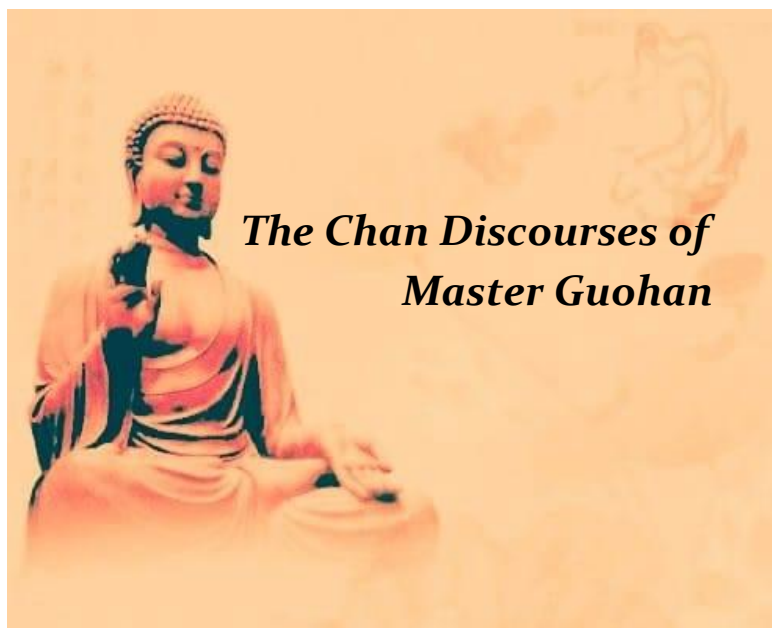




ON THE TIP OF A RIPPLE



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Preface

By Rev. Shenyun Gilenson

I was fortunate to first encounter the Venerable Chan (Zen) Master Beishi Guohan through a medium where no one would expect to find a master: social media. In this day and age, finding an authentic teacher who shares the Buddhist teachings in a way that is, on the one hand, completely his own, and yet on the other, does not try to cater to modern tastes and does what happens so often, where we find the limbless body of that proverbial baby laying in shallow proverbial bathwater.

The teachings of the Chan School, ever since the Buddha held up a flower in front of the assembly and only Mahakasyapa smiled, are entirely beyond the scope of words. And yet for the benefit of those of us who still cling to the play of illusion, masters have always had to employ different techniques in order to point out for us the Moon of our brightly shining Original Nature.

Now, if you've ever tried to point something out to your cat or dog, you have probably seen how they inevitably stare at your finger, blissfully ignorant of the object you are pointing to. In the same way, many of us get bogged down in the metaphors and similes, trying to distinguish historical facts from

fictive narrative, and forget the task we set out to do originally: See into our very own Mind.

The Masters of old have employed a host of techniques to remedy our situation - shouting, hitting, confusing us with intellect-stifling anecdotes, teaching different meditation methods, and any other thing that might possibly help us wake up and see what is already true: That our very own mind is already Buddha.

Master Guohan, in adapting his skillful means to the age of social media, has evolved, over years, a style of posts which includes all sorts of emoji, typesetting and language which can truly only be the product of an ancient mind functioning through the lens of the 21st Century.

For the purposes of this book, I edited the discourses to be more legible in book format, and to make the sentence structures a bit more readily digestible in book form. In order to see the wonderful posts as they appear on social media, I highly encourage you to visit Master Guohan's Facebook page.

I have arranged these discourses into an order that feels to me to be sequential and beneficial both as a practice manual, and a book of recorded sayings, as is traditional in the Chan sect. Anything lost through the process of editing, and any mistakes are all mine, while any benefit gained through reading this book is all the product of Ven. Guo-

han's and the ancient masters' compassion and wisdom.

I recommend reading this book slowly, and giving things time to crystalize and clear-up in the mind. Chan is not attainable through intellectual understanding, and time for an intuitive grasp of what is said is of utmost importance.

I recommend reading in the same manner that the master always admonishes:

“In all situations, in everyday life as well as in Sitting Chan (formal meditation practice) always apply an Ordinary Mind of Non-Abiding Awareness.”

This “guiding concept” of the ordinary mind of non-abiding awareness (OMNAA) will become clearer and clearer as you progress through the book. May it help you swiftly attain a realization of your True Mind and send you on your way to help liberate innumerable beings from the suffering of the deluded life of samsaric existence.

May all beings be content, free from vexation and at peace!

Every day is a good day!

Mark Shenyun Gilenson
Winter 2019



Introduction: What is Chan?



*What is Mahayana * Suddenness Chan?*

The "Suddenness Chan" is the "Chan Dharma of sudden approach and sudden enlightenment", while the "Gradualness Chan" is the "Chan Dharma of gradual approach and sudden enlightenment".

Suddenness Chan belongs to "One-flavor Chan", the flavor of liberation. That is, intrinsic completion and accomplishment without cultivation, and also intrinsic sufficiency without gradual levels and stages. Meanwhile, it is the Dharma Gate of the mind-ground, which works through *direct application* of the True Mind [of no mind] and *direct attainment* [of no attainment] of Buddhahood.

Suddenness Chan means the direct realization of the Ultimate Reality of life in the universe, which includes the so-called "independence and interdependence" of everything and every being. It also

* Mahayana, or the "Great Vehicle" of Buddhism is concerned with helping all beings, not just oneself, to attain freedom from suffering, unsatisfactoriness and unease.

means the simultaneous manifestation of Buddha's wisdom and compassion.

This direct actualization experience is inconceivable and ineffable in words and language, because of the principle that "none but the taster knows the flavor of the water". Therefore, it is an enlightened state of the wisdom mind of non-abiding awareness, which is also an awakening state of pure awareness free of any self-centeredness.

Independence of Everything/Every Being:

Among all universal and worldly things and beings, everything or every being has its own position, condition, and perspective; and all things are entirely and truthfully manifesting with their original face and are spontaneously functioning. Therefore, **at** every moment, everything/every being is unique, perfect, and fresh.

Interdependence of everything/every being:

Everything/Every being in the universe has the relationship of interconnectedness (interbeing and interpenetration):

"In the multifariously developing and endlessly expanding Dharma-realm of the ten directions, one is all, all is one; one penetrates all, all penetrates one.

It is just like Indra's net*, with its multiple interfusion and mutual manifestation." This is the ultimate reality of everything/every being.

Discourse of Sixth Chan Patriarch Huineng:

Since the self-nature is of both "sudden approach & sudden awakening" and "sudden awakening & sudden approach"**, and since it is approached instantaneously without any gradual process, there is no setting up of all Chan dharmas/Dharmas***. As all Chan dharmas/Dharmas are intrinsically in "perfect rest and cessation", what gradation could there be?



* The Mythical Indra's net is a net where a mirrored-jewel is placed at each knot, and thus each knot reflects all other knots. This is the classic Indian image of the interpenetration of all things.

** Implies the maintenance of spontaneousness & effortlessness

*** Dharma with small d means "all phenomena", while Dharma with capital D means "Truth", or "Buddha's Teachings".



What, Ultimately, is Chan?

Chan means direct and ultimate awakening to interconnectedness (interbeing and interpenetration), and the spontaneous manifestation of Buddha-wisdom and compassion. This awakening experience is ineffable in words; it is inconceivable to the duality of language and concepts. It is merely a state of non-abiding awareness which is free of self-centeredness.

For this reason, there is a saying, “Chan does not depend on words and language”; and yet Chan freely uses words and language to benefit worldly beings as a means of "direct pointing at the moon by the finger". Chan practitioners apply this "finger", the Dharma of Teachings*, for genuine investigation in order to directly see the moon, the intrinsic Dharma of Mind, and forget the finger; or even reach the ultimate destination - "no moon, no finger".



* i.e. scriptures.



What is the Ultimate Reality of Everything?

A disciple once asked Chan Master Caoshan Benji, "What does it mean that there is Ultimate Reality in everything?"

Master Caoshan replied, "Everything is itself Ultimate Reality."

The disciple asked again, "How should it be manifested?"

Master Caoshan just lifted up the tea tray.

“Everything is itself Ultimate Reality” entails:

- The non-interference of everything;
- The non-interference of the "temporal existence" and the "ultimate emptiness" of everything;

In short:

Perfect Resting Is Ultimate Bodhi*.



* Bodhi (Pali, Sanskrit) – Enlightenment.



Chapter 1: Beginning Chan Practice

“Sudden Approach”



Chan Master Xu Yun's (Empty Cloud's) Essentials of Chan Investigation:

“The Chan Sect focuses on investigating Chan. The Chan investigation lies in “having an insight into the mind and seeing into the self-nature.” This Chan investigation is the so-called “penetration into the original face”, and is also equivalent to “profoundly realizing one’s true mind and thoroughly actualizing one’s original nature.

“Since the time when Buddha held up a flower and Bodhidharma came from the West*, the approaches for entry into this gateless Dharma-gate have frequently evolved. Most Chan practitioners, before the Tang and Song dynasties, became enlightened at the very moment of the statement by only a brief remark.

* The former signifies the Chan School’s conception, while the latter refers to Chan’s arrival in China.

“The mind-to-mind transmission from Master to disciple was merely the receiving of the Mind-Seal. There was no real Dharma transmitted. Everyday questions and answers were nothing but the removal of bonds according to the masters’ skillful means, who gave ‘medicine’ in accord with the practitioner’s ‘sickness’.

“After the Song dynasty, however, Chan practitioners did not have such good karmic potentialities as their precursors. They could not carry out what had been taught. For example, Chan practitioners were guided to “Let go of everything” and “Not think of either good or bad,” but they simply could not do it. They could not let go of everything, and if they weren’t thinking of good, they were thinking of bad! Under these circumstances, the Patriarchs and Matriarchs had no choice but to fight poison with poison, and so, they instructed the method of Chan investigation with expediencies such as investigating a Huatou.”

Beishi Guohan's Humble Commentary:

All Chan Patriarchs or Masters before the Tang and Song dynasties always guided Chan practitioners as follows:

The self-nature of Bodhi is intrinsically pure, just apply this pure mind for direct realization and attaining Buddhahood. The Way (Chan) does not need cultivation, but only not to defile it. What is defilement? While there is mind of arising and perishing, and the mind of effort and intension, *all is defilement*. Suppose the Chan practitioner wants to directly realize the Way (Chan), well then, the ordinary mind *is* the Way.

The so-called ordinary mind is of no effort, no right or wrong, no grasping or rejecting, no nihilism or permanence, no sentient beings and no saints.

All Chan Masters in or after Song Dynasty often guide Chan practitioners about powerful methods of Chan investigation as follows:

The Huatou Chan Method:

The method includes investigating such phrases as "What is Wu (Mu)?", "What is my original face?", "Who is dragging this corpse around?", or "What is it?", or "Who is reciting the name of Buddha?" etc. Chan practitioners keep on raising or asking the Huatou and maintain the sensation of wanting to know it (known as question sensation).

Silent Illumination Chan Method:

Chan practitioners keep on clearly aware of the sensation of whole body sitting, and let go of the clear awareness without attaching to anything.

All modern Chan good fellow-practitioners!

In dealing with everyday activities *and* in Sitting Chan, always act with the “ordinary mind of non-abiding awareness of self-nature”. That is, be clearly aware of all things without simultaneous discrimination and attachment of self-centeredness (i.e. without deluded thinking). *

When causes and conditions ripen, at that very moment, Chan practitioners will be able to have an insight into the True Mind, see into the self-nature, and realize the ultimate reality of all things [in the universe], which everything embodies.



* This is elaborated on in Chapter 5, “The Guiding Concept of Non-Abiding Awareness”.



Huatou Chan

Chan Master Xuyun (Empty Cloud) explains "Huatou" as that which occurs just before thoughts arise in Chan practitioners' minds.

What does the "Huatou" point to?

Chan practitioners' inherent and liberated mind, which is also called the "Buddha mind" or "Chan mind".

Genuine Huatou investigation can be likened to the wings of a bird: the first would be the guiding concept - "non-abiding awareness"; the second would be the method of practice – investigating "What is Wu (Mu)?", "What was my original face?", "Who is dragging this corpse around?", or "What is it?" etc.

Huatou Chan Method:

1. Chan practitioners keep on asking the Huatou and maintain the sensation of wanting to know the answer ("question sensation").

With practice, Chan practitioners may be able to experience the continuous "question sensation" with non-abiding awareness.

2. Chan practitioners keep on asking the Huatou and entering into the **great ball of question sensation**.

Chan practitioners may be able to experience the great question sensation which becomes vast and self-sustaining.

3. Chan practitioners keep on investigating Huatou; under certain circumstances this great question sensation will explode; Chan practitioners' sense of self will suddenly vanish and enlightenment will occur.

When causes and conditions ripen, Chan practitioners may be able to see into the self-nature and have an insight into the true mind.





Silent Illumination Chan

In silence and serenity, all words are forgotten; in clarity and luminosity, all things manifest.

Silence is the ceasing of self-centered attachment. Illumination is the functioning of the wonder of wisdom.

The simultaneity of these two is awakening to the Buddha Nature (self-nature) – that is seeing the original face and having an insight into the scenery of mind ground.

Silent Illumination Chan Method:

1. Chan practitioners are clearly aware of the sensation of whole body sitting, and let go of the clear awareness without attaching to anything.

With practice, Chan practitioners may be able to experience the unification of body and mind.

2. Chan practitioners keep on being clearly aware of the outer environmental situations, and letting go of the awareness with no attachments.

Chan practitioners may be able to experience the unification of inside and outside.

3. Applying "Absolute Contemplation":

Chan practitioners keep on reminding themselves of "letting go", and keep on letting go of the awareness of "luminosity and quiescence" itself.

When causes and conditions ripen, Chan practitioners may be able to see into the self-nature and have an insight into the true mind.





Ordinary Beings Vs Enlightened Beings

To let circumstances turn the mind around is the way of ordinary people of self-centeredness.

"The circumstances turn mind around" is due to self-referential deluded thinking and attachment.

Those who have this mind state are in the cycle of **sectional transmigration** (Samsara).

To let the mind turn the circumstances around is the saint of no self.

"The mind turns the circumstances around" is due to the genuine immovability of samadhi and no-self function of Prajna-wisdom* which includes both *fundamental* and *skillful* wisdom.

Those who have this mind state are in the cycle of **transformed transmigration** (Nirvana).



* Prajna-wisdom is the spontaneous wisdom of perfected enlightenment. For more, see chapter 3.



Mahayana Suddenness Chan Samadhi

What is the difference between Mahayana samadhi and Hinayana* samadhi?

The principal difference between these two kinds of samadhi lies in:

1. Time, space, the external environment, and mental activities disappear in the deeper Hinayana samadhi; whereas in genuine Mahayana samadhi, all of these – except defiled mental activities – remain.
2. Chan practitioners experiencing deep Mahayana samadhi could, for example, converse or discourse luminously. Because the mind is in deep stillness, one would respond without any deluded thinking at all. The Hinayana practitioners, however, would experience mental activities and vexations whenever they departed from samadhi. These two types of responses – that with defiled "deluded thinking", and that without – are known, respectively, as “re-

* Hinayana here **does not** denote the Theravada or Southern Schools of Buddhism, but rather those who practice dualism and/or nihilism in the disguise of Buddhism, craving for the annihilation of the self.

sponse by mental discrimination and attachment” and “natural response by manifested wisdom”.

The Suddenness Chan Samadhi of the Chan Sect is based on the *equivalent* and *simultaneous* manifestation of samadhi and wisdom —

Samadhi is the quintessence of wisdom, while wisdom is the function of samadhi.





Suddenness Chan and Gradualness Chan

The Suddenness and Gradualness Paths to Enlightenment:

The distinction between suddenness and gradualness representations of the Chan Path can be considered from two perspectives: a temporal perspective, and a spatial perspective.

1. from a temporal perspective: Suddenness refers to what is completed instantaneously, all at once. Gradualness implies a time gradient or a step-by-step ascent over time.
2. from a spatial or dimensional perspective: One could say that in the suddenness approach there is no motion from “here” to “there;” no shift in position or movement from one realm to another takes place, whether it be from samsāra to nirvana, delusion to enlightenment, or so on. In fact, the metaphor of spatial delimitation collapses altogether with the suddenness perspective, for “here” is “there,” and “there” is “here.”

The gradualness approach, on the other hand, not only sets up spatial distinctions, but represents progress toward enlightenment as a displacement from one perspective or realm to another—for example, from existence to emptiness, from emptiness back to existence, to both, to neither.

The Chan Sect expresses its distinctive character as Suddenness Chan through the following four essential principles:

1. Chan does not depend on words and languages;
2. Chan is a special transmission of Mind Dharma outside the Dharma of Teachings;
3. Chan directly points to the nature of Chan practitioner's mind;
4. Chan emphasizes seeing into the self-nature and attaining Buddhahood.





Climbing a Crystal Mountain in a Dream

The Chan Master Huikong Shengyen of the Suddenness Chan School had often compared Chan investigation with "climbing a crystal mountain in a dream":

“Chan investigation is like a dream. Chan practitioners seem to proceed quickly or slowly, to be near or far from the beginning; but once they awaken, they know all this has never happened in reality. Therefore, no matter how fast or far they go, it has nothing to do with awakening. The purpose of Chan investigation is not enlightenment, but once they awaken, it's like they finally wake up from a dream.

“Chan investigation is like climbing a crystal mountain in a dream. The surface of the crystal mountain is sleek and slippery. There is nowhere to put one's effort into or exert one's strength upon. After climbing a few steps they definitely slide down. Though they know it's very hard, even almost impossible to climb up, Chan practitioners just keep on climbing, eager to get up to the top.

“As the Chan Master Kuling Yu said in his awakening verse:

*I have a shiny pearl;
It has been locked up by vexations of ignorance for a long time.
Now, its light is revealed as vexation is gone;
It shines brightly through ten thousand mountains and rivers.*

“Chan practitioners believe that once they reach the top of the mountain, they will definitely gain the priceless shiny pearl which illuminates the universe.

“Therefore, Chan practitioners keep on engaging their full, complete mind and body in climbing the crystal mountain. Whatever happens, they don't become happy when they do it well, and they don't become worried when it doesn't work out. No matter if they are able to climb up or not, no matter if they slide down again and again and try to climb up again and again, they just keep on doing it, perseveringly. And then, one day, all of a sudden the crystal mountain is gone, the shiny pearl is gone, and even the mind which seeks for the pearl is gone. At this moment, they awaken utterly from the dream, see into the self-nature, and have an insight into the true mind. Meanwhile, they realize that eve-

rything is of no attainment except for all the functions of the shiny pearl – the great functions of the wisdom of no-self and the compassion of no conditions – completely manifested.”

Guohan's humble commentary on the comparison of Chan investigation to “climbing a crystal mountain in a dream”:

In fact, all beings have been experiencing countless lives of deluded thinking and attachments, as well as the deeply rooted habit of self-reference. Therefore they are misled and caught up in the course of life and death. First of all, they have no idea that "the mind itself is Buddha".

Even when they do finally learn about it, they are not able to take this reality straight on and be their own master. In addition, they lack the Great Determination of perseverance and earnestness which is necessary for diligent mind-training.

Thus, they prefer to stick with their deluded attachment and illusory habit, and endure sufferings for endless time to come.

Therefore, it is an expedient way to draw this analogy between "climbing a crystal mountain in a dream" and Chan investigation in order to liberate practitioners from the bondage of attachment and provide the right cure to their illness.

In fact, the subtle gateless-gate of Chan investigation consists of applying "non-abiding awareness" to guide the illusory mind to investigate ('climb') the illusionary Chan method (the 'crystal mountain') within the illusory dualistic state of sense faculty and sense object (the 'dream').

Concretely speaking, it is to use this illusionary Chan method (the 'crystal mountain') to investigate ('climb'); for the purpose of penetrating straight into "the wisdom mind of non-abiding awareness" – the great principle of the Suddenness Chan – and in order to wake up from the illusory attachments ('dream') of illusory existence and instantaneous vicissitudes of impermanence.

All Chan good fellow- practitioners!

Living in the present moment
At each and every thought;
There is Buddha in the present moment
At each and every thought.

Therefore, **let's take on mutual encouragement!**

Let's take on the down-to-earth mind of clear awareness, and simultaneously let go of self-referential discrimination and attachment, in diligent Chan investigation!

Let's take on and let go of everything in peace with the help of the wisdom mind of non-abiding awareness. Then, we can attain [of no-attainment] the genuine liberation and freedom, and our life can be a life of true peace, harmony, altruism, and happiness!





Discourse of Dahui Zonggao

Chan Master Dahui said,

“If Chan practitioners wish to have genuine Chan investigation, just let go of everything. Reach no-knowing and no-realization, like those who are under the Great Death. And then unexpectedly proceed straight to break through this single thought and experience the Great Birth. Then, even the Buddha has nothing over them.”

From the perspective of Chan, this describes the so-called “non-duality of Great Death and Great Birth”. Chan Patriarchs/Masters always ask Chan practitioners to experience a Great Death, and that is to make a great demand for their putting all deluded thoughts, attachments and habits of ignorance to death. Furthermore, at the same time as the Great Death, there is a Great Birth, in which the wisdom mind of non-arising manifestation and the compassionate action of effortless spontaneity become alive.





The Mind Is the Essential Principle

There is a saying in the *Lankavatara Sutra* which expounds:

“All the words of the Buddha evolve around the mind as its essential principle.”

This expresses the essential principle of the Mind Dharma, and Chan is therefore known as the Mind Dharma – the direct realization of one’s self-nature, or Buddha nature. It is not the Dharma of words and language. Chan practitioners manifest the Buddha wisdom and see into the Buddha nature by directly letting go of self-centeredness or self-referencing, and the attachment to grasping and rejecting that hinders practitioners from liberation.

Suddenness Chan (Patriarch/Matriarch Chan, or Ultimate Tathagata Chan) involves the ultimate reality that "everyday activity is itself Chan". Therefore, Chan practitioners have to integrate their "direct realization and Chan investigation" with all aspects of their daily life.

As a primary example, the Sixth Chan Patriarch Huineng achieved complete enlightenment while

engaging in all his daily activities with straightforward mind (ordinary mind).

The integration of daily life and Chan investigation has very deep roots. In fact, we say that Chan sitting itself cannot bring about enlightenment. Chan Masters often say, “Not only is Chan sitting not enlightenment; Chan sitting does not even lead to enlightenment”. Chan enlightenment is the reality of letting go of the self-centeredness directly. It does not necessarily have anything to do with Chan sitting. Chan practitioners just have to put all deluded thinking and attachment into full rest through various daily matters.

In Suddenness Chan, Chan investigation involves methods such as the investigation of Huatou, which is the essential phrase or word in any gongan* and the cultivation of MoChao, or “silent illumination”. The Chan practitioners should always apply the "ordinary mind of non-abiding awareness of self-nature" to deal with daily activities *and* with Chan sitting (Chan investigation).



* Japanese - Koan. Literally “public case”, referring to cases of ancient masters studied by Chan practitioners.



Chapter 2: Realizing Chan

“Sudden Enlightenment”



How to sit side-by-side and have a mind-to-mind talk with all Buddhas?

All Chan good fellow-practitioners!

Once you suddenly put your entire wild mind into full rest, or completely let go of all your self-referential deluded thinking and attachment, you will be able to see into your original face before you were born, at the very moment of the statement or even before the statement.

From then on, your every thought embraces all of empty space and the whole Dharma Realm; and you sit side-by-side and have a mind-to-mind talk with all Buddhas in the ten directions, thought after thought.

Let's have sincere and mutual encouragement!
Every day is a good day!





Ultimate Tathagata Chan Is Suddenness Chan*

Chan Dharma of the Buddha and the Patriarch:

Shakyamuni Buddha expounded in the first and second chapters of the *Sutra of Complete Enlightenment*:

“In their Chan training of the causal ground, which is of original-arising purity, all Buddhas rely on the complete awareness of purely illuminated forms to permanently dissolve all ignorance. Thus they attain supreme Buddhahood. Being ‘purely aware of all illusions’ is already departing from them; there is no need to contrive skillful means. ‘Departing from all illusions’ is ultimate enlightenment; there are no gradual steps.”

“All bodhisattvas and sentient beings in the Dharma Ending Age who train their minds accordingly, will be permanently departing from all illusions.”

* A title for the Buddha, literally “The One Who Has Thus Come” or “The One Of Suchness”

The Sixth Patriarch Huineng of the Suddenness Chan Sect also stated at the beginning of his *Platform Sutra*:

“The self-nature of Bodhi is intrinsically pure. Just apply this pure mind for direct realization and for the attainment of Buddhahood.”

Guohan's Humble Commentary:

Out of forty-nine years of discourses, the World-Honored One directly pointed out in this Sutra that the ultimate “Tathagata [Pure] Chan” is actually free from any skillful levels and gradual steps. It is the direct application of “ultimate pure awareness” (awareness without self-referencing) to the complete and simultaneous mind-training of “pure awareness of all illusions is already departing from them, and is also ultimate enlightenment.” It is the “complete awareness of purely illuminated forms” to completely actualize supreme enlightenment and perfectly attain supreme Buddhahood.

It is evident that Huineng has already clearly given the essential principle of Suddenness Chan as follows: All sentient beings intrinsically and completely possess the sufficient and enlightened essence of mind of pure wisdom.

It is only necessary for them to make use of this awakened pure mind (the mind of non-abiding awareness) to directly realize that this self-nature is itself Buddha. They are able to completely actualize the wisdom and virtue of the Tathagata, and to perfectly accomplish Buddhahood without clinging to skillful means and gradual steps.

Therefore, from the discourses of the Buddha and the Patriarch, we are able to understand that the “Ultimate Tathagata Pure Chan” of Shakyamuni Buddha is exactly the “Suddenness Chan” (or Patriarch/Matriarch Chan).





Stepping Forward From the Top of a Hundred-Foot Pole

Chan Master Shishuang Chuyuan asked,

“How will you step forward from the top of a hundred-foot pole?”

Another ancient Chan Master said,

“Even though one who is sitting on the top of a hundred-foot pole has entered the gate of realization, it is not yet genuine, complete awakening. The Chan practitioner must step forward from the top of the pole and manifest the transformation body throughout the worlds in ten directions.”

Wumen’s commentary:

“If the Chan practitioner can step forward and fully turn around, there will be no place where he/she cannot attain Buddhahood. Even so, just tell me, how do you step forward from the top of the hundred-foot pole?”

“Listen to my verse:

Making the eye on the forehead blind;
One mistakes the beginning for the final destination;
Even risking body and life;
Still acts as a blind one misleading the blind.”

All Chan good fellow-practitioners!

Keep on applying "non-abiding awareness" in Chan investigation or Chan realization. Just do your best to put all of mind's juggleries into full rest. Even when seeing into the self-nature (nature of emptiness), let go of it!

Otherwise, you will fall into the pitfall of emptiness, and still act as a blind donkey misleading all other blind donkeys, marching all together right into the pit of ignorance.

Make the sincere wish for nothing to abide in your mind. Please take good care of yourself!





Non Obstructing Emptiness

Shakyamuni, the World-Honored One, talked about the ultimate Tathagata Pure Chan in the teaching of the *Diamond Sutra*. It is said if Chan practitioners can ultimately and completely see that “the forms of all dharmas/Dharmas are ‘ultimately empty’ [of no form]”, they are able to see the “Buddha” (Tathagata).

In the *Mahaprajnaparamita Sastra*, the fourteenth Chan Patriarch Nagarjuna of the Indian lineage discussed the “Bodhi of insight into the mind”, the core principle of the *Diamond Sutra*, and interpreted it as follows,

“At the very moment Prajna-wisdom has an insight into ultimate emptiness, all the juggleries of the mind simultaneously rest. At that very moment, the skillful wisdom manifests from the self-nature of ultimate emptiness, and is simultaneously applied to all sentient beings for accomplishing liberation and establishing a pure land.”

Chan Master Mazu Daoyi discoursed,

“Upon ultimately and completely realizing the mind and the realm, the deluded thoughts immediately cease to arise. Since the deluded thoughts no longer arise, it is just the so-called “patient rest in non-arising”. It is intrinsically embodied and presently manifested, and is free from any cultivation of the Way and sitting Chan. No cultivation and no sitting **is just** the Tathagata Pure Chan.”

All Chan good fellow-practitioners!

Have you realized that “The ultimate emptiness of all dharmas/Dharmas does not obstruct all the subtle functions of their skillful means, and also that the subtle functions of all dharmas/Dharmas are intrinsically and ultimately empty”?

The green mountain is crystal-clear;
The white cloud drifts above.
The stream water is deep-blue;
The bright moon floats along it.





True Thoughtlessness

Mahaprajnaparamita* is the most honorable, the supreme, and the foremost Dharma. Those who supremely awaken to it realize that the three minds of the past, present, and future are non-attainable, and that the Buddhas of the three times (past, present, and future) manifest from this Dharma of Prajna.

Those who ultimately enlighten to the Chan Dharma of thoughtlessness ultimately penetrate into all dharmas/Dharmas. Those who ultimately enlighten to the Chan Dharma of thoughtlessness ultimately see into the realms of all Buddhas. Those who ultimately enlighten to the Chan Dharma of thoughtlessness ultimately arrive at the stage of Buddhahood.

What is thoughtlessness? If you are profoundly aware of all things with pure mind (ordinary mind of non-abiding awareness), which is free from the defilements of attachment, then this is thoughtlessness.



* Literally, the Great Perfection of Wisdom.



Ordinary Mind Is Chan

With respect to spreading the “True Chan Dharma,” the *Lotus Sutra* mentions the causes and conditions of a great one-time matter that all the Buddhas, the World-honored Ones, manifesting in the world, will use to help all sentient beings to reveal, manifest, realize and penetrate the Buddha's Wisdom of All Aspects.

It will also advise and guide all sentient beings to see into their original nature and have an insight into their true mind. The genuine Chan practitioner, who is at the stage of “maintaining spontaneousness & effortlessness,” has generated a great vow to completely deliver all sentient beings in the ten directions, and is, through all possible means, spreading the supreme Dharma of Suddenness Chan, that is, guiding sentient beings in Chan investigation with an “ordinary mind” (“mind of straightforwardness”).

It is said in the Vimalakirti-nirdesha Sutra:

“The straightforward mind (ordinary mind)
is the Site of the Way, the Pure Land.”*

* The Buddhist equivalent to a paradise or a heaven.

Therefore, if you investigate Chan with a straightforward thought, that thought is itself the pure land; investigate Chan with many straightforward thoughts, and each of these thought is itself the pure land. Moreover, if one person investigates Chan with straightforwardness, that one person is the pure land; if every person investigates Chan with straightforwardness, every person is the pure land.

Likewise, while people in one place investigate Chan with straightforwardness, that one place is the pure land; while people in every place investigate Chan with straightforwardness, every place is the pure land.

Meanwhile, it should be known that when a person engages in Chan investigation, the “True Dharma” lives in that one person’s mind. When a million people engage in Chan investigation, the “True Dharma” lives in a million minds. When people all over the world engage in Chan investigation, the “True Dharma” lives in the minds of people all over the world.

In order to let all sentient beings in the Dharma Realm have an insight into their true mind, see into their self-nature and attain supreme Buddhahood, the completely enlightened Chan Master should be spreading – without spreading – the great Dharma of “investigating Chan with straight-

forwardness” with the great mind of “delivering without delivering,” so that the “True Chan Dharma” will inevitably live for long in the mind ground of all Chan practitioners.





The Genuine Buddha is Everywhere and Nowhere.

Chan Master Zhaozhou said,

“Do not linger at the place where there is the Buddha. And move on quickly at the place where there is no Buddha.”

Two Chan practitioners were on a pilgrimage, one still deluded while the other enlightened. One day, they passed a temple with a Buddha statue inside. The deluded one said, “There is a Buddha in the temple, let's go in.” The enlightened one said, “Since the Buddha is already there, let's not linger here and just move on.”

Another day, they passed a deserted temple with no Buddha statue inside. The deluded one said, “There is no Buddha in there, so let's go in.” The enlightened one said, “We are on a pilgrimage; since there is no Buddha there, let's just move on.”

Why do Chan practitioners move on when the Buddha is there and also move on when there is no Buddha there?

If the genuine Buddha does not sit within your mind, you are unable to find it anywhere outside. If you cannot see the Buddha within and only see the Buddha without, you should know that is not the genuine Buddha. Therefore, just move on quickly and train your mind with earnestness and perseverance.

Once Chan practitioners truly penetrate liberation and freedom, the Buddha is everywhere and nowhere.





What is the meaning of the Patriarch's coming from the West?

For a long time seasoned Chan practitioners constantly ask the Chan Master, who have the “simultaneous breaking out and breaking in” **eye** and the “simultaneous breaking out and breaking in” **function**, to break in with regard to the question of “the meaning of the Patriarch’s coming from the West”, in order that they might be able to reveal their original face and manifest the scenery of their mind ground.

In fact, the Chan Masters who possess “the eye of settling heaven and earth” always apply the expedients of the “simultaneous illumination and function” and the “simultaneous rolling up and rolling out” so as to enable Chan practitioners to suddenly become liberated from the shackles that bind them and to make them open the enlightened mind’s eye:

A monk asked Zhaozhou Congshen,

“What is the meaning of the Patriarch’s coming from the West?”

Zhaozhou said, “Fur is growing on your teeth.”

Another monk also asked Zhaozhou,

“What is the meaning of the Patriarch’s coming from the West?”

Zhaozhou descended from his seat and stood there.

The monk said, “Is this the real meaning itself?” Zhaozhou said, “I haven’t said anything yet.”

One monk asked Zhaozhou Congshen,

“What is the meaning of the Patriarch’s coming from the West?”

Zhaozhou replied, “The cypress tree in the courtyard.”

The monk said, “Master, please do not show the people with the object.”

Zhaozhou said, “I do not show the object to the people.”

The monk asked again, “What is the meaning of the Patriarch’s coming from the West?”

Zhaozhou said again, “The cypress tree in the courtyard.”

All good Chan fellow-practitioners!

Put all of the conditions of everything into full rest, and let not one thought arise. Then, live in the real moment every day, and single-mindedly investigate

Chan with the “ordinary mind of non-abiding awareness.”

When causes and conditions ripen, Chan practitioners are able to have a sudden realization of self-nature at the moment of statement; or even to see into their original face and manifest the scenery of the mind-ground before the statement.

Let's have mutual encouragement!





Chapter 3: Manifesting Realization

“Direct Application of the True Mind of No Mind”



Han Shan's Poem

“The dewdrops fall on thousands of grasses;
The wind whistles on all kinds of pines.”

Chan Master Han Shan had an ultimate penetration into the reality of all things in the universe – the existence of equality and pervasiveness.

Everything is ready-made!
Everything is perfect!
Everything is fresh!
Everything is wonderful!

The Chan Master of ultimate complete enlightenment spontaneously applies skillful means in order to appropriately help all ordinary beings, with Prajna-wisdom of no-self and true compassion of non-abiding. Their true wisdom's functions and compassionate actions are just like the dewdrops and the wind.





What is “One Thought for Ten Thousand Years”?

For Chan Masters after complete enlightenment, “one thought for ten thousand years” represents “no thought”.

The so-called "no thought" means having no self-referential thoughts while, at the same time, merging into thoughts. If in all states (of environment, body, and mind) the mind is free from defilement, this is called "no thought". You should always be apart from all states in your own thought, and not let the [thinking] mind arise over the states.

Regarding the "no" of "no thought", what should we *let go* of? And regarding the "thought" of "no thought", what should we *be aware* of?

We should let go of attachment to the forms of duality and of the “mind of interactions between the conditioning power of mind exhaustion and the conditioned realms of the six sense objects”^{*}; simul-

* The six sense faculties are hearing, seeing, tactile sensing, tasting, smelling and thinking. The Sense Objects with which they interact are, respectively: sounds, sights, sensations, tastes and mental objects.

taneously, we should be aware of the self-nature of true suchness.

True suchness is the quintessence of thought, and thought is the function of true suchness.

The self-nature of true suchness manifests thoughts. Though the six sense faculties have the functions of seeing, hearing and awareness, they are not defiled by the myriad objects, and the self-nature of true suchness is always liberated.

Therefore, the Pure Name Sutra says, "One is adept at differentiating the forms of all dharma/Dharma, while simultaneously resting immovably in the Ultimate Principle."





Mind's Great Function

Sixth Patriarch Huineng once guided Chan practitioners in the *Platform Sutra*:

“Those who see into the self-nature can set all dharmas/Dharmas up or not set them up. They are free to simultaneously merge into and depart from all forms, and free from obstructions or impediments. In responding to the manifested function, they take action in accord with the condition of the circumstance; while in response to the inquiry, they give answer in accord with the condition of the inquirer. They universally manifest all Transformation Bodies which are one with the self-nature, thus they attain the samadhi of playfulness in free spiritual powers.”

In the *Song of the Precious Mirror Samadhi*, Chan Master Dongshan Liangjie once used the expression,

“So infinitesimal it penetrates the immeasurable spaceless space, so infinite it transcends the empty space.” to expound on the ultimately and completely enlightened mind.

Guohan's Humble Commentary:

The Sixth Patriarch Huineng's discourse really does clarify the function of the great wisdom possessed by greatly emancipated Chan practitioners: What dynamic omnipresence! What spontaneity and effortlessness!

The ultimately and completely enlightened mind, which has inconceivable, ineffable, and unlimited power, full of the vitality of great emancipation (Huayan School's Ocean-Seal Samadhi), great wisdom (Buddha's Wisdom of All Aspects), and great compassion (Unconditional Compassion). The scope of this mind power's great function can be so infinitesimal that it enters the immeasurable spaceless space and so infinite that it traverses empty space and moves beyond the Dharma Realm.





Zhaozhou's Genuine Buddha

Chan Master Zhaozhou Congshen expounded to the public:

“A golden Buddha does not pass through a furnace. A wooden Buddha does not get through fire. A mud Buddha does not go through water. The genuine Buddha does sit within your mind ground.

“Bodhi, nirvana, true suchness, and Buddha-nature are all clothes that cover the body.

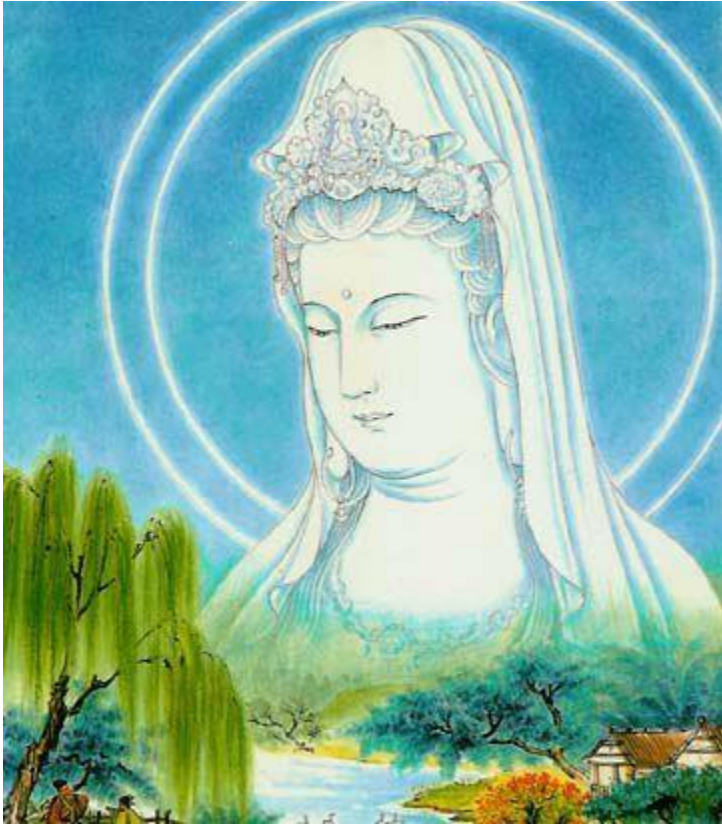
“Where is there a place to genuinely realize the noumenal principle of absolute reality? When penetrate into "going beyond one-mind", all phenomena have no faultiness.”

All Chan good fellow-practitioners!

To transcend one-mind is to have "no mind", or to not even have a single thought; those who penetrate it manifest great wisdom, great compassion, great freedom, and great liberation. Such Chan practitioners live amidst the myriad things, see the myriad things, and act in accord with the myriad things, yet they are not hindered in their "going beyond one-mind".







Chapter 4: Bodhisattva Activity

“Simultaneous manifestation of Buddha's wisdom
and compassion”



The Great Spirit of Bodhisattva

Not seeking after peace and happiness for the sake
of oneself;

Instead, vowing that all living beings will be able to
be free from all sufferings.

Acting as a piloting shuttle for all sentient beings
in accordance with great compassion, great wis-
dom, great vow, and great action.

Always manifesting the Chan style of
spontaneousness and effortlessness.

All Chan good fellow-practitioners!

Let's always take on the great spirit of Bodhisattva,
and simultaneously let go of self-centered discrimi-
nation and attachment!





Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara

Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva is the so-called bodhisattva of "great compassion of no-conditions"; and also the bodhisattva of "great wisdom of no-self", "great vow of vowlessness", or "great action of actionlessness".

It is said in the *Diamond Sutra*,

“The mind [of Prajna-wisdom] arises with non-abiding in anything.”

"Non-abiding in anything" means seeing into the self-nature. The whole sentence means not attaching to all things and allowing the wisdom of no-self to arise. When wisdom appears, compassion will also appear along with it. The unification of wisdom and compassion is called Bodhi mind (Bodhicitta) – the wisdom of no-self together with the compassion of non-discrimination.

“Wisdom is not knowledge, wisdom is not views, and wisdom is not experience.”

Wisdom is the living attitude of no-self.

“Compassion is not sympathy, compassion has no fixed recipients, and compassion is without a goal.”

Compassion means impartially benefiting all sentient beings in just the right way.

The great wisdom embodies both fundamental wisdom and skillful wisdom.

The great compassion embodies both "great loving-kindness of no-conditions" and "great compassion of oneness".





Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara's Function

It is discoursed in the *Heart Sutra*:

The Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara of great liberation, who has attained ultimate insight that brings all beings to the one-shore of "vexation is Bodhi", upon the manifestation of deeper Prajna-wisdom at every moment, has realized the ultimate emptiness of all things including the five skandhas*. Meanwhile, all kinds of skillful means are simultaneously revealed from the self-nature, and are applied to sentient beings for the purpose of transcending all sufferings.

Avalokitesvara is the Bodhisattva of great compassion. The name for Avalokitesvara in Chinese is Guanyin, where she presented in female form. This is because, as in the *Lotus Sutra*, Guanyin will appear in whatever form necessary, whether male or female, to lead beings to freedom from sufferings.

All Chan good fellow-practitioners!

In order to help all beings with the wisdom of no-self and compassion of no-conditions, just always

* The constituents of the seeming "self": Form, feeling, perception, fabrication and (sensory) consciousness.

respond to everyday activity with the "ordinary mind of non-abiding awareness".

At the very moment that all the mind's juggleries take a full rest, the Prajna-wisdom manifests and simultaneously has an insight into ultimate emptiness.

At that very moment, skillful wisdom manifests from the self-nature of ultimate emptiness, and is simultaneously applied to all sentient beings for the accomplishing of liberation and the establishing of a pure land.





***Venerable Chan Master Huikong Shengyen's
Verse on "Great Action of Bodhisattva"***

How does one attain Supreme Buddhahood?
The very first thing is generating Supreme Bodhi-
mind.

What is Supreme Bodhi-mind?
Genuine altruism is the foremost mental activity.

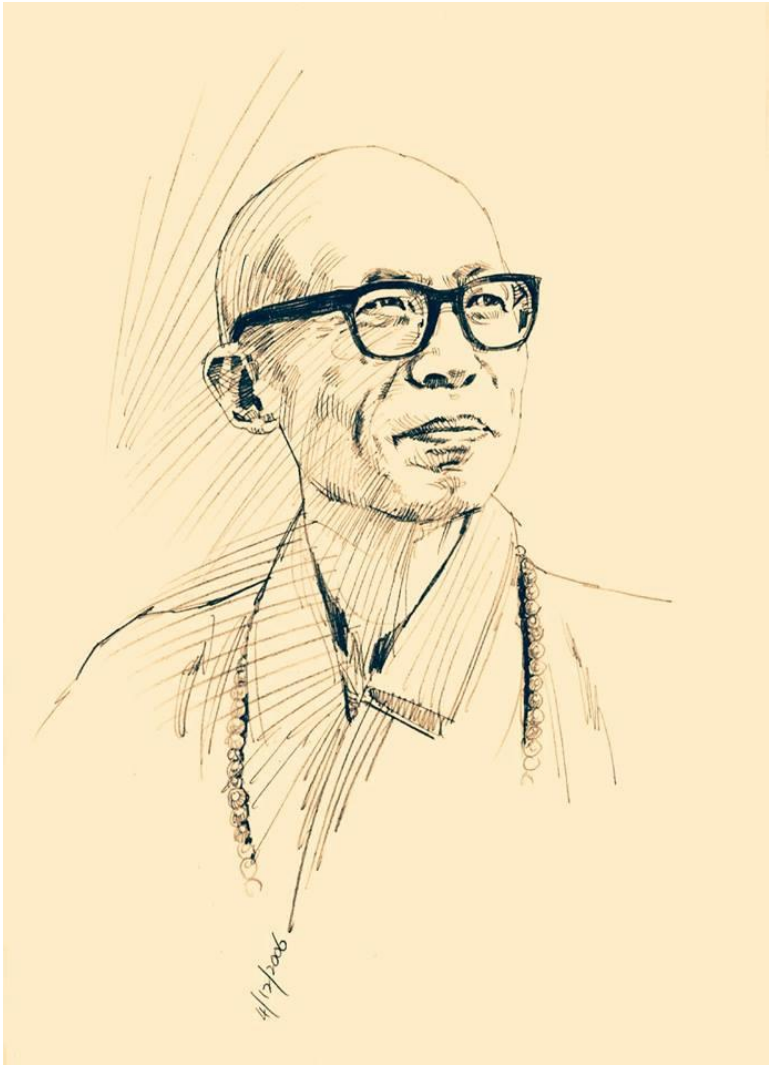
For benefiting all sentient beings, the Bodhisattva
has fearlessness of all kinds of suffering.

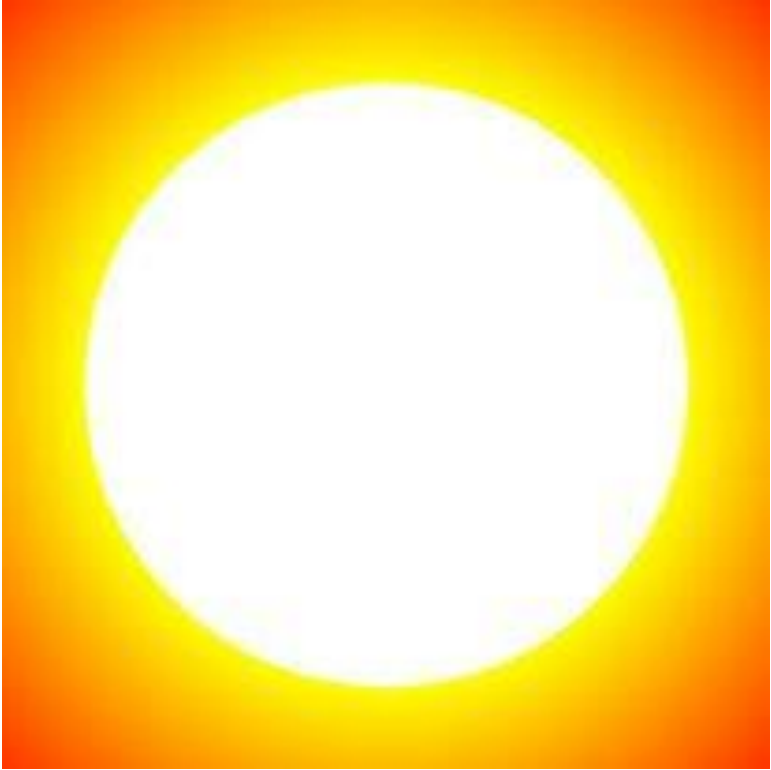
If all sentient beings are free from all suffer-
ings, the Bodhisattva's own suffering is *itself* true
peace and happiness.

Those who generate the mind of following Buddha's
greatest actions, surely are considered as the genu-
ine Bodhisattva.

The most surpassing action of the genuine Bodhi-
sattva, lies in delivering [of non-deliverance] all
sentient beings with great wisdom and great com-
passion.







Chapter 5: The Guiding Concept of Non-Abiding Awareness

"None but the taster knows the flavor of the water"



Seeing, Hearing, Perceiving and Knowing

Chan Master Shishuang Chuyuan said,

"The seeing, hearing, perceiving, and knowing, all are the causes of the cycle of samsara. The seeing, hearing, perceiving, and knowing are the roots of liberation."

Chan practitioners, in dealing with what they see, hear, perceive, and know in daily activities and sitting Chan, should follow the guiding concept of "non-abiding awareness" to fulfill Chan mind-training.

If Chan practitioners use self-centeredness to discriminate among things, believing them to be real and attaching to them, Chan practitioners definitely, unwittingly create vexation and suffering, and have a life of unease and unhappiness.

If Chan practitioners could transcend the objectivity and subjectivity among things without abiding in anything or without counting their gains and losses, Chan practitioners definitely manifest wisdom and liberation, and have a life of true peace and happiness.

Sixth Chan Patriarch Huineng expounded in the *Platform Sutra*:

“Good fellow-practitioners, the self-nature of true suchness manifests thoughts. Though the six sense faculties have the functions of seeing, hearing, perceiving, and knowing, they are not defiled by the myriad objects, and the self-nature of true suchness is always liberated. Therefore, the *Pure Name Sutra* says, "One is adept at differentiating the forms of all dharmas/Dharmas, while simultaneously resting immovably in the Ultimate Principle."





Don't Know Mind is Non-Abiding Awareness

Chan (Seon) Master Seung Sahn said,

“Always keep this don't-know mind. When this don't-know mind becomes clear, then you will understand. So if you keep don't-know mind when you are driving, this is driving Zen. If you keep it when you are talking, this is talking Zen. If you keep it when you are watching television, this is television Zen. You must keep don't-know mind always and everywhere. This is the true practice of Zen.”

In fact, “Non-abiding Awareness Mind” is “Don't Know Mind”, and is “Straightforward Mind”, and is “Ordinary Mind”, and is “Chan/Zen Mind or Beginner's Mind”, and is “Buddha Mind”, which is **the altruistic mind of simultaneous and equal samadhi and wisdom.**

If Chan practitioners can deal with everything in daily life, always and everywhere, with a “Non-abiding Awareness Mind” (Don't Know Mind), then at that very moment, their intrinsic Prajna-wisdom

completely manifests; and they definitely become the leisure-practitioners of effortlessness of the Chan Path.

Master Seung Sahn let us know that this “Don’t Know Mind” practice can be done anywhere, which is perfect for our modern world.





All things in all daily activities are themselves [Suddenness] Chan

Zen Master Seung Sahn's Discourse:

“Zen is very simple. Dishwashing time, just wash dishes; sitting time, just sit; driving time, just drive; talking time, just talk; walking time, just walk.” That’s all. Not special. But that is very difficult. That is absolute thinking.

When you’re doing something, just do it.

No opposites. No subject, no object. No inside, no outside. Outside and inside become one. That’s called absolute.”

Speech and silence, motion and stillness; walking, standing, sitting, and reclining – everything is itself Chan.

In a Chan Retreat – sitting, standing, walking, and reclining, etc. – these are all forms of Chan training. Meanwhile, In all daily activities – sleeping and arising, eating and drinking, working after meals, dealing with anything in any place and at

any moment – these are also Chan training. When doing Chan mind-training, make sure to just apply yourself to all tasks with a down-to-earth mind of non-abiding awareness.

Washing dishes? Leave them spotless. Cutting vegetables? Be the knife that cuts perfectly. Splitting firewood, carrying water, sweeping the floor, put your whole mind and strength into the task, and just do it with appreciation and enjoyment – this is genuine mind-training of Chan. When eating, chew the food with non-abiding mind, and just taste the different flavors and enjoy it. While sleeping, put into full rest the four elements, the body and five aggregates of form, sensation, perception, volition, and consciousness; also let go of the past, the present and the future; just enjoy the sleep.

All in all, everything of daily activity is itself Chan.

How to truly realize it?

The down-to-earth mind of non-abiding awareness is Chan.





Do Not Abide Where There Is Buddha

Chan Master Zhaozhou said,

"Do not abide in a place where there is a Buddha; hasten from a place where there is no Buddha."

Whether there is a Buddha or not, Chan practitioners should not attach to it. Furthermore, Chan practitioners should not attach to "the mind is Buddha", and also not attach to "no mind, no Buddha".

Chan Master Linji Yixuan said,

"Followers of the Way! If you want to have an insight into Dharma as it is, just don't be confused by others' deluded views. Whatever attachment you encounter, either inward or outward, kill it at once."

Chan practitioners should completely let go of all their attachments to the phenomena of the mind, the body, and the environment.

The *Diamond Sutra* says,

"The Mind arises with no-abiding in anything".

"No-abiding" is having no attachment, either to "existence" or to "emptiness", to "existence is emptiness" or to "no existence, no emptiness", and it is exactly genuine emancipation. Chan practitioners of genuine emancipation have no attachments in the mind and simultaneously, their inherent Buddha Wisdom manifests; they deliver sentient beings in accordance to the arising of conditions, and offer instruction and guidance according to people's karmic capacities.

Therefore, those who have ultimate and complete realization of "The Mind arises with no-abiding in anything" are bodhisattvas of great emancipation, great freedom, great wisdom, great compassion, great vow, and great action.





Discipline, Samadhi and Wisdom of Self-nature

Chan Sixth Patriarch Huineng expounded:

“In expounding the Dharma, I do not depart from the self-nature. Expounding apart from the essence of mind is discourse with abiding in forms, so that the self-nature is always confused. We should realize that the functions of all things manifest from the self-nature, and this is the genuine Dharma of discipline, samadhi, and wisdom. Listen to my verse:

No impurity of the mind-ground is the discipline of self-nature.

No ignorance of the mind-ground is the wisdom of self-nature.

No disturbance of the mind-ground is the samadhi of self-nature.”

In their daily life, if Chan practitioners can deal with all daily activities with an ordinary mind of non-abiding awareness, then, they are able to manifest Prajna-wisdom in all places and at all times. Therefore, in response to the manifested function of self-nature, they can take action in accord with

conditions of the circumstance, while in response to inquiries, they can give answers in accord with the conditions of the inquirer. Enlightened practitioners are free to simultaneously merge into and be apart from all forms, and are free from obstructions or impediments.





Every Day is a Good Day

Chan Master Yunmen Wenyan discoursed to the congregation on the marrow of the mind ground related to the Suddenness Chan:

“Yunmen said, ‘I don’t ask you about that before the fifteenth day; try to say something about that after the fifteenth day.’ Yunmen himself answered for everyone, ‘Every day is a good day.’”

Among Chan Master Yunmen’s discourses to Chan practitioners, the former two sentences have already absorbed and dissolved all the different discriminations and attachments, and have put the “abiding in duality of saint and ordinary people” down completely.

This answer on everyone’s behalf has even passed through both ancient and modern minds, and has set the deluded mind at full rest all at once – from before until after.

If Chan practitioners respond to daily matters with the ordinary mind of non-abiding awareness of self-

nature, then they will be able to let go of all deluded thoughts and self-centered attachment so that the wild mind will suddenly be at full rest and they will attain complete enlightenment. Furthermore, they will continue on “the upward one way of transcendence” to complete “maintaining the spontaneousness & effortlessness,” and at that very moment, they will ultimately realize “every day is a good day.”

At this time, everywhere on the planet Earth is the Pure Land, and every moment is in harmony with Chan and the Way.





Ordinary Mind of Non-Abiding Awareness

The Sixth Chan Patriarch Huineng discoursed in his *Verse of Formlessness*:

“Mastery of the Dharma of Teachings and
mastery of the Dharma of Mind,
Are just like the sun situated in the empty
sky.
Merely by transmitting the ‘Dharma of See-
ing the Self-nature’,
One can emerge into the world and shatter
the unorthodox teachings.”

Chan Master Nanquan Puyuan expounded,

“The Way (Chan) does not belong to either
knowing or not knowing. Knowing is delu-
sion, while not knowing is confusion. Sup-
pose Chan practitioners genuinely realize
the Way of no thought, they would be com-
pletely free like the vastness of space with
ultimate emptiness.”

Chan Master Huangbo Xiyun expounded,

“Chan practitioners merely need to be apart from clinging to all dharmas of existence and non-existence, let their mind be like the sun that is always in empty space with spontaneous brightness, and be illuminating [of no illumination]. Is this not something that can be accomplished without effort? When they reach this point of clinging to nothing whatever, they are acting as the Buddhas act, and are indeed acting in accordance with ‘the mind arises without abiding in anything.’”

All Chan good fellow-practitioners!

The very moment of the ordinary mind of non-abiding awareness *is just* the genuine Way (Chan). This true Way is of no seeking, no attainment and no effort; it is also of no thought, no form and no abiding; and further, it is of no knowing and no not-knowing. In fact, this ordinary mind *is just* no mind, and that is the mind which is without the self-centered discrimination and attachment in the least, but is solely the mind of great wisdom and great compassion.

Chan practitioners only have to be of direct no-mind. That is, to be directly and tacitly compatible with the ordinary mind of non-abiding awareness, and to let go of all dharmas/Dharmas of attachment and non-attachment, so as to put all conceptuality and mind's juggleries to rest forever.

Just like the sun which is always in empty space – shining completely naturally, universally and perpetually and nevertheless is not illuminating any special object, purpose and reason, the Chan practitioner's mind is brightly aware of all phenomena including people, matters and things with Prajna-wisdom, and yet is not abiding in anything and is clinging to nothing whatsoever.





All Forms Are of No Form

Shakyamuni Buddha expounded in the *Diamond Sutra*:

“Subhuti, if someone says that the Tathagata (Thus-Come One) comes, goes, sits, or reclines, this person does not understand the essential meaning of my discourse. Why? The Thus-Come One neither comes with the form of coming nor does he go with the form of going. Therefore, he is called the 'Thus-Come One!'.”

Chan Master Baizhao Gui once discoursed in the *Compendium of the Five Lamps*:

"Birds flying in the sky don't know that the sky is their native place; fish swimming in water forget that the water is vitally important."

All Chan good fellow-practitioners!

It is only necessary for Chan practitioners to make use of the ordinary mind of non-abiding awareness, the function of awakened pure mind of self-nature, to deal with everyday activities and sitting Chan; that is all that is needed for the purpose of completely awakening to the mind, seeing into the self-nature, and perfectly returning directly home to their true nature.

Therefore the Buddha has discoursed, "If you see that all forms are of no form, you exactly see into the Thus-Come One."





All Experiences of Everything are Chan

Chan practitioners just have to live their ordinary life with the ordinary mind, then they are able to realize that this mind is ultimate non-arising and effortlessness.

In fact, the ordinary mind is exactly the straightforward mind, but the former is more apt than the latter. And the mind of non-abiding awareness is exactly the ordinary mind, but the former is more practical than the latter. That is to say, if we can merely maintain the ordinary mind of non-abiding awareness in every moment, then all experiences of everything are Chan.

This mind of straightforwardness, or the ordinary mind, or the mind of non-abiding awareness is actually the mind activity of pure awareness of self-nature with no grasping and no rejecting, no discrimination and no attachment in all daily matters.

All Chan good fellow-practitioners!

Let's take on mutual encouragement!

The ancient Chan Patriarchs/Masters would have said that,

“It is easy to investigate Chan at a cross-roads.”

It is no wonder that Layman Pang would have accepted carrying water and moving firewood in daily life exactly as the spiritual powers and their subtle functions.

Chan Master Wumen Huikai had a verse in the *Gateless Gate*:

“Hundreds of flowers in spring and the moon
in autumn;
The cool breeze in summer and the snow in
winter.
If idle and miscellaneous concerns do not
cloud the mind;
This exactly is the world's happiest season.”





Chapter 6: The Present Moment

“At every moment, everything/every being is unique, perfect, and fresh”



Living In the Present Moment

As the past has become an illusory memory, and the future still remains a dreamland; living in the present moment is the most important and foremost fundamental principle for Chan practitioners.

There is no need to be concerned about the past, and no need to worry about the future. Just live steadfastly in the present moment at each and every thought, then you can be sure that Chan practitioners are together with both the past and the future.

Be a down-to-earth Chan practitioner and live in the present moment with an ordinary mind of non-abiding awareness.

This is the fundamental guiding-concept of Chan mind-training, or Chan investigation.

"The three minds (past mind, present mind, or future mind) are non-attainable."

"Living in the present moment at each and every thought; there is a Buddha in the present moment at each and every thought."





Living In the Present Moment at Each And Every Thought

In the *Avatamsaka Sutra* it is discoursed:

“The mind is like an artist, ceaselessly manifesting the five skandhas. In all of the worlds that exist, there is nothing that is not manifested by the mind.”

In the *Heart Sutra* it is expounded:

"The Bodhisattva of great liberation and freedom (Avalokitesvara), who has genuinely attained ultimate insight of the exploitation of true reality of universal life, upon the manifestation of deeper Prajna-wisdom at every moment, has seen into the ultimate emptiness of all things, including the five skandhas. Meanwhile, the skillful wisdom simultaneously manifests from self-nature and is applied to sentient beings for the purpose of transcending all their sufferings."

All Chan good fellow-practitioners!

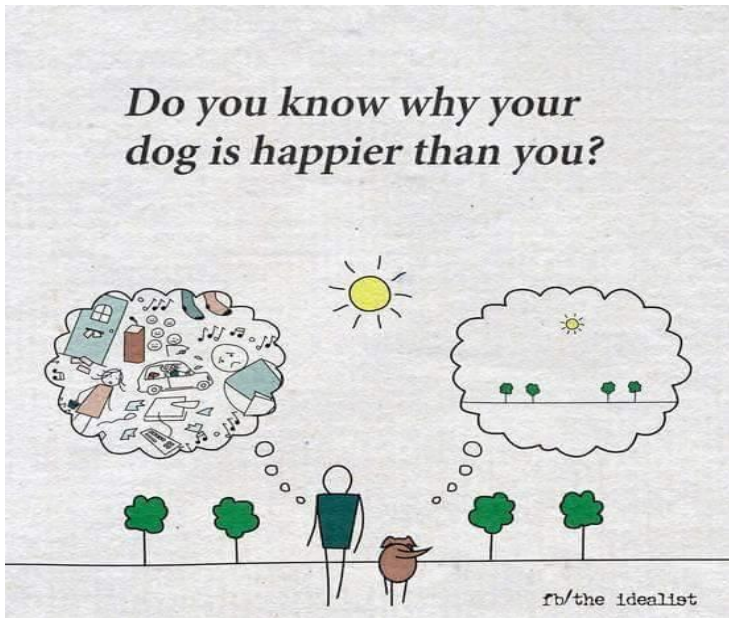
Ordinary mind is Chan.

Living in the present moment at each and every thought with an ordinary mind of non-abiding awareness, there is a great Bodhisattva profoundly awakening to the mind and seeing into self-nature at each and every thought.





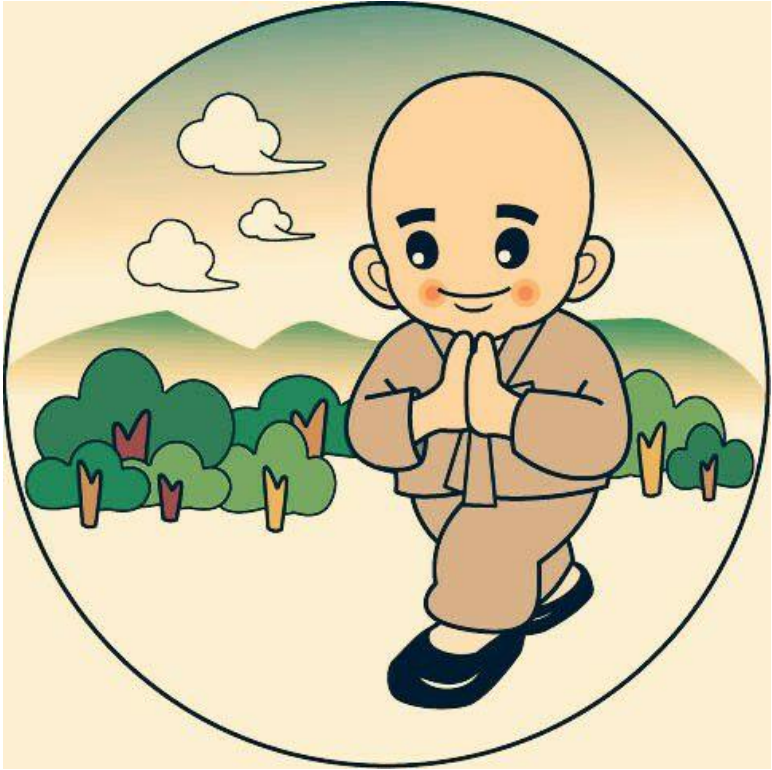
How to Have True Happiness?



Beishi Guohan's Commentary:

Ordinary Mind Is Chan! Dealing with all daily activities with "Non-abiding Awareness" (i.e. the function of Prajna-wisdom), you are able to genuinely express self-nature (Buddha nature) at every moment, and have an ultimate realization of the inconceivable one-flavor of Chan.





Chapter 7: Interdependence of everything/every being

“One is All, All is One; One Penetrates All, All Penetrates One”



Living In the Present Moment at Each And Every Thought

Chan Master Yangqi Fanghui used the great potentiality and great function of Suddenness Chan to guide Chan practitioners:

“Yangqi entered the hall and said, ‘one is all, all is one.’ Then he picked up the staff and said, ‘It swallows the mountains, the rivers and the great earth. All the Buddhas of the past and the future as well as all the venerable old monks of the nation, are always on the head of the staff.’ As a result, he drew a line with the staff and said, ‘It’s not necessary to give a shout.’”

From the above-mentioned “The staff swallows the mountains, the rivers and the great earth”, or “All the Buddhas of the three times as well as all Patriarchs and Masters of the world turn the great Dharma Wheel on the tip of the staff,” It is evident

that Chan Master Yangqi uses one staff to distinctly indicate that “In the multiple and endless Dharma Realm, one dharma and all dharmas are of **interbeing and interpenetration**. That is to say, all things are in perfect harmony and unhindered interconnectedness; and there is no obstruction in the interbeing of phenomena (everything) and noumena (emptiness).”





Yangshan's Buddha in a Circle

Chan Gongan:

A monk asked Chan Master Yangshan Huiji, “What is the meaning of the Patriarch’s coming from the West?”

Yangshan drew a circle in the sky with a finger, and wrote a Chinese character of “Buddha” (佛) inside the circle.

The monk was in silence.

All Chan good fellow-practitioners! “Have you ever realized?”

In fact, if Chan practitioners can go beyond the four statements and put their hundred negations to rest forever, at that very moment, everything manifests its ultimate reality. They are able to profoundly realize the “Dharma Realm of One Reality” which is in accordance with the perfect harmony and non-interference of "ultimate true-emptiness" (noumena) and "ultimate subtle existence" (phenomena); that is also to realize the “Dharma Realm of Non-Interference among All Phenomena” in conformity with “one and all are of interbeing and interpenetration”.





Realizing Interdependence, Manifesting Wisdom and Compassion

Suddenness Chan means direct realization of independence and interdependence (interconnectedness) of everything/every being, and the simultaneous manifestation of Buddha wisdom and compassion.

This actualization experience is inconceivable and ineffable in words and language. It is an enlightened state of non-abiding awareness, which is an awakening state of pure awareness free of self-centeredness.

On one hand, everything or every being has its own position, condition, and perspective. Therefore, at every moment, everything/every being is unique, perfect, and fresh.

On the other hand, everything/every being has the relationship of interconnectedness: One is all, all is one; one penetrates all, all penetrates one.

This is the ultimate reality of everything/every being.





Seeing a World in a Pure Flower, And a Buddha in a Pure Leaf

Layman Pang shared a verse with all Chan practitioners:

“The purity of mind manifests itself in one thought;
The lotus flowers blossom in everywhere.
Seeing a world in a pure flower,
And a Buddha in a pure leaf.”

“Seeing a world in a pure flower; And a Buddha in a pure leaf” represents ultimate seeing into the original face and perfect manifestation of the scenery of mind ground. The commentary of its embodiment of the verse is shared as follows:

The Chan practitioner has indeed ultimately awakened to the so-called “One thought for ten thousand years” and “A single thought sufficiently contains the Ten Dharma Realms” of the Chan Sect, which is also spoken of as “All Buddhas in the ten directions and three times turn the great Dharma Wheel on the tip of a fine strand of hair” in the *Avatamsaka Sutra*.

The realization encompasses the interconnectedness (interbeing & interpenetration) of each and every thing :

“In the multifariously developing and endlessly expanding Dharma-realm of ten directions, each thing is everything, and everything is each thing; each thing penetrates into everything, and everything penetrates into each thing. It is just like Indra’s net, with its multiple interfusion and mutual manifestation. Therefore, all innumerable things altogether are free and liberated, and function freely without obstruction.”

It is like hundreds of thousands of different rivers flowing into the ocean simultaneously, and all are labeled “seawater”. Abiding in one flavor is to encompass all flavors, while abiding in the ocean is mingling with all rivers. As the saying goes, “bathing in the ocean is using all waters.”





Let All the Mind's Juggleries Take a Full Rest

All things ("existence"), such as the five skandhas (form, sensation, perception, volition, and consciousness), are not apart from "emptiness" (no self-nature) and are even of interbeing with it – **"existence is emptiness"**. Meanwhile, the nature of emptiness (self-nature) can manifest all things. However, the interbeing of "all things" and the "nature of emptiness" is also ultimately empty ("no existence and no emptiness" – "not two & not one"), therefore, it cannot be attached either. In this way, a Bodhisattva is just able to "depart from the four statements and let go of one hundred negations", which is the same as "all the mind's juggleries take a full rest" that is mentioned in the *Mahaprajnaparamita Sastra* of Nagarjuna Bodhisattva.

All Good Chan Fellow-practitioners!

Let's intentionally and spontaneously apply "non-abiding awareness" to first completely let go of all attachment and then perfectly tame the habit. At that very moment, we will be able to manifest the inherent Buddha-wisdom and genuinely deliver all sentient beings to the transcendence of all their sufferings.





Chapter 8: Reality

“All Chan dharmas/Dharmas are intrinsically in
"Perfect Rest and Cessation"”



Samsara Is Itself Nirvana

“Samsara Is Itself Nirvana” is a Mahayana concept about the non-duality (oneness) of samsara and nirvana. Meanwhile, it is also a skillful Suddenness Chan Dharma, because it tells Chan practitioners to completely let go of discrimination and attachment of duality from self-centeredness.

The ultimate reality is that there is "no samsara and no nirvana" (no non-duality *or* no oneness), and furthermore there is even no non-oneness.

All in all, for ultimate truth, there is **nothing** to talk about (no discourse, no demonstration).





The Ultimate Reality of Interconnectedness

The ultimate reality of all things and all beings in the universe is "interconnectedness":

One is all, all is one (interbeing); one penetrates all, all penetrate one (interpenetration). Therefore, all things and all beings are of oneness in the global village.

As Chan practitioners, we have to do our utmost to completely let go of all attachments of self-centeredness and to perfectly tame habitual patterns, in order to help all beings with the great wisdom of no-self and the great compassion of oneness, and let all beings enjoy a life of true peace, harmony, altruism, and happiness.

All Good Chan Fellow-practitioners!

The prerequisite of "Natural Environmentalism" is actually the "Spiritual Environmentalism".

Therefore, let's altogether step into the Path of Attaining Buddhahood of genuine altruism.

May all beings attain Supreme Bodhi!

May all beings attain great loving kindness of no-conditions and great compassion of oneness!





Heart Sutra: Genuine Realization of the Middle Way

At the very moment that all the mind's juggleries take a full rest, the Prajna-wisdom manifests and simultaneously has an insight into ultimate emptiness:

If a Bodhisattva is genuinely able to not abide in either "existence", or "emptiness", or "existence is emptiness", or "non-existence and non-emptiness", he/she just can "depart from four statements and let go of one hundred negations", and also, can just "put all of the mind's juggleries to full rest".

At that very moment, "the mind arises without abiding in anything", such that it induces the manifestation of "great Prajna-wisdom" (Buddha Wisdom of All Aspects) and penetrates into the genuine realization of the Supreme Truth of the Middle Way, which is mentioned in the *Mahaprajnaparamita Sastra* of Nagarjuna Bodhisattva as,

"At the very moment that all the mind's juggleries take a full rest, the Prajna-wisdom manifests and simultaneously has an insight into ultimate emptiness."

In this genuine realization of the Middle Way, the ultimate "nature of emptiness" (form of emptiness) of all things is originally of "non-arising and non-perishing", "non-impurity and non-purity", as well as "non-increasing and non-decreasing".

Meanwhile, it is also intrinsically of "neither arising nor perishing", "neither nihilism nor permanence", "neither oneness nor duality", and "neither coming nor going", which is expounded as the "Eightfold Negation of the Middle Way" in the *Sastra of the Middle Way* of Nagarjuna.





The True Reality of Life in the Universe

If Chan practitioners always live their daily lives with the mind of non-abiding awareness (straight-forward mind or ordinary mind), they are able to hear the Chan Dharma in the sound of the birds — interdependence (interconnectedness) and independence.

They have truly actualized that all dharmas have interaction, that is, the “interdependence” (interbeing & interpenetration) of all dharmas. Yet at the same time they have also actualized that all dharmas have non-interaction, that is, the “independence” (discrepancy) of all dharmas:

“It is said in the Lotus Sutra, ‘all dharmas abide in their own positions, and the ultimate reality of all worldly phenomena always abides directly in true suchness.’

Among all universal and worldly dharmas, every dharma has its own position, condition, and perspective, and all dharmas are entirely and truthfully manifesting with their original face and are spontaneously functioning.”

The Buddha said in the *Diamond Sutra*:

"The [wisdom] mind [of pure awareness] manifests with non-abiding in anything."

Chan practitioners do not attach to the subjectivity or objectivity in all things; meanwhile they do not negate the conditional arising and perishing of all things.

Chan practitioners do not shut down the function of awareness including seeing, hearing, perceiving, or knowing; rather they do not manifest a vexed mind of greed, hatred, or ignorance while at the same time being in touch with everything.

Chan practitioners truly realize the ultimate reality in "non-duality and non-oneness of existence and emptiness."





Non-duality of Immovability & Movability

Chinese Dharma Master Seng-chao wrote the following verse:

Great winds are strong enough to tip over
the highest peak of a mountain ridge,
But in fact, they are always in stillness.

All great rivers forever run toward the ocean,
Yet, they do not flow.

Wild horses run fast as if they are storming
the enemy in battle,
But in reality, they are immobile.

The Sun and moon revolve around the earth,
Yet actually they never turn over.

A Chan saying states,

"It is raining on the eastern mountain, yet
the western mountain gets wet."

Completely enlightened Chan practitioners see the simultaneous existence and emptiness of all phenomena. They see that all phenomena are forever in movability; and at the same time, they see that all phenomena are always in immovability.

The *Pure Name Sutra* says,

"One is adept at differentiating the forms of all dharmas/Dharmas, while simultaneously resting immovably in the Ultimate Principle [of the Middle Way]."

The self-nature of true suchness manifests thoughts. Though the six sense faculties have the functions of seeing, hearing, and awareness, they are not defiled by the myriad objects, and the self-nature of true suchness is always liberated.





The Ultimate Reality of the Middle Way

The Suddenness Chan Dharma, which was transmitted downward from Sixth Chan Patriarch Huineng to the Masters of the modern world, is to have genuine realization of the "ultimate reality of the Middle Way" in everything in the universe.

The "ultimate reality of the Middle Way" is equivalent to the "Middle Way of Eightfold Negation" in Bodhisattva Nagarjuna's *Treatise on the Middle Way*:

Non-duality and Non-oneness;
 Non-arising and Non-perishing;
 Non-annihilation and Non-permanence;
 Non-coming and Non-going.

Moreover, there will be the "Middle Way of Twelvefold Negations" by adding another fourfold negations from *Heart Sutra*:

Non-impurity and Non-purity;
 Non-increasing and Non-decreasing.





The Ultimate Reality of the Middle Way

The Essential Principle of the *Śūrangama Sutra*:

The sense organs and sense objects are of the same source; bondage and liberation are of non-duality.

The above sentences clearly point out that both six sense organs and six sense objects have no self-nature (the self-nature is intrinsically empty), as well as showing that bondage is liberation and vice versa. These have the same essential meaning as both "vexation is Bodhi" and "samsara is nirvana", as expounded in the *Platform Sutra*.

Suddenness Chan advocates:

"Vexation is Bodhi; samsara is nirvana" and "no vexation & no Bodhi; no samsara & no nirvana".

Those practitioners, who still have a dual view, thinking of "vexation and Bodhi" or "samsara and nirvana", all have attachment of self-centeredness.

Meanwhile, Chan practitioners, who attach to either "cutting off vexation to attain Bodhi" or "departing from samsara to attain nirvana", all still reside in the sectional transmigration. Therefore, Chan Master Linji Yixuan discoursed that,

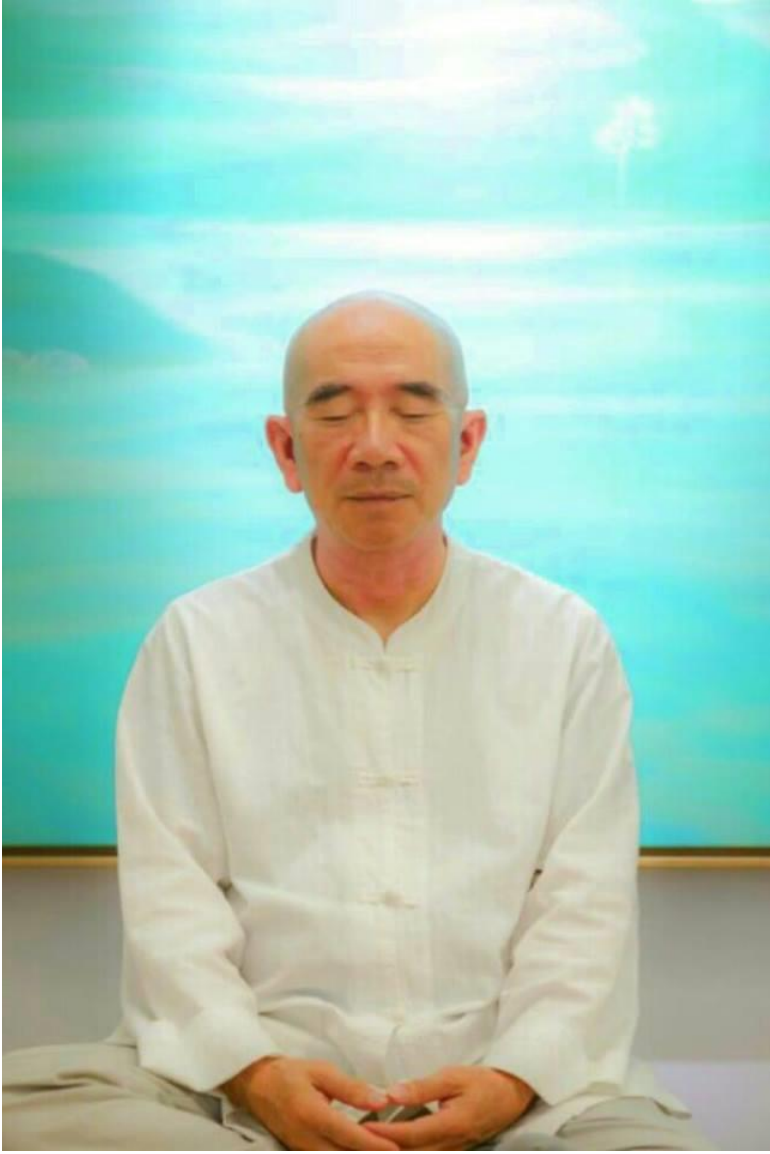
"Those who seek for Buddhahood, Bodhi and nirvana are tapped under the birth-and-death dharmas; they do nothing but create more birth-and-death karma."

Suddenness Chan practitioners should rely on the Non-Duality and Non-Oneness Dharma-gate of Suddenness Chan.

Merely always apply the ordinary mind of non-abiding awareness for facing, accepting, and dealing with all daily matters at every moment, and for simultaneously and perfectly letting go of all deluded thinking and attachment.

Therefore, such Chan practitioner of complete enlightenment is suddenly seeing into the self-nature against the stream, and is able to manifest the ultimate reality of "The sense organs and sense objects are of the same source; bondage and liberation are of non-duality."





About the Master:

Venerable Beishi* Guohan (also known as “Old Teacher Tsao”) was born in a village near Taipei, Taiwan in 1951, and got his Master degree in Geological and Geophysical Prospecting at National Taiwan University’s Institute of Oceanography in 1975. He was engaged in oil and gas exploration for about twenty years as an exploration manager for the Chinese Petroleum Corporation.

Venerable Guohan immigrated to Vancouver, B. C. Canada in 1993 and met Chan Patriarch Huikong Shengyen in 1994. He became Patriarch Sheng Yen’s disciple and investigated Chinese Chan for twelve years. Guohan focused first on the investigation of Silent Illumination Chan followed by Huatou Chan.

He received the late Sheng Yen’s legitimate transmission of Buddha Mind-Seal for genuinely attaining the Patriarch Chan Dharma in the year 2006. Thereafter, to respectfully act in accordance with the trust Sheng Yen, the Patriarch of the Caodong, Linji and Dharma Drum Lineages, had placed in him and in the spirit of “an Heir to Patriarch and a Master of Posterity”, he began to spread the Chan Teachings and lead Chan Retreats throughout Canada.

* “Beishi”: Chinese “卑詩”; English “British Columbia”

While investigating Chan, Venerable Guohan was President of the Vancouver Branch of Dharma Drum Mountain Buddhist Association 2001–2002, and was charged with buying a piece of land to establish the Dharma Drum Mountain Vancouver Centre, which was completed and began operations in 2006.

After receiving the Buddha Mind-Seal, he founded the Patriarch/Matriarch Chan community, “**Cosmos Chan (Zen) Community**”, for the purpose of deeply and widely popularizing Chan in the West, and has begun to distribute the Teachings and guide Retreats of Patriarch/Matriarch Chan all over the world.

