

# Kobun's Teaching



on Platform Sutra



*“The Sixth Patriarch left the robe and oryoki on a rock and hid himself in the bush.” Kobun Chino*



KOBUN CHINO OTOGAWA

KOBUN'S TEACHING ON  
PLATFORM SUTRA

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## *Editor's Note*

The Platform Sutra was the first sutra Kobun studied with the group which met on Monday mornings, in the early 1970's, at students' houses. We were reading from The Platform Scripture translated by Wing-Tsit Chan, St. John's University Press, New York, 1963. This book is out of print, although several used copies are still available at this writing, on Amazon. Other translations of Platform Sutra are available on Amazon. It is probable that these more recent translations come closer to Kobun's interpretations of the original Chinese characters than the one we had, but Kobun's commentary clarifies his thinking about the Sixth Patriarch's teachings. Since he is reflecting on the Chan version, selected portions of the original text of that book are presented in bold print, on the left side of the page, while Kobun's commentary is on the right. Pages where this format resulted in having text only on one side of the page can be used to add notes and citations to other translations and commentary. Sections of Platform Sutra are identified only by numbers, which are referred to here in the Contents, followed by a quote from Kobun's commentary. Since The Platform Scripture is out of print, it is hoped that the reader can come to understand the main themes of the sutra, together with Kobun's own understanding of them, without purchasing a copy of the original. Sanskrit and Chinese words are in italics.

Judy Cosgrove





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Section 1. Great Master Hui-neng ascended the high seat in the lecture hall of the Ta-fan Temple to preach the Law of the Perfection of Great Wisdom and to give the discipline that frees one from the attachment to differentiated characters. There were present more than ten thousand monks, nuns, disciples who had renounced their families, and laymen. The prefect of Shao-chou, Wei chu, more than thirty government officials, and over thirty Confucian scholars jointly requested the Great Master to preach the Law of the Perfection of Great Wisdom. Thereupon the prefect ordered the disciple, Monk Fa-hai, to record the lecture so that it would prevail in future generations. It was to enable seekers of the Way to have

something to rely on  
and to follow when  
they in turn  
transmitted and taught  
the Law according to  
this fundamental  
doctrine, that this  
Platform Scripture was  
spoken.

**Section 2. Great Master  
Hui-neng said: Good  
and learned friends,  
think of the Law of the  
Perfection of Great  
Wisdom with a pure  
mind....**

Hui-neng is saying that **pure mind** doesn't mean voidness, or mind like pure water. **Pure mind** accepts all things as they are in it, without any particular desires attached to them.

Editors note: Sections 3 through 12 are Hui-neng's description of how the Fifth Patriarch came to give him the robe and bowl which signified that he was chosen to transmit the Law as the Sixth Patriarch. There was a competition to see who could write a verse which indicated that the author understood the basic idea. When



Hui-neng won the competition, the Fifth Patriarch warned him not to remain there because his life might be in danger. He left at midnight, but was followed by several hundred people. Finally one man came after him, and he gave him the robe and transmitted the Law to him.

**Section 13. Good and learned friends, calmness and wisdom are the foundations of my method. First of all, do not be deceived into thinking that the two are different. They are one substance and not two. Calmness is the substance of wisdom and wisdom is the function of calmness. Whenever wisdom is at work, calmness is within it. Whenever calmness is at work, wisdom is within**

There is no border line between the **external and internal** worlds in meditation, no external, no internal. If you see things as perturbed in the external world, those things will be included in your calmness, free from judgement or discrimination. **Calmness** doesn't mean simply a state of stillness. In very fast activity there will be calmness, too.

**Calmness** is a more psychological term, and **wisdom** is more ontological, so **wisdom** is here used as a very religious term, also meaning compassion. Nondiscrimination is a form of

**it... in the case of those whose hearts and words are both good and in whom the internal and the external are one, calmness and wisdom are identified.**

**Section 16. Good and learned friends, in method there is no distinction between sudden enlightenment and gradual enlightenment. Among men, however, some are intelligent and others are stupid. Those who are deluded understand gradually, while the enlightened achieve understanding suddenly. But when they know their own minds, then they see their own nature, and there is no difference in their enlightenment...**

**Section 17. Good and learned friends, in this method of mine, from the very beginning,**

compassion. When we point to something and start to relate to it without love, we cannot understand it. Understanding is nothing but a realization of your love. When you see a road up the mountain, it is the road of wisdom. When you stand on top of the mountain and look down the same road, it is the road of compassion.

whether in the sudden-enlightenment or gradual-enlightenment tradition, absence-of-thought has been instituted as the main doctrine, absence-of-characters as the substance, and non-attachment as the foundation. What is meant by absence-of-characters? Absence-of-characters means to be free from characters while in the midst of them. Absence-of-thought means not to be carried away by thought in the process of thought. Non-attachment is man's original nature. Thought after thought goes on without remaining. Past, present, and future thought continue without termination. But if we cut off and terminate thought for one instant, the Law-body is freed from the physical body. At no time should a sin-

**Characters** are forms which form in front of us. What we know is how we understand them. If you just see form, you are in the world of delusion. If you understand form you understand emptiness too. The Sixth Patriarch is not saying we should avoid thoughts. Avoiding thoughts would be concentration, not meditation. Rather, we don't pay attention to thoughts. They pay attention to you, to make you realize what they are. Zazen is, in a sense, a very pure time, but if when you finish zazen some very important thing is left to do, you try to do it. Usually things which arise in zazen are completed as they arise. Big self comes together with your small self who is practicing, and you don't need to remember what happened in your zazen.

gle instant of thought be attached to any dharma. If one single instant of thought is attached to anything, then every thought will be attached. This is bondage. But if in regard to dharmas no thought is attached to anything, that is freedom. This is the meaning of having non-attachment as the foundation....

Section 18. Good and learned friends, according to this method, sitting in meditation is at bottom neither looking at the mind nor looking at purity....

Section 19. Now, this being the case, in this method, what is meant by sitting in meditation? In this method, to sit means to be free from all obstacles, and externally not to allow thoughts to rise

from the mind over any sphere of objects. To meditate means to realize the imperturbability of one's original nature. . . . Cultivate and achieve for yourselves the Law-body of your self-nature. Follow the Way of the Buddha yourselves. Act and achieve Buddhahood for yourselves.

Section 20. Good and learned friends, you must all go through the experience yourselves and receive the discipline that frees you from the attachment to differentiated characters. Follow me at the same time and repeat my slogans. They will enable you, good and learned friends, to see that the Three Bodies of the Buddha are within you: 'We take refuge in the pure Law-body of the Buddha with our own physi-

The Sixth Patriarch uses traditional ideas to express his standpoint. However, he expresses a unique idea at the beginning of Section 20, when he says, **We take refuge . . . with our own physical bodies**. Actually, the Chinese is "within". What is happening is homage to yourself. Your body is an inn where everything comes and goes.

All dharmas lie in one's self nature. The three bodies of Buddha are:

- *Dharmakaya*, translated here as **law body**
- *Nirmanakaya*, translated here as **myriad transformation body**
- *Sambhogakaya*, translated here as **perfect reward body**.

**cal bodies. We take refuge in the Myriad Transformation-body with our own physical bodies. We take refuge in the Perfect Reward-body with our own physical bodies.” (The above to be chanted three times.) The physical body is like an inn and cannot be spoken of as a refuge. It has always been the case that the Three Bodies lie in one’s own nature. Everyone has them; . .**

*Dharma* means “Truth.” *Kaya* means “body.” This “truth body” or “law body” can’t be seen, yet we say the name of this buddha is “Truth.” In this text, *nirmana* means “transformation.” What you see, hear, and speak, all are *nirmana*. The original meaning refers to when we see things, “myriad transformations,” appearing. In psychological terms it refers to various perceptions, but in religious terms it has deeper meaning. When we really see something, when we really see Buddha, we see *Nirmanakaya*. “That which is emptiness is form,” speaks of *Nirmanakaya*. *Nirmanakaya* is the historical Buddha, who understands all the suffering of the world because it happens in his body. If you understand that Shakyamuni Buddha has been dead for many centuries, you don’t understand *Nirmanakaya* Buddha. When Shakyamuni Buddha appears all beings become Buddha. Just the form is a little different! Flower is flower, cloud is cloud, rain is rain.

When transmission from master to disciple takes place, the disciple is **taking refuge** in the master as Nirmanakaya Buddha, meaning that the disciple is taking refuge within himself. If you seek for Buddha somewhere else, you never reach him. A buddha understands all the suffering of every war because it happens in his body.

*Sam* means “fully, all together, without exception.” *Bho* is “to realize, to reach.” *Sambho* is “thusness.” If you want to express it, you point. *Sambhogakaya*, of course, is everywhere, the same as *Dharmakaya*. This “reward body” is not action causing an effect, but the action, itself, which tells its nature. It happens even if nobody knows and you, yourself, don’t know. Your own practice tells it, you are doing fine, you are enlightened.

**Section 21. Now that we have taken refuge in the Three Bodies of the Buddha, let me and you, good and learned friends, take the Four Very Great Vows. Good and learned friends, please all follow me and say at the same time:**

**I vow to save an infinite number of beings.**

**I vow to cut off an infinite number of afflictions resulting from passions.**

**I vow to study an infinite number of gates to the Law.**

**I vow to attain Supreme Buddhahood.**

**(This is to be chanted three times.)**

**Good and learned friends, when we make our vows to save an infinite number of**

There are some differences between this version and our version. The first vow is the same. The second vow, in our version, is, "Desires are inexhaustible, I vow to put an end to them." The feeling is like when you sit in the sunshine and receive the sunlight into your body, a feeling of infinity, a feeling that even if you sit there a year, your whole life, the sun will continue to shine. It's the feeling of the sound of waves at the beach, never ending. "Infinite" is a very good translation. The third vow, in our version, is, "Dharma gates are boundless, I vow to master them. The fourth vow, in our version, is, "Buddha's way is unsurpassable, I vow to attain it." It sets up a paradox, like a sportsman's record where this year another one will come and surpass it! The Chinese character is more complete, "accomplish." In Chinese there is no subject; in English, we say, "I vow to surpass it."



**living beings, it does not mean for me to save them. Good and learned friends, all living beings are in the mind; each must save itself in its own body and through its own nature. What is meant by saving oneself through one's own nature? In one's own physical body there are perverse views, afflictions resulting from passions, ignorance, delusion and erroneous thoughts. Everyone possesses the nature of original enlightenment. Everyone can save himself with correct views....**

I would translate this gatha:

Sentient beings are infinite,  
they will save themselves.

Desires are infinite, they  
will reach an end by  
themselves.

Dharmas are infinite, so there  
is learning, study.

Buddha's way is no above, so  
it is always accomplished  
(or allowed).

Usually, although the Sixth Patriarch didn't say this, it is called the four vows of a bodhisattva. We have to think about the person's mind when he takes this vow. If I am not a sentient being, I cannot take this vow. If I am not with desire, I cannot take this vow. The subject is a sentient being, itself, passion, itself, Dharma, itself, road, itself, Buddha's way. If the road, itself, has some choice, saying, "You can walk on me, you can't walk on me," then the vow cannot be completed. If the road says, "Anything can walk or ride on me," the vow is completed. It is absolute.

When we think of this vow, we have to think of karma. As one student said, to repeat this vow every day is a paradoxical activity. Yet the vow goes by itself and we just decide it is paradoxical, even more than paradoxical. What is important is whether I can consider myself a sentient being, or part of a sentient being. "I have limitless desires; I put an end to them." It's like sweeping fallen leaves. One hour later, more leaves come. Winter brings snow; spring, dust. When awareness is only on the sweeping, maybe you hate it. Maybe you hate the fallen leaf! Even if people's desires are like that, we cannot say it's bad. It's a very delicate point, whether we vow, or not. It's a big change in the karmic cycle of life. The spot where we are becomes a standard of measurement. The karmic life has many burdens. It's a caught state, a heavy feeling.

The Chinese word for "vow" is *yang*. "I have yang" means "I have an objective." It's not just a promise. It's a determination to offer my whole effort. To take care of yourself, myself, in

the vow, is the thing to do. For instance, when I have some sick friend, I take a vow in myself, I do not forget him, always be with him, even if we are separated, to always keep real friendship between us. It works really well. When a mother has a sick baby, that feeling is instinctively understood. The basis of the vow is a very natural feeling, not artificial. "I am fine, he is not fine, I have to take care of him."

The vow is the same as way mind. With this mind you practice. Suppose there are two persons walking in the desert and both of them see a village which they are about to reach. They are quite hungry and tired, with only a little water left. They are almost dried up. There is only water for one person. When such a thing happens, we'll see whether we have way mind or not. In war, this kind of condition is given to each person; it is how they judge their action. With way mind, you let others reach to the destination first.

The word, "save," I don't understand so well. In Japanese, *do* is like a sailor carrying a passenger from this shore to

that shore. He, himself, doesn't go there. The Bodhisattva's vow is very paradoxical. It's like, "I don't need to attain the way because I'm always there, but many beings need to have this opportunity." But when "I" become visible and static, I think, "This is me; they are not me." At this time it's very hard to understand what is the vow.

When I say, "all sentient beings," my feeling is all the selves of me. When I reach toward some place and only my finger touches it, at that time my whole body is there. In the beginning, Shakyamuni Buddha had nothing to do for all sentient beings because they are there already and they are already enlightened. If your son says, "I want to do this," you trust him, let him go ahead even if you are worried. You tell him, "You can do whatever you want." That kind of feeling is like the Sixth Patriarch saying, "... they can save themselves."

The vow is not only toward the future. When you vow, you say it to the past, too. Not only your personal past, but the

whole thing, which relates to you, will be saved. The vow is like putting a light in a dark room. We have done it many times. It's not an act of will. It naturally happens. Vowing is remembering, renewing. When you practice, that practice saves seven past lives, your father and mother, their fathers and mothers. . . . But even if all of them are enlightened, as long as we keep ignorance, we have to be in ignorance. With the vow, the light of the present reaches to past activity. Historians have eyes which reach to the past in very interesting ways. Actually, all of us have the eye which can remember past lives. We don't need to talk about it, but we have very huge experiences of the past.

**Section 22. Now that we have made the Four Very Great Vows, let me tell you, good and learned friends, about repentance that frees one from the attachment to differentiated characters in order to destroy the sins and obstructions of the past, the present, and the future....**

**Good and learned friends: What is repentance? To repent means never again to do evil in one's life time. To regret means to realize the evil of previous deeds and not to allow that realization ever to slip from the mind. It is useless merely to say so before the Buddhas....**

**Repentance** looks like just cleansing ourselves from dusty elements, but you cannot tell which was dusty, whether an action was dusty, or you were dusty, so you purify everything, not just wrong actions. In our life experience we do things over and over again which we are not supposed to do. As we do them, we believe this is the way, and say, "I am okay!" Ten or twenty people may say, "That is not good" but when you believe your action is right, you don't listen to others. Then, finally, with inner understanding, you find out your action was wrong, and maybe twenty, thirty years of your actions are finally seen in the light. It is terrible to find out! The mind of asking forgiveness appears at that time. You have to say to yourself, "I am sorry." You say it to yourself and to everyone else, and to the thing you have done, you say, "Pardon me." At that time everyone says, "Oh, you now understand. That's okay." After thirty years of misunderstanding, the thing mistakenly done is completely purified. The basic idea of "repentance" is

clarification, avowal, a very deep recognition.

A better translation of . . . **not to allow that realization ever to slip from the mind** is

“... forever or always to be mindful toward yourself, not to let your mind separate from yourself.” **Repentance** means not to do it in your whole lifetime, and **regret** means to know, to see the former bad activity of yours as a bad thing. This is the Sixth Patriarch’s feeling. For example, when you break something, you may give the reason, “My hand was shaky, so it happened.” When you become very calm, somehow you understand, “That was my mistake, anyway, and my hand shook because I was not ready to take the glass. I was in a very high state, emotionally.”

**Regret** means, not only realization of one’s mistake, but to know the good thing as well as the bad thing. To know reality, to know what happened, that is the most important point.

When you **repent** your feeling, you are not at the level of good or bad. **Repentance** is your pure mind. Your mind is originally pure. Your pure

mind sees your old deed so that you can **repent**. Pure mind is the zero point, the beginning point to measure things. When you are in zero point you see your negative feeling or your positive feeling. The one who repents, who can see his own mistake, is already free from it. **Repentance** is like putting yourself in a washing machine. You come out from the washing machine exhausted. Somehow, it is a very nice feeling. You are not destroyed. You returned to your original state, to the base of yourself. Real **repentance** happens all at once, a very religious activity, a very natural activity.

In **Section 21**, the **four vows** were written, and now we have **repentance**. The arrangement of the paragraphs is important. They are two sides of an activity, happening at once. Because of the **four vows**, your mind repents a previous deed. Or, because of a previous deed, you suffer. Maybe the Sixth Patriarch thought **repentance** came first and the **four vows** came next. Both stop the cycle of karma.



When you **repent** there has to be somebody to really hear your voice. That somebody can be God, but **repentance** does not mean to go in a small box and speak about your problem. When you believe in God and face directly to God, that is **repentance**. Each word of your **repentance** increases your purification. To show everything to true nature, that is also **repentance**. And forgiveness is important. Maybe you can say true nature forgives you. The mind which is repenting has no room to forgive itself. In the Christian sense, forgiveness belongs to God, not to humans. The Buddhist sense is, forgiveness belongs to everybody. It belongs to you to forgive others. Forgiveness means "let it go."

**Repentance** works in one direction, forgiveness works in the other direction. They happen at once. Also, time is forgiveness. Time is very kind for us. Time drops off every moment. If we keep attaching to the past we cannot die so nicely. When we attach to life, itself, we have to hold onto our past delusion in the present.

Ordinarily, we see that the past is behind us, yet things which can be experienced again cannot be called past. When you are concerned with them, they can be experienced at any time. So, in **repentance**, all of our experiences of ourself don't disappear, are not cut off. What will be cut off is a wrong view of yourself.

When one repents, everything becomes pure. "Pure" doesn't mean right in the middle between two extremes, either. The extremes show you your limitations. You feel if you went further than this, you would die! Yet, when you are in a high or low state, that is just a momentary conception of yourself, so good and bad, right and wrong, are relative. "Pure" includes both extremes.

With birth of the **vow**, comes the discipline of how to live. At that time a person's life goes beyond ordinary thinking in the customary way, which is so-called "karma." In karma, when something happens, a person always reacts in the same way, but, unlike karma, consciousness of karma is not

a blind state. It shows the position of everything. With karma consciousness, if you experience your difficulties in silence, maybe silence will explain them to you.

There are various angers we experience. My feeling is that sadness and anger always come together. Righteousness is also a type of anger. What is the opposite of anger? Anger is the opposite of anger! Actually, what exists is a sphere of anger. When you come into it, you feel it. Ignorance is the best reason for why anger comes. It means you have no understanding of your true self. Anger has no root. It's just like a cloud. You don't understand your true self or the outside situation. Naturally you suffer with it. If a small thing makes you angry, that small thing controls you. When this happens in me I am showing less compassion to someone to whom I want to offer my love and respect. If I know I am getting angry, I don't reject it. I watch it. I say, "What is this?" I see who is involved in the anger, what are the elements of it. Most of

the time we see other people behind our own anger. Sometimes there are no objectives, no person or no thing in the anger. Sometimes the anger is toward yourself. You watch it and think, "What can I learn from this?" To act from anger makes things worse. If you act from anger you hurt yourself. To express it is one solution. This doesn't mean you act with anger. If someone is listening, naturally your anger will be decreased when you express it. There are many different emotions which, when they get strong, most people say, "This is anger." It is hard to keep anger in our mind and body. We seek ways to get rid of it. Mostly, when we get angry, we say, "I am right, you are wrong!" If you are truly right and they are truly wrong, you don't need to get angry. When you get angry, most of the mistake is on your side, the mistake on their side is little! Your anger is really a sign of your weakness. It is the same with righteousness. When you think your view is right and the whole world seems a little crazy, that is righteousness.

Many young people think they have a righteous reason to protest. When it appears, they feel separate from the world. Actually, righteousness is an element of the world, part of the world. It's best to develop one's own ability within the world. Protesting, turning it into a kind of revolution, looks like a brave and shortcut way, but really it is a violent and short-tempered way.

The place that is not extreme is peace. Peace is silent. Sometimes it has a little sound in it, sometimes you are alone, sometimes there are people around.

To pay homage to Shakyamuni Buddha is enlightenment, when understanding reaches a perfect state. Paying homage to Buddha doesn't mean you are expressing your feeling to the historical Buddha. To be as he is, is true homage. To become something is to really "understand" it. To "know" it is extra. Dharma is not like knowledge. Every moment you are new to it. You cannot name it, you cannot call it. When you get it, you laugh and laugh because

you thought it was something you hadn't seen before. Dharma is like breathing, inhalation, exhalation. A very natural thing. When the time comes it happens. Time is always ready and all things are ready to accept this time. Dharma is the closest thing to us. In English it is called "truth."

**Section 23. Now that we have repented, let me give you, good and learned friends, the discipline of the Three Refuges that frees one from the attachment to differentiated characters. . . . Good and learned friends, I exhort you to take refuge in the Three Treasures - The Buddha, who is enlightenment; the Law, which is the correct doctrine, and the Order, which is purity. . . . The scripture merely says to take refuge in the Buddha within the self; it does not say to take refuge in another Buddha. If we do not take refuge in our own nature, there is no place in which to take refuge.**

**Section 24. Now that we have taken refuge in the Three Treasures ourselves, each of you please pay close attention. I shall speak to you, good and learned**

With the Sixth Patriarch, Zen started to be present in Buddhism. The Chinese text translates as “returning, or coming home,” to the root, the beginning point from which you see things. This is the point we reached toward in **repentance**. It is pure mind. **Triple Treasure** is here, in pure mind, not somewhere different from yourself. This “purity” is not the opposite of “impure,” it is the original face of things. Starting with faith, you will find out for yourself by facing the delusions of dualistic thoughts in zazen.

friends, about the method of salvation through great wisdom. . . . The word *mahaprajnaparamita* is Sanskrit and means in Chinese the great wisdom by which to reach the Other Shore. This Law must be put into practice and does not depend on its recitation. If we do not put it into practice, it amounts to an illusion and a phantom. If one practices it, his Law-body will be the same as that of the Buddha.

**Section 25. The Self-nature is great because it embraces all dharmas. . . . Do not just talk about it and then fail to practice it.**

What does *maha* mean? It means "great." The capacity of the mind is as great as that of empty space. If one sits with an empty mind, however, one will be attached to the emptiness characterized by indifference. Empty space can embrace the sun, the moon, stars, plants, the great earth, mountains, rivers, all trees and plants, good and evil people, good and evil dharma, heavens and hells. They are all within this emptiness. The emptiness of



human nature is the same. From **Section 13** through **Section 23**, the Sixth Patriarch speaks about calmness and wisdom as the foundation of his method. In this section he begins to speak from a little different angle. He is saying that practice and realization are two sides of one thing.

**Section 26...*paramita*...**  
**In Chinese it is “to reach the Other Shore.”**  
**It means to be free from birth and extinction. If one is attached to any sphere of objects, birth and extinction will arise, like waves in the sea. This means the shore on our side. If one is free from spheres of objects, there will be no birth or extinction. It is like water running forever. For this reason it is called reaching the Other Shore, or *paramita*... Good and learned friends, afflictions resulting from**

It feels like we choose to think our thoughts, but it isn't so. To believe we choose our own thoughts is delusion; to believe they just come to us is enlightenment. When we say, "... this side of the shore, other side of the shore. . ." it is a deluded idea. We have to understand what we mean by this shore and the other shore. When the Sixth Patriarch says, "... water running forever. . ." he means that even though it has waves and splashes, it is the same water, always flowing. In this way, delusions and passions are the same as wisdom. If we stay on this shore, the other side of the water is the other shore. If we make this side the other side, the other side can be this side. We are always on the other shore. We think it is this shore.

passions are the same as wisdom. To hold on to a previous deluded thought makes a person an ordinary man, but the next thought, if enlightened, makes one a Buddha.

**Section 27. Good and learned friends, in this method of mine, one prajna produces 84,000 wisdoms. Why? Because there are in the world 84,000 afflictions resulting from passions. If there were no afflictions, wisdom would always be present and would not be separated from the self-nature. . . .**

**Afflictions resulting from passions are the same as wisdom.** That which is passion is awakening. That which is passion is wisdom. It is like the Prajna Paramita, "That which is form is emptiness." "Passion" is a strong desire, in process, like burning fire. You cannot stop it. But within wisdom, there can be a still state of fire, like candle light. This kind of calmness limits the fire, not too much burning and not too little. Yet wisdom is very big and calmness seems very small. From the point of view of fire, all burning is calmness but from our view it's not calmness. When fire burns something that shouldn't be burned, for us it is not wisdom, but for fire, it is wisdom. In this example, **wisdom** is a very religious term, a synonym of compassion. When you say "He is a wise man," there is a delicate feeling in this word. If you say, "He is a clever man, very intellectual," you can feel the difference.

**Section 28. . . If only you hold on to this one book, the *Diamond Scripture*, you will be able to see your own nature and will enter into the calmness of wisdom. . .**

**Section 29. . . When people hear the doctrine of sudden enlightenment and do not depend on external practice, but simply find correct views in their own nature, all these afflicted people are at once enlightened. It is like the great ocean receiving the rivers and streams. The big body of water and the small bodies of water merge to form one body. This is seeing [one's own] nature. If one is not attached either to the internal or the external, is free in coming and going, removes his attachment, and understands things without impediment - he who**

In these paragraphs, the Sixth Patriarch is facing the traditional background of Buddhism, expressed in The Diamond Sutra and the big volume of the Wisdom Sutra.

There are entrances and exits. Going in and also going out, zazen opens both ways. We cannot say which comes first. The problem is that as long as we have a narrow understanding of meditation, we sit at the gate and everywhere is outside. You feel that you have meditated only when you go to sit. But when the gate and the door disappear, there is no inside of zazen, no outside of zazen. You have the force to meditate wherever you go. The physical body becomes the gate, and meditation visits us. To accept it is how we do zazen.

**Sudden enlightenment** means that whatever we are doing, this time is it. We cannot recognize it, but that is how we are living. Without enlightenment, we could not live any farther from now. When we see something, have some sort of understanding, even if it is a

can do this will not differ from the *prajna* scripture.

**Section 30. All scriptures and writings... are provided for men. It is because man possesses the nature of wisdom that these were instituted. If there were no men in the world, there would naturally not be any dharmas... When deluded people understand and open up their minds, they are no longer different from the superior and the wise. Hence we know that without enlightenment, a Buddha is no different from other living beings. With enlightenment, even in a single instant of thought, all living beings become the same as a Buddha. Hence we know that all dharmas are imma-**

misunderstanding, it is an expression of enlightenment. The whole condition which is prepared for us is enlightenment. Our life, itself, is enlightenment.

**Dharmas** are many kinds of phenomena. Existences are all called **dharmas**. The Sixth Patriarch is talking about teachings which are also **dharmas**. If you say "Dharma" there is only one. Truth is one and its contents are many thousand millions of dharmas, yet if you see only the differences among dharmas and not the similarities, you don't understand the real feel of **dharmas**. It is because of sameness that you can be aware of differences. At the same time, without discrimination there is no oneness. Many people have said it this way. **We are originally pure in our self nature. If we understand our minds and see our nature, we shall achieve Buddhahood ourselves.** I would translate it, "We shall realize the Buddha way ourselves." This term, **original** is very important. We don't change human nature. When we are watching something external, we don't

**ment in one's mind and person. Why not seek in one's own mind the sudden realization of the original nature of True Thusness? *The Scripture of Disciplines for Bodhisattvahood* says, 'We are originally pure in our self-nature. If we understand our minds and see our nature, we shall achieve Buddhahood ourselves.' [The Scripture Spoken by Vimalakirti says], "Immediately we become completely clear and recover our original mind."**

separate from that thing, rather, we reflect, we accept, and thus we can understand everything within ourselves. So maybe we cannot say we are "enlightened" but what we can say is that we are sentient beings, **originally pure. Original nature** exists beyond time, beyond past, present, and future, always basically pure. Even if you try to throw it away, get rid of it, it is still there. Dharma, Buddha nature, **self nature**, all are **original nature**.

Suffering exists. Even if I don't suffer myself, watching a suffering person, I suffer. I suffer because people appear in me. My whole life I will work on suffering. It is a weak, negative condition, or positive, struggling condition, but it is not a bad thing. Pain is not the same as suffering. If I think I can be healthy again, I suffer. Looking at me, no one else can say I'm suffering.

Trudy Dixon, the editor of *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*, expressed the coming and going of great pain, and a feeling of peace. Healthy people cannot feel that complete peaceful feeling.

**Section 31. Good and learned friends, when I was at Priest Hungjen's place, I understood immediately as soon as I heard him, and suddenly realized the original nature of True Thusness. . . . To know your own mind is to be emancipated. To be emancipated is wisdom. To have obtained wisdom means absence-of-thought.**

The Sixth Patriarch says, **Absence of thought means to have obtained wisdom**, and it is emancipation, and **to be emancipated means to know your own mind**. The actual happening of daily life is not so simple. When it occurs between people, it's more like choosing "like," or "dislike." Even if we experience emptiness, trouble will happen. We can accept it and not be controlled by it. You don't lose yourself because of trouble. In this sense, emptiness is the same as absence of thought. "Thought," in this place is a little too rigid translation. It means absence of a concept, but not absence of attitude. Attitude mustn't be absent. "Preconception" is a good word. "Like, dislike," these reactions come very quickly from habit. "Absence of thought" is not something to be obtained. Instead, you react to the whole figure of the idea to make it empty.

On the table, we see a teacup. We pile up ideas, likes and dislikes about this teacup and react to them. When I pick up the teacup, I crystallize my own attachment to it. We can see life as total attachment. At

the same time attachment is emptiness. Maybe I can keep this teacup in good shape for ten years, but when something nicer needs me, this attachment doesn't work. Attachment keeps relationships of people and at the same time it is not attachment or it will become mere suffering. When attachment becomes very, very strong, object and subject have to become one. Only when you make the object free from you can you become one with it. Accepting the existence of partner, husband, friend, wife, materials, thoughts, you can enter into oneness. You don't need to cut your attachment. Attachment is actually emptiness. It does not reach to oneness. It's like sending an arrow to the sun.

In complete independence there is complete oneness. It doesn't mean you melt into the object, like an ice cube in water. Keeping the form of an ice cube it can be in the water. That is our existence. We can't melt and become a teacup, even if we are attached to it. One form of attachment is a strong feeling of wanting to make the object the

same as you. Another is wanting to be perfectly possessed by the object. Usually attachment cannot be said to be love. When I see the teacup from this side, I have a one-sided view of it. Attachment is to keep this understanding forever, seeing no other aspect of the object. If I move to see the teacup from another angle, then I have the whole aspect. That is more like love, acceptance of the whole object, not in here (pointing to himself), but there. Accepting it there. You let it be free from your one-sided view. That is called love, and to stick to your one-sided view is attachment. Of course, the view from one side can also be wisdom, if you accept it as part of a complete understanding of everything. Mountain is mountain. Sometimes relations with others are not ideal because expectations are too big. The problem is emotional. It's expectation minus reality! It's not that simple, but anger is like that. Maybe your husband walks too fast or is too lazy so you get angry. The larger this separation becomes, the more we have to feel anger, or impatience,



sorrow, suffering. Usually anger is pretty good at maintaining this separated condition. Anger between beings in different situations, like man and woman, is mostly based on expectations. One day a good king asked his wife, "Who do you love the most?" The Queen answered, "After all, I love myself best, you are second." The King was so disappointed! She said, "If you really know I love myself, because of that, I can love others." It is the same with confidence. One who can really trust himself can be trusted by others.

Attitude is very important. "Way mind" can be said to be "right attitude." I don't like the idea of "way-seeking mind." "Seeking" is not the right attitude. Seeking is more like concentration, searching for something among many, many things. The attitude of "seeking" wastes energy. "Way mind" is an attitude of faith. Faith isn't a state of mind. It is action. In western terminology we say, "faith in action." A Biblical, religious idea has to have the word, "within" or "in." Everything is happening "within Him," so individual faith takes

the form of "in." Buddhism is more practical. Life is faith. Of course, the Buddhist faith is to believe in Buddha nature and, Zen in particular, emphasizes the relationship of you with all. That is practice.

If you are angry at your husband, you'd better think, "This is an empty man!" If you realize you are empty too, the anger doesn't disappear, but is left in the air. This is an intellectual method of getting rid of emotional problems. The first step of attachment is seeing something and deciding it exists. But when you understand, "That thing appeared within me, so I attached to it." That is the second stage: You attach to your understanding of it to get rid of the attachment to the object. You realize that things appear to us in different ways because of our different conditions as beings. Each of us has the opportunity to live, probably 20 or 50 years more, and the opportunity to respect others for that time. That is one expression of trusting in Buddha Nature. So the whole system of education is one of teaching respect of human life.

In the Lotus Sutra a monk went up to everyone he saw on the street and said to them, "You are the future Buddha so I will never condemn you." (People got a little upset with his activity!) The future starts from this moment. Even the past becomes the future. The job of historians is to show the past as one road to the future.

"Quick enlightenment" is not in the human world. "Gradual enlightenment" is a suitable term from our practice side. The Chinese started to talk about "quick" and "gradual," and both are the same enlightenment. But you don't say, "This is half-way enlightenment," or, "This is half-enlightened, half deluded." The question, "What is enlightenment?" comes from the sense of practice, but when I am practicing, then the idea of "halfway" and "gradual" disappears. "Enlightenment" should be very, very sudden. The one who experiences it always speaks about "quick" or "gradual," but never about what enlightenment is, or the feel of enlightenment. The difference between "enlightened" and "not-enlightened" is something we often experience.

It's like the feeling of whether we are able to put our faith in somebody or not. If we don't have faith in another person, the feeling is completely different. Instead of faith, there is no interest, no concern. It's a shut-out feeling. Even deeper than this is doubt. Instead of faith, because of no faith, doubt takes its place. It's an opposite kind of thing. As you know, faith and doubt are not intellectual problems of the brain, they are the whole concern of body and mind. When there is doubt, there is no understanding. Instead, there is fear, insistence upon oneself. You have a negative feeling, "She doesn't follow the same way that I follow." Do you think you have enlightenment? This is a very important point. As long as you do zazen you have to know it. Otherwise you don't do zazen in the right way. You cannot understand what you are doing there. But many beings are dissatisfied with their practice, wanting to go further. Yesterday I had to speak at the Mountain View Buddhist church, during the family service for Buddha's enlightenment day. The children recited

in loud voices, "We are the son and daughter of the Buddha, homage to the Buddha, the sons and daughters of the Buddha."

When one has faith, the idea comes, "My parents are Buddha." It means that essentially that person is also Buddha. No difference between parent and son, a little cucumber next to a big one. In the so-called "discriminated world" we just see form, even deluded people will see the same form, but they don't think of it as part of the enlightened world. Enlightened people see the same thing, with the sense of "relating with, going with, living with." Probably deluded people see and relate with things as they want to see them. Probably awakened people see things as they exist and as things want to be understood.

We celebrate a birth. Instinctively we know it is a wonderful thing, even if, waiting for the baby, there are struggles and difficulties. We celebrate life, and sometimes we celebrate people's deaths, too. I went to a funeral in Japan of a man who died at the right time, age 98, and without suffering.

He beautifully died, with many children around him. People didn't cry at all.

Gradual enlightenment and quick enlightenment, do you understand when I say they are the same thing? Two ways to look at it. An example is, if I get a cold, I lie down in bed. It looks weak, like I'm not fighting it, but it's the same as if I just said, "I won't let this bother me!" If you are floating in the water, you cannot keep your face in the water all the time, sometimes you have to lift it up. Do we just flow with life naturally, no struggle, or do we put some will, some energy into creating something in this harmonious life? In another example, whether you eat a persimmon all at once, or slowly, the persimmon doesn't care if you eat it fast or slowly. What is important is keeping your eyes open.

One more time I return to the original question of quick enlightenment... "gradual" means never... "quick" means ever. At one period there were arguments, with one school of Zen saying it's always quick, the other saying it's only gradual. These distinctions are a

side job of our brain, not enlightenment.

When we reach to the understanding that delusion always comes before enlightenment, we see reality in everyday life. Can we say that zazen and everyday life are different? The actions are different. Nobody says that sitting is the same as studying, or meditation is the same as eating, but what is important is who is doing it. Can we say that everyday life is the same as enlightenment so we can skip zazen? Does it mean that because I have been enlightened many times, I don't need to meditate? If we were born beautiful is there no need to wash our face? Or, if I did wash this morning, even if it is not needed, shall I wash again? If we look at it this way, halfway enlightenment is not a misunderstanding. Is a half-moon really half?

**Section 32. Good and learned friends, people in future generations who receive my method will always see my law-body by your side. Good and learned friends, those who apply this method of sudden enlightenment, who share similar views and similar practice, who take a vow of devotion as in serving the Buddha, and who devote their whole lives without retreating, will surely enter Nirvana. But when the Law has to be transmitted, they should transmit the Law silently handed down from one patriarch to another. To people who do not share similar views and have no desire for it, do not foolishly publicize it at all. . . .**

You will remember that when discussing "quick enlightenment, **sudden enlightenment**, gradual enlightenment," my understanding is that "gradual" means "never," and "quick" means "forever." So it appears, in this paragraph, the Sixth Patriarch is not insisting on some certain way of gaining enlightenment, rather, he is saying that if you don't see truth, you will never see truth.

This **silently** is not like an absence of ideas or words. Seeing a disciple, some people see the teacher of that disciple. This is the very big merit of the Dharmakaya, the **law-body**.

You can feel the kind of master they have. That is how you see the law-body. The Dharma is transmitted to each of us. "Patriarch" is a word for each of us. **Law-body** has form and no form. If I am blind and touch something, some feeling comes to me. That is an expression of Dharma body. When you start to discriminate, some different thing from Dharma body is happening. You create karma, making a shadow of yourself and saying, "That's me."

You don't make Buddha nature, true self, an objective. It's like



keeping lots of food in your refrigerator, then you go shopping and come back with more food. Where shall you put it? Everything is within you so you cannot search for it around you. That is like a little dog trying to catch his tail. In another word, "self-understanding" is like the little foam on the ocean knows himself, without knowing how huge a world he is in. He says, "I am enlightened, I am the universe," yet he is foam. Awareness of foam and ocean is like my Dharma body is not separated from yourself. There is nothing new to say.

**Section 33. . . .When the Great Master had finished explaining the Law, the Imperial Delegate Wei, government officials, monks, disciples who had renounced their families, and lay folk all praised him endlessly, saying they had never heard this before.**

**Section 34. The imperial delegate paid reverence to the Master and said, “. . . I beg Your Holiness, with your great compassion, for further explanation. . . . Is not the Law the fundamental doctrine of the First Patriarch from the West, Bodhidharma?”**

**The Great Master said, “Yes.”**

**The imperial delegate asked, “I have heard that when the Great Master Bodhidharma tried to convert Emperor Wu [reigned**

This is one of the most important parts of this text. Many scholars nowadays say that the meeting of **Emperor Wu** and **Bodhidharma** is a made-up story, yet most Zen texts consider this event the beginning of Zen. In this way the Sixth Patriarch told a very important part of the history of Zen. You do this with your own ancestors' lives, reviewing significant events in their lives. We are doing the same kind of thing with the life of Suzuki Rosh. He was living with us and we have many memories. If we don't correct the record of these memories, the meetings with him, he will be like a foreigner living in a deep mountain. Nobody would know what happened. The point of this text is to clarify what is the essence of Zen, the essence of Buddhism. It is not just how we think, but in the way that we live. The Sixth Patriarch spoke of the Precepts, homage to the Buddha, and now he speaks of true virtue, true **merit**, the difference between **merit** and blessings.

**. . . Internally see the Buddha-nature, and externally practice respect and reverence. A friend**

502-549], the emperor asked him, 'During my entire life I have built temples, given alms, and made offerings. Is there any merit [achievement and virtue] for these deeds?' Bodhidharma answered and said, 'No merit at all.'

"The emperor was disappointed and thereupon sent Bodhidharma out of his state. I do not understand Bodhidharma's words. I beg Your Holiness to explain."

The Sixth Patriarch said, "There is really no merit. Imperial Delegate, please do not doubt the words of Great Master Bodhidharma. Emperor Wu was attached to perverse ways and did not understand the correct doctrine."

The imperial delegate asked, "Why is there

of mine came right after New Year's breakfast, a Jesuit Father. He came just to say "Happy New Year," and "God bless you." "Thank you very much," I said. The words are like the sound of wind. It doesn't matter what he says. He appears, and wants to express something. I cannot think, "He is a Jesuit Priest and I am a Buddhist monk." It is very clear what is happening. I gave him a little present of incense from Japan. I was feeling what a huge world existed in his mind. I was so glad to be in his world. (Kobun noted that the first koan of the Blue Cliff Record and Case 2 of the Book of Equanimity are also about Bodhidharma and Emperor Wu, the Blue Cliff Record from a Rinzai perspective, and the Book of Equanimity from a Soto point of view. Ed.)

When **Bodhidharma** discussed with **Emperor Wu**, everyone knew what Buddhism was. It was kind of a national religion, and it wasn't unusual to see Buddhist monks. This emperor is symbolic of the Chinese nation at that time, and **Bodhidharma** is a symbolic figure who came from India to China, like

no merit?"

The priest said, "Building temples, giving alms, and making offerings are only cultivating blessings. Blessings should not be considered as merit. Merit lies in the law-body, not in the field of blessings. There is merit in one's own dharma-nature. Not to make any differentiation but to be straight-forward is virtue. [Internally see] the Buddha-nature, and externally practice respect and reverence. If one looks down on others and does not get rid of the idea of the self, he will have no merit. . . . Merit is the product of one's own mind. Blessings are different from merit. Emperor Wu did not know the correct principle. The Great Patriarch was not mistaken."

a first raindrop in the field. You can imagine that **Emperor Wu** built many temples and that many monks took care of them, studied, were educated. **Emperor Wu** made a great effort to establish the Buddha way, from his point of view. **Bodhidharma** said there was **no merit at all** in this for **Emperor Wu**. In a later period, the age of the Sixth Patriarch, most people were not familiar with Zen. People didn't know the real Dharma, 200 years after **Bodhidharma**. From our view **Bodhidharma** came and taught Zen, but the sociological view of history is different. "Bodhidharma" is the name of a person, but you mustn't forget that "Bodhidharma" is also a name for many persons who taught Zen. We use Suzuki Roshi's name this way. Remember this: "Roshi" is also a name for yourself. Otherwise Suzuki Roshi will really laugh at you from the grave! The main topic here is that Bodhidharma replied to the **Emperor** that there was **no merit at all** in building temples. The Sixth Patriarch completely agreed, but you must not understand this to mean that "no merit" is a denial of the whole

work of **Emperor Wu**. An example is, this apple has a sweet taste. If the Emperor asks, "Is the sweetness of this banana the same as an apple?" the answer is, "No." The Sixth Patriarch's explanation is a kind of comment on this koan, to answer the governor's question. The concept of "merit" had become mixed up with "blessings."

**Bodhidharma** was saying that **merit** is something you have to find out for yourself. **Blessings** you get from someone else. That we were born on this earth is a blessing. The whole world is a blessing. We didn't do anything.

**Section 35. The imperial delegate paid reverence and asked again, "I observe that monks, disciples who have renounced their families and lay folk always recite the name of Amitabha with the hope of going to and being reborn in the Western Region (Pure Land, Paradise). Will your Holiness explain whether it is possible to be born there or not?"... The Great Master said, "... De-luded people recite the name of the Buddha hoping to be born in the Pure Land, but the enlightened purifies his own mind, for, as the Buddha said, 'As a result of purity of mind, the Buddha Land becomes pure.' ... If one does not understand the Great Vehicle doctrine of sudden enlightenment, the way to go and be born there through reciting the name of**

There are very interesting things to discuss here. About the same time the Sixth Patriarch was born, the Pure Land school arose. This idea of the Pure Land came from India, from Nagarjuna. As Zen developed, Pure Land also developed, in the same society, in the same period. A strange thing happened recently. As I was reading this a phone call came from the Palo Alto Buddhist church, wanting me to speak at their anniversary ceremony for Buddha's birthday. I thought, "Oh, how shall I?" They wanted me to speak in Japanese. About 150 of the Japanese congregation came, first and second generation. So I know why this kind of thing happens, I know! As you read, you see Amitabha Buddha, who is not different from Sakyamuni Buddha. **The ability to be pure is the same as Sakyamuni.** I have a different translation, "The ability to purify is the same as Sakyamuni." The part about the passage way refers to the belief in the Pure Land, that this world is tainted and only Amitabha Buddha can reach to this Pure Land, in this life, and also in the after life. I, myself, feel that I am a very

the Buddha is very far. . . . Suppose Your Honor and I move to the Western Region. In an instant it will appear before our eyes. Do you wish to see it? . . . No doubt you see the Western Region in the passage way." It immediately disappeared. The congregation were astonished, not knowing what was what. . . . The Great Master said, "Will all of you please be alert and listen. Our own physical body is a city. Our eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body are the gates. There are five external gates. Inside there is the gate of the mind. The mind is the ground and the nature is the king. With the nature, there is king. Without the nature, there is no king. When the nature remains, our body and mind exist. When the nature is gone, our body and mind are

good Pure Land believer, too. It's just a different style of belief. Like when I face to you, one side looks like a Zen priest and when I show my backside, Pure Land appears! Zen and Pure Land as social phenomena, as expressions of belief, are different. But actually, the source, the one which is expressed, is the same thing. I also feel this way about Buddhism and Christianity. It becomes more and more clear. . . . **The view that the self exists is the same as Mount Meru. A perverse mind is the same as a great ocean. . .** These metaphors are explaining our inner world, the very many forms of mind. For instance, "If man cannot reach to **Pure Land**, or "If man cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. . ." or "If we don't reach to the Amitabha Buddha," we cannot be saved. If it takes infinite time to realize the **Pure Land**, or the Kingdom of God, when our individual being is finite, even if you add a million billion finite beings together, it's impossible to reach the infinite. There is no number that is infinite. That is why the Sixth Patriarch said that the **Pure Land** is not a far place,

destroyed. The Buddha is the product of one's own nature. Do not seek it outside of your body. . . . If their self-nature is enlightened, all living beings are Buddhas. . . . The ability to be pure is the same as Sakyamuni. And not to make differentiation but to be straightforward is the same as Maitreya. The view that the self exists is the same as Mount Meru. A perverse mind is the same as a great ocean. Afflictions are the same as waves. . . ."

but is above, below, and everywhere. So when compassion, itself, is Avalokiteshvara, purification itself is Shakyamuni Buddha, and what "Buddha" means is enlightened self nature, it's not becoming ideal, it's essentially so. All living beings are buddhas. By daily deeds, by action, we realize it. That is the Zen view of **Pure Land**, according to the Sixth Patriarch. And when it's realized, the **passage-way** suddenly **disappears**. It isn't logical, it's faith. We have to feel it.

The **Pure Land** believers are not looking for Zen. They speak of guilt and helplessness. The practice of zazen doesn't help them. They feel they have nothing to do with what happens. Their idea is that when light shines in the darkness, and there is helplessness, the light cannot go through. Their practice is very hard. **Pure Land** people believe in perfection. They believe, "When something wrong happens, it is because I'm imperfect." I always stop in that place. The Sixth Patriarch did not have the same idea as **Pure Land**, but his feeling was the same. He says, . . . **straightforward** mind is the



**same as Maitreya**, not just attitude, but whole life direction. So when the dewdrop of morning evaporates in the warm sunshine, to the Sixth Patriarch it looks like Maitreya.

**Section 36. The Great Master said, 'Good and learned friends, if you wish to practice, you can do so at home, not necessarily in a monastery....**

**In the dark room of affliction, We should constantly bring forth the light of wisdom.... If we always see our own mistakes, We will always be in accord with the Way.... If one departs from one's own way to seek another way, He may keep seeking but he will not find it.... If one finds fault with the world, He is evidently at fault himself.... The world should be transcended right in this world. Do not depart from this world To seek the transcendent world outside....**

**At home** has a double meaning here. It is where one takes the master's position. There is no hierarchy. One thinks, "I am the center." This refers to how you live your life, not depending on the conduct of others. Regarding "afflictions," the ideal state is when we are born. We don't have the idea of possession, "This is mine." We don't know what's inside and what's outside. It's a chaos-like state. We all originally exist in that way. On top of that basic condition we put society and different ways of life.

**If one departs from one's own way...** At first, you don't know your own way, so you look outside. There is a story of a bent old man who offered jade to the Emperor, saying, "This is the best kind of jade." But the Emperor refused to believe him, saying, "This is common rock!" and had the old man's arm cut off. A few years later there was a new emperor, so the old man tried again to give him the jade, but again he was punished. The third emperor, instead of punishing the old man, polished the rock and found it to be true jade. He trusted enough

to polish the rock. This is a metaphor for Buddha nature. When the emperor was busy with the affairs of the nation, he didn't listen to the man with the jade. If you say to the world, "Pay attention to your Buddha nature," not everyone listens. I, myself, when I don't pay attention, begin to wonder if I am just a blind bastard! But Buddha nature is not jade, or common rock, it is more like the soil which nurtures plants or is made into pots. Even when you are doubting, you do not lose it. Instead, you come to the end of your delusion and you are saved, you see your true nature. It is like a condemned man who has a chance to see the priest, someone who really believes you, who truly reflects yourself. The problem is how to trust in others, teachers, parents, friends. If you can trust, there is no need to choose your direction.

... **If one finds fault with the world, he is evidently at fault himself...** That statement is very strong. If you see the imperfectness of others, you are saying you are missing something, the same thing you believe they lack. So a world

comes between you, there is no kindness or positive feeling. If we see that ourselves and others are very similar, there is nothing to say. On the other hand, when we cannot accept criticism, it comes from misunderstanding and mistrust. Usually, we think, "I am perfect," so when criticism comes, you feel, "I am not like that!" If you are the one being criticized, it is better to hear it as a gift. In Chinese, "transcendence" is "world among" meaning to open and go out, and to go in, too. Psychologically, this means to practice openness, not to cling to limited views.

**Section 37. The Great Master said, "Good and learned friends, all of you recite this verse [portions quoted above] even if you are a thousand li away from me, you will always be at my side. . . . Let each of you practice by himself. The Law waits for no one. You may disperse. I am going back to Ts'ao-hsi Mountain. If you have serious doubts, come to this mountain and ask me. I will remove your doubts. Together we will enter the Buddha world. . . "**

**Section 38. The Great Master lived in the Ts'ao-hsi Mountain. For more than forty years he went around to convert people. . .**

**Section 39. . . Zen Master Shen-hsiu lived and practiced in the Yu-chuan Monastery, Tang-yang District, Nan-ching Prefec-**

As you remember, since the Sixth Patriarch left the Fifth Patriarch, **Shen-hsiu** took the place of the Fifth Patriarch. So, in this section, the Sixth Patriarch, in a "tricky" way, attempts to show that his idea is basically the same as that of **Shen-hsiu**. Samadhi, wisdom, precepts, and practice of meditation were the basic teaching of all Buddhists, so **Shen-hsiu** was just following traditional teaching. When the Sixth Patriarch said, . . . **my views are different**, he was not talking about **Shen-hsiu**, but, rather, the whole tradition. His ways of practice were new, showing a deeper understanding. Bodhidharma also expressed a direct pointing at mind. However, **Shen-hsiu** taught that discipline and precepts meant **not to do any evil; wisdom, to practice all good deeds; and calmness, to purify one's own mind**. Thus he was looking at the external and visible world, which is phenomenal and mundane, concerned with ethical stages of understanding. This implies that one who sits has a tainted mind. But the Sixth Patriarch was reviving Bodhidharma's teaching when he said, **When**

ture. The Great Master Hui-neng lived in the Tsao-hsi Mountain thirty-five li east of the capital city of the Shao-chou Prefecture. The Law is only one although people differ as southerners and northerners. It is for this reason that two different schools, Northern and Southern, have been instituted. Why are there sudden and gradual enlightenments? In reality there is only one Law, but people's understanding of it may be quick or slow.

Section 40. [Shen-hsiu sent his disciple, Chih-cheng, to learn about Hui-neng's teaching. He decided to stay with Hui-neng.]

Section 41. The Great Master said to Chih-cheng, "I hear that in teaching people your Zen Master only transmits the methods of

**the mind is free from evil, that is the discipline of one's own nature.** If we think we are not perfect without discipline, we start looking for perfection, so we sit. More important is to ask, "What is the more complete way?" turning our eyes inward.

Life is peace, even when there is struggle and fighting. There is no person who doesn't struggle. In Japanese, the struggle is expressed as ivy vines, many views pulling you in different directions. But there is a difference between knowledge of the mountain, and being at the mountain. When you are on the mountain and see the city lights below, when you are without food and shelter, city lights look wonderful! Even if you go to the mountain, there is struggle. To actualize peace, you go alone.

The 15th of this month is Buddha's Parinirvana day. Everyone knows he died centuries ago. The concern is whether that day was centuries ago, or yesterday. So when this moment appears, it tells us everything. The near past cannot be past. Not in the world of understanding, but in the

discipline, calmness, and wisdom. What are the discipline, calmness, and wisdom taught by your priest? Please tell me." Chih-cheng said, "Priest Shen-hsiu said that discipline means not to do any evil, wisdom means to practice all good deeds, and calmness means to purify one's own mind... " Answered Priest Hui-neng, "This doctrine is wonderful but my views are different...

world of feeling, it is eternally now. One realizes oneself, now. When you feel nirvana, you cannot separate yourself from nirvana. Every moment is the parinirvana of yourself.

When the mind  
is free from  
evil, that is  
the discipline  
of one's own  
nature.

When the mind  
is free from  
disturbance, that  
is the calmness  
of one's own  
nature.

When the mind  
is free from  
delusions, that  
is the wisdom  
of one's own  
nature.

... But if one understands his own nature, there is no need to set up the doctrine of discipline, calmness, and wisdom.... The cultivation of self-nature is sudden but setting up the doctrine is gradual. Therefore there is no need to set it up."

Section 42. There was another monk by the name of Fa-ta who for seven years had constantly recited the Lotus Scriptures. His mind being deluded, he did not know where the correct Law was and thought there was something doubtful in the scripture....

The Great Master said, 'Suppose you bring the Lotus Scripture here, read it once to me. As soon as I hear it, I shall understand.... Fa-ta, the Lotus Scripture does not say much. All seven chapters are parables and explanations of the causes of

To be **turned around** is to put the scripture in the center, and go around it. This happens if your mind is deluded. The opposite is to "turn" the scripture, so your mind becomes the center. **Fa-ta** thought he had mastered the Lotus Sutra, but actually it was the opposite. His mind was turned around by it. You could say he depended on it.

As the Sixth Patriarch teaches, the Lotus Sutra doesn't tell of many things, but just one thing, one **great event**, one great matter. It was considered to be the most profound scripture, and he taught that it expressed the transmission of immediate enlightenment. The great event consists of the Buddha's enlightenment, divided into four phases: to **open**, to **show**, to let



the Buddha's appearance... The scripture is quite clear that there is no other vehicle than the One Vehicle...

Where does the scripture talk about the One Vehicle? ... The scripture says, 'The various buddhas and the World-honored Ones appeared in the world simply because of one great event.' (This sentence represents the correct Law.)

How do we explain this Law? How do we practice it? Listen to me.

When the human mind is free from thoughts, its original source will be empty of differentiated characters and be tranquil, and perverse views will be gone. That is the same as causing the great event... If one understands this principle, in one instant his mind is opened up... It is opened to the Buddha-

us **understand**, and to allow us to **enter**. Buddha's appearance was to enlighten people, so he tried it, himself. In the same way, other Buddhas tried to **open** it, **show** it, **understand** and **enter**, and when they were enlightened, they were able to do it for others.

Talk of **one vehicle** also tells about it. The Sixth Patriarch says, "There is only **one Buddha Vehicle**." It is a kind of parable for one great matter, one great opportunity. It is why you were born, why I was born.

At the end it says, **To practice the Way of the Buddha is no different from being a Buddha**. This is a very natural thing. One could say, "Buddha does Buddha's thing... and it is happening. Rain falls, flower blooms. That is the flower doing it's thing. Man is always enlightening. That is doing man's thing." (The word "buddha" with a small character, means enlightenment.) I would translate this passage, "That which is buddha-action, Buddha's doing, is Buddha." When something is blooming, it is a flower. When someone is stealing something from some place,

knowledge.

**The word *buddha* means enlightenment, which may be divided into four phases, namely, to open our minds to the enlightening knowledge, to show us the enlightening knowledge, to make us understand the enlightening knowledge, and to enable us to enter into the way of the enlightening knowledge.**

**...Fa-ta, if in your mind you practice the Law, your mind will turn the Lotus Scripture around. If it does not, the Lotus Scripture will turn it around.... If you make an effort to practice according to the Law, that is turning the Lotus Scripture around.... To practice the Way of the Buddha is no different from being a Buddha.**

moving something which doesn't belong to him, this activity tells who he is. Our practice of zazen is doing zazen. You don't care about becoming Buddha. You are not climbing, step by step, into a holy person's world, like climbing a mountain from hell to heaven. A Rinzai master called it "zapping Buddha's world." Zazen doesn't mean you go somewhere.

**Section 43.** Once a monk by the name of Chih-chang came ... to ask about the doctrine of Four Vehicles... Great Master Hui-neng said, "Try to find out in your own mind and your body... because the capacity of the human mind is divided into four levels, therefore there are four vehicles in the Law. To see, to hear, and to recite the scriptures is the Small Vehicle. To understand the Law and comprehend its meaning is the Middle Vehicle. To practice according to the Law is the Great Vehicle. To understand all dharmas... to be free from all impurities... and not to possess anything - that is the Very Best Vehicle. The Very Best Vehicle means the very best practice. This does not depend on any argument. You must yourself practice it. Do not ask me."

The idea of three **vehicles** came from Mahayana thinking. Talking about the **Small Vehicle**, the Sixth Patriarch expands the ideas of listening, seeing, to their larger sense. The **Middle Vehicle** is to understand the meaning of the Dharma, to understand all dharmas. **Small, middle, and great** vehicles are to help understand the stages, the growth from the center, like when you cut a tree you clearly see its history. Any argument about the "best way" is like cutting a tree and arguing about the rings. But the Sixth Patriarch's way was very new. It didn't belong to any of the three vehicles.

... **not to possess anything.**...

When I hold a book, it is my own understanding that I possess. If you think there is a great Dharma somewhere else, in a book, you cannot stay with it. When you see that you are in it, you stay. ... **free from all impurities.**... When there is too much emphasis on "purity," you cannot stay there. The Dharma is beyond the idea of "pure and impure." It is the essence of pure and impure. Actually, an example is the face of a cut diamond. To be

free from all impurities you will have to cut yourself and then you will die. To live as you are is the meaning of very best effort. This old manuscript prepares the middle way for us, to help us see ourselves in the right way. When you see the middle in you, you know you will find it in others.

**Section 44. . . . another monk named Shen-hui . . . asked, ‘Your Holiness, when you sit in meditation, do you see [your mind] or not?’**

**The Great Master rose and beat Shen-hui three times and asked him, “As I beat you, do you feel the pain or not?”**

**Shen-Hui answered, I am both pained and not pained.”**

**The Sixth Patriarch said, “I both see and do not see. . . . I see means that I see my own mistakes and trouble all the time. . . . I do not see means that I do not see the mistakes and sins of the people in the world. . . . your being pained and not being pained are instances of birth and extinction. You do not even see your own nature. How dare**

This conversation has many levels. My feeling of this discussion is of a large typhoon swallowing a small wind.

**Shen-hui** spoke to the Sixth Patriarch in a public meeting. He was asking, “When you do zazen , is it clear?” When I sit, I can ask, “How is your zazen?” There is a big difference when one who doesn’t have zazen asks. The Sixth Patriarch said, “If you don’t understand, you will ask about it forever.”

[Reading from another text]

“The Master says, ‘My seeing is self-knowing. . . . If your seeing is self-knowing also, you don’t need to expect my delusion.’” It means, if you bring deluded mind, you cannot see. And if you see, you wouldn’t bring this deluded question. In the beginning, we often have this kind of unprepared question. It’s a very sharp question: “When you sit in meditation, do you see your mind or not?” This “seeing” is the same word as kensho. This ken means seeing, not with two eyes, but with one eye. In other words, “Are you an enlightened person or not, doing this zazen?” The young monk was very sharp, but this sharp question

**you come and insult people?... Now you are yourself deluded and do not see your own mind, and yet you come and ask me if I see!"**

**.... Shen-Hui paid reverence and became a disciple. He did not leave the Ts-ao Mountain but always remained at the Great Master's side.**

had to be asked not because of the master, but because of the young monk's own problem. Pain is a feeling, while seeing relates with the eye or mind. Pain relates, not just with mind, but with skin, muscle, bone, too. Both of these questions, asking whether your zazen is clear or not clear, true or not true, whether you feel pain or no pain, are on a dualistic level of understanding. In Buddhist thinking, "dualism" refers to birth and extinction, arising and corruption. People often ask, "Is he enlightened or not?" "Is Kobun enlightened or not? I don't think so!" But the problem is not whether Kobun is or not, but whether you are, or not! If you say, "He is not enlightened," you are not enlightened.

When you measure, it is like putting a one-foot ruler up against a huge rock, and saying it is one-foot tall. Actually, it is a huge rock. If someone says you are deluded, that means he is deluded. He doesn't see what you actually are. If you really see another person's problem, you feel, "This is my problem." If you cannot feel another's pleasure, or their pain, even

if you listen to and see them, you are a total stranger. You can imagine what is going on in this conversation between Hui-neng and **Shen-hui**. One is seventy years old, the other is a little boy of thirteen. How do you feel when the master hits **Shen-hui**? Does he hit him very hard, not too hard? You can feel that you are Hui-neng and you hit him not too hard, and not too soft.

When you don't feel the other's pain or pleasure, it's like a narrow entrance which only one person can go through, but three persons, all at once, want to go through. It is "me first." The three of them need to become very slender, but they don't want to! So if you don't die, you cannot go through this very narrow gate. If you die, you can go through and come out really alive. What shall you do?

**Section 45. . . . Since the self-nature embraces all dharmas, it is called the storehouse consciousness. As soon as deliberation takes place, the storehouse consciousness is transformed into the various consciousnesses, thus giving rise to the Six Consciousnesses, producing the Six Gates, and bringing on the appearance of the Six Qualities. Three times six makes eighteen. Because one's self-nature is perverse, it will give rise to eighteen perverse embracements. If one's self-nature is correct it will give rise to eighteen correct embracements. If they function in an evil way, they are those of the common people, but if they function in a good way, they are those of the Buddha. How can the function be the same as the Buddha? It can be through one's**

This is a very traditional expression of how our mind works. Not only Zen, but all of Mahayana Buddhism speaks of **store-consciousness**. The Sixth Patriarch is saying that if the **embracements** function in an evil way, they will be those of **common people**, but if **their function is in a good, right way**, they will be the same as **those of the Buddha**. These **embracements** include the **Six Consciousnesses**: seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, and sense-center consciousness; the **Six Gates**: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind; and the **Six Qualities**: sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, dharmas." So the important thing is **function**. **Storehouse consciousness** includes both mind and body. Everything we see, hear, etc. is stored in *alaya vijnana*, storehouse consciousness. It's a metaphysical term. (*Alaya* means "store" as in *Himalaya*. *Hima* means "snow.") This *alaya vijnana* cannot be grasped. Nobody knows what shape it has, where it begins. It is the ground of all consciousness and sub-consciousness, which means that, because of it, everything can



own nature.

be explained, everything exists, because of it.

This store-consciousness is the basic reason for karma, and also for nirvana. It has both possibilities, expressed in the **six consciousnesses**. The sense-center consciousness catches and corrects all senses. It is called the "sixth sense," which is mind. Not mentioned in this text is the "seventh sense," *klista manas*, which is tainted, habitual sense. An example is, as soon as you see a cookie, you don't hesitate to pick it up and eat it. If there were just the six senses, and *alaya vijnana*, the hand wouldn't move toward the cookie. Thinking is also affected by the seventh sense. It directs our activity and keeps our karma functioning, one action altering another, and another. This is called *klista manas*, meaning already colored, already directed sense. Our mind is already directed toward our favorite things, most interesting things. This is an explanation of habit, custom. Below this seventh sense is *alaya vijnana*, **storehouse-consciousness**.

In this **Section 45**, we now understand that the Sixth Patriarch taught his disciples

these traditional teachings, in addition to his new teachings. The important thing here is that these “embracements” are elements of our nature and they can be the contents of wisdom, or the contents of ignorance. Usually meditation and concentration reach to the understanding that there is alaya vijnana, and it becomes something you don’t, yourself, have. Rather, this person (you) is growing from the ground of alaya vijnana, like a tree. We see dharmas with our senses, but we don’t recognize there is ground. So I can say that the universe is huge, millions of dharmas, and a little dew-drop is reflecting it all. That is how we are seeing things. This is a simile of ourselves and store-consciousness.

Usually store-consciousness is really dark. It has no light in it, so no one can understand who is who. Everything is sleeping in the darkness. When I visited a mental hospital, my sense of alaya vijnana was the same as theirs, but their seventh sense, *klista manas*, was extremely different, so normal people couldn’t understand them. Thus the feeling was, “That’s

his problem." This is how people encourage mental patients to go further and further in a different direction. This is how the seventh sense powerfully determines people's lives, which direction they go. I was born in Japan. So even though I was interested in French, I couldn't be a Frenchman! The transmitted qualities of our ancestors, their blood, their body structure, are also in the seventh sense. Our history is also in the seventh sense. It includes all cultural activity, the kind of car we drive, etc.

When Hui-neng talks about "deliberation," he means whatever occurs before you sense something. The Chinese characters for "deliberation" are "thinking, measuring." So a perception can be erroneous, and frightening or not frightening, or correct, and frightening or not frightening. If it is a good smell, your body goes to it. When you are fond of it, you go toward it. If you're not fond of it, you part from it very instinctively. In a famous analogy, you are walking in the mountains and see a rope about the same size as a snake. It's dark, and everyone thinks it's

a snake. Sometimes you see a snake, but think it is a rope, so you don't feel fear.

The same store-consciousness can become wisdom and it can be worked as wisdom.

In this sense, sentient beings and Buddha are not different. Even when they awake, nothing changes, except that they see the daylight shining on all the different forms, in different positions. In brightness, what we have instead of thinking and measuring, is wisdom. You see with wisdom, you taste with wisdom, you act with compassion. And yet you cannot find the whole figure of alaya vijnana. It has existed from what has been called, "beginningless beginning." Because of it there are both delusion and nirvana. Sometimes you may see a waterfall from a far place and think you see a white cross hanging from the cliff. But constantly this "vijnana", this consciousness, is flowing. You are looking at a cross, but a flowing waterfall is hanging there.

**Section 46. . . . How are the thirty-six pairs to be used in the functioning of one's own nature? In conversation with others, externally be free from characters while in the midst of characters and internally be free from Emptiness while in the midst of Emptiness. To be attached to Emptiness merely means to increase ignorance. To be attached to characters merely means to increase perverse views. . . . Darkness is manifested by brightness, and brightness is revealed by darkness. One is the cause of the other. It is the same with the thirty-six pairs.**

There are several Sanskrit words for **characters**. For example, when I say "This is a book," it means I have a thought-construct, a conception of this material. That is one kind of attachment. When I describe it as "corrected writing, hard cover, etc." that is another attachment. You don't need to memorize all of this teaching. Just remember it's how we experience things. **Darkness is manifested by brightness, and brightness is revealed by darkness.** When we look out of this window, we could say we see shadows. Or we could say we see varieties of lightness. The correct view is, we see light and dark, together. Does that make sense? We can feel where we are, where we are. We have some translations of Dogen where he says, "Height is depth." It means, when we see the height of the moon, we also see the depth of our mind. It's about how we accept things, all the things that come into our mind. If our mind is small, it's impossible to accept many things. This is related to trust, the conquering of doubt. Maybe one hundred people say it is impossible for you to

achieve enlightenment, because they count how many hindrances you have. But one person believes you are okay. Do you believe the one hundred people, or the one person? Trust is believing, even if a person lies one hundred thousand million times! It's like Buddha appears and examines your trust by speaking a million lies to you. If you follow his lie, you fail. But when you say, "You cannot fool me by your lie. Even if you change yourself into one thousand different figures, I know who you are," that is true trust. Of course you struggle with those appearances. If there is no struggle, you are ignoring why Buddha tried to examine you. You find out whether your awakening is real or not.

Joshu tells about an old woman who has a little tea house by the roadside, and when people come to ask where is Mr. Joshu's temple, she always says, "Go straight." If a monk came from the east or the west, she'd say, "Go straight. Today also, the good monk is going straight." A monk came to Joshu and told him about her, so Joshu said, "I will go and

examine her." The old woman also told Joshu, "Go straight." He came back to the monastery and said, "I examined her. She is the imitation of me."

Joshu meant she was like a tape recorder, over and over again, just like himself. I, Kobun, also, always say, "Wherever the light comes from is the future."

The Japanese idea of *muki* is a very important attitude, meaning to be free from endless argument which goes on forever, like whether we continue to exist after we die. If people believe they will come back seven times, that works. If they believe this is their first life, that also works. More important is something we can really experience: "Who is this who is talking about it?"

**Section 47. The Great Master said, 'My ten disciples, hereafter when you transmit the Law, hand on and teach this one book, the *Platform Scripture*, and then you will not be out of accord with our school. . . . Having received this instruction, the ten monks had the *Platform Scripture* written down so that it would prevail from generation to generation, enabling everyone who obtained it to see his own nature.**

**Section 48. . . . On the eighth day of the seventh month [the Great Master] called his pupils in to say goodbye. . . . [He] said, "Will you please come forward. I wish to leave the world in the eighth month. If you have any doubts please ask me now so I may remove them for you. I will eliminate all your**

This Platform Sutra was given to the direct disciples of the Sixth Patriarch, those who remained a very long time, until his death. Later it became the source of the Soto, Rinzai, and other schools.

First the Sixth Patriarch is talking about **real/unreal** and next he is talking about **activity/inactivity**. When he says **true inactivity**, the word, "true" is about "real/unreal." In Section 46, he spoke about pairs such as form and emptiness, activity and tranquility, purity and impurity, the ordinary man and the sage. That is how he explains our contradictory views of ourselves. So there is some difficulty with the translation, **falsehood**. An example



**delusions and make  
you happy. After I  
leave, there will not be  
anyone to teach you."**

**When Fa-hai and other  
monks heard this, they  
all cried sorrowfully.  
Shen-hui alone re-  
mained unperturbed.  
Nor did he shed any  
tears. . . . "If you knew  
where I am going,  
you would not cry so  
sorrowfully. The sub-  
stance of our nature is  
neither produced nor  
annihilated; it neither  
comes nor goes. Please  
sit down, all of you. I  
will give you a verse,  
a verse on truth and  
falsehood and on activ-  
ity and tranquility. . . "**

**All things are  
unreal. . . .**

**If we view them as  
real**

**Such a view is  
entirely false.**

**If one is to discover  
reality himself,**

**He must be free  
from falsehood**

is this flower in a vase, and that flower in a painting. We say this one is "real," that is "unreal." Like, "A dream appears as the real thing," or, "A reflection of the moon is not the true moon." It is the same as your reflection in the mirror. In a way, when I say, "This is a book," I am reflecting myself when I name it, "book." This "book" is actually different from the meaning I put on it. One way to talk about this is saying that the disciples who cried when the Sixth Patriarch said he was going to leave the world were "wrong" and Shen-hui understood the "truth." Yet, the real problem is whether "I" am I. Of course, using "horizontal" logic, this question is nonsense. I see this question as "transcendental (vertical)" logic. The written "I" stands up. It doesn't lie down along the line of the page. It makes a strong wedge wherever it appears. If it is on the ground, it sticks, if in the water, it dips into the water. This poem relates to the Sixth Patriarch's mind when he spoke to his disciples whose faces had a weepy appearance. He knew their grief, but it didn't work for him. He might

and his mind  
will then  
be reality itself....  
Insentient beings  
are the same as  
inactivity [im-  
movability]....  
If you want to see  
true inactivity,  
You must be in-  
active in your  
activity....

have been thinking, "I know it's real when you weep for me. When you weep, you feel sad. Your sadness is from your side to me, from my side to you. But more important is what I, myself, am experiencing, not just weeping" So he told his disciples, "When you finish weeping, think of this, feel this: I say that our nature is originally neither born nor **produced nor annihilated. It neither comes nor goes.**" Of course, it is natural for disciples to cry when their great master is dying. But there is another way to see it. I think of the dolphins popping in and out of the water when my boat slid into Hawaii from Japan. One jump up is breathing into Buddha's world and the next jump is breathing into all sentient beings. The idea of the bodhisattva is like the dolphins. Bodhisattvas don't become Buddha. Both Buddha and sentient beings are the life of the Bodhisattva. Eternal life. **Our nature is neither produced nor annihilated, neither comes nor goes.** That is the same expression as our chanting, "All dharmas are marked with emptiness." They aren't tainted, don't need to be purified,

either. Our nature is beyond the sense of pure and impure. Birth and decay affect limited aspects of this human mind. We are talking about something which we call our "nature," human nature and the nature of all beings.

**Section 49. . . . Head Monk Fa-hai looked to the Great Master and said, 'Great Master, after you leave, to whom should the robe and the Law be given?' The Great Master said, 'The Law has already been given. You do not need to ask. Twenty years or more after my death, perverse systems will create disorder and will confuse my fundamental doctrines. . . .**

**According to the idea of the First Patriarch, Bodhidharma, the robe should not be transmitted. . . . [He said]**

**I originally came to the state of T'ang [China]**

**To spread the Law for the salvation of people with perverse thoughts.**

**A flower opens with five petals.**

**The fruit it bears will naturally be**

**Fa-hai** and the Sixth Patriarch mean different things when speaking of the **robe**. In **Fa-hai's** mind, he is thinking that if he is chosen, he has to take off his **robe**, become naked, and go into the Sixth Patriarch's **robe**. I mustn't say it was a perverse view, but it shows how he understood the **robe**, and the Dharma. So the Sixth Patriarch replied, "**The Law has already been given. You do not need to ask about it.**" When we chant every morning after zazen, that is the chanting of the robe. The robe and Dharma are the same thing. So I can say a flower is a "robe" of Spring. "Spring" is the Dharma of flower. There is only Dharma, inside, outside, everywhere. There is nobody to transmit it, nobody to get rid of it. Yet it is "rarely met with." Only when no-self is realized, is true Dharma realized. And another word for "no-self" is "emptiness." This "no-self" realization of emptiness, is instant freedom from ego-centered practice. It's not a situation which you have attained. It is reality, it's real, it is how each of us are continuing our life. If you see all beings as imperfect, even if they are practicing

mature. . . .

**The verse of the Fifth  
Patriarch, Hung-jen,  
says,**

**A sentient being  
comes to sow a  
seed,**

**The flower, insen-  
tient, will grow.**

**But if a thing is  
insentient and  
there is no seed,**

**Even in the soil  
of the mind  
nothing will  
grow.**

**[I, Hui-neng, say]**

**The mind embraces  
all [Buddha]  
seeds.**

**With the rain of the  
Law, they will all  
grow to be**

**flowers.**

**When one has  
understood by  
himself, the  
flowers**

**and all sentient  
and insentient  
beings,**

toward perfection, that is a perverse view. You will never get Buddhahood. If all beings were not perfect, they could not appear. So when you see something wrong with a person, that tells that some perverse view is appearing. Saying, "He did this to me, I did that to him," is confused. A clock hand cannot move if it's whole system is not working. Reality is really working in that way. This perfect Dharma has existed from beginningless time.

If you want to see an enlightened world, you have to make all beings enlightened. In that sense Shakyamuni Buddha's appearance made a thousand million past Buddhas. He saw many beings who came before him and he made them buddhas. Seeing many living beings, he tried to awaken them to this Dharma. He is still working on it. So from our mouths his name comes out. What is the relation between "no-self" and egolessness? When the ego drops off from the self, what happens? It is the action of repentance, a very personal experience. So repentance appears in enlightenment. Repentance appears in

**The fruit of perfect  
wisdom will  
naturally mature.**

awareness of truth. In awakening of truth, repentance appears. In the same action, no-self appears. The body, our physical condition, our physical body and mind, our being as an individual, is not destroyed by dropping the ego. If we give up the ego, at first we feel pain, because the ego is a very strong attachment. We feel physical pain, mental, spiritual and emotional pain. It is all the same thing. But, losing the ego, we don't become water; we don't become ashes. Barbara will be the same Barbara as before. Mary will be the same Mary as before. Even if you become empty, egoless, you will still be you.

When I speak of "Dharma," and "robe" I am saying the noumenon is Dharma and its phenomenon is robe. In the Prajna Paramita Sutra this perfect Dharma is "emptiness" and all existences are "robe." This is a very expanded sense of the meaning of "robe." How you face to it, with what kind of mind, is very important. Do you accept the whole world as your robe? When the Sixth Patriarch evaporates, his robe

will probably be left on the ground as a mound of clothes. It is his body, the Dharma body, which carried his Law. My feeling of the Sixth Patriarch's answer to **Fa-hai** is, "What are you speaking about? Are you not wearing a robe? It's been given to you. Are you not breathing? Are you not eating? Are you not Dharma? From whom are you going to get Dharma and robe?"

When the Fifth Patriarch gave the robe and bowl to the Sixth Patriarch, one strong monk followed. The Sixth Patriarch left the robe and oryoki on a rock and hid himself in the bush. That strong monk represents the opposite feeling, which Fa-hai is showing with his question. In another story, about Bodhidharma, a disciple spoke to him, "Let my mind be at peace." Bodhidharma replied, "Show me your mind and I will make it peaceful." The Sixth Patriarch's poem expresses this same idea, saying, "**The mind embraces all Buddha-seed.** I cannot hold it. I cannot find it. It is not possible to obtain. In the rain of Dharma, all flowers grow."

It seems to me that when Hui-neng says, "sentient," he is limiting it to the difference between humans and not humans. These days, the concept of "human" is body and mind together as one. And when you speak of "rock" or "mind of rock" it is a poetic expression, referring to your response to the rock. Most people see a rock as just a material thing. For a long time "materialism" vs. "idealism" was the discourse. Now, a more advanced scientific view is that both aspects are possible. In this text, what does **seed** mean? In the Fifth Patriarch's verse, **flower, petals, rain, seed, soil** become spiritual expressions, like **mind** as **soil**. Let us recite the robe gatha we chant every morning:

"How great is the kesa!  
 A virtuous garden  
 Far beyond form and emptiness.  
 I will wear the Tathagata's teachings  
 And save all sentient beings."  
 What kind of mind is making this sound? That one is wearing the robe. The one who hears the verse is also wearing it. It's very interesting. It sounds like the words are coming from



someone's mind, but when you make the sound it hits something, which makes a sound too. That is the great virtue of the teaching. If no people are around, you speak to a tree or the ground and they listen, and listening to their own sound they learn. In the same way, when you hear them, even when they're not human, they also hear the Tathagata's teaching.

Here, the metaphor for transmission of Dharma is the cycle of the seed, flower, fruit. The seed is in the fruit. Again it hits the soil, so the flower is also fruit. The seed is fruit, too. Earth, which contains the seed, has fruits and flowers, too. So the Sixth Patriarch said, "The Dharma has already been transmitted, entrusted. You may not ask who transmitted it. Because when you ask, it makes a delusion."

Another way to look at it is that, because of our senses, it's hard to get rid of the sense of internal and external. When I put my hand in front of my body and pay attention to it, this side is "inside," that side is "outside." Actually, both are external. Even when I pay

attention to the inside of this hand, my cognition is catching the external world, or the outside of the inside world! But it's very difficult to get rid of the sense of discrimination: Saying "outside" you mean no inside, saying "inside," no outside. But when we see it "beyond form and emptiness," this man, Kobun, wearing the robe, means everyone is wearing the robe.

Actually, it seems easy to discriminate, but it is a very hard job. When you usually listen to a word, or a bird, or the sound of an engine, in order to hear it, you discriminate. Then you know the bird is singing, or the car is running. But to just listen to it is a little different. When you just listen, a dog barking cannot be separated from you. That is how you can listen. So to discriminate seems like an easier job because it's what we always do. And not to discriminate is really difficult when we are used to discriminating, because it goes in a different direction.

In one sense, feeling you can catch something, is madness! And in this so-called "madness" you feel something is

different from you. But if you feel it is the same as you, you don't feel "madness." In another example, when you say "soil" or "earth" there are two different aspects to it. If it is just soil, just the ground for some life, some seed, that is one aspect. But when seed is contained in this soil, your sense of it is different. Of course, until something sprouts, you just see soil. But there are many seeds contained in this soil so when you realize that, you cannot step on this ground!

When "Dharma" is written with a capital "D" people understand it as the universe. We never see the limits of the universe, or we don't know if it has limits, so this word, "universe" has a feeling close to "Dharma." Can you say you are in the center or on the edge of Dharma, like when you are sleeping in a bed? Actually, "Dharma" has the sense that you are in the center of it, lived by it, or living it. It isn't something handed to you. Often, when people think of transmission, they think it's like being handed a certificate. Actually, each exhalation and inhalation is a symbol of transmission. I

can see the rose flower linking to the rose seed and blooming again. That is how transmission works. Yesterday, today, tomorrow, yourself. That is transmission. Maybe we could say, "continuation. . ."

From the Second to the Fifth Patriarch, all are expressing the same thing, like searching for the root in the soil. It represents a very big effort to create tradition in Buddhism. The Second, Third, Fourth, Fifth are not well-known people so the Sixth appeared like a shoot of bamboo. His disciples wanted to express this root. It is truly the symbol of transmission. The faith between people, between God and people, between the human Buddha and Buddha in humans, is also transmission. Trust is basic. I don't trust part of life, distrust another part of life. It means no doubt, no hesitation, trust life. This is not ignorance. Getting to this trust is just a little change of mind, one little change, the thickness of paper.

**Section 50. Great Master Hui-neng said, 'Listen to the two verses I have composed according to the ideas of Bodhidharma. . . .**

**When an evil flower blossoms from the mind**

**Its five petals and its root will follow.**

**They will all perform deeds of ignorance,**

**And will be blown down by the wind of these deeds.**

**When a good flower blossoms from the mind,**

**Its five petals and root will follow.**

**They will all cultivate wisdom,**

**And the perfect wisdom of the Buddha will arise.**

I feel the origin of this verse is in *Dhammapada*, the record of Buddha's words. He used similar expressions to express flowers from both sides: "evil" and correct. Both ignorance and wisdom are to be studied. There is a saying, "Ignorance is nothing but wisdom, afflictions are nothing but awakening." So there are two verses: One expresses this side, and one expresses the other side. The relation of religion and ethics can also be discussed when looking at this Section 50. When you see some litter in the street, picking it up is endless practice, beyond doing "good," or "evil." Picking up a piece of paper when it cannot be explained why it came here, why it shouldn't be in this place, is infinitely picking up something which has infinitely been there. It is the conditioned state of time and space, creating the limitations of life. It's an endless practice, infinite activity. When you see a little insect on the road, which is a dangerous place for an insect to walk, without hesitation you move it out of the way. Like the snail in the garden doesn't know you are raising vegetables.

Everything we do makes some difficulty, a very delicate point. What carries our deed, what carries our practice, whether it is a sense of good, or wrong, it is trusting that it needs to be done. So if you compare the length of your life, or the life of the vegetables, with the snail, the snail is a little morning dewdrop, and our life is like two morning dewdrops. When you compare, all vegetables will disappear by the next morning unless you smash the snail. But all vegetables disappear when the snail disappears. You have clear ground again. Most ethical, moral judgement is relative and conflictive, of tentative meaning. So we have to be very agreeable in judging, and we have to allow the possibility of completely changing it if necessary. Each of us is a sentient being, so we have that problem. The sun and moon work very patiently so they don't dry us up. Since they have quite long life, they are giving us the opportunity to see and be seen, to live and be lived.

**Section 51.** Later, on the third day of the eighth month, after he had finished his meal, the Great Master said, "Will all of you sit down. I will now bid you goodbye."

Fa-hai asked, "From the very beginning up to now, for how many generations has this doctrine of sudden enlightenment been transmitted?"

The Sixth Patriarch said, "At first it was transmitted to seven Buddhas. Sakya-muni was the seventh. The eighth was Mahakasyapa... [counting all Buddha-Patriarchs down to myself, Hui-neng], the fortieth... "

We are sentient beings, but we are also not sentient beings at all, as all sentient beings are not sentient beings at all. In that same sense this Dharma lineage appears as Buddha Patriarchs. In Christian thinking they are called "god-men" or "men-gods." Not God, not man. Maybe they are just a question mark, not because of unknowing, but because of really knowing the meaning of the unknown. When you see them as insentient, the forty become one. In time and space, you count forty Patriarch Buddhas. But it doesn't mean just forty, it is infinity. Innumerable Buddhas are forty. Like when you count days, you mean number of welcomings of the sun. For the sun, it is always just one day. Counting is human work. It sounds strange when I say Shakyamuni Buddha is still living. People ask me, "Where does he live?" When I say the sun is still shining, you can feel how I feel Shakyamuni Buddha exists. Historically, he died about twenty-six centuries ago. One day, twenty-six centuries ago, he disappeared. But the sun, which is the same sun as now, also disappeared. Night

came. The one who recognizes the existence of Buddha within himself, is the one who transmits the Dharma. Dharma is not separate from Buddha. Shakyamuni Buddha's life was about eighty years. Before him, length of life was really different: The Buddha before Shakyamuni lived ten times as long as Shakyamuni, and the next one before him lived ten times longer, and so forth. It tells of a sense of time which is not two dimensional, but in infinite dimension, and Sakya-muni Buddha's appearance as a human was in infinite dimension. So when you see this life in relation to Shakyamuni Buddha, you see twenty-six centuries. It's a matter of faith. What Shakyamuni Buddha was, depends on each person. If you say the same sun shown yesterday, and the same moon came out last night, and you are the same person, but not the same person, as yesterday, then you understand what was Shakyamuni Buddha. In the same way the Dalai Lama is not only that historical figure, but in a more alive meaning, he is the whole of Tibetan Buddhism. And when Tibetan Buddhism



exists, it is not just Tibetan Buddhism, it is the Buddhism of the world, in Tibet, in America. So Shakyamuni Buddha is counted as one of the past Buddhas, and from Mahakasyapa, the numbering of Patriarchs starts, down to Hui Neng. These are historical figures, and, at the same time, beyond historical figures. What makes this lineage? We spoke about the transmission of Dharma and the transmission of robe, which is the symbol of perfect Dharma. It expresses how we exist in this world. The meaning of practice will be found when we see ourselves in this kind of expression. We see both ideas: absolute existence and relative mundane existence. To be human is nothing but to be mundane. At the same time, without being one of humankind, the first principle, the absolute, cannot be realized.

**Section 52. Fa-hai again said, "Now that you are going, what Law are you going to leave behind? How will you enable future generations to realize their Buddhahood?"**

**The Sixth Patriarch said, "Please listen. If deluded people of future generations only know [the nature of] sentient beings, they will realize Buddhahood. If they seek Buddhahood without knowing sentient beings, they will never attain realization even after ten thousand infinitely long periods. Now I will instruct you how to know sentient beings and realize Buddhahood. . . . Apart from sentient beings, there is no Buddha-mind.**

**. . . . If for one instant of thought they make no differentiations,**

In this translation **Law** is the same as "Dharma," one of Triple Treasure: Buddha, Dharma, Sangha. It includes both teaching and learning, happening at the same time. So when Shakyamuni Buddha realized the truth, he said there were six before him, letting us know that he didn't begin this realizing of the Dharma, that it was always there and he was just one of those who realized it. The Sixth Patriarch counted himself as the fortieth. Now the number of Patriarchs is eighty or ninety. But when you count, it is actually innumerable, infinite. It is the same when you count your breathing, counting up to three, up to ten. You don't stick to the number. What is important is what kind of breath you are counting. With teaching, the visible part of teaching and the invisible part of teaching are both teaching. Some people can't play music, but when they accept and really appreciate music, that is also transmission.

When you see these figures, do you just see persons, historically arranged like in a necklace? In this figure, the thread is Dharma. That is a

**All sentient beings will in themselves be Buddha.**

**There is Buddhahood in my own mind.**

**This Buddhahood in oneself is the real Buddha...**

**Without the Buddha-mind,**

**Where can one seek the Buddha?"**

visible way we can imagine how it is. Yet seeing each of these people is also like seeing the shape of a plum blossom. Every year when the time comes they bloom, but just seeing the blossom isn't enough. When you see Shakyamuni Buddha, number seven, it looks like there is only one figure. So "number seven" is also "number one," in which all of us are already counted. Or if you are counted as "one hundred," all those figures disappear within you. Not only those figures, but all generations, everything, disappears within you, and you cannot tell who is first, Shakyamuni Buddha, or you. So to see these many jeweled lives is just in our imagination. For people who don't know those figures in the background, those efforts of expression, it is the same as empty white paper, nothing. It is the same thing, but how you understand it is different.

There is another translation, by Philip B. Yampolsky, of this text. A very kind translation, comparing different Chinese texts. Probably I would have said it was better for us to use if I had it before we started. Reading the translation we are

using, I feel many older translations behind it. For instance, the Chinese character for “differentiation” is like a very sharp slope, up or down. The other term when the mind makes no differentiations, is flat. When mind activity goes up, or down, there is a sense of judgement, high and low, good and bad, judging in terms of a goal. The character for “no differentiation” is flat, not only in the human dimension, but in any sense, flatness, completeness. You can’t say which is high and which is low, which is front and which is back.

**Section 53. The Great Master said, "My disciples, take good care of yourselves. I leave with you a verse, called 'Emancipation through the Realization of Real Buddhahood in One's Own Nature.'**

...The Transformation-body, the Reward-body, and the Law-body -

All Three Bodies are originally one body.

If one seeks in this body his own realization,

That is the cause for the perfect wisdom to realize

Buddhahood...."

Editor's note: **Section 53** ends, "Having said this, the Great Master ceased talking. Suddenly, at midnight, he entered Nirvana. The Great Master was seventy-six years old." **Section 54** describes

*Nirmanakaya* is your very visible body, when you realize Buddhahood. **Transformation body**, another name for it, relates with our practice of following Buddha's way. It is like, when you want to be a flower, you become a flower; when you want to be a thief, you do the thief's thing, and you realize what a thief is. So practice, itself, is realization. This word, *nirmana*, means "roll of mind." When we see something, when things appear, that is called *nirmana*. It is a very ordinary thing we are always experiencing. Shakyamuni Buddha, the historical Buddha, is called "Nirmanakaya Buddha," who actualized the Reward body and the Law body on this earth. And when we realize, when our true nature is realized, we become Shakyamuni Buddha, as the Transformation body. There is no division of Shakyamuni Buddha's body and our present body.

**Reward Body** and **Law Body** can also be experienced. They cannot be expressed but they can be experienced. You don't need to ask others, "Am I Buddha?" when you realize this is it. **Law body**, Dharmakaya, and

various miracles, including fragrances, natural wonders, and light flashing, which occurred upon the death of the Sixth Patriarch.

**Section 55** repeats the statement that this scripture was compiled by Head Monk Fa-hai, who passed it on to his fellow student, Tao-chi, who passed it to his student, Wu-chen.

Reward body, Sambhogakaya, are usually invisible, but when Transformation body, Nirmanakaya, is realized, all three arise as one body. So three bodies are not three. It's just one thing, one body. To realize this body, we were born and we are living in this way. It is not a matter of pride. When you hear the world of sound, see the world of light, when you recognize a time, these are Reward body. When you see the forms and shapes and colors of all beings, that is Reward body. When you breathe air and feel that the air is breathing you, when you even get rid of the sense that you are breathing, then you understand air is Reward body, and you are also Reward body. You do not recognize "I am breathing, air is breathing me," there is just breathing. True respect toward our own existence depends on this idea. This is acceptance of the joy of Buddha, which is Sambhogakaya. Dogenzenji wrote a poem about this:

"The form of mountains,  
Sounds of valley,  
All my Buddha's figure and  
voice."

You have to say, “my Buddha’s body and voice” because it’s not someone else’s.

This word, **reward**, is very dualistic. Because we are human, we speak like this. In another example, we may say, “I hold this paper like this.” But Sambhogakaya, Reward body, includes the whole thing, so we could also say, “This paper is holding me.” The paper doesn’t need to express this, but because of our body, we speak. With words, all of our actions are for the use of humankind, but if we see things in a very pure state, there are no words. So when we express Sambhogakaya, it comes through words, forms, through the five senses. When you point to the moon, this action is like using words. You can say, “see the moon.” But words and finger are not moon. If you seek Buddha outside it is a dualistic way. You see just a shadow. But if you seek Buddha inside, it means you seek Buddha within yourself. Buddha is realizing Buddhahood.

**Section 56. If this doctrine is to be left to anyone, he must be one with high intelligence and wisdom, who has faith in the Law of the Buddha, who has aroused great compassion in himself, and who holds on to this scripture as the basis. [That has been done] without interruption to this day.**

**Section 57. . . . Let us together spread the doctrine of non-remaining [non-attachment], that is, one's own mind not remaining. . . . Teach only those who, in all their work of saving people or taking vows, in all their practices and action, do not retreat when they encounter danger. . . . Those who are not able to understand or to establish [their character] should not erroneously be left with this *Platform Scripture*. Tell all fellow seekers of**

When you read carefully, you can understand what kind of people can carry this sutra. It relates with faith, not the intellect. It looks like the Sixth Patriarch is choosing people, but the choice is not from the master's side, it is the choice of the receiver. Like if there is a beautiful horse, everyone wants to ride it, but you cannot encourage children to ride. It's too dangerous. Maybe someone who has no faith in the Dharma and no compassion within, that person will not understand the sutra. It wouldn't make sense. For instance, if you are very critical, you don't put this teaching into practice. When you meet the sutra, you are meeting yourself.

*Jo-kon, chu-kon, ge-kon*, describe the three stages or divisions of the possibility of peoples' ability to achieve Dharma, how fast or slow they learn. It is based on faith. This ability is not obvious, like whether you are beautiful or not beautiful, or how many years you were educated. It is not like caste, in India, where there are four classes of opportunity in life. If you are born in the Brahman caste, even if you are very



**the Way so that they  
may understand these  
subtle ideas.**

bad-natured, you are considered the highest. That isn't the same as *jo-kon*. There are interesting examples in Christ's disciples. When Christ came to the shore he met two fishermen, and very skillfully made them real fishermen, taking care of people. The Sixth Patriarch is the best example of *jo-kon*. He was born a woodcutter, to a very poor family. Selling firewood, he was studying himself, and by his sincere way-mind he accepted Buddhist teaching. Even hearing one phrase of the Diamond Sutra, he understood the whole of Buddhism. He was a candle ready to be lit, and the sound of the sutra was lightning, making ancient darkness disappear. In the light, all enlightened beings appear. This kind of sutra is a future sutra. In the historical sense we see it was made a long time ago. Truly, it is a present sutra and a future sutra. Its nature is beyond time. So how do we face to this kind of sutra? Not only this Platform Sutra, but many religious texts, like the Bible and the Koran, and Confucius, and many other Buddhist texts, have to be read by the mind of faith, not the scientific mind.

So the sutra relates with real life. How do you face reality? Do you accept the whole thing, and through your own sincerity, actualize this world? Our business is studying the original sutra, which is everyday phenomena. Without a sincere attitude to reality, this sutra cannot be accepted, because this sutra was made with a spirit which faced reality at that time. So there will be some cultural and linguistic differences between that time and this time, but those difficulties can be softened and also conquered, by our practice. Have we spent one year with this sutra? It took a long time. With full speed we finished this sutra. For me it was very quick.