra: 'The (indestructible) diamond-body" is imperceptible, yet it clearly perceives; it is free from discerning and yet there is nothing which it does not comprehend.' What does this mean?

A: It is imperceptible because its own nature is a formless 'substance' which is intangible; hence it is called 'imperceptible'; and, since it is intangible, this 'substance' is observed to be profoundly still and neither vanishing nor appearing. Though not apart from our world, it cannot be influenced by the worldly stream; it is self-possessed and sovereign, which is the reason why it clearly perceives. It is free from discerning in that its own nature is formless and basically undifferentiated. Its comprehending every-thing means that the undifferentiated 'substance' is endowed with functions as countless as the sands of the Ganges; and, if all phenomena were to be discerned simultaneously, it would comprehend all of them without exception. In the Prajna Gatha it is written:

Prajna, unknowing, knoweth all,

Prajna, unseeing, seeth all.

5.Q: There is a sutra which says that not to perceive anything in terms of being or nonbeing is true deliverance. What does it mean?

A: When we attain to purity of mind, that is something which can be said to exist. When this happens, our remaining free from any thought of achievement is called 'not perceiving anything as existent'; while reaching the state in which no thoughts arise or persist, yet without being conscious of their absence, is called 'not perceiving anything as nonexistent'. So it is written: 'Not to perceive anything in terms of being and nonbeing,' etc. [The Shuran-gama Sutra](#) says: 'Perceptions employed as a base for building up positive concepts are the origin of all ignorance (avidya);" perception that there is nothing to perceive - that is nirvana, also known as deliverance.'

6.Q: What is the meaning of 'nothing to perceive'?

A: Being able to behold men, women and all the various sorts of appearances while remaining as free from love or aversion as if they were actually not seen at all - that is what is meant by 'nothing to perceive'. Q: That which occurs when we are confronted by all sorts of shapes and forms is called 'perception'. Can we speak of perception taking place when nothing confronts us?

A: Yes.

Q: When something confronts us, it follows that we perceive it, but how can there be perception when we are confronted by nothing at all?

A: We are now talking of that perception which is independent of there being an object or not. How can that be? The nature of perception being eternal, we go on perceiving whether objects are present or not." Thereby we come to understand that, whereas objects naturally appear and disappear, the nature of perception does neither of those things; and it is the same with all your other senses.

Q: When we are looking at something, does the thing looked at exist objectively within the sphere of perception or not?

A: No, it does not.

Q: When we (look around and) do not see anything, is there an absence of something objective within the sphere of perception?

A: No, there is not.

7.Q: When there are sounds, hearing occurs. When there are no sounds, does hearing persist or not? A: It does.

Q: When there are sounds it follows that we hear them, but how can hearing take place during the absence of sound?

A: We are now talking of that hearing which is independent of there being any sound or not. How can that be? The nature of hearing being eternal, we continue to hear whether sounds are present or not.

Q: if that is so, who or what is the hearer?

A: It is your own nature which hears and it is the inner cognizer who knows.

Q: As to the gateway of sudden illumination, what are its doctrine, its aim, its substance and its function?" A: To refrain from thinking (nien) is its doctrine; not to allow wrong thoughts to arise is its aim; purity is its substance, and wisdom is its function.

Q: We have said that its doctrine is to refrain from thinking, but we have not yet examined the meaning of this term. What is it that we must refrain from thinking about?

A: It means that we must refrain from wrong thinking, but not from right thinking.

Q: What are wrong thinking and right thinking? A: Thinking in terms of being and nonbeing is called 'wrong thinking', while not thinking in those terms is called 'right thinking'. Similarly, thinking in terms of good and evil is wrong; not to think so is right thinking. The same applies to all the other categories of opposites - sorrow and joy, beginning and end, acceptance and rejection, dislikes and likes, aversion and love, all of which are called 'wrong thinking', while to abstain from thinking in those categories is called 'right thinking'.

Q: Please define 'right thinking' (more positively).

A: It means thinking solely of bodhi (enlightenment).

Q: Is bodhi something tangible?

A: It is not.

Q: But how can we think solely of bodhi if it is intangible?

A: It is as though bodhi were a mere name applied to something which, in fact, is intangible, something which never has been nor ever will be attained. Being intangible, it cannot be thought about, and it is just this not thinking about it which is called 'rightly thinking of bodhi as some-thing not to be thought about' - for this implies that your mind dwells upon nothing whatsoever. The term 'not to be thought about' is like the various kinds of not-thinking mentioned earlier, all of which are but names convenient for use in certain circumstances - all are of the one sub-stance in which no differences or diversities exist. Simply to be conscious of mind as resting upon nothing what-soever is to be without thought; and whoever reaches this state is naturally delivered.

8.Q: What is the meaning of 'to act as the Buddhas do'?

A: It means total abstention from action, which is also termed 'right' or 'holy' action. It is very similar to what we were talking about before, for it means not acting as if things really are or are not, and not acting from motives of aversion, love and all the rest. The Great Canon (of Monastic Rules) says: 'The sages do not act like other beings; nor do other beings act like the sages.'

9.Q: What does right perception mean?

A: It means perceiving that there is nothing to perceive.

Q: And what does that mean?

A: It means beholding all sorts of forms, but without being stained by them, as no thoughts of love or aversion arise in the mind. Reaching this state is called 'obtaining the Buddha-eye', which really means just that and nothing else. Whereas, if the spectacle of various forms produces love or aversion in you, that is called 'perceiving them as though they had objective existence', which implies having the eye of an ordinary person, for indeed ordinary people have no other sort of eye. It is the same with all the other organs of perception.

10. Q: When you said that wisdom is the function, what did you mean by wisdom?

A: The knowledge that by realizing the voidness of all opposites, deliverance is assured and that, without this realization, you will never gain deliverance. This is what we call 'wisdom' or 'knowing wrong from right'. Another name for it is 'knowing the function of the substance'. Concerning the unreality of opposites, it is the wisdom inherent in the 'substance' which makes it known that to realize their voidness means liberation and that there can be no more doubt about it. This is what we mean by 'function'. In speaking thus of the unreality of opposites, we refer to the nonexistence of relativities such as 'is' and 'is not', 'good' and 'evil', 'love' and 'aversion', and so on. Q: By what means can the gateway of our school be entered?

A: By means of the dana paran-iita.

Q: According to the Buddha, the Bodhisattva path comprises six paramitas. Why, then, have you mentioned only the one? Please explain why this one alone provides a sufficient means for us to enter.

A: Deluded people fail to understand that the other five all proceed from the dana paramita and that by its practice all the others are fulfilled.

Q: Why is it called the dana paramita?

A: 'Dana' means 'relinquishment'.

Q: Relinquishment of what?

A: Relinquishment of the dualism of opposites.

Q: Which means?

A: It means total relinquishment of ideas as to the dual nature of good and bad, being and nonbeing, love and aversion, void and nonvoid, concentration and distraction, pure and impure. By giving all of them up, we attain to a state in which all opposites are seen as void. The real practice of the dana paramita entails achieving this state without any thought of 'now I see that opposites are void', or 'now I have relinquished all of them'. We may also call it 'the simultaneous cutting off of the myriad types of con-current causes'; for it is when these are cut off that the whole Dharma-nature becomes void; and this voidness of the Dharma-nature means the nondwelling of the mind upon anything whatsoever. Once that state is achieved, not a single form can be discerned. Why?

Because our self-nature is immaterial and does not contain a single thing (foreign to itself). That which contains no single thing is true reality, the marvelous form of the Tathagata-it is said in the [Diamond Sutra](#): 'Those who relinquish all forms are called "Buddhas" (enlightened ones).' Q: However, the Buddha did speak of six paramitas, so why do you now say they can all be fulfilled in that one? Please give your reason for this.

A: The Sutra of the Questions of Brabma says: 'Jala-vidya, the elder, spoke unto Brahma and said, Bodhi sattvas by relinquishing all defilement's (klesha) may be said to have fulfilled the dana paramita, also known as 'total relinquishment'; being beguiled by nothing, they may be said to have fulfilled the sila paramita, also known as ,observing the precepts'; being hurt by nothing, they may be said to have fulfilled the kshanti paramita, also known as 'exercising forbearance'; clinging to nothing, they may be said to have fulfilled the virya paramita, also known as 'exercising zeal'; dwelling on nothing, they may be said to have fulfilled the dhyana paramita, also known as 'practising dhyana and samadhi'; speaking lightly of nothing, they may be said to have fulfilled the prajna paramita, also known as 'exercising wisdom'. Together, they are named 'the six methods'." Now I am going to speak about those six methods in a way which means precisely the same - the first entails relinquishment; the second, no arising (of perception, sensation, etc); the third, no thinking; the fourth, remaining apart from forms; the fifth, non-abiding (of the mind); and the sixth, no indulgence in light speech. We give different names to these six methods only for convenience in dealing with passing needs; for, when we come to the marvellous principle involved in them all, we find no differences at all. So you have only to understand that, by a single act of relinquishment, everything is relinquished; and that no arising means no arising of anything whatsoever. Those who have lost their way have no intuitive understanding of this; that is why they speak of the methods as though they differed from one another. Fools bogged down in a multiplicity of methods revolve endlessly from life span to life span. I exhort you students to practise the way of relinquishment and nothing else, for it brings to perfection not only the other five paramitas, but also myriads of dharmas (methods).

II. Q: What are the 'three methods of training (to be performed) at the same level' and what is meant by performing them on the same level?

A: They are discipline (vinaya), concentration (dhyana) and wisdom (prajna)."

Q: Please explain them one by one.

A: Discipline involves stainless purity. Concentration involves the stilling of your minds so that you remain wholly unmoved by surrounding phenomena. Wisdom means that your stillness of mind is not disturbed by your giving any thought to that stillness, that your purity is unmarred by your entertaining any thought of purity and that, in the midst of all such pairs of opposites as good and evil, you are able to distinguish between them without being stained by them and, in this way, to reach the state of being perfectly at ease and free of all dependence. Furthermore, if you realize that discipline, concentration and wisdom are all alike in that their substance is intangible and that, hence, they are undivided and therefore one - that is what is meant by three methods of training performed at the same level.

12. Q: When the mind rests in a state of purity, will that not give rise to some attachment to purity?

A: If, on reaching the state of purity, you refrain from thinking 'now my mind is resting in purity', there will be no such attachment.

Q: When the mind rests in a state of void, will that not entail some attachment to void?

A: if you think of your mind as resting in a state of void, then there will be such an attachment.

Q: When the mind reaches this state of not dwelling upon anything, and continues in that state, will there not be some attachment to its not dwelling upon anything? A: So long as your mind is fixed solely on void, there is nothing to which you can attach yourself. if you want to understand the nondwelling mind very clearly, while you are actually sitting in meditation, you must be cognizant only of the mind and not permit yourself to make judge-ments - that is, you must avoid evaluations in terms of good, evil, or anything else. Whatever is past is past, so do not sit in judgment upon it; for, when minding about the past ceases of itself, it can be said that there is no longer any past. Whatever is in the future is not here yet, so do not direct your hopes and longings towards it; for, when n-iinding about the future ceases of itself, it can be said that there is no future. 18 Whatever is present is now at hand; just be conscious of your nonattachment to every-thing - nonattachment in the sense of not allowing any love or aversion for anything to enter your mind; for, when miinding the present ceases of itself, we may say that there is no present. When there is no clinging to any of those three periods, they may be said not to exist. Should your mind wander away, do not follow it, whereupon your wandering mind will stop wandering of its own accord. Should your mind desire to linger somewhere, do not follow it and do not dwell there, whereupon your mind's questing for a dwelling place will cease of its own accord. Thereby, you will come to possess a nondwelling mind - a mind which remains in the state of nondwelling. If you are fully aware in yourself of a nondwelling mind, you will discover that there is just the fact of dwelling, with nothing to dwell upon or not to dwell upon. This full awareness in yourself of a mind dwelling upon nothing is known as having a clear perception of your own mind, or, in other words, as having a clear perception of your own nature. A mind which dwells upon nothing is the Buddha-mind, the mind of one already delivered, bodhi-mind, uncreate mind; it is also called 'realization that the nature of all appearances is unreal'. It is this which the sutras call 'patient realization of the uncreate'.19 If you have not realized it yet, you must strive and strive, you must increase your exertions. Then, when your efforts are crowned with success, you will have attained to understanding from within yourself - an understanding stemming from a mind that abides nowhere, by which we mean a mind free from delusion and reality alike. A mind disturbed by love and aversion is deluded; a mind free from both of them is real; and a mind thus freed reaches the state in which opposites are seen as void, whereby freedom and deliverance are obtained.

13. Q: Are we to make this effort only when we are sitting in meditation, or also when we are walking about? A: When I spoke just now of making an effort, I did not mean only when you are sitting in meditation; for, whether you are walking, standing, sitting, lying, or what-ever you are doing, you must uninterruptedly exert your-selves all the time. This is what we call 'constantly abiding' (in that state).



14. Q: The Vaipula Sutra says: 'Of the five kinds of Dharmakaya,' O the first is the Dharmakaya of the Absolute; the second is the Dharmakaya of merit; the third is the Dharmakaya of the Dharma-nature; the fourth is the Dharmakaya of infinite manifestations; and the Dharmakaya of the void is the fifth.' Which one is our own body? A: To comprehend that mind is imperishable is to possess the Dharmakaya of the Dharma-nature. To comprehend that all the myriad forms are contained in mind is to possess the Dharmakaya of merit. To comprehend that mind is not mind is to possess the Dharmakaya of the true nature of all. To teach living beings according to their individual capacities for conversion is to possess the Dharmakaya of infinite manifestation. To comprehend that mind is formless and intangible is to possess the Dharmakaya of the void. If you understand the meaning of all this, it implies that you know there is nothing to be achieved. Realizing that there is nothing tangible, nothing achievable - this is achieving the Dharmakaya of the Buddha-dharma." Anyone who supposes they can achieve it by getting hold of, or grasping at, something is full of self-conceit - an arrogant person with perverted views, a person of heterodox beliefs. [The Vimalakirti Nirdeśha Sutra](#) says: 'Shariputra enquired of a devakanya, "What is it you have won? What achievement has given you such powers of speech?" To which the devakanya replied, "It was my winning and achieving nothing which enabled me to reach this state. According to the Buddha-dharma, someone who wins and achieves things is a person full of self-conceit. "'

15. Q: The sutras speak not only of samyak-sambodhi (full enlightenment), but also of a marvellous enlightenment lying even beyond that. Please explain these terms. A: Samyak-sambodhi is the realization of the identity of form and voidness. Marvellous enlightenment is the realization of the absence of opposites, or we can say that it means the state of neither enlightenment nor non-enlightenment.

Q: Do these two sorts of enlightenment really differ or not?

A: Their names are expediently used for the sake of temporary convenience, but in substance they are one, being neither dual nor different. This oneness and sameness characterize all phenomena of whatever kind.

16. Q: What is the meaning of a passage in the [Diamond Sutra](#) which states that 'having absolutely nothing describable in words is called "preaching the Dharma"'? A: Prajna (wisdom) is a substance of absolute purity which contains no single thing on which to lay hold. This is the meaning of 'nothing describable in words'. Yet that immaterial and motionless Prajna is capable of whatever functions are befitting - functions as numerous as the sands of the Ganges; so there is nothing at all which it does not comprehend; and this is what is implied by the words 'preaching the Dharma'. Therefore it is written:

'Having absolutely nothing describable in words is called "preaching the Dharma".'

Q: ([The Diamond Sutra](#) also says:) 'If a virtuous man or woman holds to, studies and recites this sutra, and is despised by others, this person, who was bound to suffer an evil destiny in retribution for his or her past sins and whose karmic sins are now eradicated by the others' contempt, will attain anuttara-samyaksambodhi.' Please explain this.

A: Their case resembles that of those who, not having met an enlightened teacher, continue building up nothing but evil karma for themselves, so that their pure original

mind obscured by the three poisons<sup>14</sup> stemming from primordial ignorance, cannot show forth, which is the reason for our calling them despicable. Then, just because they are despised in this life, they grow determined to seek out the Way of the Buddhas without delay; and, thereby, their ignorance is conquered so that the three poisons cease to be generated, whereat their original mind shines forth brilliantly. The tumult of their thoughts is thenceforth stilled, for all the evil in them has been destroyed. It is their having been despicable which has led to the conquest of ignorance, the cessation of their mental tumult and - as a natural consequence of that - to their deliverance. Therefore is it written that bodhi is attainable at the very moment we make up our minds to achieve it - that is to say in this life and not in some other lives to come.

Q: It is also written that the Tathagata has five kinds of vision. What are they?

A: The perception that all appearances are pure (i.e. real) is called 'earthly vision'. The perception that their substance is pure (real) is called 'heavenly vision'. Ability to distinguish the minutest differences among the appearances constituting our environment, as well as the smallest gradations of good and evil, and yet to be so entirely unaffected by them that we remain perfectly at ease amidst all of them - that is called 'the wisdom vision'. The perception that there is nothing to perceive is called 'the dharma vision'. No perception, yet nothing unperceived, is called 'the Buddha vision'.

Q: It is also written that there is a Great Vehicle (Maha-yana) and a Supreme Vehicle. What are they?

A: The former is that of the Bodhisattvas; the latter is that of the Buddhas.

Q: By what means can they be attained?

A: The means for gaining the Bodhisattvas' vehicle are those of the Mahayana. Attaining to it and thenceforth remaining so free from discursive thought that even the concept of 'a means' no longer exists for you - such utter tranquillity" with nothing to be added to it, nothing to be taken away, is called 'attainment of the Supreme Vehicle', which is that of the Buddhas!

17. Q: [The Mahaparinirvana Sutra](#) says: 'Excess of dhyana (ting) over wisdom (hui) provides no way out from primordial ignorance (avidya), while excess of wisdom over dhyana leads to piling up false views; but, when dhyana and wisdom function on the same level, that is what we call "deliverance" What does it all mean? A: 'Wisdom' means the ability to distinguish every sort of good and evil; 'dhyana' means that, though making these distinctions, you remain wholly unaffected by love or aversion for them - such is the explanation of dhyana and wisdom functioning on the same level.

18. Q: That sutra also says: 'No words, nothing to say - this is called "dhyana".' But can we also speak of being in dhyana while we are engaged in talking?

A: My definition of dhyana just now referred to that perpetual dhyana which is unaffected by speech or silence. Why? Since the nature of dhyana functions even while we are engaged in speaking, or in making distinctions, our speech and those distinctions also pertain to dhyana. Similarly, when we contemplate forms with our minds in a state

of voidness, the voidness persists as much during the act of regarding those forms as when we are neither speaking nor engaged in any other kind of discursive activity. The same applies to our seeing, hearing, feeling and consciousness. How so? Because, as our own nature is void, it remains so in all situations; being void, it is free from attachment, and it is this detachment which makes possible the simultaneous functioning of dhyana and wisdom on the same level. All Bodhisattvas employ this method of universalizing voidness, which enables them to attain the final goal. Therefore is it written: When dhyana and wisdom function on the same level, that is what we call "deliverance" Now I shall give you a further example in order to clarify this, so as to awaken your understanding and set your doubts at rest. Take the case of a bright mirror. When it is reflecting something, does its brightness waver? No, it does not. And when it is not reflecting something, does its brightness waver, then? No. But why is this so? It is unwavering whether an object is present or not because it has the property of reflecting without any sensation being experienced. And so? Where no sensation is present there can be neither movement nor absence of movement. Or take the case of the sunlight. Do the sun-beams waver when they shine upon the earth? No. Or do they waver when they do not encounter the earth? No, they do not. Why? Because they are devoid of sensation. That they do not waver whether they encounter something or not is due to their property of shining without experiencing sensation. The quality of being able to reflect (or shine)" pertains to wisdom, while that of perfect steadiness pertains to dhyana. It is the Bodhisattvas' employment of this method of equalizing dhyana and wisdom which enables them to attain sambodhi (supreme enlightenment). Therefore is it written: 'When dhyana and wisdom are on the same level, that is what we call "deliverance" However, when I spoke just now of absence of sensation, I meant freedom from ordinary sensations, not from holy sensation. Q: How do they differ?

A: Ordinary sensations are those involving duality of feeling; holy sensation pertains to realization of the void-ness of opposites.

19. Q: The sutra says: 'The path of words and speech is cut off; the mind's activities cease.' What does this mean? A: Words and speech are to reveal the Dharma's meaning; but, once that meaning is understood, speech is discarded. Meaning is immaterial; that which is immaterial is Tao (truth), and Tao is inexpressible. Hence 'the path of words and speech is cut off.' By 'the mind's activities cease' is meant that, upon actual realization of the Dharma's significance, no further contemplation is required. That which lies beyond our contemplation is the uncreate. Being uncreated, the nature of all appearances is void. Because their nature is (seen to be) void, all their concurrent causes are eradicated, and that eradication involves the cessation of the mind's activities.

20. Q: What is Suchness (Ju-ju, Bhutatathata)?

A: Suchness signifies immutability. Since mind is immutable (j&n-ju, absolute), we term it Suchness. Hence it can be known that all the Buddhas of the past attained enlightenment by conducting themselves in accord with this immutability. With the Buddhas of the present it is likewise and so will it be with the Buddhas of the future. Since all practice, whether past, present, or future, culminates in the same attainment of enlightenment, it is called 'the attainment of Suchness'. [The Vimalakirti Nirdeśa Sutra](#) says:

‘Thus has it ever been with all the Buddhas; thus will it be with Maitreya 17 and with every other sentient being as well. Why so? Because the Buddha-nature is eternally and uninterruptedly self-existent.

21. Q: Does the (teaching concerning the) identity of matter and the immaterial (void), and that of ordinary and holy, pertain to the doctrine of sudden illumination? A: Yes.

Q: What do you mean by the identity of matter and void and of ordinary and holy?

A: When mind is stained by attachment, materiality is there; when it is free from stain, immateriality is there. Stained mind is ordinary and unstained mind is holy. The Absolute is self-existent, which implies the identity of the immaterial and matter; but, since the latter is not discover-able it is in fact immaterial. Here, we are using ‘immaterial’ with reference to the void nature of form, not to mean (the kind of) voidness which would result from form’s annihilation." Similarly, we are using ‘material’ with refer-ence to the nature of the immaterial, which exists of itself, not in the sense that the material can be matter (as ordinarily understood).

22. Q: What are the exhaustibles and the inexhaustibles mentioned in the sutra?

A: On account of the void nature of all dualities, when seeing and hearing no longer take place, that is exhaustion meaning the end of passions (asravaksaya). ‘Inexhaustible’ connotes the uncreated substance complete with m- ar-vellous functions as numerous as the sands of the Ganges. These functions respond to all the needs (of sentient beings) without occasioning the smallest diminution of substance. Such, then, are the exhaustibles and inexhaustibles mentioned in the sutras .29

Q: Are the exhaustibles and inexhaustibles really identical, or are they different things?

A: In substance they are one, but they are spoken of separately.

Q: Yet, if they are one in substance, why should they be spoken of separately?

A: ‘One’ denotes the substance of speech, and speech is a function of that substance; it is employed as circum-stances require. That is why they are said to be of the same substance but spoken of separately. We may liken this to the fact that, although only the one sun appears in the sky above, its reflections are caught by water held by many different receptacles, so that each of those receptacles ‘contains a sun’ and every ‘sun’ is both complete in itself and yet identical with the sun in the sky. Therefore, although the suns are of the same substance, they are spoken of separately with reference to the various recep-tacles. Hence (things of) the same substance are spoken of differently. Moreover, although every one of the suns manifested below is perfect and entire, the sun in the sky is not in the least diminished by them - hence the term ‘inexhaustible’.

Q: A sutra speaks of ‘no coming into existence and no ceasing to exist’. To what sort of dharmas (phenomena) do these words apply?

A: They mean the not coming into existence of unwholesome phenomena and the never ceasing to exist of wholesome phenomena-" Q: What are wholesome and unwholesome phenom-ena?

A: A mind stained by attachments and leaking" is unwholesome; a mind freed from these characteristics is wholesome. It is only when no stains or leaking occur that unwholesomeness does not arise; and, when freedom from stains and leaking is attained, there is purity, per-fection and brilliance - a deep, everlasting and unwavering stillness. This is what is meant by 'wholesome phenomena not ceasing to be'; it explains the term 'no coming into existence, or ceasing to exist'.

23. Q: The Precepts of the Bodhisattvas says: 'When sen-tient beings observe the Buddha-precept, they enter upon the status of Buddhahood - a status identical with full enlightenment - and thereby they become true sons of the Buddhas.' What does this mean?

A: The Buddha-precept denotes perfect purity<sup>32</sup> of mind. if someone undertakes the practice of purity, and thereby attains a mind unmoved by sensory perceptions, we speak of that person as one who observes the Buddha-precept. All the Buddhas up to this day have practiced purity unmoved by sensory perceptions and it was by means of this that they attained Buddhahood. in these days, if people undertake its practice, their merit is equal to and does not differ from that of the Buddhas; hence they are said to have entered upon the status of Buddha-hood. Illumination thus obtained is precisely the illumina-tion of a Buddha, so such a person's status is said to be identical with full enlightenment. Those people really are son's of the Buddhas and their pure mind begets wisdom. One whose wisdom is pure is called 'a son of the Buddhas', or 'this Buddha son'.

24. Q: As to the Buddha<sup>33</sup> and the Dharma, which of them anteceded the other? if the Dharma came first, how can there have been a Buddha to preach it; but, if a Buddha came first, then what doctrine led to his attainment? A: The Buddhas anteceded the Dharma in one sense, but came after it in another.

Q: How is that possible?

A: If you mean the quiescent Dharma, then the Dharma anteceded the Buddhas; but, if you mean the written or spoken Dharma, then it was the Buddhas who came first and the Dharma which followed them. How so? Because every one of the Buddhas attained Buddhahood by means of the quiescent Dharma - in that sense, the Dharma anteceded them. The 'teacher of all the Buddhas' men-tioned in the sutra is the Dharma; it was not until they had attained Buddhahood that they first embarked upon their detailed exposition of the Twelve Divisions of the sutras for the purpose of converting sentient beings. When these sentient beings follow and practice the Dharma preached by previous Buddhas, thereby attaining Buddhahood, that is also a case of the Dharma anteceding the Buddha.

25. Q: What is meant by 'proficiency in teaching, but not in transmsionl'?<sup>31</sup> A: It refers to those whose words are at variance with their deeds.

Q: And what is meant by 'proficiency in transmission and also in teaching'?

A: it refers to people whose words are confirmed by their deeds.

26. Q: What is meant by 'the reachable not reached' and by 'the unreachable reached'?

A: By 'the reachable not reached' is meant speech not supported by deeds; by 'the unreachable reached' is meant deeds performing what speech fails to reach; and, when both speech and deeds attain the goal, this is 'complete reaching', or 'double reaching'.

27. Q: Please explain the two statements: 'The Buddha-dharma neither annihilates the worldly (yu wei) nor gets bogged down in the transcendental (wu wei).'" A: The first means that the Buddha never rejected any thing phenomenal from the moment when he first determined upon his quest up to the time when he achieved enlightenment beneath the bodhi tree, and from then up to his entrance into parinirvana beneath the twin sala trees.<sup>31</sup> This is 'nonannihilation of the worldly'. The other statement means that, although he achieved absence of thought, he never looked upon this as an attainment; that, although he reached immaterial and nonactive bodhi and nirvana, he never held that these states marked an attainment. This is what is meant by 'not getting bogged down in the transcendental'.

28. Q: Is there really a hell?<sup>31</sup> A: There is and there is not. Q: How so?

A: In that our minds have constructed many sorts of evil karma, there is hell; but, since everyone's self-nature is void, for those whose minds have been freed of attachment's stains there can be no hell.

Q: Do evildoers possess the Buddha-nature?

A: Yes, they have it too.

Q: Then, if they too have this nature, does it enter hell with them or not?

A: It does not enter with them.

Q: But, when they enter hell, where is their Buddha-nature?

A: It also enters hell.

Q: That being so, while they are undergoing punishment there, does their Buddha-nature share the punishment?

A: No. Although the Buddha-nature remains with these people while they are in hell, it is the individuals themselves who suffer; the Buddha-nature is fundamentally beyond punishment.

Q: Yet, if they enter together, how can the Buddha-nature not suffer?

A: Sentient beings possess forms and whatsoever has form is subject to formation and destruction's whereas the Buddha-nature is form-less and, being form-less, is immaterial, for which reason it is the very nature of the void itself and cannot be destroyed. Were someone to make a pile of faggots in a vacuum, the faggots could come to harm but not the vacuum. In this analogy, the vacuum symbolizes the Buddha-nature and the faggots represent sentient beings. Therefore it is written: 'They enter together but do not suffer together.'

29. Q: Regarding the quotation 'Transform the eight states of consciousness (parijnana)<sup>39</sup> into the four Buddha-wisdoms and bind the four Buddha-wisdoms to form the trikaya, which of the eight states of consciousness must be combined to form one Buddha-wisdom and which of them will each become a Buddha-wisdom in itself? A: Sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch are the five states of consciousness which together form the perfecting wisdom. The intellect, or sixth state of consciousness, alone becomes the profound observing wisdom. Discriminative awareness, or the seventh state of consciousness, alone becomes the universal wisdom. The storehouse of consciousness, or eighth state, alone becomes the great mirror wisdom.

Q: Do these four wisdoms really differ?

A: In substance they are the same, but they are differently named.

Q: Yet, if they are one in substance, why do their names differ? Or, allowing that their names are given according to circumstances, what is it that, being of one substance (with the rest), is (nevertheless called) 'the great mirror wisdom'?

A: That which is clearly void and still, bright and imper-turbable, is the great mirror wisdom. That which can face defilements without love or aversion arising and which thereby exhibits the nonexistent nature of all such dualities is the universal wisdom. That which can range the fields of the senses with unexcelled ability to discern things, yet without giving rise to tumultuous thoughts, so that it is fully independent and at ease, is the profound observing wisdom. That which can convert all the senses with their functions of responding to circumstances into correct sensation<sup>41</sup> free from duality is the perfecting wisdom. Q: As to 'binding the four Buddha-wisdoms to form the trikaya', which of them combine to form one body and which of them each becomes a body in itself? A: The great mirror wisdom singly forms the Dharma-kaya. The universal wisdom singly forms the Sambhoga-kaya. The profound observing wisdom and the perfecting wisdom jointly form the Nirmanakaya. These three bodies are only named differently to enable unenlightened people to see more clearly. Once the principle is understood, there will be no more three bodies with functions responding to various needs. Why? Formless in substance and by nature, they are established in the basically imper-manent<sup>41</sup> which is not their own (true basis) at all.

30. Q: What is meant by perceiving the real Buddhakaya?<sup>13</sup> A: It means no longer perceiving anything as existing or not existing.

Q: But what is the actual meaning of that definition? A: 'Existence' is a term used in contradistinction to 'nonexistence', while the latter is used in opposition to the former. Unless you begin by accepting the first concept as valid, the other cannot stand. Similarly, without the concept of nonexistence, how can that of existence have meaning? These two owe their being to mutual dependence and pertain to the realm of birth and death. It is just by avoiding such dual perception that we may come to behold the real Buddhakaya.<sup>41</sup> Q: If even the concepts of existence and nonexistence are invalid how can that of a real Buddhakaya have validity? A: Only because you are asking about it! When such questions are not asked, the concept of a Buddhakaya is not valid. Why? Take the case of a mirror; confronted by objects, it reflects them; unfronted, it reflects nothing.

31. Q: What is meant by 'being never apart from the Buddha'?

A: Having a mind freed from the going and coming of concepts, its stillness unaffected by environmental forms so that it remains eternally void and motionless - this is being never apart from the Buddha.

32.Q: What is the meaning of the transcendental (wu wei, unconditioned, asamskṛta)?

A: it is worldly (yu wei, conditioned, saṃskṛta) .41 Q: I enquired about the transcendental. Why do you say it is worldly?

A: 'Worldly' is a term valid only in contradistinction to 'transcendental'. The latter derives its meaning from the former. if you do not accept the one as a valid concept, the other cannot be retained. But if you are speaking of the real transcendental, that pertains neither to the worldly nor to the transcendental. Yes, the real transcendental is like that! Why? [The Diamond Sutra](#) says: 'If their minds grasp the Dharma, they will still cling to the notion of an ego (a being and a life); if their minds grasp the non-Dharma, they will still cling to the notion of an ego (a being and a life). Therefore, we should not grasp at and hold onto the notions either of Dharma or of not-Dharma.' This is holding to the true Dharma. If you understand this doctrine, that is true deliverance - that, indeed, is reaching the gate of nonduality.

33.Q: What is the significance of the term 'middle way'?

A: It signifies the extremes.

Q: I enquired about the middle way; why do you say it signifies the extremes?

A: Extremes are only valid in contradistinction to the middle way. If at first you do not postulate extremes, from what can you derive the concept of a middle way? This middle you are talking about was first used in relation to extremes. Hence, we should realize that middle and extremes owe their existence to their mutual dependence and that all of them are transient. The same rule applies equally to the skandhas - form, sensation, perceptions, impulses (or volitions) and consciousness .41

34. Q: What are these things which we call the five skandhas?

A: The propensity to allow the forms we encounter to set their stain upon us, thereby arousing forms in our minds, is called 'the skandha of form'. As this leads to the reception of the eight winds" which encourage the piling up of wrong notions, sensations are aroused '49 and this is called the skandha of sensation'. Thereupon, the deluded mind takes to perceiving (individual sensations) and perception is aroused, and this is called 'the skandha of perception'. This leads to the piling up of impulses (based on likes and dislikes) and this is called 'the skandha of impulse (or volition)'. Accordingly, within the undifferentiated substance, error gives rise to the notion of plurality and countless attachments are formed, whereat false consciousness (or wrong understanding) arises, and this is called 'the skandha of consciousness'. It is thus that we define the five skandhas.

35. Q: A sutra says that there are twenty-five factors of existence. What are they?



A: This term refers to our having to undergo future incarnations or rebirths taking place within the six realms .<sup>51</sup> Owing to the delusions filling our minds during the present life, we sentient beings have become closely bound by all sorts of karma and will receive rebirth in exact accordance with our karmic state. Hence the term 'reincarnation'. However, if during a given existence there are people determined upon doing their utmost to gain deliverance and who thereby attain to the state of no rebirth, they will leave the three worlds for ever and never more have to be reborn. This implies attainment of the Dharmakaya in the absolute sense of Buddhakaya.

Q: How do these twenty-five factors of existence differ from one another?

A: Their basic substance is one. However, when we name them in accordance with their various functions, there appear to be twenty-five of them. This figure really connotes the ten evils, the ten virtues, and the five skandhas.

Q: What are the ten evils and the ten virtues?

A: The ten evils are: killing, stealing, licentiousness, lying, voluptuous speech, slander, coarse language, covetousness, anger, and false views." The ten virtues may be simply defined as absence of the ten evils.<sup>12</sup>

36. Q: A little while ago you spoke of refraining from thinking (nien), but you did not finish your explanation .<sup>13</sup> A: It means not fixing your mind upon anything anywhere, but totally withdrawing it from the phenomena surrounding you, so that even the thought (szu) of seeking for something does not remain; it means that your mind, confronted by all the forms composing your environment, remains placid and motionless. This abstaining from all thought whatever is called real thought; but to keep on thinking is deluded thinking and certainly not the right way to think. Why is that? A sutra says: 'If you teach people to entertain the six meritorious thoughts,<sup>51</sup> that is called "teaching them to think in the wrong way".' So, even entertaining those six thoughts is termed 'deluded thinking', while abstaining from them is known as 'real thought'. A sutra says: 'O virtuous one, it is through abiding in the Dharma of no thought that we obtain this golden colour and these thirty-two bodily marks of Buddhahood which emit an effulgent radiance that penetrates the entire universe.' Such inconceivable merits even the Buddhas cannot describe in full; how much the less can the devotees of other vehicles know about them! Those who achieve abstention from thought" are naturally able to enter upon the Buddha-perception, for their six senses can no longer stain their minds. Such an attainment is called 'entering the treasury of the Buddhas', also known as 'the treasury of the Dharma', which enables you to perform the Dharmas of all Buddhas. How can that be so? Because of abstention from thought. The same sutra says: 'All Buddhas are produced by this sutra.'

Q: if we esteem absence of thought, how can the notion of 'entering upon Buddha-perception' have any validity? A: Its validity stems from absence of thought. How so? A sutra says: 'All things take their stand upon the basis of nonabiding.' It also says: 'Take the case of a bright mirror; though it contains no form, it can manifest a myriad forms.' Why is this? It is because of its brightness (stainless clarity) that it is able to reflect them. You disciples, if your minds are stainless, will thereby be freed from entertaining erroneous thoughts; the stirring of your minds by the notion of 'self' and 'others' will vanish; there will be nothing but purity (stainlessness) on account of which

you will become capable of unlimited perception. Sudden illumination means deliverance while still in this life. How shall I make you understand that? You may be compared to lion cubs, which are genuine lions from the time of their birth;" for, with those who undertake to become suddenly illumined, it is just like that. The moment they practise it, they enter the Buddha-stage, just as the shoots put forth by bamboos in spring will have grown to resemble the parent plants without the least difference remaining even before spring has departed. Why so? Because the minds of these people are void. Likewise, they who undertake sudden illumination cut off erroneous thoughts at a stroke, thereby eliminating the duality of selfness and otherness, so that perfect voidness and stillness supervene - thereby parity with the Buddhas is achieved without one jot of difference remaining. Therefore it is written that the most ordinary beings are profoundly holy.<sup>57</sup> Those who undertake sudden illumination transcend the three realms of existence within this very life! As a sutra says: 'Transcend the world from its very midst; enter nirvana ere ridding yourselves of samsara's Moil.<sup>1511</sup> if you do not employ this method of sudden illumination, you will be like a jackal following and imitating a lion but unable to become a lion even after hundreds and thousands of aeons.

Q: Is the nature of the Absolute (Chan-ju) a true void, or not really void? To describe it as not void is to imply that it has form- yet to speak of it as void implies extinction (mere nothingness) and what would then be left for sentient beings to rely on in their practice for attaining deliverance?

A: The nature of the Absolute is void and yet not void. How so? The marvellous 'substance' of the Absolute, having neither form nor shape, is therefore undiscoverable; hence it is void. Nevertheless, that immaterial, formless 'substance' contains functions as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, functions which respond unflinchingly to circumstances, so it is also described as not void. A sutra says: 'Understand the one point and a thousand others will accordingly grow clear; misunderstand that one and ten thousand delusions will encompass you. He who holds to that one has no more problems to solve.' This is the great marvellous awakening to the Way (truth). As one of the sutras says:

'The myriad forms dense and close bear the imprint of a single dharma.' How then can so many sorts of views arise from the one Dharma? All these karmic forces are rooted in activity. if, instead of pacifying our minds, we rely on scriptures to achieve enlightenment, we are under-taking the impossible. Ourselves deceived, deceiving others, our mutual downfall is assured. Strive on! Strive on! Explore this teaching most thoroughly! just let things happen without making any response and keep your minds from dwelling on anything whatsoever; for they who can do this thereby enter nirvana. Attained, then, is the condition of no rebirth, otherwise called 'the gate of non-duality, the end of strife, the samadhi of universality'.<sup>19</sup> Why so? Because it is ultimate purity. As it is free from the duality of selfless and otherness, it no longer gives rise to love and hatred. When all relativities are seen as non-existent, naught remains to be perceived." Thus is the undiscoverable Bhutatathata revealed. This treatise of mine is not for the sceptic, but for those sharing the same view and following the same line of conduct. You ought first to discover whether people are sincere in their faith and qualified to practise it without backsliding before you expound it to them so that they can be awakened to its meaning. I have written this treatise for the sake of those having a karmic affinity with it. I seek neither fame nor wealth. I desire only to emulate the Buddhas who preached their thousands of sutras and countless shastras just for the sake

of sentient beings lost in delusion. Since their mental activities vary, appropriate teachings are given to suit individual cases of perverse views; hence the great variety of doctrines. You should know that setting forth the principle of deliverance in its entirety amounts only to this - when things happen, make no response.- keep your minds from dwelling on anything whatsoever.. keep them .for ever still as the void and utterly pure (without stain): and thereby spontaneously attain deliverance. Oh do not seek for empty fame, mouthing forth talk of the Absolute with minds like those of apes! When talk contradicts actions, that is known as self-deception; it will lead to your falling headlong into evil states of rebirth. Seek not fame and happiness in this lifetime at the cost of unenlightenment and suffering for long aeons to come. Strive on! Strive on! Sentient beings must save themselves; the Buddhas cannot do it for them. If they could, since there have already been Buddhas as numerous as grains of dust, every single being must by now have been saved; then how is it that you and I are still being tossed upon the waves of life and death instead of having become Buddhas? Do please realize that sentient beings have to save them-selves and that the Buddhas cannot do it for them. Strive on! Strive on! Do it for yourselves. Place no reliance upon the powers of other Buddhas .61 As the sutra says: ‘Those who seek the Dharma do not find it merely by clinging to the Buddhas.’

37.Q: In the coming generation, there will be many followers of mixed beliefs; how are we to live side by side with them?

A: Share the light with them, but do not share their karmas. Although you may be staying with them, your minds will not dwell in the same place as theirs. There is a sutra which says: ‘Though it follows the current of circum-stances, its nature is unchanging.’ As to those other students of the Way, you are all studying the Way for the sake of that great cause - liberation; so, while never despising those who have not studied the Dharma, you should respect those who are studying it as you would respect the Buddha. Do not vaunt your own virtues nor envy the ability of others. Examine your own actions; do not hold up the faults of others. Thus, nowhere will you encounter obstruction and you will naturally enjoy happiness. I will summarize all this in the form of a gatha:

Forbearance is the best of ways;

But first dismiss both self and other.

When things occur, make no response

And thus achieve true Bodhikaya.<sup>12</sup>

[The Diamond Sutra](#) says: ‘If a Bodhisattva is thoroughly versed in the doctrine of the unreality of the ego and of all dharmas (things), the Tathagata will call him a true Bodhisattva.’ It is also said that ‘he who does not accept anything, has nothing to reject; he is free of samsara for ever. He whose mind dwells on nothing whatsoever is called "a son of the Buddha" [The Mahaparinirvana Sutra](#) says: ‘When the Tathagata attained nirvana, he freed himself from samsara for ever.’ Here are some more gathas:

So wholly good my present state of mind

7-bat men's revilement cannot stir my ire.  
No word shall pass my lips of right and wrong -  
Nirvana and samsara form one Way -  
For I have learnt to reach that mind of mine  
Which basically transcends both right and wrong.  
Erroneous, discriminating thoughts  
Reveal the worldling who has still to learn.  
I urge the errant folk of Kaliyug"  
To rid their minds of every useless straw.  
How vast indeed my present state of mind  
My wordless unconcern ensures its calm.  
At ease and free, my liberation won,  
I roam at will without impediment.  
In wordless silence all my days are passed,  
My every thought fixed on the nominal.  
In gazing on the Way, I am at ease  
And unaffected by samsara's round.  
So marvelous my present state of mind,  
I need intrude no longer on the world,  
Where splendor is illusion and a cheat,-  
7-be simplest clothes and coarsest food suffice.  
On meeting worldly men, I scarcely speak,  
And so they say that I am dull of wit.  
Without, I have what seems a dullard's stare,-  
Within, my crystal clarity of mind

Soundlessly tallies with Rabul's bidden way<sup>64</sup>

Which worldly folk like you have yet to learn.

For fear that you may still be unable to understand the real principle of deliverance, I shall demonstrate it to you once more.

38. Q: The [Vimalakirti Nirdeśa Sutra](#) says: 'Whosoever desires to reach the Pure Land must first purify his mind.' What is the meaning of this purifying of the mind?

A: It means purifying it to the point of ultimate purity.

Q: But what does that mean?

A: It is a state of beyond purity and impurity.

Q: Please explain it further.

A: Purity pertains to a mind which dwells upon nothing whatsoever. To attain to this without so much as a thought of purity arising is called 'absence of purity'; and to achieve that without giving it a thought is to be free from absence of purity also.

39.Q: For followers of the Way, what constitutes realization of the goal?

A: Realization must be ultimate realization.

Q: And what is that?

A: Ultimate realization means being free from both realization and absence of realizations Q: What does that mean?

A: Realization means remaining unstained by sights, sounds and other sense perceptions from without, and inwardly possessing minds in which no erroneous thinking takes place. To achieve this without giving it a thought is called 'absence of realization'; and to achieve the latter without giving that a thought either is called 'freedom from absence of realization'.

40.Q: What is meant by 'a mind delivered'?

A: Having a mind free from the concepts of delivered and undelivered is called 'real deliverance'. This is what the [Diamond Sutra](#) means by the words: 'Even the Dharma must be cast aside, how much more so the not-Dharma!' Here, Dharma implies existence and not-Dharma implies nonexistence - disengagement from both of which results in true deliverance.

41.Q: What is realization of truth (Tao)?

A: It means ultimate realization.

Q: What is that?

A: Ultimate realization is beyond realization and non-realization.

Q: And what is ultimate voidness?

A: Ultimate voidness is beyond voidness and nonvoid-ness.<sup>66</sup> Q: And what is the fixed Bhutatathata (Absolute)? A: The Bhutatathata's fixity is neither fixed nor unfixed. [The Diamond Sutra](#) says: 'There is no fixed Dharma called anuttara-samyaksambodhi (supreme enlightenment) and there is no fixed Dharma which the Tathagata can expound.' This is what another sutra means by: 'When meditating on the void, perception of the void should not be taken as realization.' This means abstention from the thought of voidness. Similarly, although we practise fixing the mind, we do not regard (success in this practice) as realization, because we entertain no thought of fixity. Like-wise, although we attain purity, we do not regard it as realization, because we entertain no thought of purity. Even when we attain to fixed concentration, to purity and to the state of letting the mind dwell upon nothing whatsoever, if we permit any thought of our having made progress to enter our minds, that thought will be an erroneous thought and we shall be caught in a net - that cannot be called deliverance! Moreover, if after attaining to all this we experience a lively awareness of being at ease and independent (of all conditioning factors and so on), we must not take this for realization, or suppose that deliverance can be won by thinking in this way. As the sutra says: 'Allowing the concept of progress to enter our minds is not progress but error; whereas, if we keep our minds free from error, progress is unlimited.'

42.Q: What is the middle way?

A: It is without middle or extremes.

Q: What are the two extremes?

A: They are that-mindedness (pi hsin) and this-minded-ness (tzu hsin).

Q: What do those terms mean?

A: Being ensnared from without by forms and sounds is that-mindedness; allowing erroneous thoughts to arise within is this-mindedness. Being unstained from without by forms is called 'freedom from that-mindedness'; permitting no erroneous thoughts to arise within is called 'freedom from this-mindedness'. Such is the meaning of 'no extremes'. And, if your minds are without extremes, how can there be a middle? Reaching this state is called the 'middle way' or the 'true Way of the Tathagata's' by which completely awakened people reach deliverance. A sutra says: 'The void is without middle or extremes; with the Buddhakaya it is also thus.' The voidness of all forms implies mind dwelling upon nothing whatsoever; and the latter implies the void nature of all forms - these are two ways of saying the same thing. This is the doctrine of the unreality of form, also called 'the doctrine of the non-existence of form'. If you people reject 'mind dwelling upon nothing whatsoever', then bodhi (enlightenment), still and passionless nirvana, and perception of your real nature through dhyana-samadhi, will all be closed to you. It is just by not allowing your minds to dwell upon anything whatsoever that you will perceive your own nature whenever you practise attainment of bodhi, deliverance, nirvana, dhyana-samadhi, or the six paramitas. Why

so? [The Diamond Sutra](#) says: 'Realizing that there is not the smallest thing to be attained is called "anuttara-samyaksambodhi" (supreme enlightenment).'

43.Q: if we have performed all (good) deeds success-fully, shall we receive a prediction of our future Buddha-hood?17 A: No.

Q: if we have gained ultimate achievement by refraining from the practice of any dharma (method) whatsoever, shall we receive that prediction?

A: No.

Q: in that case, by what dharma is that prediction to be obtained?

A: It is obtainable when you cease (clinging to) deeds and to no deeds. Why so? The [Vimalakirti Nirdeśha Sutra](#) says: 'The nature and the phenomenal expression of all deeds are both impermanent.' According to the Mahapati-nirvana Sutra: 'The Buddha said to Kashyapa, "There is no such thing as permanence of the totality of phenomenal activity.'" You must just avoid letting your minds dwell upon anything whatsoever, which implies (being unconcerned about) either deeds or no deeds - that is what we call 'receiving a prediction of Buddhahood'. What I mean by not letting the mind dwell upon anything whatsoever is keeping your minds free from hatred and love. This means that you must be able to see attractive things without love for them arising in your minds, which is termed 'having minds free from love'; and also that you must be able to see repulsive things without hatred for them arising in your minds, which is termed 'having minds free from hatred'. When these two are absent, the mind is unstained and the nature of forms is seen as void. Perception of the voidness of their nature leads to the cutting off of concurrent causes and thus to spontaneous deliverance. You must examine this thoroughly. if the meaning is not brilliantly clear to you, hasten to ask your questions. Do not allow the hours to pass in vain. If you people put your trust in this teaching and act accordingly, without being delivered, I shall gladly take your places in hell for the whole of my existence. if I have deceived you, may I be reborn in a place where lions, tigers and wolves will devour my flesh! But, if you do not put your faith in this teaching, and do not practice it diligently, that will be because you do not understand it. Once you have lost a human body, you will not obtain another for millions of aeons. Strive on! Strive on! It is absolutely vital that you come to understand.

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## THE TSUNG CHING RECORD OF

## THE ZEN MASTER HUI HAI

## ALSO KNOWN AS THE GREAT PEARL

*A collection of dialogues recorded by the monk Tsung Ching of Hua Yen Monastery in the city of Yü. (Throughout Part Two 'M' stands for Master Hui Hai while 'Q' and 'A' stand for the questions and answers to others.)*

1. When the Master first arrived in Kiangsi to pay his respects to Ma Tsu, the latter enquired, 'From where have you come?'

'From the Great Cloud Monastery at Yieh Chou,' answered the Master.

Q: 'What do you hope to gain by coming here?'

M: 'I have come seeking the Buddha-dharma.'

To this Ma Tsu replied, 'Instead of looking to the treasure house which is your very own, you have left home and gone wandering far away. What for? I have absolutely nothing here at all.<sup>61</sup> What is this Buddha-dharma that you seek?'

Whereat the Master prostrated himself and enquired, 'Please tell me to what you alluded when you spoke of a treasure house of my very own.'

A: 'That which asked the question is your treasure house. It contains absolutely everything you need and lacks nothing at all. It is there for you to use freely, so why this vain search for something outside yourself? No sooner were these words spoken than the Master received a great illumination and recognized his own mind! Beside himself with joy, he hastened to show his gratitude by prostrating himself again.'

The Master spent the next six years in attendance upon Ma Tsu; but, as his first teacher - the one responsible for his admission to the monastic order - was growing old, he had to return to Yieh Chou to look after him. There he lived a retired life, concealing his abilities and outwardly appearing somewhat mad. It was at this time that he composed his shastra - A Treatise Setting Forth the Essential Gateway to Truth by Means of Instantaneous Awakening. Later this book was stolen by Hsueh Yen, a disciple of his brother-in-the-dharma, who brought it from the Yangtze region and showed it to Ma Tsu. Ma Tsu, after reading it carefully, declared to his disciples, 'In Yieh Chou there is now a great pearl; its lustre penetrates every-where freely and without obstruction.'

Now it happened that the assembly included a monk who knew that the Master had, in lay life been surnamed Chu (a word identical in sound with the word for pearl). In great excitement he hastened to communicate this information to some other monks, who went in a group to Yieh Chou to call on the Master and follow him. Thence-forward the Master was called 'the Great Pearl'.

(Note inserted in the Chinese text: The Master Hui Hai, Ocean of Wisdom, was a native of Chien Chou.<sup>9</sup> He was received into the Order by the Venerable Tao Chih in the Great Cloud Monastery at Yieh Chou.)

2. Once the Master began his daily address to his disciples by saying, 'I am no Ch'an adept; indeed, I have not a single thing to offer anyone, so I must not keep you standing here longer. Go and take a rest.'<sup>171</sup> In those days the number of people who came to study under him was gradually increasing. As day follows night, they came and pressed him for instruction; he was compelled to answer their questions as soon as asked, thus revealing his unimpeded powers of dialectic. Endless discussions took place with questions and answers following one upon another.



Once a group of Dharma masters (learned preachers) sought an interview and said, 'We have some questions to ask. Are you prepared to answer them, Master?' M: 'Yes. The moon is reflected in that deep pond; catch it if you like. 171 Q:'What is the Buddha really like?'

M: 'if that which is facing the limpid pond is not the Buddha, what is it?'

The monks were puzzled by this reply; after a long pause, they enquired again, 'Master, what dharma (doctrine) do you expound in order to liberate others?' M: 'This poor monk has no dharma by which to liberate others.'

'All Ch'an masters are of the same stuff they exclaimed, whereat the Master asked them, 'What dharmas do you Virtuous Ones expound for liberating others?' A: 'Oh, we expound the [Diamond Sutra](#).'

M:'How many times have you expounded it?'

A: 'More than twenty times.'

M:'By whom was it spoken?'

To this the monks answered indignantly, 'Master, you must be joking! Of course you know that it was spoken by the Buddha.'

M: 'Well, that sutra states: "If someone says the Tathagata expounds the Dharma, he thereby slanders the Buddha!" Such a man will never understand what I mean.' Now, if you say that it was not expounded by the Buddha, you will thereby belittle that sutra. Will you Virtuous Ones please let me see what you have to say to that?' As they made no reply, the Master paused awhile before asking his next question, which was, '[The Diamond Sutra](#) says: "He who seeks me through outward appearance, or seeks me in sound, treads the heterodox path and cannot perceive the Tathagata." Tell me, Virtuous Ones, who or what is the Tathagata?' A: 'Sir, at this point I find myself utterly deluded.' M:' Having never been illumined, how can you say that you are now deluded?'

So then the monk (who had spoken) asked, 'Will the Venerable Ch'an Master expound the Dharma to us?' M: 'Though you have expounded the [Diamond Sutra](#) over twenty times, you still do not know the Tathagata!' These words caused the monks to prostrate themselves again and to beg the Master to explain further, so he said, '[The Diamond Sutra](#) states: "The Tathagata is the Suchness of all dharmas (phenomena)." How can you have forgotten that?'

A: 'Yes, yes - the Suchness of all dharmas.'

M:'Virtuous Ones, "yes" is also incorrect.'

A: 'On that point the scripture is very clear. How can we be wrong?'

M: 'Then, Virtuous Ones, are you that Suchness (too)?'

A: 'Yes, we are.'

M: 'And are plants and rocks the Suchness?'

A: 'They are.'

M: 'Then is the Suchness of you Virtuous Ones the same as the Suchness of plants and rocks?'

A: 'There is no difference.'

M: 'Then how do you Virtuous Ones differ from plants and rocks?'

This silenced the monks for some time, until at last one of them exclaimed with a sigh, 'It is hard to keep our end up in discussions with a man so very much our superior.'

After a considerable pause, they enquired, 'How can mahaparinirvana be attained?'

M: 'By avoiding all samsaric deeds - those which keep you in the round of birth and death.'

Q: 'What deeds are they?'

M: 'Well, seeking nirvana is a samsaric deed. Casting off impurity and clinging to purity is another. Harboring attainments and proofs of attainment is another, and so is failure to discard rules and precepts.'

Q: 'Please tell us how to achieve deliverance.' M: 'Never having been bound, you have no need to seek deliverance. Straightforward functioning and straight-forward conduct cannot be surpassed.'

'Ah,' exclaimed the monks, 'People like this Venerable Ch'an Master are indeed rare!' Then they bowed their thanks and left.

3. Once a man who practised Ch'an asked the Master, 'It is said that mind is identical with the Buddha, but which of these is really the Buddha?'

M: 'What do you suppose is not the Buddha? Point it out to me!'

As there was no answer, the Master added, 'If you comprehend (the mind), the Buddha is omnipresent to you; but, if you do not awaken to it, you will remain astray and distant from him for ever. 171

4. A Master of the Vinaya sect named Fa Ming once remarked, 'You Ch'an masters do a lot of tumbling about in the emptiness of the void.'

M: 'On the contrary, Venerable Sir, it is you who tumble a lot in the emptiness of the void.'

'How can that be?' exclaimed Fa Ming in astonishment.

M: 'The scriptures are just words - mere ink and paper

and everything of that sort is just an empty device. All those words and phrases are based on something people once heard - they are naught but emptiness. You, Venerable Sir, cling to the mere letter of the doctrine, so of course you tumble about in the void.'

Q: 'And do you Ch'an masters not tumble in the void?'

M: 'We do not.'

Q: 'How not?'

A: 'All those writings are the products of wisdom; and, where wisdom's mighty function operates, how can there be tumbling about in the void?'

'Ah,' replied Fa Ming, 'from this we know that he for whom there is a single dharma (doctrine) of which he has not grasped the meaning cannot be called a Hsi-Ta (Siddham).'

'Venerable Sir!' exclaimed our Master, 'You not only tumble about in the void; you even misuse Buddhist terminology!'

'What term have I misused?' cried Fa Ming, flushing angrily.

M: 'Why, Venerable Sir, you are even unable to distinguish between a Chinese word and an Indian word, so how can you manage to preach?'

Q: 'Will the Venerable Ch'an Master point out my mistake?'

M: 'Surely you must know that Hsi-Ta (Siddham) is a name for the Sanskrit alphabet?'

Though the Vinaya Master then realized his mistake, he was still blazing with anger. Fa Ming enquired again, 'The sutras, vinaya and shastras are all the teaching of the Buddha. If we read them, recite them, have faith in what they teach, and act accordingly, how can we fail to come face to face with our real nature?'

M: 'All this is like a dog chasing after a lump of flesh, or a lion devouring a man. The sutras, vinaya, and the shastras disclose the function of self-nature - reading and reciting them are mere phenomena arising from that nature.'

Q: 'Had the Buddha parents and a surname?' M: 'Yes. Anandabha Buddha was surnamed Kaushika. His father's name was Candrar-Uttara and his mother was called Surpassing Beauty.'

Q: 'From which scripture does this information come?'

M: 'From the Collection of Dbarani.'

At this Fa Ming bowed his thanks and departed with expressions of admiration.

5. A certain Tripitaka Master once enquired, 'Do changes occur within the Absolute (Bhutatahata)?' M: 'Yes, they do.'

'Venerable Master,' he replied, 'you are wrong-Whereat the Master asked him a question as follows:

'Does the Tripitaka Master possess the Bhutatathata?'

A: 'Yes.'

M: 'Well, if you hold that it undergoes no changes, you must be a very ignorant sort of monk. Surely you must have heard that a learned man can transform the three poisons into the three cumulative precepts ;8 he can transmute the six sense-perceptions into the six divine perceptions; he can transform defilements (klesha) into bodhi, and primordial ignorance into highest wisdom (mahaprajna). So, if you suppose the Absolute incapable of change, then you - a Master of the Tripitaka - are really a follower of the heterodox sect which holds that things happen spontaneously (i.e. not as a result of the law of causality).'

A: 'If you put it that way, then the Absolute does under-go changes.'

M: 'Yet your holding that the Absolute does undergo changes is equally heretical.'

A: 'Venerable Master, first you said that the Absolute does undergo changes and now you say that it does not. What, then, is exactly the right answer?'

M: 'Those who have clearly perceived their own nature, which may be likened to a mani-pearl reflecting all appear-ances, will be right if they say that the Absolute does undergo changes and equally right in saying that it does not. On the other hand, those who have not seen their own nature will, upon hearing of the changing Absolute, cling to the concept of mutability; or, upon hearing that the Absolute is unchanging, they will grasp at the concept of immutability.'

'Ah, so it is true,' exclaimed the Tripitaka Master, 'that

the Southern Ch'an sect really is too deep to fathom! 171

6. Once a Taoist, happening to pass by, asked, 'is there anything in the world more marvellous than the forces of nature?'

M: 'There is.'

Q: 'And what is that?'

M: 'The power of comprehending those natural forces.'

Q: 'Is cosmic vitality the Way (Tao)?'

M: 'Cosmic vitality is cosmic vitality. The Tao is the Tao.'

Q: 'if so, they must be two different things?' M: 'That which knows does not proceed from two different persons.'

Q: 'What is wrong and what is right?'

M: 'Wrong is the mind that attends to externals; right is the mind that brings externals under control.'

7. A Vinaya Master named Yijian once came and asked, 'Do you make efforts in your practice of the Way, Master?' M: 'Yes, I do.'

Q: 'How?'

M: 'When hungry, I eat; when tired, I sleep.'

Q: 'And does everybody make the same efforts as you do, Master?'

M: 'Not in the same way.'

Q: 'Why not?'

M: 'When they are eating, they think of a hundred kinds of necessities, and when they are going to sleep they ponder over affairs of a thousand different kinds. That is how they differ from me.'

At this, the Vinaya Master was silenced.

8. The Venerable Yi An Kuang once asked, 'Master, do you know where you will be reborn?'

M: 'We have not died yet; so what is the use of discussing our rebirths? That which knows birth is the unborn. We cannot stray from birth to speak of the unborn. The Patriarch once said, "That which undergoes birth is really unborn."

Q: 'Does this apply even to those who have yet to perceive their own nature?'

M: 'Your not having perceived your own nature does not imply that you lack that nature. Why so? Because perception itself is that nature; without it, we should never be able to perceive anything. Consciousness is also that nature, whence it is called 'the nature of consciousness'. Understanding is also that nature, whence it is called 'the nature of understanding'. That which can produce the myriad phenomena (dharma) of the universe is called 'the Dharma-nature', otherwise known as the Dharmakaya. The Patriarch Ashvaghosa declared, "In speaking of phenomena (dharma), we really refer to the minds of sentient beings; for, when mental processes (literally 'mindings', *hsin*) occur, all sorts of phenomena take birth in accordance with them; and, when mental processes do not occur, phenomena have nothing in which to arise - there are not even names for them." Deluded people who do not know that the Dharmakaya is immaterial but becomes manifest in response to the needs of men, may say that "fresh bamboos are the Dharmakaya" and that "luxuriant clusters of yellow flowers are nothing but prajna"! Yet, if flowers are prajna, then prajna must be identical with nonsentient matter; and, if

green bamboos are the Dharmakaya, then the Dharmakaya is a vegetable, so that people dining off bamboo shoots are actually eating the Dharmakaya! Is this sort of talk worth recording? Instead of recognizing the Buddha right in front of you, you spend aeon after aeon searching for him. His whole substance pervades all phenomena, but you are deluded and look for him elsewhere! Consequently, anyone who understands the Way (Tao) is never off it, whether walking, standing, sitting, or lying. Anyone who awakens to the Dharma is sovereign and at ease in all situations, since none of them are outside the Dharma.'

9. Presently, the Venerable Yiin Kuang asked some further questions.

Q: 'Can spiritual wisdom spring from the great emptiness (t'ai hsij)? Is real mind the causal product of good and evil? Can those indulging their desires be on the Way? Can those clinging to right and wrong develop unimpeded use of mind? Can those in whom sense-impressions stir up mental processes achieve one-pointed concentration (ting)? Do people who remain constantly in motionless abstraction really possess wisdom? Do those who treat others with contempt really possess egos? Are those grasping at "is" and "is not" really wise? Those who seek realization through book-knowledge '12 those who seek the Buddha by means of austerities, those who stray from their minds in quest of Buddhahood and those who cling to mind's being the Buddha - are all these various people acting in accord with the Way? I beg you, Master, to reply to these points one by one.'

M: 'The great emptiness does not give birth to spiritual wisdom. Real mind is not the causal product of good and evil. Those whose evil desires lie deep have exceedingly shallow potentials. The minds of those clinging to right and wrong are obstructed. Those in whom sense-impressions stir up mental processes seldom achieve one-pointed concentration. In those who remain constantly in a state of motionless abstraction, forgetful of the mysterious source of that stillness, wisdom is at a low ebb. Self-importance and contempt for others intensify the illusion of an ego. Those grasping at "is" and "is not" are stupid. Those who seek realization in book-knowledge pile up more obstructions for themselves. Those who seek the Buddha by means of austerities are all deluded. Those who stray from their minds in quest of Buddhahood are heretics. Those who cling to mind as being the Buddha are devils!,<sup>13</sup> A: 'if all that is so, ultimately, we find there is just nothing at all.'

M: 'We have come to the ultimate extent of yourself, Venerable Sir, but not to the ultimate.'

At this, the venerable monk, who was now filled with joy, hastened to prostrate himself in gratitude, and departed.

10. Once our Master took his place in the assembly hall and said, 'it is far better for all of you to be unconcerned people .<sup>84</sup> Why all this craze for karmic activities that will put felons' cangues about your necks and send you down to hell? Toiling and moiling the whole day through, telling people you are practicing Ch'an and studying the Way, holding forth about your understanding of the Buddha-dharma - this sort of thing is no use at all. It simply amounts to rushing about in pursuit of sounds and forms. Ah, when will you desist from it all? Once this poor monk heard the great Ma Tsu of Kiangsi say,

"Your own treasure house contains absolutely everything you need. Use it freely instead of searching vainly for something outside yourself."

From that day forward, I desisted. Making use of your own treasure house according to your needs - that can be called happiness! There is no single thing (dharma) which can be grasped or rejected. When you cease looking on things in their temporal aspect, and as having come or gone, then in the whole universe - above, below and round about - there will be no grain of anything which is not your own treasure. All you have to do is carefully contemplate your own minds; then the marvellous trinity of Three jewels in One Substance 85 will constantly manifest itself; of this there is no shadow of doubt. Do not search for the truth with your intellects. Do not search at all. The nature of the mind is intrinsically pure. Therefore it is written in the Avatamsaka Sutra: 86 "All things have no beginning; and all things have no end." Before those who

are able to interpret these words correctly the Buddhas are ever present. Moreover, in the [Vimalakirti Sutra](#) it is written: "It is through your own bodies that reality is perceived; the Buddha is perceived in the same manner." If you do not follow sounds and sights so that they stir your minds, and if you do not pursue appearances so that they give rise to discriminations, you will then be unconcerned people. Don't stand there for so long. Take good care of yourselves! 117

1 1. Upon the same day, as the assembly of monks did not break up at the usual time, the Master said, 'Why do you not disperse? This poor monk has already sat face to face with you. just go and rest.'" What doubts do you still entertain? Do not misuse your minds and waste your energy. if something is still bothering you, hurry up and ask whatever you wish.'

Then Fa Yijan, one of the monks present, asked, 'What are Buddha, Dharma and Sangha; what are the Three jewels in One Substance? We beg you, Master, to explain.' M: 'Mind is the Buddha and it is needless to use this Buddha to seek the Buddha. Mind is the Dharma and it is needless to use this Dharma to seek the Dharma. Buddha and Dharma are not separate entities and their togetherness forms the Sangha. Such is the meaning of Three jewels in One Substance. A sutra says: "Mind, Buddha and sentient beings - there is no difference between any of them. When your body, speech and mind are purified, we say a Buddha has appeared in the world. When these three become impure, we say a Buddha has been extinguished."

For example, when you are angry you are not joyous, and when you are joyous you are not angry; yet, in both cases, there is only the one mind which is not of two substances. Fundamental wisdom is self-existent; when the passionless (anasrava - that which is outside the stream of transmigration) appears, it is like a snake becoming a dragon without changing its scaly skin. Likewise, when sentient beings turn their minds towards Buddhahood, they do not change their physiognomies. Our nature, which is intrinsically pure does not rely on any practice in order to achieve its own state. Only the arrogant claim that there are practice and realization. The real void is without obstruction and its function is, under all circumstances, inexhaustible. It is without beginning or end. Those of high spirituality are capable of sudden illumination,

whereon its function will be (seen to be) unsurpassable this is anuttara-samyaksambodhi (unexcelled enlight-enment). Mind has neither form nor shape; it is the subtle

Sambhogakaya. That which is form-less is the Dharmakaya of Reality. That of which the nature and phenomenal expression are void is the Boundless Immaterial Body. That which is adorned with a myriad modes of salvation is the Dharmakaya of Merit, which is the fundamental power responsible for the conversion of sentient beings; it (mind) is named according to how it appears and its wisdom is inexhaustible - hence it is called 'the inexhaustible Treasury'. As the progenitor of all phenomena (dharma), it is called 'the Primal Dharma Treasury'. As the container of all knowledge, it is called 'the Wisdom Treasury'. As the Suchness to which all phenomena ultimately return, it is called 'the Tathagata Treasury'. [The Diamond Sutra](#) says:

"Tathagata means the Suchness of all dharmas." Another sutra says: 'Of all the dharmas in the universe coming into existence and fading out of existence, there is not one which does not return to the Suchness.'"

12. A guest staying at the monastery said, 'I do not know which of these three - a Vinaya master (upholder of monastic discipline), a Dharma master (skilled preacher), or a Ch'an master - is the greatest. I beg you, Master, out of compassion for my ignorance, to make the matter clear to me.'

M: 'The Vinaya masters expound the discipline section of the scriptures and transmit the ancient tradition for preserving the infinite life of the Dharma (doctrine). Seeing clearly who are the upholders and who are the transgressors of the disciplinary rules, they know how to encourage the former and to restrain the latter. They know how to comport themselves in accordance with the rules and regulations in a manner which inspires respect. They officiate at the three kinds of confession which precede transmission of the Vinaya, and they teach the initial steps leading to the four grades of sainthood. Unless they have spent their lives virtuously up to the onset of old age, how will they dare take charge of those duties? The Dharma masters sit crosslegged upon their lion-thrones pouring forth rivers of eloquence to huge crowds, expounding means of chiselling a way through the Mysterious Pass, or of opening the marvellous Gates of Prajna by which the voidness of giver, receiver and alms is revealed.'" Who, unless they can trample all before them like a lion or an elephant, would dare undertake to be a match for all this? The Ch'an masters grasp at essentials and gain a direct understanding of the Mind Source. Their methods consist of revealing and hiding, of exposing and covering reality in a crisscross manner, which responds adequately to all the different grades of potentiality (for enlightenment).

They excel in harmonizing facts with the underlying principle, so that people may suddenly perceive the Tatha-

gata; and, by pulling up their deep samsaric roots, they cause their pupils to experience samadhi on the spot. Thus,

unless they are capable of achieving tranquillizing dhyana and imperturbable abstraction, they are certainly bound

to be flustered under such circumstances. Although the three methods of training - discipline, dhyana and wisdom differ in that they present the Dharma in a manner suited to the capability of each individual, once a disciple has awakened to their profound meaning by forgetting all about the wording, how do they differ from the One



Vehicle?' O Wherefore it is written in a sutra: "In all the Buddha-realm-is of the ten quarters, there is only the Dharma of the One Vehicle" - there is neither a second nor a third, except in so far as the Buddha employed relative terms in his expedient teaching for the guidance of sentient beings.'

'Master,' exclaimed the guest, 'you have penetrated the Buddha-dharma's profundity and your dialectic powers are unimpeded.'

Then he asked a further question, 'Do Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism really amount to one doctrine, or to three?'

M: 'Employed by those of great capacity, they are the same. As understood by those of limited intellect, they differ. All of them spring forth from the functioning of the one self-nature. It is views involving differentiation which make them three. Whether a person remains deluded or gains illumination depends upon that person, not upon differences or similarity of doctrine.'

13. The Venerable Tao Kuang, who was an adherent of the Dharmalakṣaṇa school (which holds that consciousness is real) and also a commentator upon the scriptures, enquired, 'Master, what mental processes (hsin) do you employ in pursuing the Way?'

M: 'I have no mental processes that would be of use and no Way to follow.'

Q: 'if both those statements are true, why is it that every day you convene gatherings during which you urge others to learn how to follow the Way by means of Ch'an?'

M: 'This old monk does not possess even a dot of ground in which to stick an awl," so how can he gather people? He does not have so much as a tongue, then how can he urge people to do anything?' A: 'Why, Master, you are lying to my face.'

M: 'How can this old monk, being without a tongue to urge people, tell a lie?'

A: 'Really I do not understand the way the Venerable Ch'an Master talks.'

M: 'Nor does this old monk understand himself.'

14. The Venerable Chih, who used to expound the Avatamsaka Sutra, asked, 'Why will you not allow that fresh green bamboos are the Dharmakaya and that luxuriant clusters of yellow flowers are nothing but prajna?' M: 'The Dharmakaya is immaterial, but avails itself of the prevailing green bamboos to reveal itself. Prajna does not differentiate, but avails itself of the prevailing yellow flowers to manifest itself. These yellow flowers and bam-boos do not themselves possess prajna or the Dharma-kaya. Therefore it is written in a sutra: "The real Dharmakaya of the Buddhas is likened to a void; it reveals itself in response to the needs of living beings like the moon being reflected in the water." if yellow flowers are prajna, then prajna would be identical with inanimate objects; if green bamboos were the Dharmakaya, then they would be capable of the Dharmakaya's responsive functioning. Do you understand, Venerable Sir?' A: 'No, I do not.'

M: 'Those who have perceived their own nature will be right whether they say that those things are prajna and the Dharmakaya or that they are not; for they will carry out its function according to prevailing circumstances without being hindered by the dual conception of right and wrong. As for the people who have not yet perceived their own nature, when they speak of green bamboos they form a rigid concept of green bamboos as such; and, when they speak of yellow flowers, they form the same sort of rigid concept. Moreover, when they speak of the Dharmakaya it becomes an obstruction to them, and they talk of prajna without knowing what it is. Thus, everything they say remains at the level of theoretical debate.' Chih bowed his thanks and withdrew.

15. Somebody once asked, 'How much time do we need to attain deliverance by setting our minds on practising the Dharma?'

M: 'Using the mind for practices is like washing dirty things in sticky mud. Prajna is mysterious and wonderful. itself unbegotten, its mighty functioning is at our service regardless of times and seasons.'

Q: 'Can ordinary people succeed in mastering those functions?'

M: 'Those who have perceived their own nature are no longer ordinary people. The Supreme Vehicle of sudden illumination transcends ordinary and holy alike. While deluded people are talking of ordinary and holy, illumined people leap over samsara and nirvana - both! While deluded people are speaking of facts and of the underlying principle, illumined people exercise their function without restriction. While deluded people seek achievement and realization, illumined people remain free from both. While deluded people set their hopes upon some far-distant aeon, illumined people instantly perceive all.'

16. Once a commentator on the [Vimalakirti Sutra](#) said, 'It is written in our sutra: "You should regard the six heretics as your teachers. After you have joined the Order, you should be misled by them and take part in their fall. Those giving you alms should not be called 'cultivators of the field of blessedness'. Those making you offerings should fall into the three evil states of existence. You should vilify the Buddha and destroy the Dharma. You should not belong to the sangha and you should not attain deliverance." if you can behave like this, you may take my food." I ask you, Master, to give me a clear explanation of this passage.'

M: "'The six teachers" is a term for "the six senses" from which your delusions arise. The term "heretic" refers to seeking the Buddha apart from mind. Whatever can be given away cannot be called "a field of blessedness". Your being stirred by the thought of receiving offerings will land you amidst the three evil states.<sup>9</sup> if you dare to vilify the Buddha, you are not attached to Buddha-seeking; if you dare to slander the Dharma you are not attached to Dharma-seeking; and your not joining the sangha implies that you are not attached to sangha-seeking. Your "not attaining deliverance" means that your inherent wisdom, now freed from this last obstruction, can manifest itself instantaneously. If you can interpret the passage in this way, you will receive as food joy in the Dharma and the happiness of meditation (ch'an).'

17. A man who practised meditation once asked, 'There are some who, when questioned about the Buddha, just answer, "Buddha!" Questioned about the Dharma,

they simply answer, "Dharma!" This is called "the one-word method". I do not know if it is right or not.' M: 'Like parrots @cking human speech, those people have nothing to say for themselves because they lack wisdom. Their method is similar to that of using water to cleanse water, or fire to burn fire - all are absolutely valueless!'

18. Someone asked if words and speech are the same.<sup>91</sup>

M: 'The same. Speech means words arranged in sentences. Fluent dialectic resembling an ever-flowing stream, so manifold and sublime as to suggest a vessel pouring forth pearls; such is speech - it clears away the myriad phenomenal appearances, gushes forth in unending torrents of eloquence and skilfully interprets an ocean of meanings. As for words, a single syllable reveals the mind, which is inwardly mysterious and profound, while outwardly it exhibits marvellous aspects; amidst a myriad disturbing forces, it remains imperturbable- and it remains for ever distinct amidst a medley of pure and impure. All this may be likened to the minister's words which made the Prince of Chi blush,<sup>91</sup> or to Vimalakirti's silent preaching which Manjushri praised <sup>97</sup> - how can ordinary people of today hope to understand such things?'

19. The Vinaya Master YiAan once said, 'You Ch'an masters always claim extravagantly that Mind is the Buddha. You are wrong, for even Bodhisattvas at the first stage <sup>911</sup> (of development into Buddhas) can appear in bodily forms in a hundred different Buddha-realms, and those at the second stage can multiply themselves ten times more than that. (Since Mind is the Buddha), will the Ch'an Master try out his miraculous powers and do the same for me to see?'

M: 'Venerable Acharya, are you yourself an ordinary, or a saintly monk?'

A: 'Ordinary.'

M: 'Since you are but an ordinary monk, how can you ask questions about matters like that? This is what a sutra means by saying: "The Virtuous One's mind is turned upside down and does not accord with the Buddha-wisdom."'<sup>99</sup> A: 'You Ch'an masters always say that if we awaken to the Way right in front of us, we shall attain deliverance in our present bodily form. You are wrong.'

M: 'Suppose someone, after a lifetime of virtuous conduct, suddenly puts forth a hand and steals something. is that person a thief in his or her present bodily form?' A: 'Obviously, yes.'

M: 'Then, if at this moment someone suddenly perceives his or her own nature, tell me why that person cannot be delivered?'

A: 'At this moment? Impossible! According to the sutras, three aeons-of-uncountable-extent (asamkhyeya-kalpas) must pass before we attain to it.'<sup>100</sup> M: 'Can aeons-of-uncountable-extent be counted?' At this YiAan shouted indignantly, 'Can someone who draws an analogy between thievery and liberation claim that he reasons correctly?'

M: 'Acharya, you do not understand the Way, but you should not prevent others from understanding it. Your own eyes are shut, so you get angry when others see.' Red in the

face, Ytian began striding away, but called over his shoulder, 'Who's an old muddlehead right off the Way?'

M: 'That which is striding away is just your Way.'

20. A venerable monk called Hui, who preached the Chih-Kuan doctrine (of the T'ien T'ai school), asked, 'Master, are you able to discern demons?'

M: 'Yes. A stirred mind is the heavenly demon; a stirless mind is the demon of the five aggregates; a mind that is sometimes stirred and sometimes stirless is the passion (klesha) demon. According to this "right" dharma of mine, there should be none of these.'

Q: 'What is the meaning of (the T'ien T'ai practice of) simultaneous meditation upon the One Mind's three aspects?'  
M: 'Besides the past mind which is already gone, the future mind which has yet to come, and the present mind which does not stay, which mind will you use for your meditation?'

A: 'So the Venerable Ch'an Master does not understand the Chih-Kuan teaching (to which I alluded).' M: 'Do you understand it, Venerable Commentator?'

A: 'I do.'

M: 'As the great Master Chih Chu 112 said, "'Chih (silencing the mind to obtain samadhi) is preached to wipe out (the illusion of) Chih; and Kuan (looking into the mind to cause prajna to appear and function normally) is preached to eradicate the illusion of Kuan. To dwell on Chih is to drown oneself in the ocean of birth and death-, to abide in Kuan is to upset the mind." Will you use the mind to put a stop to mind and stir the mind to meditate on it? Setting the mind on meditation involves attachment to permanence; setting no mind on meditation involves annihilation. Clinging to the concept of "either existence or non-existence" implies (attachment to) a dualism. Then how will the Venerable Conu-nentator expound (the Chih-Kuan practice) correctly for me to see?'  
A: 'Since you put it like that, there is really nothing I can say.'

M: 'If so, have you ever really understood the Chih-Kuan practice?'

21. Someone asked, 'Is prajna very large?'

M: 'It is.'

Q: 'How large?'

M: 'Unlimited.'

Q: 'Is prajna small?'

M: 'It is.'

Q: 'How small?'

M: 'So small as to be invisible.'

Q: 'Where is it?'

M: 'Where is it not?' 103

22. A monk commentator of the [Vimalakirti Nirdeśa Sutra](#) enquired, 'According to our sutra: "After all the Bodhi-sattvas who were present had spoken of their interpretation of the nondual Dharma-gate (to enlightenment), Vimalakirti remained silent." Is that the ultimate?'

M: 'It is not. If the sacred meaning had been wholly revealed (by that), there would have been nothing more for the third section of the sutra to say.'

After a long pause, the Commentator enquired, 'Will the Venerable Ch'an Master explain to me the ultimate meaning that was not wholly revealed?'

M: 'The first section of that sutra taught the Buddha's ten chief disciples how their minds should abide. The second section described how each of the Bodhisattvas present spoke of their entry into the nondual Dharma-gate; they used words to reveal that which is wordless. Manjushri, however, revealed the wordless through absence of words and speech; whereas Vimalakirti employed neither words nor absence of words to wind up their statements. The third section began after Vimalakirti's silence and went on to reveal the transcendental function. Does the Venerable Commentator understand?'

A: 'Well, what a strange way of putting it!'

M: 'It is not so strange.'

Q: 'Why not?'

M: 'I explain it like that to wipe out passionate clinging to the reality of an ego. If you take the sutra's real meaning, it tells you only that the material and immaterial are void and still (i.e. in the nirvanic condition), so as to enable you to perceive your own nature. It teaches you how to give up wrong practices in favour of right practice. So you must not allow your mind to give rise to discriminative thoughts about words, speech, and printed texts. It would be quite enough if you could fully understand just the two words composing Vimalakirti's name - "Vimala" (spot-less) refers to the fundamental "substance" and "kirti" (reputation) is its functional manifestation.<sup>115</sup> This functional manifestation proceeds from the fundamental "substance" and it is by means of it that we return to that "substance". Since "substance" and manifestation are one in reality, the fundamental and its manifestation do not differ from each other. For this reason the ancients said, "Though the fundamental and its manifestations are different denominations, the inconceivable (of which they are aspects) is but one; and yet, even though one is not one."<sup>116</sup> Had you understood the real meaning of the two denominations expediently termed "Vimala" (spotless) and "kirti" (reputation), it would be superfluous to speak of the ultimate and the not-ultimate. (There is only that which is) neither preliminary nor final, neither root nor twig and neither vimala nor kirti. The instruction consists in revealing to sentient beings their fundamental nature which cognizes its own

inde-scribable state of deliverance. Those who have not perceived their own nature will never in all their lives understand this doctrine.'

23. A monk asked, 'Since all the myriad phenomena (dharma) are nonexistent, the nature of mind should also be nonexistent. just as a bubble having burst can never reform, so can a person once dead never be reborn, for

nothing remains of that person. Where will the nature of that person's mind be then?'

M: 'Bubbles are composed of water. When a bubble bursts, does the water composing it cease to be? Our bodies proceed from our real nature. When we die, why should you say that our nature is no more?'

A: 'If you maintain there is such a nature, bring it forth and show it to me!'

M: 'Do you believe there will be a morrow?'

A: 'Yes, certainly.'

M: 'Bring it forth and show it to me!'

A: 'There will surely be a morrow, but not just now.' M: 'Yes, but its not being just now does not mean that there will be no morrow. You personally do not perceive your own nature, but this does not mean that your nature does not exist. just now, there is before you that which wears a robe, takes food and walks, stands, sits, or reclines, but you do not recognize it (for what it is). You may well be called a stupid and deluded person. If you discriminate between today and tomorrow, that is like using your own nature to search for your own nature; you will not perceive it even after myriads of aeons. Yours is a case of not seeing the sun, not of there being no sun.'

24. A monk who used to give lectures on the Ch'ing Lung (Green Dragon) CommentarV 17 (on the [Diamond Sutra](#)) enquired, 'Our sutra says: "(When the Tathagata expounds the Dharma) there is really no Dharma to teach; but this is (expediently) called 'teaching the Dharma'." How does the Venerable Ch'an Master interpret this passage?' M: 'The substance of prajna is utterly pure and does not contain a single thing on which to lay hold - this is the meaning of "there is no Dharma to teach". As this nirvanic substance, prajna, is endowed with functions countless as the sands of the Ganges, there is not a thing which can escape its knowledge - this is the meaning of "this is (expediently) called preaching the Dharma".'

25. A commentator of the Avatamsaka Sutra asked, 'Do you believe that inanimate objects are Buddhas?' M: 'I do not. If inanimate objects were Buddhas, then a living man would be inferior to a dead man; why, even dead donkeys and dead dogs ought to be superior to him! A sutra says: "The Buddha-body is the Dharmakaya; it is begotten of discipline, dhyana and wisdom, by the three insights, the six transcendental powers" and by the performance of all excellent modes of salvation." If an inanimate object were the Buddha, then, were Your Reverence to die now, you would automatically become a Buddha!'

26. A Dharma Master enquired, 'Do you believe that the greatest merit derives from the recitation of the Prajna Sutra?'

M: 'I do not.'

Q: 'So all ten volumes of the Stories of Divine Responses

are unworthy of belief

M: 'Filial piety practised while parents are still alive ensures divine responses (and rewards); this does not mean you have to wait until after their death so that their bleached skeletons may bless you.'" Sutras are made of paper covered with words printed in ink, but printed words, paper and ink are without self-nature; so from whence will those divine responses capable of fulfilling your wishes come? Effectual answers come from proper use of the mind by the person who reads the sutras; and this explains how the divine power works in response to appeal from a living being. You may test this for yourself by taking a volume of the sutras and leaving it quietly on a table. If nobody picks it up and recites it and practises it, do you suppose it can possibly have any marvellous efficacy in itself'

27. A monk enquired, 'How are we to interpret correctly all names, forms, speech and silence in order to integrate them and realize a state that is neither anterior nor posterior?'

M: 'When a thought arises, fundamentally there is neither form nor name; how can you speak in terms of before and after? Failure to understand the essential purity of all that has name and form is the cause of your mis-takenly reckoning everything in those terms. People are locked in by these names and forms, and, lacking the key of wisdom, they are unable to unlock themselves. Those clinging to the Middle Way suffer from Middle Way psychosis; those grasping at extremes suffer from a dualist psychosis. You do not comprehend that that which mani-fests itself right now is the unequalled Dharmakaya. Delusion and awakening, as well as gain and loss, pertain to the worldly way. The rising (of the thought) of creation and destruction leads to the burial of true wisdom; both the cutting off of defilements (klesha) and the search for bodhi are in direct opposition to wisdom.'

28. Once somebody asked, 'Why do the Vinaya masters not believe in Ch'an?'

M: 'The noumenon is profoundly mysterious and not easily revealed, whereas names and forms are easy to grasp. Those who do not perceive their self-nature refuse to believe in it; those who do perceive their self-nature are called Buddhas. Only those who recognize the Buddha can believe in and enter the noumenon. The Buddha does not flee from people; it is people who flee the Buddha. Buddhahood can be realized only by the mind. While deluded people seek it through printed words, illumined people look into their minds and realize bodhi. Deluded people sow causal deeds and await their fruition, whereas illumined people understand the immateriality of mind. Deluded people cling to the (illusory) ego and hold it to be their very own, but illumined people employ their prajna which, when called upon to do so, manifests itself instantaneously. Deluded people are hindered by their clinging to "is" and "is not", while people of wisdom perceive their own nature and understand the marvellous inter-penetration of all

forms. Those who have reached only the "dry wisdom"" stage grow weary of their dialectics, whereas people of (real) wisdom and clear understanding set their minds at rest. When Bodhisattvas touch anything (those people's wisdom) shines upon it (enabling them to perceive it as it really is), while Shravakas darken their minds with fear of their surroundings." illumined people, in their daily activities, do not stray from the uncreate, but deluded people screen themselves from the Buddha who is right in front of them.'

29. Once somebody asked, 'How can we obtain the power of bodily freedom from natural law?'

M: 'Spiritual self-nature pervades all worlds which are countless as the sands of the Ganges; it penetrates mountains, rivers, rocks and cliffs without hindrance, leaping an infinite distance in a single moment, going and coming without trace. Fire cannot burn it, nor water drown it. Fools, having no mind-wisdom, want their (bodies which are composed of the) four elements to fly! It is written in a sutra that ordinary people who cling to forms must be taught in accordance with their capacities. So mind's formlessness is described as the subtle Sanibhogakaya. That which is immaterial is reality, the "substance" of which is void; hence it is called "the Boundless Space-like Body". As it is adorned with merits deriving from a myriad modes of salvation, it is called "the Dharmakaya of Merit, the source of all befitting activities". Despite all these names derived from its varied functions, in reality there is but the pure Dharmakaya.'

30. Somebody once asked, 'if we follow the Way with undivided mind, will the load of karmic obstructions resulting from our past deeds be dissipated?' M: 'For those who have not yet perceived their own nature, it will not be dissipated; whereas those who perceive it thereby wipe out all karmic obstruction just as the hot sun melts the frost and snow. They may be likened to people able to burn up all the grass covering the mighty slopes of Mount Sumeru in a single flash, for their karmic obstruction is like that grass and their wisdom is like that fire!'

Q: 'How can we know when all karmic obstructions have been dissipated?'

M: 'When you see through to the mind now manifesting itself in front of you, all arising concepts of past and present will be viewed in the light of that perception. All past and future Buddhas, together with the myriad phenomena, will be seen as appearing simultaneously. The sutra says:

"Knowledge of all phenomena contained in a single thought-moment is a bodhimandala, for it ensures achievement of (the Buddha's) universal knowledge (sarvajna)."

31. A man who practiced meditation once asked, 'How can I abide in the right dharma?'

M: 'To seek abode in the right dharma is wrong. Why so? Because the right dharma is neither wrong nor right.' Q: 'Then how am I to become a Buddha?'

M: 'You need not cast aside the worldly mind; just refrain from soiling your self-nature. The sutra says: "Mind, Buddha and living beings do not differ from one another." Q: 'Can we gain deliverance just by interpreting in this way?'



M: 'Since fundamentally you are not bound, why seek deliverance? The Dharma is beyond mere words, speech and writings. Do not seek it amidst a plethora of sentences. The Dharma does not pertain to past, present and future; you cannot unite with it at the level of causal law. The Dharma transcends everything and is incomparable. The Dharmakaya, though immaterial, manifests itself in response to the needs of living beings; so you cannot turn away from the worldly to seek deliverance.'

32. A monk enquired the meaning of prajna.

M: 'If you suppose that anything is not prajna, let me hear what it is?'

Q: 'How may we perceive our own nature?'

M: 'That which perceives is your own nature; without it there could be no perception.'

Q: 'Then what is self-cultivation?'

M: 'Refraining from befouling your own nature and from deceiving yourself is (the practice of) self-cultivation. When your own nature's mighty function manifests itself, this is the unequalled Dharmakaya.'

Q: 'Does our own nature include evil?'

M: 'It does not even include good!'

Q: 'If it contains neither good nor evil, where should we direct it when using it?'

M: 'To set your mind on using it is a great error.'

Q: 'Then what should we do to be right?'

M: 'There is nothing to do and nothing which can be called right.1113

33. Once somebody enquired, 'Suppose a man is sitting in a boat and the boat keel cuts to death a shellfish. Is the man guilty, or should the boat be blamed

M: 'Man and boat had no mind to kill the shellfish, and the only person to be blamed is you. When a tearing wind snaps off a branch which falls and kills somebody, there is no murderer and no murdered. in all the world, there is no place where living beings do not have to suffer.'

34. A monk asked, 'I still do not understand how realization can be achieved in a single thought-moment (ksana) by relying on (people) displaying certain feelings or passions, or on their pointing at the surrounding objects, their speech or silence, their raising their eyebrows or moving their eyes.'<sup>14</sup>

M: 'There is nothing which is outside self-nature. Its function is marvellous - marvellous in its motion and in its stillness. Those who have (attained to) real mind express that reality whether they speak, or keep silent. For one who understands the Way, walking,

standing, sitting, or lying - all are the Way. When the self-nature is obscured by delusion, a myriad illusions arise.'

Q: 'What is the meaning of "a dharma (doctrine) has its aims"?'

M: 'From the moment of its establishment, a dharma (doctrine) is complete in all its meanings. (As the sutra says:) "Manjushri, all dharmas (doctrines) are established upon basic impermanence.11,115 Q: 'Do you mean that there is just a great emptiness?'

M: 'Are you scared by emptiness?'

A: 'Yes, I am scared.'

M: 'That which is scared is not the same as a great emptiness.'

Q: 'How shall we understand that which is beyond the reach of words?'

M: 'Now, while you are speaking, what is there which cannot be reached by your words?'

35. There were over ten older monks who came and asked the Master, 'There is a sutra which speaks of the destruction of the Buddha-dharma, but we do not know if the Buddha-dharma is destructible.'

M: 'Worldlings and heretics claim that it can be destroyed, whereas Shravakas and Pratyeka buddhas hold it to be indestructible. The "right" dharma of mine has no room for these two opinions. As to that "right" dharma, it is not only worldlings and heretics who have not yet reached the Buddha-stage, for the followers of the two smaller vehicles (Shravakas and Pratyekabuddhas) are just as bad.'

Q: 'Do the dharmas (doctrines) that treat of reality, illusion, immateriality and materiality each have a seed-nature?'

M: 'Although a dharma itself has no seed-nature, it manifests itself in response to the needs of living beings. When the mind abides in illusion, everything becomes illusory; if there were a single dharma (phenomenon) not illusory, illusion would be stable! if the mind is immaterial, everything is immaterial if there were a single dharma not immaterial, the concept of imateriality would not be valid. When you are deluded, you run after a dharma; when you are enlightened, you can manipulate it! The utmost limit of the universe with all its immense variety is space; and all earth's many rivers merge with their final destination, the sea; all saints and sages can reach their apotheosis in Buddhahood; and the twelve divisions of the canon, the five groupings of Vinaya and the five group-ings of shastras have for their highest aim realization of own-mind. Mind is the marvellous basis of Dharani' 17 and the great source of all phenomena; it is called "the Store-house of Great Wisdom", or "the Nonabiding Nirvana". Although there are innumerable names for it, all serve to designate Mind.

Q: 'What is illusion?'

M: 'Illusion has no stable appearance; it is like a whirling fire,"" like a mirage city, like puppets on strings, like (the mirage oases caused by) sunbeams, like flowers in the sky - none are real.'

Q: 'Who is the great illusionist?'

M: 'Mind is the great illusionist; the body is the City of Great Illusion, and names are its garments and sustenance. In all the worlds, countless as Ganges' sands, there is not anything which is outside illusion. Worldlings, unable to understand illusion, are deluded by illusory karma wher-ever they happen to be. Shravakas, being afraid of illusory phenomena, darken their minds and enter a state of stillness (i.e. relative nirvana). Bodhisattvas, knowing all illusions and understanding that their substance is illusory, are indifferent to all names and forms. The Buddha is the great illusionist who turned the great illusory Dharma-wheel, attained illusory nirvana, transmuted illusory sam-sara into that which is beyond birth and death, and transformed lands of filth, innumerable as the sands of the Ganges, into the pure Dharmadhatu.

36. A monk once enquired, 'Why do you forbid people to intone the sutras and liken intoning them to speaking in a foreign language?'

M: 'Because such people are like parrots mimicking human speech without understanding its meaning. The sutras trans@t the Buddha's meaning, and those who in-tone them without understanding that meaning are merely imitating someone else's words. That is why I do not allow it.,

Q: 'Can there be any meaning apart from writings, words and speech?'

M: 'Your talking like that reveals that you are just an imitator of other people's words.'

Q: 'We, too, are now using words. Why are you so dead set against their use?'"

M: 'Now, listen attentively. Sutras are writings set forth in specific order. When I speak, I use meaningful words which are not writings. When (most) living beings speak, they employ words from writings, but they are not mean-ingful. To comprehend (real) meanings, we should go beyond unsteady words; to awaken to the fundamental law, we should leap beyond writings. The Dharma is beyond words, speech and writings; how can it be sought amid a plethora of sentences? That is why those seeking enlightenment forget all about wording after having arrived at the (real) meaning. Awakened to reality, they throw away the doctrine just as a fisherman, having caught his fish, pays no more attention to his nets; or as a hunter, after catching his rabbit, forgets about his snare.'

37. A Dharma Master asked, 'Master, what do you think about the statement that constant repetition of the Buddha's name is a form of Mahayana involving realism?' M: 'Even idealism is not Mahayanist, how much less so realism! A sutra says: "Ordinary people who cleave to forms must be taught according to their capacities."' Q: 'As to the vow to be born in the Pure Land, is there really a Pure Land?'

M: 'A sutra says: "Those who wish to attain the Pure Land should purify their minds and then their pure minds are the Pure Land of the Buddha." If your mind is pure and clean, you will find the Pure Land wherever you happen to be. By way of illustration -

an heir born to a prince is destined to succeed to the throne; likewise, those who set their minds on the quest for Buddhahood will be born into the Buddha's Pure Land. Those whose minds are corrupt will be born in a land of filth. Purity and corruption depend solely on the mind, not on the land.' Q: 'I am always hearing talk of the Way (Tao, here meaning self-nature), but I do not know who can perceive it., M: 'Those possessing the Wisdom Eye can perceive it.' Q: 'I am very fond of the Mahayana, but how shall I study it with success?'

M: 'Those who awaken (to mind) can achieve success; those who are not awakened to it cannot.'

Q: 'What shall I do to be awakened to it?'

M: 'It comes only by true intuition.'

Q: 'What is it like?'

M: 'It resembles nothing.'

Q: 'If so, it should be ultimately nonexistent'

M: 'That which is nonexistent is not ultimate.'

Q: 'Then it must exist.'

M: 'It does exist, but it is formless.'

Q: 'If I do not awaken to it, what shall I do?' M: 'It is of your own accord that Your Reverence fails to awaken to it; nobody is preventing you.'

Q: 'Does the Buddha-dharma appertain to time?' M: 'It is to be perceived in the formless, so it is not external; but nor, with its infinite powers of responding to circumstances, is it internal; and, as there is nowhere between them where it abides, it cannot be grasped on the time level.'

A: 'This way of talking is much too confusing.' M: 'Just now, when you used the word "confusing", was there anything internal or external about it?' A: 'I cannot search, then, for any trace of it within or without.'

M: 'If (you understand) there is no trace, it is clear that what I said just now was not confusing.'

Q: 'What shall we do to attain Buddhahood?'

M: 'This mind is (fundamentally) the Buddha and can become a Buddha (in actuality).''

Q: 'When beings enter hell, does their Buddha-nature accompany them?'

M: 'When you are actually engaged in doing evil, is there any good in that action?'

A: 'No, there is not.'

M: When beings enter hell, the Buddha-nature is similarly (not present).'

Q: But how is it then with the Buddha-nature which every being possesses?

M: If you perform the Buddha's function, that is employing the Buddha-nature. If you steal, that is employing the nature of a thief. If you behave in the worldly way, that is employing the nature of (ordinary) living beings. This nature, being formless and without characteristics, is variously named in accordance with the ways in which it functions. The Diamond Sutra says: "All the virtuous ones (bhaddra) and enlightened saints (arya) are distinguished by (their conformity with) the nonactive dharmas (anasrava, v,ru wei)."

38.A monk once asked, 'What is the Buddha?'

M: 'There is no Buddha apart from mind.'

Q: 'What is the Dharmakaya?'

M: 'Mind is the Dharmakaya. As it is the source of all the myriad phenomena, we refer to it as "the Body of the Dharma Realm". The Shastra of the Awakening of Faith says: "In speaking of the Dharma, we refer to the mind of sentient beings, for our revelations of the Mahayana truths all depend on Mind."

Q: 'What is meant by saying that the Great Sutra' resides in a small particle of dust?'

M: 'Wisdom is that sutra. A sutra says: "There is a great sutra (book) with a capacity equal to that of a major-chilocosm (tri-sahasra-maha-sahasra-loka-dhatu) which yet resides in a small particle of dust." By "a particle of dust" is meant the mind-dust giving rise to a single thought. Therefore it is said: "In a thought stirred by mind-dust, there are elaborated as many gathas as there are sands in the Ganges." Today people no longer understand this.' Q: 'What is the City of Great Meaning and who is the King of Great Meaning?'

M: 'The body is that city and mind is that king. A sutra says: "Those who listen much are skilled in truth, but not in putting it into words." Words are transient, but meaning is eternal, for it is without form and characteristics. Apart from words and speech, there is Mind which is the Great Sutra (book). Mind is the King of Great Meaning; those who do not clearly know their minds are not skilful (in-terpreters) of the meaning- they are just imitators of words spoken by others.'

Q: 'The Diamond Sutra speaks of leading all the nine classes of sentient beings into the state of final nirvana. it also says: "There are really no sentient beings to be led across." How can these two passages of scripture be reconciled? it first says and then repeats that sentient beings really are led across, but without being attached to their forms. I have often doubted this and am still not convinced, so I beg you, Master, to explain it to me.'

M: These nine classes of beings are all (latent) in our physical body; they are created according to our karmic deeds. Thus, ignorance creates a being born from an egg;

defilement (klesha) creates a being born from the womb; immersion in the love-fluid creates a being born from humidity; and the sudden arising of passion creates a being born of transformation. When awakened, we are Buddhas; when deluded, we are (ordinary) sentient beings. To a Bodhisattva, every thought arising in the mind is a living being. If every thought is looked into clearly, the substance of the mind is found to be void, and this is called "the deliverance of living beings". Illumined people liberate their inner living beings even before they take shape in their own selves and, since their shapes therefore do not exist, it is clear that there are in reality no living beings to be liberated.'

39. A monk asked, 'Are words and speech also mind?'

M: Words and speech are concurrent causes; they are not mind.'

Q: 'What is this mind which lies beyond all concurrent causes?'

M: 'There is no mind beyond words and speech.' Q: 'If there is no mind beyond words and speech, what is that mind in reality?'

M: 'Mind is without form and characteristics; it is neither beyond nor not beyond words and speech; it is for ever clear and still and can perform its function freely and without hindrance. The Patriarch'" said:

It is only when the mind is seen to be unreal That the dharma of all minds can be truly understood.

40. A monk asked, 'What is meant by "the study of dhyana (meditation) and wisdom (prajna) in equal proportions"?'

M: 'Dhyana pertains to substance, and wisdom is its function. Dhyana begets wisdom and wisdom leads to dhyana. They may be likened to the water and its waves, both of which are of one substance with neither taking precedence over the other. Such is the study of dhyana and wisdom in equal proportions. Homeless ones (monks) should not look to words and speech. Walking, standing, sitting and lying - all are the functioning of your nature. In what are you out of accord with it? Just go now and take a rest (i.e. set your minds at rest) for a while. As long as you are not carried away by external winds, your nature will remain like water for ever still and clear. Let nothing matter. Take good care of yourselves!'