

**Selection of Teachings of  
Great Master Hanshan**

## **Han Shan's Looking at the Mind**

**By Zenmaster Han-shan De-qing (1546–1623)**

**Translation by Hakuun Barnhard**

Look at what your body is – it is not you  
But an image in the mirror of awareness,  
Just like the reflection of the moon on the water.

Look at what your mind is – it is not  
The thoughts and feelings that appear within it  
But the bright knowing space that holds them.

When not a single thought arises, your mind is  
Open, perceptive, serene and luminous;  
It is complete as great all-embracing space  
And holds all kinds of wondrous aspects.

Your mind does not come or go away,  
Has no particular shape, nor a special way of being.  
But a great many beneficial qualities  
Come all forth from this one knowing being.

It does not depend on material existence,  
Material existence covers it up!  
Do (therefore) not take vain hopes seriously,  
Vain hopes lead to illusory phenomena.

Closely investigate this mind, which is  
A knowing emptiness, not containing a thing.  
When you are suddenly flooded with emotions  
Your vision gets unclear, your experience confused.

Then at once bring back your presence of mind  
And gather all your strengths to reflect.  
The clouds will disperse and the sky will clear:  
The sun of awareness spreads brightly its light.

If no feelings or thoughts arise within  
No (worrying) circumstance is found without.  
So where lies the original reality,  
Of all that has characteristics?

If you can be aware of a thought as it arises  
This awareness dissolves the thought at once.  
Sweep away whatever state of mind may come,  
Be present and aware – and you will be free.

Good and evil, internal or external,  
Transform when you turn towards the heart of it.  
Worldly and spiritual forms  
Come into being through what you think.

Using a mantra and looking at your mind

Are means to polish the mirror of awareness;  
Once the obscurations have been removed  
They have no more use and can be dropped.

All great and deep spiritual abilities  
Are already complete within your mind  
And you can roam as you wish  
To the Pure Land or Heavenly Palace.

There is no need to seek the Truth  
As your mind is from the start already enlightened.  
When ripe, all things are fresh and new  
When fresh and new, they are inherently already ripe.

Day and night all things are wondrous  
And you will have faith in whatever you meet.  
The above is what you need to know  
Regarding the mind.

## **Contemplating Mind**

**By Han Shan Te-ch'ing (1546-1623)**

**Translated by Sheng Yen**

In: Getting The Buddha Mind

Look upon the body as unreal,  
An image in a mirror,  
Or the reflection of the moon in water.  
Contemplate the mind as formless,  
Yet bright and pure.  
Not a single thought arising,  
Empty, yet perceptive,  
Still, yet illuminating,  
Complete like the Great Emptiness,  
Containing all that is wonderful.  
Neither going out nor coming in,  
Without appearance or characteristics,  
Countless skillful means  
Arise out of one mind.  
Independent of material existence,  
Which is ever an obstruction,  
Do not cling to deluded thoughts.  
These give birth to illusion.  
Attentively contemplate this mind,  
Empty, devoid of all objects.  
If emotions should suddenly arise,

You will fall into confusion.  
In a critical moment bring back the light,  
Powerfully illuminating.  
Clouds disperse, the sky is clear,  
The sun shines brilliantly.  
If nothing arises within the mind,  
Nothing will manifest without.  
That which has characteristics  
Is not original reality.  
If you can see a thought as it arises,  
This awareness will at once destroy it.  
Whatever state of mind should come,  
Sweep it away, put it down.  
Both good and evil states  
Can be transformed by mind.  
Sacred and profane appear  
In accordance with thoughts.  
Reciting mantras or contemplating mind  
Are merely herbs for polishing a mirror.  
When the dust is removed,  
They are also wiped away.  
Great extensive spiritual powers  
Are all complete within the mind.  
The Pure Land or the Heavens  
Can be travelled to at will.  
You need not seek the real,  
Mind originally is Buddha.

The familiar becomes remote,  
The strange seems familiar.  
Day and night, everything is wonderful.  
Nothing you encounter confuses you.  
These are the essentials of mind.

## The Important Doctrines of Pure Land and Zen

Excerpts from Master Han-Shan's Dream Roamings

Translated by Dharma Master Lok To

Those who engage in the [dual practice] of Buddha Recitation and Zen should take the name of Amitabha Buddha as a hua-t'ou [or kung-an]. During Buddha Recitation, you should ask "who is it that recites the Buddha's name?" If you ask and investigate again and again, there will come a time when all false thoughts suddenly cease. No such thoughts can arise, or if they do, they will be quickly suppressed. You will have only a single, clear thought, like a bright sun in the sky, and never engender any false thought. The confused mind will reign no more.

Rather, you will experience stillness and awareness. The Great Master Yung-Chia said: To be still and alert is correct, while to be still and unaware of what is going on around you is wrong. To be alert and still is correct, while to be alert but filled with disturbing thoughts is wrong.

If stillness does not lead to lack of mindfulness and awareness does not lead to confused thinking, then awareness and stillness will flow together. You let go of both "sinking" and "floating" until not a single thought arises in mind, not of past, present or future; then, suddenly the pitch blackness cracks and you see your Original Face. Body, mind and world are immediately at peace, like illusory flowers falling from the sky. (17) Everything in the Ten Directions is bright because a great light is shining everywhere. When you arrive at this stage, this complete brightness is always present in your daily life and you will no longer have any doubts. You will believe your own mind, which is intrinsically thus. (18) Then your mind is no different from the Buddhas' and Patriarchs'. When you reach this level, you will no longer grasp at Emptiness.

If you grasp at Emptiness, you will fall into evil and heterodox views. Nor will you grasp at Existence or at the Wonderful. If you grasp at Existence, you will also fall into evil ways.



If during practice, you find some realm, whether wholesome or evil, appearing in the mind, you must not grasp at it but just let it be. Then the realm will vanish. You should neither fear evil realms nor take delight in auspicious realms when they appear, for this is the action of demons. If worry or joy arise, these are the views of demons. You should understand that these realms come from your own mind and not from outside. You must understand that our minds are intrinsically clean and pure, without a single dharma, neither confused nor awakened. We belong neither to this world nor to the realm of the holy, nor to any other realm. But, because we are



at present confused, we must cultivate to reduce ignorance and bad habits.

If anyone could open up his own mind – originally bright, all-encompassing, clean and pure – that would be Wonderful Suchness and there would be no need for practice. However, because today’s cultivators have not yet seen their Self-Nature (Mind), they must practice diligently in order to reach the stage where they can end the cycle of Birth and Death.



Buddha Sakyamuni taught the Dharma of Mind. There are countless Dharma methods, but they are all for the purpose of awakening the mind. The very important method of Zen has been established by some Patriarchs, but Buddha Sakyamuni Himself taught the Bodhisattvas of the Three Worthy Positions and the Ten Stages [that is, all Bodhisattvas] the crucial method of Buddha Recitation to attain Buddhahood. In short, practice Buddha Recitation to become a Buddha. The Bodhisattvas of the Ten Stages have already attained the level of True Thusness.

Can you say that they are not awakened? Yet even they can never depart from Mindfulness of the Buddhas, the Dharma and the Sangha. (Mindfulness of the Buddhas = Buddha Recitation;

[In the Avatamsaka Sutra,] the youth Sudhana visited fifty-three Good Spiritual Advisors.

The first was the monk Cloud of Virtue, who taught him the liberation method of Buddha Recitation. The last one he visited was the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra, who taught him that to attain Wonderful Enlightenment, he need only turn towards the Western Pure Land, behold the Tathagata of Infinite Light (Amitabha Buddha) and receive a prediction of Enlightenment.

Take note of this: even the supreme teaching of the Avatamsaka Sutra, which encompasses the entire Dharma realm, also promotes Buddha Recitation. The Bodhisattvas of the Ten Stages, even those who have already attained True Thusness, still practice mindfulness of the Buddhas (Buddha Recitation).



There are those in this Dharma-Ending Age who dare to deprecate Buddha Recitation as an inferior practice. But why should they think that Zen and Pure Land are different? Such people lack knowledge and fail to understand the intent of the Buddhas. They are creating a false dichotomy. According to Mind-Only Pure Land, if the mind is pure, the land is pure.

Therefore, if you are a beginning Zen practitioner and have not yet awakened, unless you engage in Buddha Recitation, you have no means of purifying your mind. (19)  
But, a pure mind is precisely an awakened mind.

Even Bodhisattvas who are already awakened still practice Buddha Recitation,

because without Buddha Recitation (mindfulness of the Buddhas) they cannot attain correct Enlightenment. We know that the Patriarchs awakened their minds through mindfulness of the Buddhas. Anyone who practices Buddha Recitation singlemindedly and without distraction will find that all afflictions vanish. With their minds thus bright, they are called awakened. Look at it this way: Buddha Recitation is Zen. No Bodhisattva abandons mindfulness of the Buddhas after awakening. None of the Patriarchs abandoned the Pure Land either. Thus, Buddha Recitation is Zen, Zen is Buddha Recitation.

Since ancient times, this question has remained unsettled; I want to speak out now and shatter the view that Pure Land and Zen are different. If all the Buddhas were to appear in the world, they would say the same thing: to abandon this Pure Land Dharma and embrace false words is the work of demons and not the true Dharma.



## **Essentials of Practice and Enlightenment for Beginners**

By Master Hanshan Deqing [1546-1623]

Translation by Guo-gu Shi

### I. How to Practice and Reach Enlightenment

Concerning the causes and condition of this Great Matter, [this Buddha-nature] is intrinsically within everyone; as such, it is already complete within you, lacking nothing. The difficulty is that, since time without beginning, seeds of passion, deluded thinking, emotional conceptualizations, and deep-rooted habitual tendencies have obscured this marvelous luminosity. You cannot genuinely realize it because you have been wallowing in remnant deluded thoughts of body, mind, and the world, discriminating and musing [about this and that]. For these reasons you have been roaming in the cycle of birth and death [endlessly]. Yet, all Buddhas and ancestral masters have appeared in the world using countless words and expedient means to expound on Chan and to clarify the doctrine. Following and meeting different dispositions [of sentient being], all of these expedient means are like tools to crush our mind of clinging and realize that originally there is no real substantiality to "dharma" or [the sense of] "self."

What is commonly known as practice means simply to accord with [whatever state] of mind you're in so as to purify and relinquish the deluded thoughts and traces of your habit tendencies. Exerting your efforts here is called practice. If within a single moment deluded thinking suddenly ceases, [you will] thoroughly perceive your own mind and realize that it is vast and open, bright and luminous—intrinsically perfect and complete. This state, being originally pure, devoid of a single thing, is called enlightenment. Apart from this mind, there is no such thing as cultivation or enlightenment. The essence of your mind is like a mirror and all the traces of deluded thoughts and clinging to conditions are defiling dust of the mind. Your conception of appearances is this dust and your emotional consciousness is the defilement. If all the deluded thoughts melt away, the intrinsic essence will reveal in its own accord. It's like when the defilement is polished away, the mirror regains its clarity. It is the same with Dharma.

However, our habit, defilement, and self-clinging accumulated throughout eons have become solid and deep-rooted. Fortunately, through the condition of having the guidance of a good spiritual friend, our internal prajna as a cause can influence our being so this inherent prajna can be augmented. Having realized that [prajna] is inherent in us, we will be able to arouse the [Bodhi-] mind and steer our direction toward the aspiration of relinquishing [the cyclic existence of] birth and death. This task of uprooting the roots of birth and death accumulated through innumerable eons all at once is a subtle matter. If you are not someone with great strength and ability brave enough to shoulder such a burden and to cut through directly [to this matter] without the slightest hesitation, then [this task] will be extremely difficult. An ancient one has said, "This matter is like one person confronting ten thousand enemies." These are not false words.

## II. The Entrance to Practice and Enlightenment

Generally speaking, in this Dharma-ending-age, there are more people who practice than people who truly have realization. There are more people who waste their efforts than those who derive power. Why is this? They do not exert their effort directly and do not know the shortcut. Instead, many people merely fill their minds with past knowledge of words and language based on what they have heard, or they measure things by means of their emotional discriminations, or they suppress deluded thoughts, or they dazzle themselves with visionary astonishment at their sensory gates. These people dwell on the words of the ancient ones in their minds and take them to be real. Furthermore, they cling to these words as their own view. Little do they know that none of these are the least bit useful. This is what is called, "grasping at other's understanding and clouding one's own entrance to enlightenment."

In order to engage in practice, you must first sever knowledge and understanding and single-mindedly exert all of your efforts on one thought. Have a firm conviction in your own [true] mind that, originally it is pure and clear, without the slightest lingering thing—it is bright and perfect and it pervades throughout the Dharmadhatu. Intrinsically, there is no body, mind, or world, nor are there any deluded thoughts and emotional conceptions. Right at this moment, this single thought is itself unborn! Everything that manifests before you now are illusory and insubstantial—all of which are reflections projected from the true mind. Work in such a manner to crush away [all your deluded thoughts]. You should fixate [your mind] to observe where the thoughts arise from and where they cease. If you practice like this, no matter what kinds of deluded thoughts arise, one smash and they will all be crushed to pieces. All will dissolve and vanish away. You should never follow or perpetuate deluded thoughts. Master Yongjia has admonished, "One must sever the mind [that desires] continuation." This is because the illusory mind of delusion is originally rootless. You

should never take a deluded thought as real and try to hold on to it in your heart. As soon as it arises notice it right away. Once you notice it, it will vanish. Never try to suppress thoughts but allow thoughts to be as you watch a gourd floating on water.

Put aside your body, mind, and world and simply bring forth this single thought [of method] like a sword piercing through the sky. Whether a Buddha or a Mara appears, just cut them off like a snarl of entangled silk thread. Use all your effort and strength patiently to push your mind to the very end. What is known as, "a mind that maintains the correct thought of true suchness" means that a correct thought is no-thought. If you are able to contemplate no-thought, you're already steering toward the wisdom of the Buddhas.

Those who practice and have recently generated the [Bodhi-] mind should have the conviction in the teaching of mind-only. The Buddha has said, "The three realms are mind-only and the myriad dharmas are mere consciousness." All Buddhadharmas are only further exposition on these two lines so everyone will be able to distinguish, understand, and generate faith in this reality. The passages of the sacred and the profane, are only paths of delusion and awakening within your own mind. Besides the mind, all karmas of virtue and vice are unobtainable. Your [intrinsic] nature is wondrous. It is something natural and spontaneous, not something you can "enlighten to" [since you naturally have it]. As such, what is there to be deluded about? Delusion only refers to your unawareness that your mind intrinsically has not a single thing, and that the body, mind, and world are originally empty. Because you're obstructed, therefore, there is delusion. You have always taken the deluded thinking mind, that constantly rises and passes away, as real. For this reason, you have also taken the various illusory transformations in and appearances of the realms of the six sense objects as real. If today you are willing to arouse your mind and steer away from [this direction] and take the upper road, then you should cast aside all of your previous views and understanding. Here not a single iota of intellectual knowledge or cleverness will be useful. You must only see through the body, mind, and world that appear before you and realize that they are all insubstantial. Like imaginary reflections they are the same as images in the mirror or moon reflected in the water. Hear all sounds and voices like wind passing through the forest; perceive all objects as drifting clouds in the sky. Everything is in a constant state of flux; everything is illusory and insubstantial. Not only is the external world like this, but your own deluded thoughts, emotional discriminations of the mind, and all the seeds of passion, habit tendencies, as well as all vexations are also groundless and insubstantial.

If you can thus engage in contemplation, then whenever a thought arises, you should find its source. Never haphazardly allow it to pass you by [without seeing through it]. Do not be deceived by it! If this is how you work, then you will be doing

some genuine practice. Do not try to gather up some abstract and intellectual view on it or try to fabricate some clever understanding about it. Still, to even speak about practice is really like the last alternative. For example, in the use of weapons, they are really not auspicious objects! But they are used as the last alternative [in battles]. The ancient ones spoke about investigating Chan and bringing forth the huatou. These, too are last alternatives. Even though there are innumerable gong ans, only by using the huatou, "Who is reciting the Buddha's name?" can you derive power from it easily enough amidst vexing situations. Even though you can easily derive power from it, [this huatou] is merely a [broken] tile for knocking down doors. Eventually you will have to throw it away. Still, you must use it for now. If you plan to use a huatou for your practice, you must have faith, unwavering firmness, and perseverance. You must not have the least bit of hesitation and uncertainty. Also, you must not be one way today and another tomorrow. You should not be concerned that you will not be enlightened, nor should you feel that this huatou is not profound enough! All of these thoughts are just hindrances. I must speak of these now so that you will not give rise to doubt and suspicion when you are confronted [by difficulties].

If you can derive power from your power, the external world will not influence you. However, internally your mind may give rise to much frantic distraction for [seemingly] no reason. Sometimes desire and lust well up; sometime restlessness comes in. Numerous hindrances can arise inside of you making you feel mentally and physically exhausted. You will not know what to do. These are all of the karmic propensities that have been stored inside your eighth-consciousness for innumerable eons. Today, due to your energetic practice, they will all come out. At that critical point, you must be able to discern and see through them then pass beyond [these obstacles]. Never be controlled and manipulated by them and most of all, never take them to be real. At that point, you must refresh your spirit and arouse your courage and diligence then bring forth this existential concern with your investigation of the huatou. Fix your attention at the point from which thoughts arise and continuously push forward on and on and ask, "Originally there is nothing inside of me, so where does the [obstacle] come from? What is it?" You must be determined to find out the bottom of this matter. Pressing on just like this, killing every [delusion in sight,] without leaving a single trace until even the demons and spirits burst out in tears. If you can practice like this, naturally good news will come to you.

If you can smash through a single thought, then all deluded thinking will suddenly be stripped off. You will feel like a flower in the sky that casts no shadows, or like a bright sun emitting boundless light, or like a limpid pond, transparent and clear. After experiencing this, there will be immeasurable feelings of light and ease, as well as a sense of liberation. This is a sign of deriving power from practice for beginners. There is nothing marvelous or extraordinary about it. Do not rejoice and wallow in this ravishing experience. If you do, then the Mara of Joy will possess you and you

will have gained another kind of obstruction! Concealed within the storehouse consciousness are your deep-rooted habit tendencies and seeds of passion. If your practice of huatou is not taking effect, or that you're unable to contemplate and illuminate your mind, or you're simply incapable of applying yourself to the practice, then you should practice prostrations, read the sutras, and engage yourself in repentance. You may also recite mantras to receive the secret seal of the Buddhas; it will alleviate your hindrances. This is because all the secret mantras are the seals of the Buddhas' diamond mind. When you use them, it is like holding an indestructible diamond thunderbolt that can shatter everything. Whatever comes close to it will be demolished into dust motes. The essence of all the esoteric teachings of all Buddhas and ancestral masters are contained in the mantras. Therefore, it is said that, "All Tathagatas in the ten directions attained unsurpassable and correct perfect enlightenment through such mantras." Even though the Buddhas have said this clearly, the lineage ancestral masters, fearing that these words may be misunderstood, have kept this knowledge a secret and do not use this method. Nevertheless, in order to derive power from using a mantra, you must practice it regularly after a long and extensive period of time. Yet, even so, you should never anticipate or seek miraculous response from using it.

### III. Understanding-enlightenment and Actualized-enlightenment

There are those who are first enlightened then engage in practice, and there are others who first practice and then get enlightened. Also, there is a difference with understanding-enlightenment and actualized-enlightenment.

Those who understand their minds after hearing the spoken teaching from the Buddhas and ancestral masters reach an understanding-enlightenment. In most cases, these people fall into views and knowledge. Confronted by all circumstances, they will not be able to make use of what they have come to know. Their minds and the external objects are in opposition. There is neither oneness nor harmony. Thus, they face obstacles all the time. [What they have realized] is called "prajna in semblance" and is not from genuine practice.

Actualized-enlightenment results from solid and sincere practice when you reach an impasse where the mountains are barren and waters are exhausted. Suddenly, [at the moment when] a thought stops, you will thoroughly perceive your own mind. At this time, you will feel as though you have personally seen your own father at a crossroad—there is no doubt about it! It is like you yourself drinking water. Whether the water is cold or warm, only you will know, and it is not something you can describe to others. This is genuine practice and true enlightenment. Having had such

experience, you can integrate it with all situations of life and purify, as well as relinquish, the karma that has already manifested, the stream of your consciousness, your deluded thinking and emotional conceptions until everything fuses into the One True [enlightened] Mind. This is actualized-enlightenment.

This state of actualized-enlightenment can be further divided into shallow and profound realizations. If you exert your efforts at the root [of your existence], smashing away the cave of the eighth consciousness, and instantaneously overturn the den of fundamental ignorance, with one leap directly enter [the realm of enlightenment], then there is nothing further for you to learn. This is having supreme karmic roots. Your actualization will be profound indeed. The depth of actualization for those who practice gradually, [on the other hand,] will be shallow.

The worst thing is to be self-satisfied with little [experiences]. Never allow yourself to fall into the dazzling experiences that arise from your sensory gates. Why? Because your eighth consciousness has not yet been crushed, so whatever you experience or do will be [conditioned] by your [deluded] consciousness and senses. If you think that this [consciousness] is real, then it is like mistaking a thief to be your own son! The ancient one has said, "Those who engage in practice do not know what is real because until now they have taken their consciousness [to be true]; what a fool takes to be his original face is actually the fundamental cause of birth and death." This is the barrier that you must pass through.

So called sudden enlightenment and gradual practice refers to one who has experienced a thorough enlightenment but, still has remnant habit tendencies that are not instantaneously purified. For these people, they must, implement the principles from their enlightenment that they have realized to face all circumstances of life and, bring forth the strength from their contemplation and illumination to experience their minds in difficult situations. When one portion of their experience in such situations accords [with the enlightened way], they will have actualized one portion of the Dharmakaya. When they dissolve away one portion of their deluded thinking, that is the degree to which their fundamental wisdom manifests. What is critical is seamless continuity in the practice. [For these people,] it is much more effective when they practice in different real life situations.

Comments by the Translator

Hanshan Deqing [1546-1623] is considered one of the four most eminent Buddhist monks in the late Ming Dynasty [1368-1644] partly for his social-political interactions



with Ming court, exegesis of Buddhist texts, and most importantly, for his Chan practice. In this short introduction, I will only comment briefly on the last aspects on his contributions to Chinese Buddhism.

Even at age seven, Hanshan had existential concerns about life and death. These thoughts had led him to leave the household life and pursue a life of Buddhist training already at age nine. At the age of 19, he was ordained as a Buddhist monk.

In all of the history of Chan, there is not a single master that has written in such detail about his own practice and experiences, especially in describing the enlightened state of mind. According to a compiled record, *The Dream Roaming of Great Master Hanshan*, he had numerous and extraordinary enlightenment experiences. His first experience was during a Dharma lecture when he heard the profound teaching on the interpenetration of phenomena as taught in the *Avatamsaka Sutra* and the treatise, *The Ten Wondrous Gates*. He experienced another deep enlightenment experience sometime later when at Mt. Wu Tai he read the treatise by an early Chinese Madhyamika monk called *Things do not Move*. According to the record, Hanshan served as proofreader of the *Book of Chao*, the source of *Things do not Move*. Hanshan came across the stories of a Bramacharin who had left home in his youth and returned when he was white-haired. When people saw him, the neighbors asked, "Is that man [whom we know] still living today?" The Bramacharin replied, "I look like that man of the past, but I am not he." On reading this story ,, Hanshan suddenly understood that all things do not come and go. When he got up from his seat and walked around, he did not see things in motion. When he opened the window blind, suddenly a wind blew the trees in the yard, and the leaves flew all over the sky. However, he did not see any signs of motion. When he went to urinate, he still did not see signs of flowing. He understood what the text spoke of as, "Streams and rivers run into the ocean and yet there is no flowing." At this time, Hanshan shattered all doubt and existential concerns about birth and death. He wrote the following poem:

Life and death, day and night;

Water flows and flowers fall.

Only today, I know that

My nose points downward!

The next day when another great Chan Master, Miaofeng, saw him, he knew that Hanshan was different and asked him whether anything has happened. Hanshan

replied, " Last night I saw two iron oxen fighting with each other next to the river bank. They both fell in the river. Since then, I have not heard anything about them." Miaofeng rejoiced and congratulated him.

Still, on another occasion, after a meal, Hanshan walked in the mountains and experienced a profound state of samadhi while standing. In the record, it described that suddenly he lost all consciousness of his body and mind. He experienced everything, the whole universe, as contained in a great perfect mirror-like mind. Mountains and rivers all reflected in it. After he came out of that experience, he wrote the following verse:

In an instant of thought, this chaotic mind is put to rest.

Internally and externally, the sense faculties and objects

Became empty and clear.

Overturning the bodyóemptiness is now shattered.

The myriad forms and appearances arise and extinguish

[in their own accord].

These are just some of his experiences recorded in The Dream Roaming of Great Master Hanshan. The instructions on practice that I have translated here are from the second fascicle of this record. The original text had no titles but were letters written to a lay practitioner on Chan practice.

Hanshan was also a prolific writer whose published works ranging from commentaries on Buddhist sutras and treatises, to secular poems, reached the length of 8,300 pages. In The Dream Roaming of Great Master Hanshan, there are 55 chuan, or books, covering over 3,000 pages. His commentaries on the Supplement to the Tripitaka consist of 119 chuan, covering over 1,200 large pages printed on both sides. Like other Ming Dynasty Buddhist monks, he also wrote many commentaries on non-Buddhist works such as Lao Zi and Zhuang Zi, as well as other Taoist and Confucian text.

His contributions to Chinese Buddhism lies in his exemplary personality and his striving toward liberation, especially in an age of mismanaged government, corruption, internal oppression, and the external vulnerability of the Ming Dynasty.

Although his Buddhist commentary is not particularly original, the strength of his writing comes from his active approach in reviving and popularizing Buddhism, and in the way he responded to the times in which he lived.

From all that we know of Hanshan, we can conclude that he was a great master who gave equal weight to doctrine and practice, as well as to the revival of Chinese Buddhism.

**Instructions in the Critical Essentials of  
Cultivating Dhyana Meditation (Chan/Zen)**

By the Ming Dynasty Dhyana Master Han-shan De-ching

Translated by Dharmamitra

From The Records of Dream Wanderings

The particular lineage of the dhyana gateway transmits the seal of the buddha mind. Originally, it was not a subtle matter. Beginning with Bodhidharma's coming from the west, the idea of exclusive transmittal became established and the four fascicles of the La'nkaavataara were taken as the [basis for] the seal of the mind. This being the case, although dhyana constituted a separate transmittal outside of the teachings, in actuality, it is because the teachings bring forth a corresponding realization that one then [succeeds in] perceiving the non-dual path of the buddhas and patriarchs. The very meditative skills which are employed during one's investigations [into dhyana] come forth from the teachings themselves.

The La'nkaavataara states, "When sitting quietly in the mountains and forests, at superior, middling and lower levels of cultivation one is able to perceive the flow of the false thinking in one's own mind." This is in fact the World Honored One's clear instruction in the formulary method of developing meditative skill. It also states, "His intellectual mind consciousness is a manifestation of his own mind. The false marks of the experiential state associated with one's self nature [manifest as] the sea of existence within the realm of birth and death. [They arise from] karmic action, desire and ignorance. Such causes as these may all be transcended thereby." This constitutes the Thus Come One's clear instruction in the marvelous principle of how to awaken the mind. It also states, "From all of the sages of the past it has been passed on in turn, being [both] transmitted and received that false thinking is devoid of an [inherently existent] nature." This is also a clear instruction in the [basis of] the secret mind seal.

This golden-countenanced elder's(1) instructions to people on the critically essential points of [dhyana] investigation were [continued on like this] until Bodhidharma instructed the second patriarch, saying, "You need only release (lit. "exhale") all conditions in the external sphere. The inner mind will then have nothing to draw in (lit. "inhale"). The mind will then become like a wall. You will then be able to enter

the Way." This was Bodhidharma's very first essential dharma employed in instructing people how to carry out meditative investigations.

[The tradition] was transmitted on until the time when Hwang Mei, [the Fifth Patriarch], sought a Dharma heir. The Sixth Patriarch had just proclaimed his realization that, "Fundamentally, there is nothing whatsoever" when he then obtained the robe and bowl. This was a clear indication of the transmittal of the seal of the mind.

Next, the Sixth Patriarch returned to the South and instructed Dao Ming, saying, "Don't think of good. Don't think of bad. Right then, what is the original countenance of the senior-seated Ming?" This was the Sixth Patriarch's first instruction to people in the clear formula for [dhyana] investigation.

From these [examples] we know that as it came down to us from the Buddha and the patriarchs the intent was only to instruct a person in obtaining a complete awakening to his own mind and in the recognition [of the true nature] of the "self," that's all. There still had not yet been any discussion of a gung-an (i.e. "anecdote") or a hwa-tou (lit. "speech-source"). When it came to Nan Ywe, Ching Ywan and those who came after them, all of the patriarchs accorded with what was appropriate in providing their instructions. For the most part they went to the place of doubt and knocked there in order to cause a person to turn his head around, reverse the direction of his thinking and then put it [all] to rest. But then it came about that there were those who were unable [to respond to this technique] so that even though one might bang away with the hammer and tongs, one still had no choice but to let [one's teaching] adapt to [the student's] appropriate time and conditions.

When it reached Hwang Bwo was when there first occurred the instruction of people in [the practice of] looking into a hwa-tou. [This was the practice] straight on down to Dhyana Master Da Hwei who then engaged in the extremely strong promotion of teaching students to investigate into a gung-an (lit. "anecdote") which was used as an aid. This was referred to as a hwa-tou (lit. "speech source"). It was required of a person that he very closely engage in the bringing up and "tearing into" it.

Why was this? It was done on account of the fact that in every thought the seeds of evil practices from an incalculable number of kalpas permeate internally within the field of the eighth consciousness. They flow on continuously [with the result that] false thinking is not cut off and there is nothing which [most people] can do about it. Hence he would take a phrase of words devoid of any meaning-based flavor and give

it to you for you to bite into it and hold it down.

Formerly one would take all internally and externally related false thinking in one's mind state and put it all down at once. But because one became unable to put it down he then taught one to bring up this hwa-tou. Then, just like chopping off tangled strands of silk, in a single cut they were all cut off evenly such that they did not continue on any more. One cut off the intellectual mind consciousness so that it was no longer allowed to be active. This is precisely the same as Bodhidharma's principle of "You need only release (lit. "exhale") all conditions in the external sphere. The inner mind will then have nothing to draw in (lit. "inhale"). The mind will then become like a wall."

If one fails to take on the task in this fashion, one will certainly fail to perceive one's original countenance. The intention is not to teach you to deliberate on [the meaning of] the sentence in the gung-an. One should develop a sentiment of doubt and look to it as a means for seeking a measure of realization. This is just exactly like [the instruction offered by] Da Hwei who exclusively taught the looking into the hwa-tou as the invoking of a deadly stratagem whereby he simply wanted you to engage in an assassin's surprise attack on the mind, that's all. As an example [of his teaching], he instructed the assembly, saying, "When engaging in dhyana investigation one must empty out the mind and take the two words 'birth' and 'death' and stick them up on your forehead. [One should feel] as if he owed ten-thousand strings of cash. In the three [periods] of the day and the three [periods] of the night, whether drinking tea or eating meals, when walking and when standing, when sitting and when lying down, when toasting with friends, at quiet times and at boisterous times, one still keeps bringing up the hwa-tou: 'Does a dog have the buddha nature, or not?' Jou said, 'No.'

"One should only be concerned about looking one way and looking another [so that] when there is no flavor [anymore] then it will be like running right into a wall. When one gets to the source where things come together, then it is like when a mouse [runs headlong] into a bull's horn and then finds the route cut off. The intent is that you succeed in bringing about the single entity of the long-enduring and distantly-extending body and mind with which one carries on a struggle [with the result that] suddenly the flower of the mind puts out a brightness which illuminates the k.setras of the ten directions. With a single awakening one then reaches right down to the very bottom of things."(2)

The above [teaching] is the set of hammer and tongs routinely employed by the old eminence Da Hwei. His intent was just that he wanted you to take the hwa-tou and

use it to block up and cut off the false thinking set loose by the intellectual mind faculty with the result that its flowing on would no longer be active. It is just at that point where it is not being active that one succeeds in seeing one's original countenance.

It is not the intent to instruct you to carry on deliberative thinking about [the meaning of] the gung-an. One should employ the sentiment of doubt as a means for seeking a measure of realization. For example, it was [also] stated, "As for the flower of the mind putting forth brightness, how could that be something obtained from someone else?"

Instruction such as that presented above has been set forth by each and every one of the buddhas and patriarchs with the intention that you investigate into yourself and refrain from seizing on and peering into someone else's esoteric and marvelous phrases. As for the people of the present era, in discussing investigations undertaken in dhyana and the application of meditative skill, everyone speaks of looking into the hwa-tou and bringing the sentiment of doubt to bear, but they do not realize that one must go to the very root [of the matter]. And so they are only concerned with seeking at the level of the hwa-tou.

They seek coming and they seek going and then suddenly visualize a scene full of light and declare that they have awakened. They then speak forth a verse and present a piece of poetry making as if they had become especially exotic goods. They then take it that they have succeeded in gaining complete understanding. They are completely unaware that they have fallen entirely into the net of knowledge and vision based on false thinking. When one goes about dhyana investigations in this manner, doesn't this amount to poking out the eyes of everyone in the entire world of later generations?

The younger generation of today have not even gotten their sitting cushions warm when they proclaim that they have awakened to the Way. They then rely on their mouths, start channeling sprites and ghosts, fall into the quick-and-smart verbal swordplay, and then think up a few sentences of foolish words and scrambled discourse which are utterly baseless. They proclaim it to be an "Ode to the Ancients." This is just something which has come forth from your own false thinking. And was it ever really so that you even saw the ancients here even in a dream?

If it was actually so easy to become awakened to the Way as [claimed by] people of the present, then considering the integrity of practice of ancients such as Chang

Ching who wore out seven sitting cushions and Chao Jou who for thirty years permitted no unfocused use of mind, those ancients had to have been of the very dullest of faculties. They wouldn't even be fit to serve you moderns by holding your straw sandals! When people of overweening arrogance claim to have realizations when they have not yet realized them, can one not be appalled by this?

One's investigations into Dhyana wherein one looks into the hwa-tou and brings the sentiment of doubt to bear absolutely cannot be given short shrift. [This is a case of] the so-called, "A little doubt,-- a little enlightenment. A big doubt,-- a big enlightenment. Refraining from doubt,-- one doesn't become enlightened." It is only essential that one become skillful in the use of the sentiment of doubt. If one achieves a breakthrough through the sentiment of doubt then in a single pass one can string together all of the buddhas and bodhisattvas by their noses.

It's only necessary that, for instance when one looks into the mindfulness-of-the-buddha gung-an, one simply investigates into who it is that is being mindful of the buddha. It is not the case that one is supposed to entertain doubts about who the buddha is. If it were a case of doubting who the buddha is, then it would only be necessary to listen to the lecturer say, "Amitabha is named 'Limitless Light'." After something like this then one should become enlightened and then make up a few verses on "Limitless Light." If instances such as this could be referred to as "awakening to the Way," then those with enlightened minds would be as numerous as sesame seeds and rice grains. How very sad! How very sad!

The ancients spoke of the hwa-tou as like a tile used to knock on the door. If one succeeds in opening the door by knocking, then one is supposed to go see the person in the room. It's not supposed to be the case that one stands outside the door fooling around.(3) From this one can see that in relying on the hwa-tou to bring up doubt, the doubt is not directed towards the hwa-tou. It must be directed at the very root [of the matter].

Just take for instance when Jya Shan went to visit "Boatman" who inquired of him, saying, "I've hung down the line a thousand feet. The mind abides in a deep pool, three inches from the hook. Why don't you speak?!"

Shan then started to open his mouth. The Master then knocked him into the water with an oar. Shan then climbed back into the boat. The Master said again, "Speak! Speak!" Shan was about to open his mouth again when the Master hit him again. Shan then experienced a major awakening whereupon he then knodded his head



three times.

The Master then said, "The line from my fishing pole has succeeded in playing you in. Without having to stir up the purity as waves, your mind is naturally evident."

If this Jya Shan had just fooled around with the hook and line, how could "Boatman," even at the expense of a life, have been able to succeed in getting him?

This demonstrates the keen facility of the ancients in skillfully pursuing the means of bringing forth personages. In the past when the way of dhyana was flourishing, there were clear-eyed knowing advisors everywhere and the patch-robed men who were about in the land pursuing their investigations were many. Wherever they went, it flourished.

As a comparative statement, one can say that [nowadays] either there are no [practitioners of] dhyana or there are no Masters available.(4) The house of Dhyana has been silent and deserted now for a long time. How fortunate then that all at once there are many who have decided to take up the search. Although there do exist some knowing advisors, sometimes in taking the measure of the prospective candidates, those of [only] provisional talents [are allowed to] enter in as they yield to sentiment in their proffering of the seal of realization. The students, though of only shallow mind, then have the opinion that they have [actually] gotten some realizations.

Moreover, they do not have faith in the Thus Come One's sacred teachings and do not seek out the origin of the true and correct road. They only care to go on about their dull-witted doings and so it then just becomes a case of a chop made of wintermelon being taken as the real formula.(5) Not only is this a fooling of oneself, but it's also a fooling of others. Can one not be appalled by this? What's more take for example the layman Dzai Gwan who of old recorded [one of the] records of the transmitting of the lamp. There were a number of [noteworthy] men in there, but that's all.

Now, there are those people who are immersed in the weariness of the sense objects and who don't even cultivate the most obvious precepts. They have such turbid and tangled false thinking that they lean on their own clever-wittedness, scan a few cases of the ancient virtuous ones and their prospective [lineage heirs], and then in

every case they presume the airs of those of the most superior faculties. As soon as they see a member of the Sangha they then harass him with verbal swordplay and then take it that they themselves have awakened to the Way. I bring this up even though we are in an age which has become corrupt especially on account of my own disciples. It can become a case of a single blind man leading on a crowd of blind people, that's all. This old man now faithfully sets forth the essential points of the true and correct meditative skills of the buddhas and patriarchs. Everyone can evaluate this. Those lofty and clear eminences who have well understood these things may themselves have ways in which they might correct it.

## **Maxims of Master Han Shan**

PDF: The Autobiography and Maxims of Han Shan

Translated by Upasaka Richard Cheung, written by MingZhen Shakya from the teachings of Master WeiMiao ZhiDyn

1. When we preach the Dharma to those who see only the ego's illusory world, we preach in vain. We might as well preach to the dead.

How foolish are they who turn away from what is real and true and lasting and instead pursue the fleeting shapes of the physical world, shapes that are mere reflections in the ego's mirror. Not caring to peer beneath the surfaces, deluded beings are content to snatch at images. They think that the material world's ever-flowing energy can be modified into permanent forms, that they can name and value these forms, and then, like great lords, exert dominion over them.

Material things are like dead things and the ego cannot vivify them. As the great lord is by his very identity attached to his kingdom, the ego, when it attaches itself to material objects, presides over a realm of the dead. The Dharma is for the living. The permanent cannot abide in the ephemeral. True and lasting joy can't be found in the ego's world of changing illusion. No one can drink the water of a mirage.

2. There are also those who, claiming enlightenment, insist that they understand the non-substantial nature of reality. Boasting that the disease of materialism cannot infect them, they try to prove their immunity by carefully shunning all earthly enjoyments. But they, too, are in the dark.

3. Neither are they correct who dedicate themselves to exposing the fraud of every sensory object they encounter. True, perceptions of material objects give rise to wild desire in the heart. True, once it is understood how essentially worthless such apparent objects are, wild desires are reduced to timid thoughts. But we may not limit our spiritual practice to the discipline of dispelling illusion. There is more to the Dharma than understanding the nature of reality.

4. What is the best way to sever our attachment to material things?

First, we need a good sharp sword, a sword of discrimination, one that cuts through appearance to expose the real. We begin by making a point of noticing how quickly we became dissatisfied with material things and how soon our sensory pleasures also fade into discontent. With persistent awareness we sharpen and hone this sword. Before long, we find that we seldom have to use it. We've cut down all old desires and new ones don't dare to bother us.

5. True Dharma seekers who live in the world use their daily activity as a polishing tool. Outwardly they may appear to be very busy, like flint striking steel, making sparks everywhere. But inwardly they silently grow. For although they may be working very hard, they are working for the sake of the work and not for the profits it will bring them. Unattached to the results of their labor, they transcend the frenetic to reach the Way's essential tranquillity. Doesn't a rough and tumbling stream also sparkle like striking flints – while it polishes into smoothness every stone in its path?

6. In the ego's world of illusion, all things are in flux. But continuous change is constant chaos. When the ego sees itself as the center of so much swirling activity, it cannot experience cosmic harmony.

For example, what the ego considers to be a devastating hurricane is, as far as the universe is concerned, a perfectly natural event, a link in the endless chain of cause and effect. The universe, having no ego, continues its existence without rendering judgments about hurricanes or ocean breezes.

When we are empty of ego we, too, can carry on in calm acceptance of life's varying events. When we cease making prejudicial distinctions – gentle or harsh, beautiful or ugly, good or bad – a peaceful stillness will permeate our mind. If there is no ego, there is no agitation.

7. Our mind and body are by nature pure; but we sully them with sinful thoughts and deeds. In order to restore ourselves to our original purity, we need only to clean away the accumulated dirt. But how do we proceed with the cleansing process? Do we put a barrier between us and the occasions of our bad habits? Do we remove ourselves from the places of temptation? No. We cannot claim victory by avoiding

the battle. The enemy is not our surroundings, it is in ourselves. We have to confront ourselves and try to understand our human weakness. We have to take an honest look at ourselves, at our relationships and our possessions, and ask what all our self-indulgence has gotten us. Has it brought us happiness? Surely not.

If we are ruthlessly honest we'll have to admit that it was our own foolish egotism that soiled us. This admission is painful to make. Well, if we want to melt ice we have to apply heat. The hotter the fire, the quicker the ice melts. So it is with wisdom. The more intense our scrutiny, the quicker we will attain wisdom. When we grow large in wisdom we dwarf our old egotistical self. The contest is then over.

8. There are times when we act with unshakable faith in the Dharma even though we don't understand the situation we're in. There are other times when we understand our situation but are afraid to be completely faithful.

In one instance, we have heart; and in the other we have mind. We must put these two together! Understanding AND faith!

9. With one small fulcrum, a lever can move tons of weight. With one greedy thought, years of integrity can be corrupted. A greedy thought is the seed of fear and confusion. It will grow wildly. The material gain that a greedy act brings is a small gain indeed. To act without greed and lose some material benefit is also, therefore a small loss. But to lose one's integrity! That is an immense loss! The enlightened person stands in awe of the fulcrum.

10. What do people strive for? Money, or fame, or successful relationships, or the Dharma. Well, one man may become very rich but be hated by his family. Another man may be loved by everyone but not have a penny to his name. Still a third man may be hailed as a hero by his countrymen and then find himself with neither funds nor loving family. Usually, so much effort is put into achieving one goal, that the other goals cannot be attained. But what about the man who strives to attain the Dharma? If he succeeds he has gained in that one goal far more than the other three combined. He who has Dharma lacks nothing.

11. Put a fish on land and he will remember the ocean until he dies. Put a bird in a cage, yet he will not forget the sky. Each remains homesick for his true home, the place where his nature has decreed that he should be.

Man is born in the state of innocence. His original nature is love and grace and purity. Yet he emigrates so casually without even a thought of his old home. Is this not sadder than the fishes and the birds?

12. Those who pursue money are always rushed, always busy with urgent matters. Those who pursue the Dharma, go slow and easy. "Boring" you say? Maybe. Maybe it's downright dreary to stop and smell a flower or listen to a bird. Maybe a glint of gold is really more dazzling than the sight of one's Original Face. Maybe what we need is a better definition of "treasure".

13. The heart's weather should always be clear, always sunny and calm. The only time the weather could turn bad is when clouds of lust and attachment form. These always bring storms of worry and confusion.

14. A single speck in the eye blurs good vision, we see double or triple images. A single dirty thought confounds a rational mind. Many errors in judgment can arise from it. Remove that speck and see clearly! Remove that dirty thought and think clearly!

15. Great accomplishments are composed of minute details. Those who succeed in attaining the Whole have attended carefully to each tiny part. Those who fail have ignored or taken too lightly what they deemed to be insignificant. The enlightened person overlooks nothing.

16. Why are certain material objects so treasured? A gem is virtually useless and a gilded scabbard is no better than a plain one.

Man decides that gold is valuable because it is rare and enduring and brilliant. He then thinks that if he possesses gold he, himself, will become rare or unique, that his individual worth will endure, and that he also will be considered a rather brilliant fellow. So obsessed he may become with these foolish notions that in trying to obtain gold, he will destroy the very life he is trying to embellish.

In the darkness of delusion the unenlightened believe that they can glorify

themselves by reflecting the qualities they have assigned to their possessions. Those who live the enlightened life readily discern that the qualities of an object are not transferred to its possessor. A heap of treasures piled in their path will not obstruct their vision. They can see right through them. Gold in the pocket is not gold in the character.

17. Look at people who keep tigers as pets. Even while they're laughing and playing with them, in the back of their minds they're afraid their pet will suddenly turn on them. They never forget how dangerous tigers are.

But what about people who lust after possessions, indulging themselves with one acquisition after another. They remain completely unaware of any danger.

Yet, the tiger can eat only a man's flesh. Greed can devour his soul.

18. It is easier to do the right thing when we know what the right thing to do is. We can't rely on instinct to find the Way. We need guidance.

But once we're shown the path and begin to climb it, we find that with each step up we grow in wisdom and fortitude. Looking down we see how many of our old desires have fallen dead on the wayside. They look so feeble lying there that we wonder why we ever thought we lacked the courage to resist them.

The Mountain of Wisdom is different from other mountains. The higher we climb the stronger we grow.

19. People are always looking for the easy way. The hard way – the way learned by difficult experience and painful realizations – doesn't interest them. They want a short-cut. True Dharma seekers are afraid of short-cuts. They know better. They know that without effort, there's no sense of accomplishment. It's that sense that keeps them going.

People who don't appreciate the struggles of climbing lack understanding of where they've been, awareness of who they are, and determination to continue climbing. That's why they never attain the Dharma.

20. What are the two most common goals for people who live in the world? Wealth and fame. To gain these goals people are willing to lose everything, including the health of their body, mind and spirit. Not a very good exchange, is it? Worldly wealth and fame fade so quickly that we wonder which will last longer, the money, the fame or the man.

But consider the goal of enlightenment, of attaining the wealth of the Dharma. Those who reach this goal are vigorous in body, keen in mind, and serene in spirit...right into eternity.

21. There are people who, though having accomplished nothing, connive to receive great honors or high positions of authority. Well, people who gain high rank without having earned it are like rootless trees. They live in fear that even the slightest wind will topple them.

Undeserved honor is a preface to disgrace.

22. The rich are admired because they've saved money. But what's been saved can be spent. The admiration goes with the money. A king receives loyalty because his people regard him as noble. If they decide he's acting badly, he may lose more than his throne. Those who are rich in the Dharma and noble in the Buddha's Way always retain – their wealth and the fealty of the people.

23. By successfully concealing his crimes a person can't consider himself honorable. He knows he's done wrong. By constantly bragging a person can't claim to be famous even though he does hear his name mentioned everywhere he goes. By affecting the manners of holy men monks may receive veneration, but a pious demeanor never made anyone a saint. What are true honor, true recognition and true piety? They are internal qualities, not superficial acts or appearances. When a man's conscience is free from stain, he is honorable. When his reputation for integrity precedes him, he is famous. When humility and reverence for the Dharma flow naturally out of his character, he is esteemed.

24. If men can't evade the demands of their father and emperor, what can they do when Death gives them an order? They protest bitterly and scream at heaven, but they've got to obey. The man who howls the loudest is the one who thinks he's just



reached the pinnacle of worldly success.

The enlightened understand life and death. They always live well and never complain.

25. People think that if they possess worldly knowledge they know everything. But that's not correct. Even when subjects are mastered there's always room for error. And if the finest archers can miss their targets occasionally, what about the mediocre ones? When we know the Dharma, we have all the information we need. No matter what the other facts we acquire additionally, our storehouse of knowledge, though very deep and wide, is already full.

26. Everything in the universe is subject to change. There's only one exception: death always follows life. Isn't strange that people haven't noticed this, that they conduct their lives as though they're going to live forever, that death is nothing to worry about? Of course if they really want to live as long as they obviously expect, they'd better pursue the Dharma. Life, death, and change itself are transcended in the Dharmakaya.

27. I glean what the harvesters have overlooked or rejected. So why are their baskets empty while mine is bursting with so much good food? They just didn't recognize their Buddha Nature when they saw it.

Everything in life depends on the choices we make.

28. In polite society everybody notices if a man's hands are dirty. He'll be stared at contemptuously. Why, the fellow will be wretched until he can wash his hands.

But isn't it funny how a man can have character that's defiled by greed and hate and nobody will pay the slightest attention? He'll move about in perfect ease. Evidently, a dirty character isn't worthy of notice as a dirty hand.

It's so simple to restore dirty hands to a state of purity. Just wash them. But what about corrupted character? That's quite another problem...

29. If a man carries too many worldly burdens, his body will soon wear out. If he worries about too many worldly problems, his mind will soon collapse. To be so occupied with material things is a dangerous way to live, a foolish waste of energy. A man ought to simplify his needs and use his strength to attain spiritual goals. Nobody ever ruined his mind or body by exercising self-restraint.

30. What, ultimately, is the difference between hardship and pleasure? A hardship is an obstacle and an obstacle is a challenge and a challenge is a way to use one's Dharma strength. What is more pleasurable than that?

People are always so afraid of hardship. They go through life trying to avoid the difficult and embrace the easy. For me, it's just the opposite. I don't discriminate at all between hardship and pleasure. Whether the path ahead of me is difficult or easy, I don't have hesitate to follow it.

31. People indignantly condemn thieves to steal material goods. I worry about the kind of thief who steals souls. People act to protect their property. They build walls and install security systems. They hang every thief they catch. What measures do they take to protect their minds from corruption and loss?

32. A man with good character is gentle, humble and free of material desires. A man with bad character is harsh, proud, and enslaved by greed. Gentleness indicates greater strength than harshness. Humility is more admirable than insolence. Freedom is always preferred to slavery.

It's obvious. A man with good character has a better life.

33. There are material gains and spiritual gains. To gain the material objects of its desire, the mind searches the external world. When it seeks spiritual gains, it turns its attention to the heart.

A person ignores his heart becomes attached to the material world. The Dharma seeker looks inward and attends to his heart. That's where he wants to form attachments.

34. You can't be comfortable if you've got splinters in your skin. Worse, if you don't get them out, the skin becomes infected. Infected skin becomes necrotic.

It's the same with the heart. You can't be comfortable if splinters of greed are stuck in it. And if you don't get them out, your heart becomes infected. What will you do if your spirit dies?

35. A natural disaster, a so-called Act of God, doesn't discriminate between its victims. It damages everybody – rich and poor, good and bad.

Whenever you have power over people, keep natural disasters in mind. Be godlike in your fairness.

36. The best way to convert other people to the Dharma Way, is to convert yourself to it first. Be an example for them to follow. One natural act flowing out of good character is more convincing than the most eloquent speech.

37. It's easier to go from poverty to luxury than it is to go from luxury to poverty. Everybody knows that. Poverty is like being tossed around in troubled water. If a person is alert, he can find a way out. But luxury is like drifting gently in a river current. He'll fall asleep and won't wake up until he's in the ocean. Welcome hardship. Regard rain as so much morning dew. Be afraid of sunny days. It's hard to climb with the blazing sun on your back.

38. Our Buddha Nature is always clear and bright. If we can't see because our eyes are darkly veiled with emotional dust. We can't clean dust with dust and we can't calm emotions with emotions. So how do we remove that veil? We use Dharma wisdom. Enlightenment lifts the veil and illuminates our Buddha Face.

39. The great quality of wisdom is that it always responds with precisely what's needed. Like a well-aimed, sharp pointed sword – it always hits the spot. When we grow in wisdom we understand and can control our mind.

A wise person is always kind and considerate. He always sees what's needed. He lets snow flakes fall on an overheated body. He provides cool water to slake a desperate thirst.

40. The easy path is always so appealing. So why do I prefer the hard way? On the easy path we take things for granted. We get lazy and bored. This is a formula for trouble and loss. When we go the hard way, we know we can't let our guard down for a moment. We have to stay alert to meet the challenges. Solving problems makes our mind keener and our character stronger. This is achievement! This is true gain!

41. We all have a tendency to like those who listen to our advice and to dislike those who ignore it. We should guard ourselves against this tendency.

If we allow our emotions to influence us, we're guilty of ignoring the Dharma's advice. Love and hate can infect consciousness and jeopardize our ability to perceive clearly, to see with unprejudiced eyes. In the darkness we may stumble. When we control our emotions, we preserve the light.

42. People crave sensory stimulation. They enjoy this kind of external excitement. But I consider such craving a form of suffering. Sensory stimulation feeds on itself, grows larger and larger, and develops an ever-increasing appetite. People will destroy themselves and others, too, in trying to satisfy it. Pleasure derived from Dharma wisdom is internal excitement. Happiness grows along with the capacity to enjoy it. When given a choice between enjoyments, enlightened people always choose the Dharma.

43. Look, all worldly successes have their downside. The richer you become, the more pride you have. The higher your rank, the bossier you act. The greater your ambition, the more inconsiderate you are.

Success in the Dharma works differently. The better you become, the better you become.

44. Waves roughen the sea and windmill turn because of the wind. Take away the wind and the sea becomes calm and the windmills come to rest. For every effect

there is a cause.

The waves of desire for things in the material world churn our minds, keep up in a constant state of agitation, scrambling in all directions. What do you think could happen if we eliminate desire?

45. The flow of a stream is sluggish if the source is shallow. A water-wheel won't turn in it. A tall building won't last if the foundation is shaky. Walls crack and soon the floors collapse. Depth and firmness are indispensable for good work and endurance. The saints knew this. That's why they rooted themselves deep in the Dharma. They became towers of goodness that nothing could topple. Their enlightenment was a beacon that guided and inspired others for generations.

Don't be content to study the Dharma, to memorize its surface. Plunge into it. Go as deeply as you can.

46. Limitless heaven and the huge earth are easily seen by the eye; but a tiny piece of lint can destroy that eye's vision. A heart filled with love can expand into the universe; but a single hateful thought can puncture that heart and let the love drain out. Never underestimate the power of small things. The saints always gave full consideration to the tiniest thoughts.

47. Even though a hundred persons of great erudition predict failure, the wise person who has confidence in his own abilities will persevere and succeed. Even if these same hundred persons predict success, the person who has only knowledge and not the self confidence born of wisdom will fail.

Book knowledge alone gives rise to doubts and doubts cause confusion. In such conditions, no self confidence can develop. But wisdom leads to trust and trust inspires insight and clear thinking. Dharma followers pursue the path of wisdom in order to eliminate doubt and put knowledge to good use.

48. Not too long ago, when a person fell into the gutter, he'd feel such shame that he'd vow with his blood to mend his way and never fall again. Nowadays, when a person finds himself in the gutter he sends out invitations for others to come and join him. This is really sad, isn't it?

49. The only thing we can be sure of is that we can't be sure of anything. The only fact that doesn't change is the fact that all things constantly change. The saints cultivated patience. No matter what situation they found themselves in, they calmly waited. They also understood that in matters of the heart it's not the object alone that alters, but the subject, too, which proves fickle. Desire just might be the most changeable thing of all.

50. Cultivate the habit of going to sleep early. This is the best regimen for maintaining a strong and peaceful mind. People who stay up late need to show off and entertain their friends. Or else they're bored and need excitement. Even if they sleep late, they're still tired when they get up, still sluggish in body and mind. They can't work or think well at all. People who follow the Dharma lead fuller, richer lives. They don't need other people for support. Good habits are like muscles, the more they are exercised, the stronger they become.

51. All rivers, large or small, clear or muddy, flow into the ocean and the ocean responds by yielding vapors that become clouds which rain and fill the rivers. That is the cycle.

The saints show love and respect to all people, rich or poor, good or bad. The people, seeing such exquisite fairness, respond venerating the saints and trying to emulate them. This, too, is a cycle.

Regard the Dharma as a river regards the ocean, the source of its very nature and its endlessly renewing destiny. Regard the Dharma as saints regard the people, the object of love and the reward for loving.

52. If you treat other people as other, as separate, or as people different from yourself, you will not be inclined to be fair or merciful in your judgment of them. But if you treat other people as if they were just versions of yourself, you will understand their errors and appreciate their qualities.

Are we not fortunate that this is the way Heaven regards earth.

53. If one sees only superficial forms of matter and does not penetrate the true nature of visual reality, one is spiritually blind.

If one hears only temporary function of noise and does not penetrate to the true nature of auditory reality, one is spiritually deaf.

Forms and sounds are only illusions. We use vision and hearing to determine their essence to understand the true nature of reality.

54. The unstoppable stream of the ego's conscious thoughts cannot stay still long enough to comprehend the truth. Yet people are always trying to think up a barrier to the flow, to use thoughts to stop thinking. Thoughts are like wildcats. We would never use one wildcat to tame another.

How then do we enter the state of non-thought? We understand the non-substantial nature of both the one who thinks and the thought itself. We understand that in reality there is not even a single tiny thought of a thought, or a thinker either. When we bear witness to this reality, our own testimony liberates us from bondage of thoughts of having no thoughts.

55. The very nature of mind and body is clear and calm and possesses not a single thought. It is the ego that thinks just as it is the ego that thinks that it desires not to think. The ego causes problems it tries to solve. To be empty of ego is to hear the soundless sound, to see the invisible sight, to think the thoughtless thought.

56. When one reaches the state of the thoughtless thought, one thinks that he is awakened to the Dharma. He thinks about his meditation experience and how it will change his thoughts about his environment. He thinks that it is absolutely wonderful that he has controlled his mind. It wouldn't be right to say that he has more to think about. Actually, he has less.

57. The clearer the body, the brighter one's Buddha Nature shines. In the beginning, we still need the body. It's like a lamp. The Buddha Nature is this flame. But we may still be conscious of shadows. As we progress we feel that the body is the universe itself and that our Buddha Self shines throughout it like the sun.

58. There is no beginning to what came before, and no end to what will come after. It is thought that interrupts the flow of time and calibrates it. It is thought that decides that night follows day, that death follows life, that some things are tiny while others are huge. What, to the universe, is big or large, bright or dark, future or past?

59. Acts are small; the Principle is great. Acts are various; the Principle is one. Those who live the Principle, who let its meaning flow through their very bloodstream, never act at variance with it. In whatever they do, they fulfill the Principle. Whether busy or at ease they are never deceitful, never manipulative. They have no hidden motives and need none.

60. Nothing in the world is gained without desire, without motivation. You can take the route of honesty and be sincere in the pursuit of your desire or you can take the route of deceit and get what you want under false pretenses. One way or the other, when you acquire the object of your desire you'll become attached to it – for at least as long as it takes you to desire something else. But between the routes of sincerity and guile lies a path in which neither strategy is necessary. This is the route that leads to understanding worldly desires for what they are. On this route your motivations die in their tracks while you move straightforwardly on.

61. When you think of a thing, you impart existence to it. Objects which cause desire to arise disappear when the mind's eye closes to them. They blend into the scenery.

It is the same with emotions. Hopes, fears, judgments of right and wrong, and feelings of pleasure or misery also vanish when the mind remains uninvolved in the worldly events that occasioned them. When uncluttered by worldly refuse, the empty mind can hold infinite space. Peace pervades its purity, heaven gleams, and the harmony of the spheres resonates throughout.

62. The more people try to use willpower to obliterate a desire, the more they strengthen the desire. The additional force only serves to confuse them. They become obsessed with the problem. The more people talk about the Dharma without knowing what it is, the more they strengthen their ignorance. They grow in this ignorance and soon consider themselves towers of rectitude. They're like fish out of water who attempt to teach others to swim, or like caged birds who offer lessons in flying.



If you want to conquer a desire, take off its mask and see it for what it is. Instantly, it becomes insignificant – not worth a second thought. If you want to discourse on the Dharma, let it become your natural habitat. Be at home in it. Familiarize yourself with human nature by recognizing your own errors and base desires. Instantly, you'll forgive others for their mistakes. Be humble and gentle in your love for humanity. That's the way to set an example for others to copy. Proud rigidity isn't rectitude. It's spiritual rigor mortis.

63. Those who are serious about the Dharma seek the insights of wisdom in everything they do. Whether busy or at rest, whether alone or in a crowd, in every situation they find themselves, they strive to remain consciously aware. Such vigilance isn't easy. But once they get used to the practice, it becomes so natural an activity that nobody around them even suspects what they are achieving.

64. If you subtract a single blade of grass from the universe, the universe can no longer be said to be all-inclusive. If you put one tiny thought of greed or lust into a pure mind, the mind can no longer claim to be undefiled.

Be careful of small things. Their absence or presence can change everything.

65. The mind expands, into the universe; the body shrinks to mouse-like size. To be enlightened is to appreciate the dynamics of the Dharma.

When the mind soars into boundless space, the body remains confined to earthly habitats. It is usually found scurrying around in the dark.

66. What a waste of time and energy it is to strive to obtain material objects of desire. No lasting satisfaction can result from acquiring them since by their very acquisition they have ceased to be objects of desire. They are consumed like firewood and "burnt offerings". We spit out the ashes in our mouths and search for another tree to cut down.

The saints strove for spiritual insights. They questioned the meaning of life. Achieving this insight, they gained the universe. There being nothing else left to

desire, they lit no sacrificial fires.

67. Vast as the universe is, it fits inside the mind. Small as the body is, there is not enough in creation to satisfy it.

68. Everything in the universe has One Nature. People who live in the Nature have all that they could possibly want. The enlightened possess. The unenlightened desire.

69. The person who considers himself superior to others constantly renders judgments and perceives differences. He rigidly deals in opposites: good or bad, right or wrong. If he follows his own standards of fairness, he'll have to reject at least half of creation.

A person who follows the Dharma strives to unify himself with the rest of humanity. He doesn't discriminate and is indifferent to qualitative distinctions. He knows that Buddha Nature is the One, Indivisible Reality. A person who follows the Dharma strives to remain ever-conscious of his inclusion in that One.

70. Mountains, rivers and the earth itself are parts of The One. The clear mind is transparent; all existence can be seen through it. The mind clouded by illusion of ego sees nothing but itself.

Strive to realize that you are included in The One! Your body may dwell in the material world, but your mind will understand that there is nothing apart from itself that it can desire.

71. In the Dharma's perfect stillness, the heart perceives and understands everything. There are no words for the tongue to speak, no sound for the ear to hear, no sights for the eye to see. Those who live in the Dharma live in their hearts. It's strange that though their bodies may be decaying, their breath is always like a fragrant cool breeze. How wonderful it is to be near them!

72. I have learned so much from people who have been shunned by society. Yes, it's true. Take my advice. If you want to find good teachers, seek out those who have been rejected for being blind, deaf or ignorant.

73. The objects of the material world are the props, sets and characters of a dream-drama. When one awakens, the stage vanishes. The players and the audience too, disappear. Waking up is not death. What lives in a dream can die in a dream; but the dreamer has a real existence that doesn't perish with the dream. All that is necessary for him to stop dreaming, to cease being fascinated by dream images, and to realize that he has merely been a dreamer.

74. Most people only perceive change. To them things come in and out of existence. Sooner or later, what's new becomes old, what's valuable becomes worthless. Their egos determine the nature of destiny of everything

When existence is defined in such finite, ephemeral terms, the power to control people and things is naturally seen as an exercise of ego. And why not? Isn't the ego an authority on the subject of change? Of course, when it comes to the One Thing That Never Changes, the ego is amazingly ignorant. Nowadays people don't appreciate the Changeless. They scramble to keep up with every fad and fashion. They're like comedians, desperately trying to acquire new jokes. Their lives depend on keeping the audience laughing.

What's truly funny is their conviction that they're free, powerful and in control. In reality they're merely helpless slaves to an illusion.

75. There are two ways to perceive the Dharma: the Sudden Way, the way in which the obstacle of illusion is shattered by a striking awareness; and the Gradual Way, the way in which illusion is dispelled incrementally, by continuous effort. One way or the other the obstacle must be destroyed.

76. The Buddha Mind contains the universe. In this universe there is only one pure substance, one absolute and indivisible Truth. The notion of duality does not exist.

The small mind contains only illusions of separateness, of division. It imagines myriad objects and defines truth in terms of relative opposites. Big is defined by small, good by evil, pure by defiled, hidden by revealed, full by empty. What is opposition? It is the arena of hostility, of conflict and turmoil. Where duality is transcended peace reigns. This is the Dharma's ultimate truth.

77. Though, in fact, the Dharma's Truth cannot be expressed in words, teachers talk on and on, trying to explain it. I suppose it's just human nature to say that something cannot be explained and then spend hours trying to explain it. No wonder people walk away. Well, we could be more entertaining. We could make up amusing stories and appeal to our audience with flattering assurances. Of course, we'd just be piling illusion upon illusion. But what would that have to do with the Dharma?

78. A person who is alone can't hold a conversation. A drum has to be hollow for its sound to reverberate. Absences count. Words limit. Interpretations differ. What isn't said is also relevant. Absolute Truth cannot be expressed in words. It must be experienced.

And then, in eloquent silence we best reveal that we have awakened to the Dharma.

## Poetry of Master Hanshan

by Hanshan Deqing

IN: Clouds Thick, Whereabouts Unknown: Poems by Zen Monks of China

Translated by Charles Egan

(Translations from the Asian Classics), Columbia University Press.

### SENDING OFF CHAN MONK GAO BACK TO CIHUA

A leaf boat floats

on an endless sea;

Misty waters vast and vague,

the ford is hard to find.

Go back to your mountain,

fulfill your life's goal;

A secluded place of flowers

where birds call the spring.

### LIVING IN THE MOUNTAINS

Clouds break over the land, spring light stirs;

A faint scent of plum blossom, whence does it come?

I lean on my staff to look for the secret valley,

While one branch hangs low over the eastern wall.

NIGHT DEPARTURE ON LING RIVER

As wild water twists and turns,  
An empty boat floats where it will.

Watching the moon, the color brightens;  
Hearing the river, the sound slowly stills.

Floating clouds are beyond my body;  
White hair frames my mirrored face.

Don't say I've tarried too long:  
Ahead lies my old mountain place.

LIVING IN THE MOUNTAINS

My hut is no bigger than a ladle,  
But within, I do as I please.

Colored clouds  
rise from doors and casements;  
The moon and stars  
are suspended on the porch.

Thoughts end:  
my mind becomes tranquil;  
Dust dissolves:

the world is just thus.

The southern wind reaches my sitting mat,  
Rustling through six empty windows.

SITTING AT NIGHT, ENJOYING THE COOL

I love the colors of a clearing night,  
And in autumn, the birth of the bracing air.  
Leaves in the wood  
heavy after rain;  
Clouds on the peak  
light in the wind.  
In quiet contemplation,  
I see there is no me;  
Through strict practice,  
I've tired of having a name.  
I sit and watch the moon in emptiness,  
Intently facing the solitary light.

**Sources:**

<https://terebess.hu/zen/mesterek/HanshanDeqing.html#b>