

Mirror of Sŏn

Cheongheo Hyujeong (1520~1604)

Forward

In Mirror of Sŏn, Sŏsan offers an inclusive vision of Buddhist cultivation that recognizes the value of varying approaches. From a traditional Buddhist viewpoint, the work is well balanced: it stresses the importance of precepts, discusses training in concentration, and provides general words of caution to those treading the path to awakening.

Master Sŏsan considered Buddhist texts to be of the paramount importance to his students. Yet he also knew that the vast library of Buddhist sutras and commentarial literature could also become obstacles to an experiential attainment of Buddhism. In his introduction to this text he explained “...the Buddhist sutras are as numerous as the sea is vast and this causes much concern. Buddhists in the future will have to sort through too many leaves and branches in order to discover the essence. Therefore, I have extracted and summarized several hundred passages from various texts and I have written them down in one book.” His valuable words of wisdom have been a constant inspiration to Korean Sŏn monks and continue to be so now.

Cheongheo Hyujeong (1520~1604)

Master Hyujeong placed the top of his class on the examination of the monastic curriculum, and he ascended to the highest position in the Buddhist order, the arbiter of the Sŏn school. However, he resigned his post, returning to Mt. Geumgang where he gave his undivided attention to his training and guiding the younger monks, while at the same time producing literary gems displaying his Sŏn thought.

Table of Contents

MIRROR OF SŎN	1
CHEONGHEO HYUJEONG (1520~1604)	1
CHEONGHEO HYUJEONG (1520~1604)	2
TABLE OF CONTENTS	3
CHAPTER ONE	11
COMMENTARY	11
VERSE	11
CHAPTER TWO	12
COMMENTARY	12
VERSE	12
CHAPTER THREE	13
COMMENTARY	13
VERSE	13
CHAPTER FOUR	14
COMMENTARY	14
VERSE	14
CHAPTER FIVE	15
COMMENTARY	15
VERSE	15
CHAPTER SIX	16
COMMENTARY	16
VERSE	16
CHAPTER SEVEN	17
COMMENTARY	17
VERSE	17
CHAPTER EIGHT	18
COMMENTARY	18
VERSE	18
CRITIQUE	18

CHAPTER NINE	19
COMMENTARY	19
VERSE	19
CHAPTER TEN.....	20
COMMENTARY	20
VERSE	20
CHAPTER ELEVEN	21
COMMENTARY	21
VERSE	21
CHAPTER TWELVE	22
COMMENTARY	22
VERSE	22
CRITIQUE	22
CHAPTER THIRTEEN	23
COMMENTARY	23
CHAPTER FOURTEEN.....	24
COMMENTARY	24
CHAPTER FIFTEEN	25
COMMENTARY	25
CHAPTER SIXTEEN	26
COMMENTARY	26
CHAPTER SEVENTEEN.....	27
COMMENTARY	27
CHAPTER EIGHTEEN	28
COMMENTARY	28
CHAPTER NINETEEN	29
COMMENTARY	29
CHAPTER TWENTY	30
COMMENTARY	30

CHAPTER TWENTY ONE.....	31
COMMENTARY.....	31
CHAPTER TWENTY TWO.....	32
COMMENTARY.....	32
CRITIQUE.....	33
CHAPTER TWENTY THREE	34
COMMENTARY.....	34
CHAPTER TWENTY FOUR.....	35
COMMENTARY.....	35
CHAPTER TWENTY FIVE.....	36
COMMENTARY.....	36
CHAPTER TWENTY SIX.....	37
COMMENTARY.....	37
CHAPTER TWENTY SEVEN	38
COMMENTARY.....	38
CRITIQUE.....	38
CHAPTER TWENTY EIGHT	40
COMMENTARY.....	40
CHAPTER TWENTY NINE.....	41
COMMENTARY.....	41
CHAPTER THIRTY.....	42
COMMENTARY.....	42
CHAPTER THIRTY ONE.....	43
COMMENTARY.....	43
CHAPTER THIRTY TWO	44
COMMENTARY.....	44
CHAPTER THIRTY THREE.....	45
COMMENTARY.....	45

CRITIQUE	45
CHAPTER THIRTY FOUR.....	46
COMMENTARY	46
CHAPTER THIRTY FIVE.....	47
COMMENTARY	47
CHAPTER THIRTY SIX.....	48
COMMENTARY	48
CHAPTER THIRTY SEVEN.....	49
COMMENTARY	49
CHAPTER THIRTY EIGHT	50
CHAPTER THIRTY NINE	52
COMMENTARY	52
CRITIQUE	52
CHAPTER FORTY.....	53
COMMENTARY	53
CHAPTER FORTY ONE.....	54
COMMENTARY	54
CHAPTER FORTY TWO.....	55
COMMENTARY	55
CHAPTER FORTY THREE.....	56
COMMENTARY	56
CHAPTER FORTY FOUR.....	57
COMMENTARY	57
CHAPTER FORTY FIVE.....	58
COMMENTARY	58
CHAPTER FORTY SIX.....	59
COMMENTARY	59

CHAPTER FORTY SEVEN	60
COMMENTARY	60
CHAPTER FORTY EIGHT	61
COMMENTARY	61
CHAPTER FORTY NINE	62
COMMENTARY	62
CHAPTER FIFTY	63
COMMENTARY	63
CHAPTER FIFTY ONE	64
COMMENTARY	64
CHAPTER FIFTY TWO	65
COMMENTARY	65
CHAPTER FIFTY THREE	66
COMMENTARY	66
CHAPTER FIFTY FOUR	69
COMMENTARY	69
CHAPTER FIFTY FIVE	70
COMMENTARY	70
CHAPTER FIFTY SIX	71
COMMENTARY	71
CHAPTER FIFTY SEVEN	72
COMMENTARY	72
CHAPTER FIFTY EIGHT	73
COMMENTARY	73
CHAPTER FIFTY NINE	74
COMMENTARY	74
CHAPTER SIXTY	75

COMMENTARY	75
CHAPTER SIXTY ONE	76
COMMENTARY	76
CRITIQUE	76
CHAPTER SIXTY TWO	77
COMMENTARY	77
COMMENTARY	77
CHAPTER SIXTY THREE	78
COMMENTARY	78
CHAPTER SIXTY FOUR	79
COMMENTARY	79
CHAPTER SIXTY FIVE	80
COMMENTARY	80
CHAPTER SIXTY SIX	81
COMMENTARY	81
CHAPTER SIXTY SEVEN	82
COMMENTARY	82
CHAPTER SIXTY EIGHT	83
COMMENTARY	83
CHAPTER SIXTY NINE	84
COMMENTARY	84
CRITIQUE	84
CHAPTER SEVENTY	86
COMMENTARY	86
CHAPTER SEVENTY ONE	87
COMMENTARY	87
CHAPTER SEVENTY TWO	88
COMMENTARY	88

VERSE	88
CHAPTER SEVENTY THREE	89
COMMENTARY	89
VERSE	89
CHAPTER SEVENTY FOUR	90
COMMENTARY	90
VERSE	90
CHAPTER SEVENTY FIVE	91
COMMENTARY	91
VERSE	91
CRITIQUE	91
CHAPTER SEVENTY SIX	92
COMMENTARY	92
VERSE	92
CHAPTER SEVENTY SEVEN	93
COMMENTARY	93
VERSE	93
CHAPTER SEVENTY EIGHT	94
COMMENTARY	94
VERSE	94
CHAPTER SEVENTY NINE	95
COMMENTARY	95
VERSE	95
CRITIQUE	95
CHAPTER EIGHTY	98
COMMENTARY	98
VERSE	98
CHAPTER EIGHTY ONE	99
COMMENTARY	99
VERSE	99
CHAPTER EIGHTY TWO	100

COMMENTARY	100
VERSE	100

Chapter One

Right here, right now, from the very beginning, there is only one thing. Constantly clear and unexplained, having never been born and having never died, it cannot be named or described.

Commentary

What is the “one thing?” The ancestors said: “Before the Buddhas of the past were born, there has always been this one thing, simple and ethereal. So how could Mahākāśyapa have transmitted it?” Even Śākyamuni did not understand it.

Consequently, this “one thing” has never been born and has never died. It cannot be named or conceptualized. The Sixth Ancestor said to his assembly, “I have one thing. It has no name and no form. Do any of you recognize it?” Chán Master Shenhùi came forward and said, “It is the source of all Buddhas. It is my Buddha Nature.” This is the reason that Shenhùi was not considered as Huìnéng’s legitimate dharma heir. When Master Nányuè came from Mt. Sung, Ancestor Huìnéng asked him, “What is it that has come here?” Nányuè was confused. After eight years, he finally responded, “To call it ‘one thing is not correct.” This is how he became a Dharma-heir of Huìnéng.

Verse

the masters of the three teachings
all came forth from this phrase.
if you try to demonstrate it,
you must watch your step
otherwise, the hair of your eyebrows
will fall out.

Chapter Two

The appearance of the Buddhas and Chán Ancestors in this world are like waves arising on a mirror ocean.

Commentary

“The Buddha and Chán Ancestors” in this sentence refers to Śākyamuni and Mahākāśyapa. The phrase, “the appearance... in this world” means to consider great compassion as the essential aspiration to saving all sentient beings. However, if we examine this from the perspective of the one thing, each individual’s Original Nature is already perfect and complete; then, why should we rely on others to “baste it with seasonings and dredge it in flour?”¹⁶ For this very reason, “being born into this world” causes many ripples on the calmness of the original ocean. Furthermore, the *Hsu-k’ung-tsang Sutra* states: “Written words are evil karma. Name and form are evil karma. Even the words of the Buddha are evil karma.”

This means that you should directly perceive what is originally yours; the Buddha and ancestors cannot help you.

Verse

heaven and earth have lost their brilliance.
the sun and the moon do not shine.

Chapter Three

Yet, the Dharma contains many layers of meaning, and men are of different capacities. So, one must provide expedient teachings.

Commentary

“Dharma” refers to the “one thing.” “Men” means sentient beings. The Dharma has a changeless and a conforming principle. Men have the capacity to suddenly awaken and to gradually cultivate. For this reason, written words and speech are necessary. As the proverb says; “In official policy, even a needle given as a bribe is forbidden. Yet, in actual private dealings, carts and horses carry bribes back and forth.” Even though sentient beings are perfect and complete, they fail to open their Eye of Wisdom, and thus willingly undergo transmigration. Without an outstanding, golden sword, how can you cut through the thick layer of ignorance? Every time someone transcends the sea of suffering and arrives at the joyous other shore, it is due to the Buddha’s great compassion. Even if you had as many lives as there are grains of sand, it would be difficult to repay even a minute fraction of such benevolence.

(The above paragraph is meant to instill in the novice practitioner a thorough-going sense of gratitude for the great kindness of the Buddha and patriarchs.)

Verse

The king goes up to the jeweled hall
And a rustic old man sings.

Chapter Four

Various names are arbitrarily established, for example, “the mind,” “the Buddha,” and “sentient beings.” Yet, you must not rely on names to develop understanding. The essence is right here before you. As soon as thought is put into motion, there is a distortion.

Commentary

Within the Doctrinal Approach, three names are artificially established in order to refer to the one thing. This is inherent in such an approach. According to the Meditation Approach, you must not adhere to names in order to understand. This is inherent in the Meditation Approach. Picking it up then pressing it down, setting it up then destroying it — such is the great freedom commanded by all of the Dharma Kings. In other words, that which is high is tied down; that which is low is brought up. This shows that the skillful means of the Buddha and patriarchs are all different.

Verse

After a long drought, the refreshing rains come.
In a distant land, one meets an old friend.

Chapter Five

The mind-to-mind transmission which the World Honored One passed on at three different locations is the essential teaching of the Sōn School. Everything that the Buddha said during his life is the essential teaching of the Doctrinal School. For this reason it is said that Sōn is the Buddha's mind, Kyo (Doctrine, 教) is the Buddha's words.

Commentary

The “three places” are Pahuputraka (Stupa of Many Sons), where the Lord Buddha sat with Mahākāśyapa; Vultures' Peak, where the Buddha held up a flower and Mahākāśyapa smiled; and the Sala Tree Grove at Kusinara, where Mahākāśyapa saw the Buddha's feet.¹⁷ These are the places associated with Mahākāśyapa's reception of the unique transmission of the Sōn Lamp. “During his life” refers to the forty-nine years during which the Buddha expounded the Five Teachings. These are: the Teachings for Men and Devas (celestial beings), Hinayana, Mahayana, the Sudden Teachings, and the Complete Teachings. Ananda, the Buddha's cousin and attendant for twenty-nine years, made this great sea of teachings flow forth; it was he who remembered all the sutras and passed them on. Therefore, Śākyamuni is the source of both Sōn and Kyo (Doctrine). The division between meditation and doctrinal teachings begins with Mahākāśyapa and Ānanda. Sōn uses the wordless to get to the wordless. Kyo uses words to get to the wordless. Mind is the Sōn Dharma; speech is the Kyo Dharma. The Dharma has one flavor, but the chasm separating the two types of understanding is as great as the gap between Heaven and Earth. Because of this, the two paths of Sōn and Kyo are distinguished.

Verse

You must not pass your time leisurely
Or you'll end up stretched out on the grass.¹⁸

Chapter Six

So if one gets lost in speech, even “holding up a flower and smiling” is all just the tracks of Kyo. On the other hand, if one realizes it within one’s own mind, then all of the crass words and refined talk of the world become the Sōn teaching of “a special transmission outside the scriptures.”

Commentary

The Dharma has no name, so it cannot be reached with words. The Dharma has no appearance, so it cannot be reached by mind. Those who rely on speech lose track of their Fundamental Mind. If you lose track of your Fundamental Mind, then even the Buddha’s holding up a flower and Mahākāśyapa’s smile are ultimately nothing more than dead words. If you obtain the truth within your own mind, then even the gossip in the streets is benevolent speech expressing the essence of the Dharma; even the chirping of a sparrow deeply conveys the true character of reality. For this reason, Master Pao-chi,¹⁹ when he heard someone wailing, attained awakening and danced with joy; and Master Pao-shou,²⁰ when he saw a fist fight, suddenly awakened to his Original Face. Master Pao-chi and Master Pao-shou obtained the truth within their own mind.

(The above paragraph is meant to clarify the relative depth of the Sōn and the Kyo approaches.)

Verse

You just play around with the bright pearl in your palm.

Chapter Seven

I have just one thing to say.²¹
As I stop thinking and forget all attachments,
And just sit solid as a mountain without doing anything,
Spring comes and the grass grows green by itself.

Commentary

To stop thinking and forget all attachments is to obtain the truth within your own mind. You are then called “a leisurely Man of the Way.” Oh! Such a man is totally without attachments. He has absolutely nothing more he must do. When he is hungry, he eats; when tired, he sleeps. He wanders as he wishes amongst the verdant streams and Blue Mountains. He is free and easy in the fishing villages and taverns. Although he completely disregards the passing of time, spring comes as it always has and the grass grows by itself.

(The above paragraph stresses reflection upon the mind’s enlightened nature.)²²

Verse

I was about to say that such a person does not exist,
But luckily, there is such a one, a leisurely Man of the
Way.

Chapter Eight

The Doctrinal Approach only transmits the dharma of the One Mind. The Meditation Approach only transmits the dharma of seeing one's Own Nature.

Commentary

The mind is like the mirror itself. Your Own Nature is like the brightness of the mirror. If your Own Nature becomes calm, you can suddenly awaken and thus return to your Original Mind.

(The above text emphasizes the importance of the single thought of awakening.)

Verse

Layer upon layer of mountains and streams,
The clear brightness, the old scenery of home.²³

Critique

The mind has two aspects: the Fundamental Mind and the ignorant mind which clings to appearances. Our True Nature also has two aspects: the fundamental-dharma Nature and the nature in which one's Self Nature and appearances are opposed to one another. Based on this, adherents of both Sōn and Kyo mistakenly adhere to names to elicit understanding, arguing about what is shallow and what is profound. Since this is a great disease infecting both theory and practice, I have commented on it here.

Chapter Nine

However, all of the sutras expounded by the Buddha initially distinguish between the various dharmas and then later explain that these dharmas are empty. The teachings of the patriarchs cut off the tracks at the ground of thinking so that the noumenon appears at the mind's source.

Commentary

The Buddha is a refuge for countless generations. He accurately conveyed the noumenal aspect of reality.²⁴ The patriarchs help others to reach liberation this minute, so their thoughts are always focused on the profound penetration of reality. "Tracks" are the words of the patriarchs. "Thinking" refers to the thinking of the student.

Verse

You may twist your body around
But your arms will never bend outward.

Chapter Ten

The Buddha spoke like a bow. The patriarchs spoke like a string. The Buddha expounded the non-obstructed Dharma that completely returns to the “one taste.” If you wipe away even the traces of this “one taste,” the One Mind of the patriarch’s teachings directly appears. For this reason, it has been said: “The *huàtóu* of the ‘Pine tree in the courtyard’ is nowhere in the entire Dragon Collections.”

Commentary

“Speaking like a bow” signifies bending. “Speaking like a string” signifies straightness. “The Dragon Collections” refers to the Buddhist Canon which was stored in the Dragon Palace.

A monk once asked Zhàozhōu,²⁵ “Why did Bodhidharma²⁶ come from the West?” Zhàozhōu replied, “The Pine tree in the yard.” This is called “Sōn instruction that is outside of any fixed form.”

Verse

As the fish swim, the water gets murky.
When birds fly, feathers fall.

Chapter Eleven

Therefore, disciples must study the true words and teaching of the Buddha at first so that they can distinguish between the changeless and the changeable which the two characteristics of their mind are. Also they must discern that the two gates of sudden enlightenment and gradual cultivation are the beginning and the end of their practice. Only then, may they lay aside the doctrinal teachings. If they investigate the Sōn meaning using only the present One Mind, they will profit. This is called “their own living path out of the world.”

Commentary

The above does not apply to wise men of superior capacity, but to men of mediocre or inferior capacity who cannot skip the preliminary stages. The teachings have an unchanging aspect and an aspect which follows conditions. With sudden enlightenment / gradual cultivation, there is that which comes first and that which comes later. In Sōn, you concentrate on a single thought so that the changeless and the conforming aspect, the Original Face and appearances, the essence and function, are all seen to be fundamentally simultaneous. You forsake everything and you also forsake the negation; everything is affirmed and also negated. For this reason, the great masters of our school used the Dharma but forsook words. They directly pointed to the “one thought.” “See your True Nature so as to achieve Buddhahood — that is all.” For this reason, they abandoned the doctrinal teachings.

Verse

When it is clear and bright out,
clouds are resting upon deep valleys.
In those remote areas,
the brightness of the sun illuminates the sky.

Chapter Twelve

Those who practice should investigate the “live word,” not the “dead word.”²⁷

Commentary

If you attain realization through the “live word,” you become a teacher for the Buddhas and patriarchs. If you attain through the “dead word,” you cannot even save yourself. So, you must only use the “live word” in order to directly awaken and enter into the inconceivable.

Verse

If you want to see Línjì,²⁸
you must be an iron man.

Critique

With the *huàtóu*, there are two gates: the word and the meaning. Investigating the word is the short-cut approach of the “live word.” It allows no path for the mind or for speech, since there is nothing to grasp hold of. Investigating the meaning is the so-called “complete and sudden approach” (as in the *Avatamsaka Sutra* and the *Vimalakīrti Sutra*) of the “dead word.” It allows a path for principles and speech, since it involves intellectual understanding and thought.

Chapter Thirteen

When investigating the *huàtóu*, you should practice wholeheartedly like a hen hatching an egg, like a cat catching a mouse, like a starving man thinking of food, like a thirsty man thinking of water, and like a baby longing for its mother. If you practice like this, you will surely penetrate your *huàtóu* in time.

Commentary

The *huàtóu*'s of the patriarchs number 1700 or more, consisting of such phrases as: “a dog has no Buddha-nature,” “the pine tree in the yard,” “three pounds of flax,” and “dry shit stick.” A hen sits on her eggs, constantly keeping them warm. A cat’s eyes and heart do not budge when it is catching a rat. When one is hungry, one thinks of food, and when thirsty, water. A child longs for his mother. All of these actions appear out of the True Mind. They come from the bottom of the heart and are not artificial, so such actions are said to be sincere. It is impossible for someone lacking such sincerity to penetrate reality through meditation.

Chapter Fourteen

There are three essentials to Sōn meditation. First of all, you must be rooted in Great Faith and Great Confidence. Secondly, one must have Great Anger²⁹ - a strong, inwardly-directed, ardent determination to practice. Thirdly, one must have Great Doubt. If one of these is missing, it is like a tripod vessel with one leg cut off—in the end, it will be of no use.

Commentary

The Buddha said, “Faith is the basis for achieving Buddhahood.” Yung-chia,³⁰ a disciple of Master Huìnéng, said, “One who cultivates the Way must first establish his will.” Mengshan³¹ said, “Failure to have a Great Doubt in the huàtóu is the greatest disease for one who meditates.” He also said, “With Great Doubt, there is sure to be a great awakening.”

Chapter Fifteen

While meeting the conditions of your daily life, constantly consider the *huàtóu*, “Why did he say a dog has no Buddha-nature?”

Consider it when coming and going, maintaining the Doubt while coming and going. You will then feel the path of reason and the path of meaning disappear. Even the “bland taste” will disappear. When your head and heart are feverish and you are thoroughly frustrated, you must renounce even your body and your life. This is fundamental to achieving Buddhahood and becoming a patriarch.

Commentary

A monk once asked Zhàozhōu, “Does a dog have Buddha-nature?” Zhàozhōu said, “Wu (無)!”³² This one word is the gate to the Sōn School. It is a device that cuts off all perverse views and false understanding. In addition, it is the Original Face of all the Buddhas and the bones of the patriarchs. Only those who penetrate this gate can expect to become a Buddha or a patriarch. A verse of one of the ancients says:

Zhàozhōu’s sharp sword
Shines like winter frost.
When you ask what it is
You are cut into two pieces.

Chapter Sixteen

Do not try to understand at the place whence the *huàtóu* arises. Do not think about or guess its meaning. Do not wait foolishly for enlightenment. If you get to the point where thought no longer takes place and still push on with the doubt, the mind will have nowhere to go. It will be like an old rat that enters an ox horn and finds that he no longer can turn around. If you search for a solution, constantly calculating and comparing, wondering how you must go about it, your activity is all just attachment to knowing. Present-day people do not realize that this is a disease. They let themselves fall into this disease and rise up again repeatedly.

Commentary

Those who investigate the *huàtóu* are subjected to ten diseases: 1) using discriminative thought to think about the *huàtóu*; 2) becoming attached to the master's raising his eye-brows or winking;³³ 3) getting caught up in speech; 4) trying to prove a point by reference to the texts; 5) trying to get enlightened through the sudden expression of the master;³⁴ 6) sitting in emptiness, doing nothing; 7) discriminating between existence and non-existence; 8) getting caught up in the notion of absolute nothingness; 9) trying to figure out the *huàtóu* through logical reasoning; and 10) impatiently expecting to become enlightened. If you have put aside these "ten diseases," you must wholeheartedly concentrate on the *huàtóu*. Only wonder and Doubt, "What does it mean?"

Chapter Seventeen

Huàtóu practice is like a mosquito biting an iron ox. It does not ask, “Is it like this, or like that?” It puts its proboscis on the impenetrable, and then, disregarding its own life, it just drives through with the strength of its whole body.

Commentary

This paragraph is connected with the point made before about the “live word.” It is meant to prevent those who are investigating the “live word” from falling back in their practice. The ancients said, “Those who practice Sŏn must pass through the gate of the patriarchs. If they want to attain a marvelous awakening, they must totally cut off the path of the mind.”

Chapter Eighteen

Cultivation is like tuning the strings of a harp. You find the right sound between tight and slack. If you over-exert yourself, you tend to cling. On the other hand, if you become heedless, you fall into ignorance. Practice your meditation with a clear and steady consciousness.

Commentary

Harp players will tell you that the harp emits a clear, even sound, only after the strings have been correctly adjusted. Practice is the same. If you over-exert yourself, you get feverish. If you just forget about practice, you end up in a den of ghosts. Neither slow nor fast, has the mystery lain within the mean.

Chapter Nineteen

When your practice reaches the point where you walk but do not know you are walking, and you sit and do not know you are sitting, the 84,000 demon soldiers waiting at the six sense gates will rise up in accordance with the state of your mind. But if the mind itself does not rise up, what can they do?

Commentary

A “demon-soldier” is a ghost that enjoys birth and death. The 84,000 demon-soldiers are the 84,000 kinds of mental defilements that afflict sentient beings. Ultimately, the demons have no independent origin.³⁵ They arise by following the waves of the mind whenever the cultivator loses his mindfulness. Sentient beings follow whatever appears, so they end up following demons. Men of the Way oppose³⁶ whatever appears, so they end up opposing the demons. For this reason, it has been said, “The higher the path, the greater the number of demons.”

Sayings like, “when he saw the son in mourning, he stabbed his own leg”³⁷ or “when he met the pig, he grabbed his own nose”³⁸ all show how delusion arises from one’s own mind. When the mind is deluded, demons appear externally. But if the mind does not arise, then even if every sort of demon with every sort of magical power were to appear, they would be like a knife trying to cut water or a man trying to blow out a moonbeam. The ancients used to say, “When a wall has a crack, a draft comes in. When the mind has a crack, demons come in.”

Chapter Twenty

The arising mind is the “Heavenly Demon.” The non-arising mind is the “Yin Demon.”³⁹ The mind-which-both-arises-and-does-not-arise is the “Defilement Demon.”⁴⁰ But in our true Dharma, these demons are understood to be ultimately non-existent.

Commentary

To forget all techniques is the Buddha’s path. To engage in discrimination is the way of demons. The way of demons is just a dream. So why do we bother to think and argue so hard?

Chapter Twenty One

If one's practice comes together to form an integrated whole, then even though you may fail to penetrate to an awakening during this lifetime, bad karma will not pull you away when the light falls from your eyes.

Commentary.

Karma⁴¹ is the darkness of delusion. Sōn is the light of wisdom.⁴² Darkness and light obviously cannot exist together.

Chapter Twenty Two

You who practice Sōn — do you know the weight of the Four Debts? ⁴³ Are you aware that this coarse body, composed of the Four Elements, ⁴⁴ is decaying with each conscious moment? Are you aware that human life rests on a single breath? Do you fail to appreciate your good fortune in having met the teachings of the Buddha and the patriarchs during this lifetime? Do you realize how rare it is to encounter the highest Dharma? Do you remain in the monastery, maintaining the discipline? Do you engage in frivolous speech with those around you? Do you succumb to feelings of hatred and get into arguments? Throughout the twenty-four hours of the day, is your *huàtóu* constantly bright? Does it never become dull? Do you lose it when you meet people and talk with them? Does it form one solid mass whether you are seeing, hearing or thinking? When you look back at yourself, do you feel that you can defeat the Buddha and the patriarchs? ⁴⁵ Are you firmly determined to transmit the Buddha's wisdom during this lifetime? After you get up from sitting and are feeling at ease, do you reflect on the sufferings of hell? Are you determined to transcend the Wheel of Transmigration in the present incarnation? When assailed by the Eight Winds, ⁴⁶ does your mind remain unmoving? Those who practice meditation must ponder these questions in detail throughout their daily life. The ancients said, "If a person does not direct himself towards liberation during this life, when will he do it?"

Commentary

The "Four Debts" are the debt: 1) to parents; 2) to the leader(s) of the nation; 3) to teacher; 4) to benefactors. ⁴⁷ This coarse body is made up of the Four Elements in the following manner: 1) one drop of your father's sperm mixes with a drop of your mother's blood ⁴⁸ to form the moist water element; 2) the sperm becomes bones and the blood becomes skin to form the rigidity of the earth element; 3) the mixture of blood and sperm does not rot or dissolve because of the heat of the fire element; 4) the early formation of the nasal passages — for respiration — is

due to the movement of the air element. The Venerable Ananda once said, "Sensual desire is coarse and impure. It involves the mixing of stinking, smelly substances." This is why the body is called "coarse." The phrase "decaying with each conscious moment" refers to the way our features constantly change with each passing moment: the face becomes wrinkled and the hair turns white. As they say, "I am now no longer like I was before, and later I will surely not be as I am now." This refers to the impermanence of the body. The demon of impermanence kills for fun. It is truly something to be feared with each passing thought. Exhalation is due to the expelling force of the fire element, inhalation is due to the drawing in of the wind element. Human life is completely dependent upon exhalation and inhalation. The Eight Winds are sets of mental objects which the mind finds attractive or repulsive. "The sufferings of hell" refer to the fact that sixty kalpas⁴⁹ in our world equal a single day in hell - a place of molten metals and hot ashes where one is subjected to the sufferings of forests of swords and mountains of knives. The suffering of hell is indescribable. Receiving a human life is more difficult than finding a needle which has fallen into the sea. One should be both sad and alarmed about this!

Critique

The above Dharma Talk must become part of your experience. It is like a man who drinks some water: he knows for himself whether it is hot or cold. One cannot overcome one's karma with cleverness. One cannot escape the wheel of suffering with dry wisdom⁵⁰. One must carefully consider and ponder each thing so that one does not fool oneself.

Chapter Twenty Three

Those who study rhetoric seem to be enlightened when they speak, but they are confused when they encounter situations. This shows that words and actions are not the same.

Commentary

This paragraph is connected with what was said above about “fooling oneself.” When this happens, words and actions are different from one another. One must distinguish the false from the true.

Chapter Twenty Four

If you want to overcome life and death, you must take hold of the “One Thought” and smash it with one blow. Then, you will be completely free from life and death.

Commentary

“Smash it with one blow” refers to smashing the “lacquer barrel.”⁵¹ When you smash the lacquer barrel, you are able to overcome life and death. All of the Buddha’s preparations for Buddhahood consist of this and nothing more.

Chapter Twenty Five

But even after you have smashed this “One Thought” in a single blow, you should visit a clear-eyed master so that he can confirm that you have correct vision.

Commentary

To awaken is extremely difficult. You should be timid and shy about any claims to such an insight. When you set out, you find that the Way is like the vast sea. The farther you go, the deeper it gets. You must take care to never become satisfied with some small attainment. If you feel that you have awakened but do not meet a master to have your insight verified, the fine flavor of refined milk may turn out to be poison.

Chapter Twenty Six

A venerable ancient said, “I’m only concerned about your attaining correct vision, I don’t worry about your deportment.”

Commentary

Long ago, in response to a question put forth by Wei-yen, Tung-shan⁵² responded, “The forty books comprising the *Parinirvana Sutra*⁵³ are all the talk of demons.” This is Tung-shan’s correct vision. Then, Tung-shan asked about proper deportment. Wei-yen told him, “I’m only concerned with your attaining correct vision. I do not worry about your deportment.”

This is why proper deportment is only spoken of after attaining correct vision. So if you want to practice, you must first awaken suddenly.

Chapter Twenty Seven

I hope that all students of the Way have deep faith in their own mind and neither become diffident nor proud of themselves.

Commentary

When the mind possesses equanimity, there are, ultimately, no “ordinary men” or “sages.” Even so, people generally distinguish between delusion and enlightenment, ordinary men and sages. A disciple, through the inspiration of his teacher, instantly awakens to his True Mind and realizes that he is actually no different from the Buddha. This occurs suddenly. It is due to the disciple’s not giving in. For this reason, it has been said, “originally, there is not a single thing.” The disciple then relies on this awakening to eliminate the residual habit-energies so that he transforms from an ordinary person into a sage. This development occurs gradually. It is due to the disciple’s humility. For this reason, it has been said, “one constantly wipes it clean.” Low self-esteem is the disease of the doctrinal students (Kyo); whereas, pride is the disease of Sōn students. Doctrinal students do not have faith in the mysterious entrance to awakening of the Sōn School. They become deeply muddled up within the provisional teachings and cling to notions concerning what is true and false. They do not practice, but instead ponder the jewels⁵⁴ of others. And so they retrogress as a result of their own actions. Sōn students do not have faith in the correct path of cultivation that is taught by the Doctrinal Schools. They are not embarrassed even when defiled habit-energies arise. Even though they have only reached an initial level of understanding, they become proud and brag. For this reason, those who wish to cultivate their mind must not give in and must not be proud.

Critique

The phrase “...must not give in and must not be proud” can be viewed from two angles. From the simple perspective of the initial aspiration, it can be said that the cause (viz. the initial

inspiration on the Bodhisattva path leading to Buddhahood) already contains the myriad fruits (all of the stages of the Bodhisattva path including enlightenment itself). From the broad perspective of the Bodhisattva Path, it can be said the fruits are inherent within the fundamental cause. In other words, all fifty-five stages of the path are already contained with a single act of initial faith.⁵⁵

Chapter Twenty Eight

Cultivating the Path with a deluded mind merely contributes to one's ignorance.

Commentary

If you have not yet broken through to an awakening, how can your practice be said to be authentic? Awakening and cultivation depend on one another like oil and fire. They assist each other like the eye and the foot.

Chapter Twenty Nine

The key to practice is simply to put an end to worldly attachments; the understanding of the attained ones consists of nothing more than this.

Commentary

The disease is gone and the medicine is no longer applied.
You return to the original person.

Chapter Thirty

Do not try to discard the mind of a sentient being. Just keep your Self Nature from becoming defiled. To search for a “correct dharma” is mistaken.

Commentary

Throwing away and seeking is all impurity.

Chapter Thirty One

The elimination of defilements is called the way of the “Two Vehicles.” The non-arising of defilements is called the “Great Nirvana.”

Commentary

“Elimination” involves a subject and an object. “Non-arising” lacks both subject and object.

Chapter Thirty Two

Empty your mind and reflect with clarity. You must have faith in the fact that the causal arising of each thought is actually non-arising.

Commentary

This is just meant to clarify “essence arousal.”⁵⁶

Chapter Thirty Three

If you observe closely, you will see that killing and stealing, lasciviousness, deceit all arise from the One Mind. Since the place from which they arise is quiescent, what need is there to try to cut off the defilements again?

Commentary

The above paragraph deals with both the Original Nature and appearances.

Critique

A sutra says: “When not even a single thought arises, ignorance is said to be eliminated forever.” It also says, “One must awaken at the arising of thought.”

Chapter Thirty Four

If you understand that it is a mirage, you drop it. There is no need for skillful means. If you drop it, you awaken. There is no need for gradual steps.

Commentary

The mind is a magician. The body is a magically created castle. The world is a set of magically created clothes. Names and appearances are magically created food. Even the arising mind and activated thoughts are so. For, talk of what is false and what is true is all just a magical creation. What's more, the beginningless magical creations comprising ignorance all arise from the awakened mind.

These magical creations are like the flowers in the sky that a person with an eye disease sees. When magical apparitions are destroyed, one is said to have reached the stage of non-perturbability. If a person dreams he is sick and is searching for a doctor, he no longer seeks a remedy after he wakes up. It is the same for a person who realizes that everything is just a magical apparition.

Chapter Thirty Five

Sentient beings abide in non-arising; yet, they perceive both birth/death and nirvana like flowers appearing and disappearing in the sky.⁵⁷

Commentary

Your True Nature is originally non-arising, so there is no birth and death, and there is no nirvana. Originally, there are no flowers in the sky, so there is no appearing or disappearing. If you perceive birth and death, it is like a man who sees flowers appearing in the sky. If you perceive nirvana, it is like a man who sees flowers disappearing from the sky. But appearing is originally non-appearing and disappearing is originally non-disappearing. There is no need to argue about these two views.

For this reason, the *Su-yi ching Sutra*⁵⁸ says, “All of the Buddhas¹ appearances in this world are not to save sentient beings; they are only to help eliminate the two mistaken views regarding 1) birth and death, and 2) nirvana.”

Chapter Thirty Six

The Bodhisattva saves sentient beings, leading them to nirvana. But there are actually no “sentient beings” that attain nirvana.⁵⁹

Commentary

Every thought of a Bodhisattva is born out of concern for the welfare of sentient beings. To fully understand that each thought is essentially empty is to save sentient beings. Thought is intrinsically empty and quiescent. This is what is meant by the statement that “there are actually no ‘sentient beings’ that attain nirvana.”

(The above discussion deals with faith and understanding.)

Chapter Thirty Seven

At the noumenal level, enlightenment is sudden, but at the phenomenal level, habits⁶⁰ are not eradicated instantly.

Commentary

The Bodhisattva Mañjushri achieved the wisdom of the Dharma-body. The Bodhisattva Samantabhadra clarified dependent origination. The former's understanding is like a flash of lightening, and the latter's actions are like a poor child.⁶¹

(The above discussion deals with cultivation and realization.)

Chapter Thirty Eight

Being lustful while practicing Sōn is like boiling sand to make rice.

Killing while practicing Sōn is like wearing ear-plugs and then yelling to hear oneself.

Stealing while practicing Sōn is like trying to fill up a leaking vessel.

Lying while practicing Sōn is like cutting off a chunk of excrement to make incense.

Even if you have much wisdom, such actions put you on the path of demons.

Commentary

The above paragraph clarifies the principles of practice. It discusses the Threefold Training⁶² that is free of the outflows.⁶³

Hinayanists believe that the precepts consist of receiving Dharma instruction and so they regulate externals. Mahayanists believe that the precepts consist of gathering in the mind so they skillfully cut off the defilements at their root. So, keeping the “Dharma precepts” means that one does not violate the precepts with one’s body. Keeping the “mind precepts” means that one does not violate the precepts even in one’s thoughts.

A person who lusts loses his purity. A person who kills loses his compassion. A person who steals loses his merit. And a person who lies loses truth. A person may develop wisdom and completely possess the Six Supernatural Powers,⁶⁴ but he is still certain to fall onto a demonic path and be forever bereft of wisdom and knowledge of the correct path if he fails to put an end to killing, theft, sensual lust and deception.

These four precepts are the basis for all the precepts.⁶⁵ They have therefore been separately treated to keep people from violating them even in their thoughts. Refrain from longingly for things⁶⁶ is called “sila.”⁶⁷ Non-thought is called “samadhi.”⁶⁸ Not being foolish is called “prajna.”⁶⁹ Sila captures the thief,⁷⁰ samadhi binds the thief, and prajna kills the thief. The sila-bowl must be firm, without a crack. Only then can the samadhi-water settle and

become clear and fully reflect the prajna moon. Since the Three-fold Training actually forms the foundation for the myriad dharmas, it has been especially elucidated in order to put an end to all of the outflows. Can it be that the Buddha at Vultures' Peak⁷¹ had done no good deeds and that our patriarch at Shaolin⁷² was a liar?

Chapter Thirty Nine

Men of little virtue do not rely on the Buddhist precepts and do not keep watch over the three forms of karma.⁷³ They are carefree and lazy and they look down on others. When they meet people, they argue; and still, they consider this to be the basis for practice!

Commentary

Once the mind precepts are broken, a hundred transgressions or “faults” also arise.

Critique

Those who practice must take into consideration the fact that bands of demons, just like those people mentioned above, roam about everywhere during the period of the Dharma’s decline.⁷⁴ Like a raging fire, they throw the correct Dharma teachings into chaos.

Chapter Forty

If you do not keep the precepts, you won't be able to receive even a fox's body with the mange in your next incarnation, let alone, hope to attain the fruit of pure wisdom.

Commentary

You should give the precepts the same respect you would give the Buddha.⁷⁵ Then, it is as if the Buddha were always with you. You should take the example of the monk wrapped in grass⁷⁶ and the monk who refused to tell of the goose who ate the jewel.⁷⁷ as a guide.

Chapter Forty One

If you want to transcend life and death, you must first cut off your desires and lust.

Commentary

Desire is the basis for transmigration. Lust (which our parents had for one another) is the condition for receiving a human life. The Buddha said, “If you cannot eradicate lust-filled mental states, you will not be able to break free of defilement.” He also said, “Once you get caught up in sensual desires, you are dragged to the gate of misconduct.” Desire is also called “thirst,” because it is so extreme.

Chapter Forty Two

All unobstructed, pure wisdom arises through samadhi.

Commentary

The ability to transcend the mundane and enter sagehood and the ability to die while sitting down, or to die while standing up⁷⁸ are all due to the power of samadhi. For this reason, it has been said, “For those seeking the path of the sages, there is no road without samadhi.”

Chapter Forty Three

When the mind is in samadhi, one perceives all of the transient characteristics of the world.

Commentary

Fine specks of dust dance in sunlight
falling through a crack,
Reflections vividly appear
in a clear pool of water.

Chapter Forty Four

If the mind does not become activated when it encounters objects, it is said to be “non-arising.” “Non-arising” is called “no-thought.” “No-thought” is called liberation.

Commentary

The Threefold Training is such that, in developing one you develop all three. They do not appear separately.

Chapter Forty Five

The idea that one cultivates the path and thereby realizes nirvana is also not true. The mind is originally quiescent. Realizing this is authentic nirvana. For this reason, it has been said, “From the very beginning, all dharmas have always been characterized by nirvana.”

Commentary

The eye cannot see itself. If someone says that he can see his own eye, he is lying. For this reason, Vimalakīrti remained silent when Mañjuśrī engaged in discursive thought.⁷⁹

Chapter Forty Six

If a poor man comes begging, give him a portion of what you have. Have great pity for him as if you and he were parts of the same body. This is true giving.

Commentary

When you and others become one, you are said to be “of the same body.” It is a fact for all of us in the family of man that we come into the world empty-handed and leave empty-handed; this is the lifetime plan for the family of man.

Chapter Forty Seven

If someone comes to do you harm, you must keep a settled mind. You must not give rise to anger or hatred. If a single thought of hatred arises within your mind, a million obstacles appear.

Commentary

The defilements are endless. Of these, anger is the worst. The *Nirvana Sutra* says, “Whether someone rubs you with spring-water and ointment or stabs you, you should maintain No-mind.⁸⁰ Anger is like a flash of lightning coming from a black cloud.”

Chapter Forty Eight

Without patience, the Six Perfections⁸¹ and the Ten Thousand Virtuous Deeds of the Bodhisattvas cannot be achieved.

Commentary

There are unlimited approaches to practice, but compassion and patience are the foundation for all the others. With patience, you see things as if they are a magical creation or a dream. Insults are no more real than the hair of a tortoise.

Chapter Forty Nine

Keeping the original, True Mind is first rate effort - the most important perfection.

Commentary

If you attempt to create the mind of effort, such effort will be fake. It won't really be effort. For this reason, it has been said, "Do not be deluded! Do not be deluded!"⁸² Those that are lazy always look towards the future and thereby they lead themselves to ruin.

Chapter Fifty

On reciting mantras. It is easy to control the karma of the present life; you can turn it around through your own effort. But it is difficult to eradicate the karma from previous lives; for this, you must borrow the spiritual power of a mantra.

Commentary

The story of a Matangi woman⁸³ obtaining the fruit of awakening is not false. Indeed, there are few who can escape from the activity of demons without reciting a mantra.

Chapter Fifty One

Worship involves respect and surrender. You must respect your True Nature. You must make ignorance surrender.

Commentary

When your body, speech and mind are pure, “Buddha appears in this world.”

Chapter Fifty Two

Chanting with the mouth is called “recitation,” while chanting with the mind is called “reflecting on the Buddha.” To merely recite a chant without awareness does not benefit one’s practice.

Commentary

The Dharma Gate of the six syllables “Na-mu-a-mi-ta-bul”⁸⁴ is a short-cut approach that can definitely lead you out of the cycle of transmigration. When you chant, your mind should be directed towards the realm of the Buddha. In your thoughts, you should maintain the chanting without falling into forgetfulness. With your mouth, you should chant the Buddha’s name distinctly and not let your voice become sloppy. If you do this, your mind and your voice will come together. This is the meaning of “chanting the Buddha’s name.”

Chapter Fifty Three

The Fifth Patriarch once said, “Keeping your original, True Mind is better than reflecting on all of the Buddhas of the Ten Directions.” The Sixth Patriarch once said, “Even if you constantly reflect on other Buddhas, you will not be able to avoid life and death. But if you keep your Original Mind, you can reach the other shore.” He also said, “The Buddha arises from within your Original Mind. You should not look for the Buddha outside yourself.” He also said, “Deluded men chant in order to obtain a good rebirth. Wise men purify their minds through their own efforts.” He also said, “All sentient beings save themselves when they awaken. The Buddha cannot save sentient beings.”

Commentary

The worthies in the above passages all directly point at the Original Mind. There is no other method. This holds true at the level of ultimate reality; however, in the phenomenal realm, paradise and Amitābha Buddha with his forty-eight vows, really exist. So anyone who recites Amitābha’s name just ten times will ascend with the power of Amitābha’s vows and be reborn on a lotus leaf. In this realm, he will soon break free from the wheel of transmigration. All the Buddhas of the Three Dimensions of time say that this is so. The Bodhisattvas of the Ten Directions⁸⁵ all vow to be reborn there. In addition, the records describing all of those who have been reborn there in the past or present have been transmitted accurately. All of you practitioners who have made a vow to be reborn there should beware of mistaken views. You must be diligent!

The Sanskrit “Amita” means “unlimited life-span” or “unlimited brilliance.” It is the name of the most excellent Buddha throughout the Ten Directions and the Three Dimensions⁸⁶ of time. When this Buddha was practicing, he was called Dharmakara. He made forty-eight vows in front of Lokeshvararaja Buddha. He said, “When I become a Buddha, if any deva or human being — or even the smallest insect — residing in any of the myriad worlds in any of the Ten Directions chants my name just ten times, I will cause

that being to be reborn in my realm. For, until I am able to fulfill my vow, I will not enter Buddhahood.” The sages of the past used to say, “Each time one praises the Buddha, the demons lose their courage. In addition, one’s name is removed from the register in hell, as a lotus flower⁸⁷ blooms in a golden pond.” It has also been said in the Dharma of Repentance, “There is your own power and the power of others. The former is slow, whereas the latter is fast. It is like a man who wants to cross the sea. If he plants trees for timber to make a boat, it will take a long time. This is like using your own power. But if he borrows someone else’s boat and crosses the sea, he will get there fast. This is like the power of the Buddha.” It has also been said, “If a child approaches water or fire and then yells, his parents, hearing his shout, come quickly to save him from danger. It is the same with a man on his death bed who shouts the Buddha’s name. The Buddha, who is in possession of mysterious powers, will definitely come and greet such a person. In this sense, the compassion of the great sages surpasses that of parents. Moreover, sentient beings’ birth and death is much more dangerous than water and fire.”

There are those who say, “The mind is the Pure Land. You cannot be ‘born’ in the Pure Land. Your Self Nature is Amitābha Buddha. There is no other Amitābha to meet with.” These words seem to be correct, but in fact they are not. Amitābha Buddha has no desire or hatred. Do we likewise have no desire and hatred? The Buddha transforms hell into lotus flowers as easily as you might turn your hand over. Yet, we are constantly afraid of falling into hell through the force of our own karma; we certainly could not even consider transforming hell into lotus flowers. Amitābha Buddha observes infinite worlds as if they were right in front of his eyes. For us, even the things happening right outside our wall cannot be seen, let alone the worlds in all the Ten Directions. Therefore, man’s nature may be Buddha but his actions are characteristic of a sentient being. If we discuss both character and function, they are as far from each other as the sky and the earth.

Master Kuei-feng⁸⁸ once said, “Even though you actually awaken suddenly; in the end, you must cultivate gradually.” These words are true indeed!

Then, what could we say to someone who insists that this Self Nature is Amitābha Buddha? How is it that Śākyamuni was born with his fine endowments? How is it that one like Amitābha Buddha appeared through spontaneous birth? If you think about it, you cannot help but understand. When you are on your death bed, suffering and on the verge of death, are you confident that you will be completely free? If you aren't, then you should do something to avoid falling into some long-lasting torment as a result of a moment's pride.

Even Asvaghosa and Nāgārjuna, both of them patriarchs, clearly bestowed upon us their words and teachings which strongly advocated working for a good incarnation in the next life. Who am I to say that one should not concern oneself with the next life? Even the Buddha himself said, "The Western Paradise is far from here. One must pass through 180,000 worlds to get there." This is an explanation of characteristics for the sake of those with dull faculties. "The Western Paradise is not far from here. This very mind/sentient being is the Buddha/Amitābha Buddha." This is an explanation of the Self Nature for the sake of those with "sharp faculties." The teachings consist of both the provisional and the actual. Speech has an exoteric and an esoteric aspect. One whose understanding and actions are in agreement can penetrate both what is near and what is far. Consequently, the School of the Patriarchs has those, like Hui-yuan,⁸⁹ who called out to the Amitābha Buddha and those, like Jui-yen,⁹⁰ who called out to his own self.

Chapter Fifty Four

If one listens to sutras, one develops an affinity for the Dharma. This affinity leads to joy and good fortune. This body, like a bubble, soon comes to an end. But actions that accord with truth never die.

Commentary

The above paragraph explains wise practice. It is like eating a diamond. It brings more merit than it would were you to give the seven kinds of precious jewels.

Sōn Master Yung-ming,⁹¹ Second Patriarch of the Fa-yen House, once said, “Even if you listen without faith, a Buddhist seed has still been planted. Even though you fail to realize that which you have learned, you have still attained merit leading you to rebirth as a human or a deva.”

Chapter Fifty Five

If you look at sutras but do not look at your own mind and put the words of the sutras into practice, you may read the entire Buddhist Canon and it still would not do you a bit of good.

Commentary

The above paragraph explains foolish practice. Such practice is as pointless as the birds' chirping all day in spring or the insects' buzzing all night in autumn. Kuei-feng⁹² once said, "Knowing Chinese characters and reading sutras, from the very onset, cannot attain realization or awakening. Analyzing texts in order to figure out their meaning merely ignites more greed, anger and false views."

Chapter Fifty Six

Using fine speech to defeat others in argument while you still have not reached the end of the path is like decorating an outhouse.

Commentary

The above paragraph particularly deals with the foolish practice of people during the last days of the Dharma. Practice originally means to cultivate one's True Nature. Yet, many practice in order to show off to others. What could they be thinking?

Chapter Fifty Seven

For those who have left the householder's life, studying secular writings is like cutting mud with a knife. Mud is a useless material; moreover, it damages the knife.

Commentary

The son of the rich man outside the gate
Comes back into the burning house.⁹³

Chapter Fifty Eight

How could leaving home to become a monk be a small matter? Such a life is not for those seeking a life of ease, nor is it for those seeking warm clothes and food, nor is it for those looking for fame and riches. The monastic life is for those who want to put an end to life and death, and eradicate all mental defilements. It is for those who want to maintain the transmission of the Buddha's wisdom. And it is for those who endeavor to transcend the Three Realms and ferry across sentient beings.

Commentary

Such an one⁹⁴ can be called “a great man who pierces the sky.”

Chapter Fifty Nine

The Buddha said, “The fire of impermanence is burning the world.” He said, “The fire of suffering surrounds sentient beings.” He also said, “The thief of mental defilements is always looking for a chance to slay you.” A Man of the Way should wake up to these words as if his own head were on fire.

Commentary

The body is subject to birth, old age, disease and death. The universe forms, abides for some time, destructs and then becomes nothingness. Mental states arise, abide, change, and then disappear. This shows that the fire of impermanence and suffering burns on all four sides of us. Men of depth who are sincere in your practice — do not pass your time in vain!

Chapter Sixty

One who desires fame in this world is like one who strives to inflict pain on his own body. To search for worldly gain is to add firewood to one's own karmic fire.

Commentary

There is a poem about “one who desires fame in this world.”

The stork flies to the sky's end
But its tracks remain in the sand.
A man goes to the Yellow Spring⁹⁵
But his name stays with his family.

There is also a poem about “searching for worldly gain.”

The bees have gathered the nectar from a hundred flowers.
Who is this person who has not experienced toil or pain,
And yet tastes the sweet honey?

“To senselessly inflict pain on one's own body” is as useless as it would be to make a sculpture out of ice. “To add firewood to one's own karma” refers to the fact that make-up and perfumes only serve to ignite the fires of passion.⁹⁶

Chapter Sixty One

A tattered-robed monk who seeks fame and fortune is not equal to a country bumpkin dressed in straw-filled clothes.

Commentary

“Śākyamuni Buddha spat at the crown and then entered the Himalayas.” A thousand Buddhas may appear but this principle⁹⁷ will never change. During this era of the Dharma’s decline, herds of sheep wearing tiger skins will shamelessly seek to wield power. They will secretly conspire to glory. Alas! What punishment is appropriate for their offense?

Critique

He whose mind is defiled with desire for worldly gain flatters influential people. He follows the blowing dust only to become a laughing-stock. Such a monk is said to be like a disguised sheep that reveals himself in his every action.

Chapter Sixty Two

The Buddha said, “Why are thieves donning my clothes and selling the Tathagata to produce all sorts of bad karma?”

Commentary

There are many kinds of names applied to monks in the era of the Dharma’s decline. They are called “bat-monks,” “mute sheep-monks,” “bald laymen,” “hell’s slime,” and “thieves donning robes.” Alas, there are reasons for this.

Commentary

Those who discredit the notion of cause and effect, misdeeds and merit are said to “sell the Tathagata.” The bodies and mouths of such people are on fire, feelings of like and dislike arise in rapid succession. It’s really a pity. Someone who is neither a monk nor a layman is called a “bat.”⁹⁸ A monk who does not explain the Dharma is called a “mute sheep.” One who is only outwardly a monk but still has the mind of a layman is called a “bald layman.” A monk whose misdeeds are so heavy that he cannot do anything is called “hell’s slime.” One who sells the Buddha for a living is called “a thief donning robes.” All these names refer to this “thief donning robes.”

Chapter Sixty Three

Oh, followers of the Buddha! The food you eat is produced from the blood and sweat of the farmer. The clothes you wear are made from the toil of the weaver. How can you use these things while your True Eye⁹⁹ is still not bright?

Commentary

The *Transmission of the Lamp* relates the story of a practitioner whose True Eye was not yet bright. Because of this, he was born a mushroom in his next life in order to pay back the faithful for their support.

Chapter Sixty Four

And so it has been said, “Would you like to find out how a beast puts on its hide and horns? You will be such a beast if you receive alms from supporters without practicing.” Those who eat when they are not hungry and put on extra clothes although it is not yet cold — what are they thinking? Such people never consider the fact that the pleasure now before their eyes will turn into suffering in the next life.

Commentary

The *Tai-chih-tu-ching-lun* tells of a monk who became an ox because he wasted just five grains of millet. When the ox was alive, it repaid its debt with its muscles and bones; and when it died, it repaid its debt to its previous supporters with its hide and meat. The waste of the offerings of a faithful person must be repaid as an echo resounds.

Chapter Sixty Five

And so it has been said, “It is better to enclose one’s body with hot irons than to wear the clothes given by a man of faith. It is better to drink iron water than to take food from a man of faith. And it is better to jump into a molten pot than to live in a house built by a man of faith.”¹⁰⁰

Commentary

The *Fan-mang Sutra*¹⁰¹ says, “Do not receive any goods or offerings from the faithful if you have broken the precepts. A Bodhisattva who fails to establish this as his vow creates a minor transgression.”

Chapter Sixty Six

And so it has been said, “The Man of the Way approaches food as if it were poison; he receives offerings as if he were pierced with an arrow.” A Man of the Way fears kind treatment and sweet words.

Commentary

One “approaches food as if it were poison” for fear of losing one’s True Eye. One “receives offerings as if pierced with an arrow” for fear of losing the fruit of the path.

Chapter Sixty Seven

A man cultivating the Way is like a whetstone. When men come and use it, their knives get sharper and sharper. But the stone gradually gets rubbed away. In spite of this, there are those who still want others to come and sharpen their knives on this stone. This is really a pity!

Commentary

There are some practitioners like this. Their sole concern in life is to get warm clothing and food.

Chapter Sixty Eight

The ancients have also said, “The suffering of the Three Lower Realms¹⁰² is not real suffering. To lose a human life after donning monk’s robes - that is suffering.

Commentary

The ancients said, “He who does not make his mind clear during this lifetime will find it difficult to digest even a single drop of water.”

This is what is meant by “losing a human life after donning monk’s robes.” Oh, Buddhist disciples! Become angry and aroused by these words!

Chapter Sixty Nine

How absurd! This body's nine holes are constantly oozing. The million bumps and boils inside the body are covered up by one thin layer of skin. In this leather bag full of excrement, the blood congeals and clots. This smelly, dirty, base thing is more to be pitied than desired. What's more, even if you take care of this body for a hundred years, it will turn its back on all your kindness and leave you in a single breath.

Commentary

The various forms of karma mentioned above all arise due to our body. At this, you should yell and scream. You should be deeply alarmed. This body is the basis for all forms of attachment. If you fully realize that it is an empty deception, all your attachment will automatically come to an end. Excessive attachment to the body leads to unlimited transgressions and worries. Therefore, I'm especially clear about this so that you may open the Eye of Practice.

Critique

The Four Elements have no master. The body is therefore called "the deception of the Four Enemies." The Four Elements betray the kindness you have shown the body. The body is thus said to "raise four snakes."

You have not fully realized the empty and false nature of the body, so you get angry at people and look down on them. Others have also failed to realize this and thereby treat you in the same way. This is like two ghosts fighting over a corpse. The body of the corpse is composed of a conglomeration as fragile as a bubble and as false as a dream. It is a collection of suffering and a bag of feces.¹⁰³ It quickly rots and is extremely dirty. The upper seven orifices constantly ooze tears and mucous, whereas the lower two constantly ooze excrement and urine.

For this reason, you must constantly keep your body pure and clean throughout the twenty-four hours of the day so that you can be with others. The good spirits will surely turn their backs and depart from one who is impure in his behavior. The *Yin-k'e (Cause and Effect) Sutra* says, "Those who pick up a sutra with dirty hands or spit in front of the Buddha will surely receive the body of an outhouse maggot as retribution." The *Manjushri Sutra* says, "When defecating or urinating, one should be like a tree or a rock, taking care not to speak at all. One should not write graffiti on the walls or spit in the outhouse." The sutra also says, "If you have not washed your hands after going to the toilet, you should not meditate on your cushion or enter the Dharma Hall."

Chapter Seventy

To repent when wrong, to be full of shame when his karma becomes activated - this is the character of a great man. If such a one can constantly renew his efforts to correct his faults, his misdeeds will disappear in accordance with his effort.

Commentary

Repentance means to regret your previous mistakes, and to make a commitment not to repeat the mistake in the future.¹⁰⁴ Shame means to criticize oneself and to disclose one's mistakes to others.¹⁰⁵ But the mind is fundamentally empty and quiescent; there is nowhere for unwholesome karma to attach itself.

Chapter Seventy One

A Man of the Way must make his mind firm by taking simplicity and honesty as his foundation. With a hollowed out gourd and a single set of coarse clothing, he must be able to travel anywhere without entanglements.

Commentary

The Buddha said, “The mind must be as straight as a taut string.” He also said, “The straight mind is the ‘seat’ of wisdom.”¹⁰⁶ If one does not have any attachments to one’s self, one can surely travel anywhere without entanglements.

Chapter Seventy Two

The ordinary man grasps objects. The Man of the Way grasps the mind. But the true Dharma is to forget both mind and objects.

Commentary

Grasping objects is like a thirsty deer chasing after a mirage. Grasping the mind is like a monkey who tries to grab hold of the moon reflected in water. Grasping objects and grasping the mind are different, but they are the same in the sense that they are both diseases. The above deals with the nature of average people and those who belong to the Two Vehicles.¹⁰⁷

Verse

Heaven and earth do not contain the sun and the moon of the Chin nation.¹⁰⁸

In the mountains and rivers, the Han¹⁰⁹ rulers and subjects are nowhere to be seen.¹¹⁰

Chapter Seventy Three

The sravakas sit peacefully within the forest, but are still caught by the Demon King. The Bodhisattvas roam about in the world, but the heretics and demons cannot find them.

Commentary

The Sravaka assumes that cultivation means quietude, so his mind moves. When his mind moves, the demons can see it. The Bodhisattva realizes that the Self Nature is intrinsically empty and quiescent, so he leaves no tracks. Leaving no tracks, the heretics and demons cannot see him.

(The above deals with the Two Vehicles and the Bodhisattva.)

Verse

Wandering lazily upon the path in March,
A house looks dismal, hidden by the rain.

Chapter Seventy Four

When one is dying, one should see that the Five Skandhas¹¹¹ are empty; that the Four Elements are non-self; that the True Mind has no signs; that there is no “going (death) or coming (birth)”¹¹¹; and that one’s nature does not arise when one is born, nor does it disappear when one dies. Exquisitely perfected and quiescent, the mind and its objects appear as one.

Only when one has realized these things is one able to instantaneously achieve complete awakening and no longer be entangled within the Three Dimensions of time. Then, having transcended the world, one is a free man. Even if all the Buddhas appear, one follows them with No Mind. Even if hell appears, one’s mind is without fear. With No Mind, one is at one with the Dharma Realm. One must be able to face death like this! Sowing the seeds throughout life, as one approaches death, the fruit of karma appears. One must open up one’s eyes and look at what’s happening!

Commentary

People befriend Śākyamuni when they are old and approaching death.

Verse

At this time,
you should be awakened.
A hundred years¹¹²
roll by in an instant.

Chapter Seventy Five

When a man is dying, if he still makes even the slightest distinction between holy men and ordinary men, he will be drawn into the womb of a horse or a donkey, or he will be stuffed into a boiling pot in a hell realm, or he will become an ant, mosquito, or some other insect.

Commentary

Master Pai-yun¹¹³ once said, “Even though a man on his death bed completely does away with even the slightest distinction between holy men and ordinary men, he will still be unable to avoid being drawn into the womb of a horse or a donkey.”

The two views fly this way and that; they scatter and enter the various paths.

Verse

A violent flame flickers.
A jeweled sword glitters.

Critique

These two phrases are especially established in order to open “the patriarchs’ gate of No Mind which is in harmony with the Tao.” The phrases are a skillful means that close the gate of chanting for a good rebirth. Yet, people’s capacities differ. Their aims and their vows vary. This being the case, the two approaches do not interfere with one another. I hope that all Men of the Way may follow their particular path throughout their daily activities, each one striving so that they have no doubts or regrets during their last moment of life.

Chapter Seventy Six

If a Sōn practitioner still has not clearly seen the scenery of his original home¹¹⁴, how can he penetrate the Lofty Gate of Profundity? One frequently meets people who claim that Sōn is the emptiness from cutting off everything so that all (mental objects) is destroyed; or those who say that silent emptiness is the path; or those who believe that the idea “all things do not exist” is a noble view. These “diseases,” characterized by darkness and voidness, are extremely serious. Many of those who study Sōn these days suffer from such illnesses.

Commentary

When approaching the ultimate “One Gate,” there is no place on which to step. Yun-men¹¹⁵ said, “One who has not yet penetrated the light contracts two diseases. But even one who has already penetrated the Dharma body still contracts two diseases. One must penetrate it and obtain it anew moment by moment.”

Verse

One who does not walk
the path of tangled weeds
Will have a hard time
getting to the village
of fallen blossoms.

Chapter Seventy Seven

The masters of the Sōn School also have many diseases. For those masters with diseased ears and eyes, Sōn is raising the eyebrows and opening the eyes wide, or it is listening attentively then nodding the head. For those who have diseased mouths and tongues, Sōn is twisting words and contorting speech. It is yelling “Ho!”¹¹⁶ and shouting wildly. For those with diseased hands and feet, Sōn is advancing to the front or walking to the back of the room, or it is pointing east or drawing a line to the west. For those with diseased hearts and bellies, Sōn is exhausting the profound in search of the marvelous. It is transcending attachments and forsaking all views. Actually, all such actions are diseased.¹¹⁷

Commentary

A man who has killed his parents may repent in front of the Buddha, but a man who slanders wisdom has no way to repent.

Verse

Trying to grasp the shadows within emptiness is not so special. Chasing after something that is outside of everyday objects -why is that heroic?

Chapter Seventy Eight

The words of the Dharma in which the “Original-Share” Masters¹¹⁸ completely demonstrate the truth are like a song breaking forth from a wooden doll; ¹¹⁹ they are like snow hitting a red-hot stove; they are like the spark from a flint being struck, or a bolt of lightning. Students of the Way truly cannot even imagine the profundity of such men. For this reason, an ancient once said, out of appreciation for his teacher’s kindness, “It’s not my master’s virtue that I respect; it is his refusal to provide me with theoretical explanations about the Dharma.”¹²⁰

Commentary

Don’t speak! Don’t speak! Lest the words be recorded on paper.

Verse

The arrow piercing the reflection
of the red moon in water
Must certainly belong
to a falcon hunter.

Chapter Seventy Nine

Those who practice must first carefully distinguish between the approaches of the different schools. Long ago, Ma-tsu's¹²¹ one shout made Pai-chang¹²² deaf and made Huang-po's¹²³ tongue hang down from his mouth.¹²⁴ This one shout is nothing less than the understanding achieved by Mahākāśyapa when the Buddha held up the flower. It is also Bodhidharma's Original Face when he came to China. Ah, the Línjì School originated from this. It is profound indeed!

Commentary

One who thinks that he understands the Dharma is to be feared. I'll hit him as soon as he opens his mouth.

Verse

A stack of sticks with no gnarls
Is closely assigned to a man who goes on the road by night.

Critique

Hearing Ma-tsu's one shout, Pai-chang obtained the Great Essence¹²⁵ and Huang-po obtained the Great Functioning. To obtain the Great Essence means to perfectly respond to all situations. To obtain the Great Functioning means to directly respond without hesitation. The above incidents regarding the three masters are recorded in the *Transmission of the Lamp*.

The Five Houses of Sōn are: the Línjì House, the Ts'ao-tung House, the Yun-men House, the Wei-yang House, and the Fa-yen House.

The Línjì House: This line extends from our original teacher Śākyamuni to the Sixth Chinese Patriarch Huìnég, who was the thirty-third patriarch in the lineage from the Buddha. Below Huìnég, there are, in their respective order, Sōn Master Nányuè Huai-jiang, Ma-tsu Tao-i, Pai-chang Huai-hai, Huang-po Shi-yuan, Línjì I-hsuan, Hsing-hua Ts'ung-chiang, Nan-yuan Hui-yung, Feng-hsueh Yen-chao, Shou-shan Sheng-nien, Fen-yang Shan-cha, Tz'u-ming Ch'u-yuan, Yang-ch'i Fang-hui, Pai-yun Shou-tuan, Wu-tsu Fa-yen, Yuan-wu K'o-ch'in, and Ching-shan Tsung-kao,¹²⁶ etc.

The Ts'ao-tung House: This is a peripheral line¹²⁷ of transmission from the Sixth Patriarch. Below Huìnég, in their respective order, are: Sōn Master Ch'ing-yuan Hsing-ssu (?-740), Shih-t'ou Hsi-ch'ien (700-790), Yueh-shan Wei-yen (751-834), Yun-yen T'an-sheng (782-841), Tung-shan Liang-chieh (807-869), Ts'ao-shan Tan-chang(839-901), Yun-chu Tao-ying (?-902), etc.

The Yun-men House: This is a peripheral line of transmission stemming from Ma-tsu.¹²⁸ In their respective order are: Sōn Master T'ien-huang Tao-wu (748-807), Lung-t'an Ch'ung-hsin (8th/9th century), Te-shan Hsuan-chien (780-865), Hsueh-feng I-ts'un (822-908), Yun-men Wen-yen (?-949), Hsueh-tou Tsung-hsien (980-1052), Tien-i I-huai, etc.

The Wei-yang House: This is a peripheral line of transmission stemming from Pai-chang. In their respective order are: Sōn Master Wei-shan Ling-yu (771-853), Yang-shan Hui-chi (840-916), Hsiang-yen Chih-hsien, Nan-t'a Kuang-yung, P'ach'o Hych'ong,¹²⁹ Huo-shan Ching-t'ung, Wu-chao Wen-hsi (820-899), etc.

The Fa-yen House: This is a peripheral line of transmission stemming from Hsueh-feng. In their respective order are: Sōn Master Hsuan-sha Shih-pei (835-908, Chi-tsang Kuei-

ch'en (867-928),¹³⁰ Fa-yen Wen-i (885-958), Tien-t'ai Te-shao (891-972), Yung-ming Yen-shou (904-975), Lung-chi Shao-hsiu, Nan-tai Shou-an, etc.

Chapter Eighty

Línjì's shout and Te-shan's stick completely penetrate and confirm the non-arising nature of reality. They excelled in both the high and low. These men had great capacity which they put to great use. Línjì and Te-shan had complete freedom everywhere. Their whole body fell away, but they still kept their bodily form, returning in order to preserve the sagely wisdom of Manjusri and Samantabhadra. Yet if we are to speak the truth, these two teachers were actually nothing more than mere phantoms.

Commentary

Oh, the gallant, sharp sword! Beware of touching its edge.

Verse

Oh, the sparkling,
cold brilliance
on the pearly drops of water.
As the clouds calmly scatter,
the moon traverses the sky.

Chapter Eighty One

The superior man looks upon the Buddha and the patriarchs as if he were looking at a thief. If one searches for the truth while clinging to the Buddha, one becomes bound by the Buddha. If one searches for truth while clinging to the patriarchs, one becomes bound by the patriarchs. All searching is suffering. It is better to do nothing.

Commentary

“Looks upon the Buddha and the patriarchs as if he is looking at a thief corresponds to the previously mentioned phrase “there is no wind, but the waves appear.” “All searching is suffering” corresponds to “it is all perfect just as it is.” “It is better to do nothing” corresponds to “when the thought process becomes activated, distortions occur.” When the above phrases are fully understood, you will be able to make everyone’s tongue stop flapping and to bring to a halt the rapidly spinning wheel of birth and death. Even work to ease social crises and quell political upheavals is no different than Tan-hsia’s¹³¹ burning of the wooden Buddha image, Yun-men’s “feeding it to a dog,” or the old lady’s refusal to go meet the Buddha. All such actions are methods of eliminating the false and manifesting the truth. But what does this all lead to?

Verse

I always remember
March in the South River.
The partridge singing,
the fragrance of the flowers.

Chapter Eighty Two

The sacred brilliance is not dark. It has shown forth since ancient times. If you wish to enter this gate, do not abide in intellectual understanding.

Commentary

“The sacred brilliance is not dark” corresponds to the above passage “constantly lucid and mysterious.” “It has shown forth since ancient times” corresponds to the above passage “originally there is no birth and no death.” “Do not abide in intellectual understanding” corresponds to the above passage “you cannot use designations to elicit understanding.” “Gate” refers to the coming and going of ordinary men and sages. Along these lines, Shen-hui said that the single word “know” was the “gate to all the myriad wonders.”¹³² Alas, we began with that which cannot be named or depicted and we end with “do not abide in intellectual understanding.” The creeping vines of the first chapter are all chopped off with this single phrase. So we begin and end with this one understanding. In the middle, we bring up myriad virtuous actions. This is according to the three principles of the secular classics.¹³³ Knowledge and intellectual understanding cause great injury to the Buddha Dharma, so they have been especially dealt with and put to an end. Sōn Master Shen-hui was unable to become a legitimate member of the Jogye Lineage¹³⁴ because of his adherence to knowledge and intellectual understanding.

Verse

As I have elucidated the essentials of Sōn in this manner,
The blue-eyed monk from the West¹³⁵ will laugh.
But what’s to be done? Alas!
As the lonely orb shines,
The rivers and mountains are silent.
His sudden burst of laughter
Startles the earth and sky.

¹ Traditionally, many scholars in both the East and the West talk of Buddhism's spread and development in an excessively linear fashion. Recent scholarship now tends to recognize more and more that much cross-pollination occurred between the Buddhist traditions of Northeast Asia. There were numerous Koreans active in both China and Korea from the early years of Sōn's development.

² A revised form of Neo-Confucianism which incorporated much of the meta-physical psychology from Buddhism and Taoism while criticizing these teachings as un-Chinese.

³ This academy has become present-day Songgyungwan University in northern Seoul.

⁴ The tradition of monk-soldiers continued on after Sōsan's time. Haifa century later, Hamel - a Dutch traveler shipwrecked in Korea about sixty years after the war — states in his journal that the monks in Korea had a reputation of being the bravest of warriors.

⁵ The three religions were Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism.

⁶ In fact, the word "Zen" even occurs in many English dictionaries.

⁷ The Koan (Kong-an in Korean) is an enigmatic story which has been passed down through the generations of the different lineages of the Sōn School. It tells of the circumstances and resulting conversation that led to the enlightenment of a monk. The "punch line" is used as a focal point for "study" during meditation and it is called a huàtóu. The vitality of the huàtóu lies in the sincerity with which the practitioner delves into the doubt raised by the content of the huàtóu. This is known as a "live word", but it is known as a "dead word" when the doubt lacks sincerity. It is hoped that by constantly concentrating on the enigmatic phrase, discursive, logical thinking can be broken through and the One Mind attained. The technique is the basic method of meditation used in most Son Schools. The Japanese Soto school does not use Koans.

⁸ The "phrase beyond verbalization" is probably a reference to the huàtóu technique. The expression "special teachings which lie outside of the provision vehicle" is probably a general reference to various non-verbal Sōn techniques aimed at eliciting a direct, intuitive awakening in the disciple.

⁹ Huìnéng (638-713), the Sixth Patriarch of the Sōn School.

¹⁰ Shen-hui (685-760).

¹¹ In the original text, Shen-hui is said to be a “soja”, meaning the son of a concubine. The implication is that Shen-hui, although a disciple of Huìnéng’s, was not a direct Dharma heir. In the Meditation School, it is considered better not to say anything in answer to the teacher’s question, rather than using many words to explain the truth. Silence is the best and speaking only second best. So Shen-hui became the Sixth Patriarch’s illegitimate son (disciple).

¹² Nányuè Huai-jang (677-744).

¹³ Literally, “eldest son.”

¹⁴ Refers to Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism.

¹⁵ It is said that if a master teaches falsely, then the hair of his eyebrows falls out.

¹⁶ “Baste it with grease and stick flour on it” — to senselessly add to what is already perfect.

¹⁷ It is said that when Mahākāśyapa arrived eleven days after the Buddha’s death, the Buddha’s two feet suddenly protruded from the cremation casket.

¹⁸ If one passes time leisurely without practicing the teachings, one will end up stretched out on the grass as a snake in a future life.

¹⁹ Pao-chi suddenly achieved awakening one day when he heard the loud wails of a passing funeral procession.

²⁰ One day, Pao-shou Yen-chao (dates unknown) was asked, “What is your Original Face before you were born?” He stayed up all night desperately trying to answer the question, but to no avail. The next day, he went to take leave of his teacher. He told his teacher that he would find a great master to help him solve this problem. Since it was during the summer retreat season ~ a time when all are forbidden to leave the temple — his teacher told him not to leave. In January of the next year, on his way to the market, he saw two people fighting. Eventually, one man, apologizing to the other, said, “I have truly lost face.” At this, Pao-shou achieved awakening.

²¹ This four character phrase is probably taken from the fourth line of a poem by the Chinese Sōn Master Nányuè.

²² “Mind’s enlightened nature” is a rather loose translation. It is meant to correspond to the T’ient’ai School’s use of the term.

²³ A Sōn metaphor for one’s Original Mind.

²⁴ I have rendered the Chinese character “li” as noumenon and “shih” as phenomenon. “Li” is often translated as “principle” or “reason.” It refers to the absolute aspect of reality.

²⁵ Zhàozhōu Ts’ung-shen (778-897).

²⁶ Bodhidharma (d. 532).

²⁷ “Live word” is the huàtóu of Son, and “dead word” is the Kyo teachings that have no strong question of huàtóu. If the huàtóu has no strong question, then it too is known as “dead word.”

²⁸ Línjì I-hsuan (d.866) traces his lineage through Huìnég back to Bodhidharma. He was one of the most important figures in the development of Sōn and the first patriarch of the Línjì House of Sōn.

²⁹ The Buddha and myself are all the same and not different in that we all have the same Nature and True Mind. But the Buddhas have attained enlightenment and become free forever, while I have not realized awakening and am not free. This is because I neglected to cultivate my mind for a long time. So this anger is towards myself.

³⁰ Yung-chia Hsuan-chueh (665-713).

³¹ Meng-shan T’e-yi (?) (no dates), probably Yuan Period.

³² “Mu” literally means “No” or “Not.” Every sentient being has Buddha Nature just as the Buddha does - as we are told in the surras. This being the case, why did Zhàozhōu say “No”? This is the enigmatic question posed in this huàtóu.

³³ The master sometimes gestures or changes his facial expression, but the student should not be concerned by this.

³⁴ A Son student, hearing stories about previous masters obtaining enlightenment as the master made a shout or hit with a stick, might attempt to artificially create such an experience himself. However, insight must arise directly out of one’s own practice. Any attempt to copy the experiences of previous masters is invalid.

³⁵ Literally, “the demons originally lack a seed.” A seed implies an origin independent of the mind. The text indicates that mental defilements do not arise independently from outside your own mind.

³⁶ “Oppose” in the sense of “not becoming caught up in,” not in the sense of “avoidance” or “denial.” The Buddha saw his teaching as “against the current” or “going upstream,” because he taught the way to freedom from suffering through the giving up of desire and attachment.

³⁷ There was once a monk who was sitting in meditation when a mourning son came to him dragging a coffin and screaming “Why did you kill my mother?” After a fierce argument, the monk finally hit the boy with a hatchet, but then the monk suddenly looked down to see blood running from his own leg. The whole scene had been a mental delusion.

³⁸ A monk was once meditating when a wild boar suddenly attacked him. In the ensuing struggle, the monk managed to grab the boar’s nose. The boar let out a squeal. The monk suddenly realized he was grabbing his own nose.

³⁹ In East Asian thought, Heaven represents the active principle (yang) and Earth represents the passive principle (yin); hence these first “demons” represent the active and passive aspect of the deluded mind.

⁴⁰ These three demons represent the “Three Poisons” of the mind: greed, hatred and stupidity.

⁴¹ The Buddha taught that karma (volitional action) can be both good (bearing positive results) and bad (leading to bad results). Yet, even good karma leads to rebirth in a higher realm. Since such an existence is still within the wheel of birth and death, one will eventually descend to a lower realm after one’s good karma is exhausted. To break free from the rebirth, needs wisdom.

⁴² Prajna.

⁴³ Literally, the “Four Kindnesses.” The lists vary but usually it is the kindness of: teacher, parents, ruler and supporters.

⁴⁴ Earth, water, fire, air.

⁴⁵ In other words, “have you attained the same realization as the Buddhas and the patriarchs?”

⁴⁶ Gain and loss, fame and disrepute, praise and blame, happiness and suffering.

⁴⁷ For monastics, this refers to those who provide alms.

⁴⁸ In Northeast Asia, many people traditionally believed that the sperm mixes with a drop of mother’s blood at the moment of conception.

⁴⁹ The length of a kalpa is usually illustrated as being longer than the time taken for a solid rock a cubic mile in size to be worn away by a piece of silk which is passed once over its surface every hundred years.

⁵⁰ Knowledge which is devoid of insight.

⁵¹ The lacquer barrel is a metaphor for the mind which is encrusted with layer upon layer of defilements (lacquer) to the extent that it is completely black and the innate purity can no longer be seen.

⁵² Yueh-shan Wei-yen (745-828) was Tung-shan Liang-chieh's (807-901) Dharma teacher and the first patriarch of the Wei-yang lineage.

⁵³ This is the surra telling of the Buddha's death and the events taking place. It includes the final words spoken by the Buddha.

⁵⁴ The teachings of the Buddhas¹ and patriarchs' are invaluable, but they are still not truly one's own until one personally obtains the direct insights that the teachings point to.

⁵⁵ A more direct translation of the key phrases of this passage would be: "The cause completely contains the myriad fruits. The fruits completely penetrate the original cause." This line originally comes from Ch'eng-kuan's (737-838) Hua-yen ching shu.

⁵⁶ This is also sometimes called "suchness autogenesis." This doctrine, as put forward by Fa-tsang, holds that "suchness" can arouse itself to produce all things. The term combines the eternalism of the dharmata with the causationism of pratitya-samudpada (dependent origination). This theory was used in opposition to the T'ient'ai theory of "essence possession."

⁵⁷ A person with an eye disease sees flowers in the sky just as an unenlightened person perceives birth/death (Samsara) and nirvana as a dichotomy.

⁵⁸ A four volume work translated by Kumarajiva.

⁵⁹ This sentence occurs in the Diamond Sutra.

⁶⁰ In the original text, it is not clear what exactly is eradicated. According to Chinul (1128-1210), who greatly influenced Sōsan, the habit-energies must be gradually eliminated after enlightenment. Sōsan's use of Chinul's sudden-enlightenment/gradual cultivation scheme suggests that he is also referring to latent "habit-energies"; he could equally be referring to the defilements in general. Some Son practitioners have disagreed with Chinul's contention that the habit-energies must still be eliminated after enlightenment. Master Song-ch'ol (1912-1993) ~ the Patriarch of the Korean Chogye Order from 1980 to 1993 — has gone as far as to say that Sōsan's inclusion of Chinul's sudden enlightenment gradual cultivation scheme along with his advocacy of recitation of the Buddha's name indicates that this book was

written when Sōsan was in his forties and is not a work of traditional Son. The fact that Sōsan does not mention sudden enlightenment/ sudden cultivation in this work but does mention it in later writings is used to support Master Song-ch'ol's argument.

⁶¹ The poor child is the son of the rich man in the metaphorical story found in the Lotus Sutra. The poor child is the Buddha's child and corresponds to every sentient being.

⁶² Ethical conduct, mental development and wisdom (in Sanskrit: sila, samadhi, prajna.)

⁶³ The asavas (Sanskrit asravas): sense-desire, desire for becoming, desire to hold false views, and ignorance.

⁶⁴ Clairvoyance etc. which are by-products of extended meditational practice.

⁶⁵ Literally, "the hundred precepts." "Hundred" or "ten-thousand" are often used in Classical Chinese as a metaphor meaning "all." Sōsan is generally referring to all the precepts taken by lay people and monastics.

⁶⁶ Literally, "non-recollection."

⁶⁷ Ethical conduct = the five precepts.

⁶⁸ Mental awareness of superior meditation.

⁶⁹ Wisdom = right understanding and right thought.

⁷⁰ Sōsan calls defilements or delusion a "thief."

⁷¹ A mountain in Rajagir, Bihar, India where the Buddha did much of his teaching.

⁷² Bodhidharma

⁷³ Thought, speech and action.

⁷⁴ When the Buddha taught that all phenomena are impermanent, he did not forget to include his own teaching. The Buddha predicted that his teachings would eventually be altered or lost by later generations.

⁷⁵ When the Buddha told his disciples that he was about to die, they asked him who they should take as a teacher after the Buddha was gone. The Buddha told them, "Take the precepts which I have given you as your teacher." In other words, those who use the precepts (training rules) of the Buddha, are always accompanied by the great wisdom of the Buddha. On the other hand, even those who were near to the Buddha during his lifetime, cannot be said to have truly been accompanied by the Buddha if they failed to maintain the precepts propounded by the Buddha. This indicates

that Master Sōsan considered the precepts as part of the Dharma and also reflects the possible decline in observance of the precepts during Master Sōsan's period. By writing this, maybe Master Sōsan wanted to convey the importance of the precepts.

⁷⁶ In ancient India, there was a monk who was attacked by bandits. Seeing that he had nothing for them to steal, they finally took his clothes and tied him up with grass. The monk, concerned that he might harm the grass if he stood up, remained tied to the ground. A king out hunting came upon the monk and freed him. Deeply impressed by the monk's great reverence for even the smallest living thing, the king became a Buddhist.

⁷⁷ One day a monk was on his alms round. He stopped at a jewelry shop and while the jeweler was inside getting some food offerings, a goose swallowed a highly valued jewel which was meant for the king. The jeweler accused the monk and the monk realized that if he told the truth, the jeweler would kill the goose. So the monk remained silent even though he was repeatedly beaten. The jewel eventually appeared in the goose's excrement. Due to the monk's compassion, the goose didn't have to die.

⁷⁸ If a person develops concentration (samadhi), he is able to control his births and deaths at will. We find among the sayings of the Patriarchs' that some died sitting while others died standing up. This is due to the power of samadhi.

⁷⁹ See the Vimalakirti Sutra.

⁸⁰ In other words, you should not hate those who do wrong and develop a particular fondness for those who show kindness to you. Any negative or positive reaction to situations leads to mundane states of mind. This differs from the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas whose minds are not influenced by situations.

⁸¹ Generosity, moral conduct, patience, energy, meditation and wisdom.

⁸² Sōn Master Wu-ye (762-823) used to always respond to every question put to him in this way.

⁸³ This refers to the story of a Matangi woman—a member of the lowest caste in ancient India. A Matangi woman called Prakriti once fell in love with Ananda. She used a magical spell to seduce him and lure him to her room. At that time Manjusri saved both of them with a mantra. The woman eventually ordained and when she

heard one of the Buddha's teachings, she awakened and became an arahant. This story appears in the Surangama Sutra.

⁸⁴ Literally means "praise to Amitabha Buddha." This phrase is often continually repeated as a method of concentrating the mind. It is interesting to note that Sōsan revived a game which consisted of a complicated board depicting the Buddhist path and a six-sided die with one of the six syllables "Na-mu-a-mi-ta-bul" placed on each side. According to the game rules, all players must keep chanting as each player roles the die. Sōsan's efforts to reintroduce Buddhism into the dominant Confucian culture of the Yi Dynasty attest to his commitment to the revitalization of Korean Buddhism. It is important to note that this paragraph may be considered contradictory to genuine Son teaching, in which self-awakening of one's Own Nature is emphasized. This is the deficiency that the Mirror of Sōn has together with the gradual cultivation method.

⁸⁵ The ten directions are: north, south, east, west + northwest, etc. + nadir and zenith.

⁸⁶ The Three Dimensions or Worlds are past, present and future.

⁸⁷ Each person born in Amitabha's realm is born on a lotus leaf; hence a new lotus blooming predicts a new arrival.

⁸⁸ Kuei-feng Tsung-mi (780-841).

⁸⁹ Hui-yuan (334-416) became the disciple of Master Do-an (314-385) at the age of 21.

⁹⁰ A disciple of Master Yen-t'ou Ch'uan-huo (828-887), he used to constantly talk to himself saying things like, "My master!" "Yes" "Wake up!" "Yes!" "Don't you ever try to fool others!"

⁹¹ Yung-ming Yen-shou (904-975).

⁹² Kuei-feng Tsung-mi (780-841).

⁹³ The burning house is a metaphor for this transient world. The Buddha spoke of the senses as burning with desire. The person who has attained enlightenment (who is "outside the gate") has burned all his karma and so does not think, speak or act through the senses in a karma-producing way; i.e. his senses no longer burn with desire.

⁹⁴ Someone who earnestly pursues the proper goals of the monastic life.

⁹⁵ In ancient Chinese thought, the place where people go to die. "Yellow" comes from the Chinese theory of the Five Elements, in which yellow is equated with the earth element.

⁹⁶ The two extremes of asceticism and self-indulgence. The Buddha advocated the Middle Path between the two.

⁹⁷ The need for renunciation.

⁹⁸ The Chinese term for bat literally means “bird-rat.” But a bat is neither a bird nor a rat; this gives the force to the metaphor in the above passage.

⁹⁹ The True Eye being bright is a metaphor for enlightenment.

¹⁰⁰ This paragraph means that one who doesn’t keep the precepts had better go to hell than to receive any kindness from a man of faith.

¹⁰¹ This sutra contains the Bodhisattva precepts. No Pali or Sanskrit version is extant. For a Korean translation, see the one put out by Posong Munhwasa.

¹⁰² The realms of Hell, Hungry Ghosts and Animals.

¹⁰³ In Theravada Buddhism in particular, monks are taught to meditate on death and to imagine their own body in various degrees of decomposure. Sometimes there are special places set aside where people offer their dead bodies (in bequeaths made before death) to be left to decompose exposed so that the process can be meditated on.

¹⁰⁴ In the Chinese text, these two definitions explain the two separate Chinese characters which make up the term for repentance and a commitment not to repeat the mistake.

¹⁰⁵ In the Chinese text, this is an explanation of the two separate Chinese characters for repentance and shame.

¹⁰⁶ In Korean, toryang, in Sanskrit, the bodhimandala. It means “the place of wisdom” and, by extension, “the place where one practices in order to gain wisdom.”

¹⁰⁷ In Sanskrit, the Sravaka, one who hears the teaching and the Pratyekabuddha, one who attains enlightenment on his own.

¹⁰⁸ An ancient Chinese dynasty (BCE 249-207).

¹⁰⁹ Han Dynasty (BCE 206-CE 25).

¹¹⁰ Even great kingdoms must decay and strong rulers cannot live forever.

¹¹¹ Body, feelings, perception, mental formations, consciousness.

¹¹² According to the Chinese medical tradition, man’s normal life span consists of 100 years.

¹¹³ Pai-yun Shou-tuan (1025-1072).

¹¹⁴ One’s innate enlightened nature.

¹¹⁵ Yun-men Wen-yen (864-949).

¹¹⁶ “Ho” is pronounced “Hal” in Korean and is used by masters to scold students, a form of teaching.

¹¹⁷ All of the teaching methods of Sōn are mere means meant to elicit a direct understanding in the disciple. The actions, of themselves, are not truth, and are even harmful (diseases) if they are taken to be truth.

¹¹⁸ Those who have seen their own Self Nature, in other words, their “original share.” The phrase is commonly used to refer to the enlightened masters of the Son School.

¹¹⁹ “The song breaking forth from a wooden doll” is the characteristic Dharma of the Sōn patriarchs ~ the Dharma of non-arising. It can only be known through awakening.

¹²⁰ In Sōn, all ideas or notions about ultimate reality are considered to be an obstruction. One must directly experience the truth for oneself. These words were spoken by Tung-shan Liang-chieh who was the 1st patriarch of the Ts’ao-tung House.

¹²¹ Ma-tsu Tao-i (709-788).

¹²² Pai-chang Hui-hai (749-814).

¹²³ Huang-po Hsi-yuan (d. 850).

¹²⁴ One day Huang-po asked his teacher Pai-chang how he, the teacher, had attained enlightenment accompanied by the yell of “Ma-tsu’s Ho.” Pai-chang said, “At that time I became deaf and couldn’t hear for three days.” On hearing this, Huang-po’s jaw fell open and his tongue fell to his chin. He attained enlightenment at this moment.

¹²⁵ He obtained the Great Essence — the essential Dharma of the Sōn School. The Sōn School avoids preoccupation with trivial matters, and instead focuses on the direct realization of Buddhahood. For this reason, it is sometimes referred to as the “Approach to the Essential.”

¹²⁶ Ching-shan Tsung-kao was a very famous master but he was not the legitimate successor of Yuan-wu K’o-ch’in. The legitimate successor is Hu-ch’in Shao-lung.

¹²⁷ Huìnéng is said to have put a stop to the transmission of the robe and the bowl. The robe and bowl purportedly were passed down from the time of the Buddha in a single line of succession. Huìnéng’s discontinuation of the tradition allowed the transmission to branch out into many lineages, each one tracing itself back

through Huìnéng to the Buddha. By Sōsan's time, most of those in the Korean Son tradition traced their lineage through the Korean Son Master T'aego who had received transmission from a Chinese master of the Línjì lineage. Many Korean Son adherents considered the Línjì lineage to be more pure; hence they referred to the other lineages as "peripheral transmissions."

¹²⁸ There are several people who insist that the Yun-men House is a peripheral lineage from Ma-tsu, but it is generally accepted that the Yun-men House stemmed from Shih-t'ou Hsi-ch'ien (700-790), the heir of Ch'ing-yuan Hsing-ssu (660-740).

¹²⁹ A Korean monk from Shilla.

¹³¹ Tan-hsia Tzu-ch'un (d. 1119).

¹³² This phrase occurs in the first chapter of the Tao-te-ching.

¹³³ This is apparently a reference to the Confucian and Taoist classics. But what are the three principles? At any rate, Master Sōsan seems to be saying that the verbal content of this book is not so different from that of the Confucian and Taoist classics. However, Buddhism (in particular, Sōn Buddhism) differs in that its essence is actually beyond words in that place where knowledge and understanding have been cut off. Curiously enough, this passage has been left untranslated in all of the Korean translations that I have consulted.

¹³⁴ The lineage of Huìnéng, so called because he resided on Ts'ao-ch'i (Korean, "Jogye") Mountain in China.

¹³⁵ Bodhidharma