

Chants of the Patriarchs

Enlightenment Gathas by Chan Master SengTsan, Niutou Farang, Dajian Huineng,
Hsuanchuen Yunchia, Dongshan Liangje, Xitou Xiqian, Hanshan Deqing and HsuYun

sources:

<http://zbohy.zatma.org/Dharma/zbohy/Sruti-Smriti/Gathas/hsin-hsin-ming.html>

<http://zbohy.zatma.org/Dharma/zbohy/Sruti-Smriti/Gathas/song-of-enlightenment.html>

<https://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/zen/hz/hz.htm>

<https://terebess.hu/zen/xinming.html#3>

http://www.fodian.net/world/6th_sutra.html#1

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

<http://zbohy.zatma.org/Dharma/zbohy/HsuYun/xypoems/xypoems-series2.html>

Faith in Mind Gatha

Hsin-hsin-ming by the Third Patriarch of Chan , Great Master SengTsan

It's not difficult to discover your Buddha Mind
But just don't try to search for it.
Cease accepting and rejecting possible places
Where you think it can be found
And it will appear before you.
Be warned! The slightest exercise of preference
Will open a gulf as wide and deep
as the space between heaven and earth.
If you want to encounter your Buddha Mind
Don't have opinions about anything.
Opinions produce argument
And contentiousness is a disease of the mind.
Plunge into the depths.
Stillness is deep. There's nothing profound in shallow waters.
The Buddha Mind is perfect and it encompasses the universe.
It lacks nothing and has nothing in excess.
If you think that you can choose between its parts
You'll miss its very essence.
Don't cling to externals, the opposite things,
the things that exist as relative.
Accept them all impartially
And you won't have to waste time in pointless choosing.
Judgments and discriminations block the flow
and stir the passions.
They roil the mind that needs stillness and peace.
If you go from either-or, this and that,
or any of the countless opposites,
You'll miss the whole, the One.
Following an opposite you'll be led astray,
away from the balancing center.
How can you hope to gain the One?
To decide what is, is to determine what's not.
But determining what's not can occupy you
so that it becomes what is.
The more you talk and think. the farther away you get.

Cease talking and thinking and you'll find it everywhere.
If you let all things return to their source, that's fine.
But if you stop to think that this is your goal
And that this is what success depends upon
And strive and strive instead of simply letting go,
You won't be doing Zen.
The moment that you start discriminating and preferring
you miss the mark.
Seeking the real is a false view
which should also be abandoned.
Just let go. Cease searching and choosing.
Decisions give rise to confusions
and in confusion where can a mind go?
All the opposing pairs come from the One Great Buddha Mind.
Accept the pairs with gentle resignation.
The Buddha Mind stays calm and still,
Keep your mind within it and nothing can disturb you.
The harmless and the harmful cease to exist.
Subjects when disengaged from their objects vanish
Just as surely as objects,
when disengaged from their subjects, vanish too.
Each depends on the existence of the other.
Understand this duality and you'll see
that both issue from the Void of the Absolute.
The Ground of all Being contains all the opposites.
From the One, all things originate.
What a waste of time to choose between coarse and fine.
Since the Great Mind gives birth to all things,
Embrace them all and let your prejudices die.
To realize the Great Mind be neither hesitant nor eager.
If you try to grasp it, you'll cling to air
and fall into the way of heretics.
Where is the Great Dao? Can you lay It down?
Will It stay or go?
Is It not everywhere waiting for you
to unite your nature with Its nature
and become as trouble free as It is?
Don't tire your mind by worrying about what is real
and what isn't,
About what to accept and what to reject.
If you want to know the One,
let your senses experience what comes your way,
But don't be swayed and don't involve yourself in what comes.
The wise man acts without emotion
and seems not to be acting at all.
The ignorant man lets his emotions get involved.

The wise man knows that all things are part of the One.
The ignorant man sees differences everywhere.
All things are the same at their core
but clinging to one and discarding another
Is living in illusion.
A mind is not a fit judge of itself.
It is prejudiced in its own favor or disfavor.
It cannot see anything objectively.
Bodhi is far beyond all notions of good and evil,
beyond all the pairs of opposites.
Daydreams are illusions and flowers in the sky never bloom.
They are figments of the imagination
and not worth your consideration.
Profit and Loss, right and wrong, coarse and fine.
Let them all go.
Stay awake. Keep your eyes open.
Your daydreams will disappear.
If you do not make judgments, everything will be
exactly as it is supposed to be.
Deep is the Tathagata's wisdom,
Lofty and beyond all illusions.
This is the One to which all things return
provided you do not separate them,
keeping some and casting others away.
Where can you put them anyway?
All things are within the One.
There is no outside.
The Ultimate has no pattern, no duality,
and is never partial.
Trust in this. Keep your faith strong.
When you lay down all distinctions there's nothing left
but Mind that is now pure, that radiates wisdom,
and is never tired.
When Mind passes beyond discriminations
Thoughts and feelings cannot plumb its depths.
The state is absolute and free.
There is neither self nor other.
You will be aware only that you are part of the One.
Everything is inside and nothing is outside.
All wise men everywhere understand this.
This knowledge is beyond time, long or short,
This knowledge is eternal. It neither is nor is not.
Everywhere is here and the smallest equals the largest.
Space cannot confine anything.
The largest equals the smallest.
There are no boundaries, no within and without.

What is and what is not are the same,
For what is not is equal to what is.
If you do not awaken to this truth,
do not worry yourself about it.
Just believe that your Buddha Mind is not divided,
That it accepts all without judgment.
Give no thoughts to words and speeches or pretty plans
The eternal has no present, past or future.

Song of the Mind (Xin Ming) by Niutou Farong (594-657)

Translated by master Master Sheng Yen

The nature of the mind is non-arising,
What need is there of knowledge and views?
Originally there is not a single dharma;
Why discuss inspiration and training?
Coming and going without beginning;
Sought for, it is not seen.
No need to do anything;
It is bright, still, self-apparent.
The past is like empty space;
Know anything and the basic principle is lost.
Casting a clear light on the world,
Illuminating, yet obscured.
If one-mindedness is impeded,
All dharmas are misunderstood.
Coming and going thus,
Is there need for thorough investigation?
Arising without the mark of arising,
Arising and illumination are the same.
Desiring to purify the mind,
There is no mind for effort.
Throughout time and space nothing is illuminated;
This is most profound.
Knowing dharmas is non-knowing;
Non-knowing is knowing the essential.
Using the mind to maintain quietude,
You still fail to leave the sickness.
Birth and death forgotten—
This is original nature.
The highest principle cannot be explained;
It is neither free nor bound.
Lively and attuned to everything,
It is always right before you.
There is nothing in front of you;
Nothing, yet everything is as usual.
Do not belabor wisdom to examine it;
Substance itself is empty and obscure.
Thoughts arise and pass away,

The preceding no different from the succeeding.
If the succeeding thought does not arise,
The preceding thought cuts itself off.
In past, present and future, there is nothing;
No mind, no buddha.
Sentient beings are without mind;
Out of no-mind they manifest.
Distinguishing between profane and sacred,
Their vexations flourish.
Splitting hairs deviates from the eternal.
Seeking the real, you give up the true.
Discarding both is the cure,
Transparent, bright, pure.
No need for hard work or skill;
Keep to the actions of an infant.
Clearly knowing,
The net of views increases
Stillness without seeing,
Not moving in a dark room.
Wakeful without wandering,
The mind is tranquil yet bright.
All phenomena are real and eternal,
Profuse, yet of a single form.
Going, coming, sitting, standing,
Don't attach to anything.
Affirming no direction,
Can there be leaving and entering?
There is neither unifying nor dispersing,
Neither slow nor quick.
Brightness and tranquillity are just as they are.
They cannot be explained in words.
Mind is without alienation;
No need to terminate lust.
Nature being empty, lust will depart by itself.
Allow the mind to float and sink.
Neither clear nor clouded,
Neither shallow nor deep.
Originally it was not ancient;
At present it is not modern.
Now it is non-abiding;
Now it is original mind.
Originally it did not exist;
"Origin" is the present moment.
Bodhi has always existed;
No need to preserve it.
Vexation has never existed;

No need to eliminate it.
Natural wisdom is self-illuminating;
All dharmas return to thusness.
There is no returning, no receiving;
Stop contemplating, forget keeping.
The four virtues are unborn;
The three bodies have always existed.
The six sense organs contact their realms;
Discrimination is not consciousness.
In one-mindedness there are no wandering
thoughts,
The myriad conditions harmonize.
Mind and nature are intrinsically equal;
Together, yet one does not necessarily lead to
the other.
Without arising, complying with phenomena,
Abiding, hidden everywhere.
Enlightenment arises from non-enlightenment.
Enlightenment is non-enlightenment.
As to gain and loss,
Why call either good or bad?
Everything that is active
Originally was not created.
Know that mind is not mind;
There is no sickness, no medicine.
When in confusion, you must discard affairs;
Enlightened, it makes no difference.
Originally there is nothing to obtain;
Now what use is there in discarding?
When someone claims to see demons,
We may talk of emptiness, yet the
phenomena are there.
Don't destroy the emotions of people;
Only teach the cessation of thoughts.
When thoughts are gone, mind is abolished;
When mind is gone, action is terminated.
No need to confirm emptiness;
Naturally, there is clear comprehension.
Completely extinguishing birth and death,
The profound mind enters into principle.
Opening your eyes and seeing forms,
Mind arises in accord with the environment.
Within mind there is no environment;
Within the environment there is no mind.
Use mind to extinguish the environment
And both will be disturbed.

With mind still and environment thus,
Not discarding, not grasping,
Environment is extinguished together with mind.
Mind disappears together with environment.
When neither arises,
There is tranquillity and limitless brightness.
The reflection of bodhi appears
In the eternally clear water of mind.
The nature of merit is like a simpleton:
It does not establish closeness and distance.
Favor and disgrace do not change it;
It doesn't choose its abode.
All connections suddenly cease;
Everything is forgotten.
Eternal day is like night,
Eternal night, like day.
Outwardly like a complete fool,
Inwardly mind is empty and real.
Those not moved by the environment
Are strong and great.
There are neither people nor seeing.
Without seeing there is constant appearance.
Completely penetrating everything,
It has always pervaded everywhere.
Thinking brings unclarity,
Sinking and confusing the spirit.
Use mind to stop activity
And it becomes even more erratic.
The ten thousand dharmas are everywhere,
Yet there is only one door.
Neither entering nor leaving,
Neither quiet nor noisy.
The wisdom of sravakas and pratyekabuddhas
Cannot explain it.
Actually there is not a single thing;
Only wonderful wisdom exists.
The original face is limitless;
It cannot be probed by mind.
True enlightenment is no enlightenment,
Real emptiness is not empty.
All buddhas of the past, present and future
All ride on this basic principle.
The tip of a hair of this basic principle
Contains worlds numerous as the Ganges sands.
Do not concern yourself with anything;
Fix the mind nowhere.

Fixing the mind nowhere,
Limitless brightness shows itself.
Tranquil and non-arising,
Set free in boundless time and space.
Whatever it does, there is no obstruction.
Going and staying are equal.
The sun of wisdom is tranquil,
The light of samadhi is bright.
Illuminating the garden of no forms,
Shining on the city of nirvana.
After all relationships are forgotten,
Spirit is understood and settled in substance.
Not rising from the dharma seat,
Sleeping peacefully in a vacant room.
Taking pleasure in Dao is calming,
Wandering free and easy in reality.
No action and nothing to attain,
Relying on nothing, manifesting naturally.
The four unlimited minds and the six paramitas
Are all on the path of one vehicle.
If mind is not born,
Dharmas will not differ from one another.
Knowing arising is non-arising,
Eternity appears now.
Only the wise understand,
No words can explain enlightenment.

Six Patriarch's Gathas from the Platform Sutra

by Master Dajian Huineng

Small transmission Gatha (prajna section)

A master of the Buddhist Canon as well as of the teaching of the Dhyana School May be likened unto the blazing sun sitting high in his meridian tower.

Such a man would teach nothing but the Dharma for realizing the Essence of Mind, And his object in coming to this world would be to vanquish the heretical sects.

We can hardly classify the Dharmas into 'Sudden' and 'Gradual', But some men will attain enlightenment much quicker than others. For example, this system for realizing the Essence of Mind Is above the comprehension of the ignorant. We may explain it in ten thousand ways, But all those explanations may be traced back to one principle. To illumine our gloomy tabernacle, which is stained by defilement, We should constantly set up the Light of Wisdom. Erroneous views keep us in defilement While right views remove us from it, But when we are in a position to discard both of them We are then absolutely pure.

Bodhi is immanent in our Essence of Mind, An attempt to look for it elsewhere is erroneous. Within our impure mind the pure one is to be found, And once our mind is set right, we are free from the three kinds of beclouding (hatred, lust and illusion).

If we are treading the Path of Enlightenment We need not be worried by stumbling-blocks. Provided we keep a constant eye on our own faults We cannot go astray from the right path. Since every species of life has its own way of salvation They will not interfere with or be antagonistic to one another.

But if we leave our own path and seek some other way of salvation We shall not find it, And though we plod on till death overtakes us We shall find only penitence in the end.

If you wish to find the true way Right action will lead you to it directly; But if you do not strive for Buddhahood You will grope in the dark and never find it.

He who treads the Path in earnest Sees not the mistakes of the world; If we find fault with others We ourselves are also in the wrong. When other people are in the wrong, we should ignore it, For it is wrong for us to find fault. By getting rid of the habit of fault-finding We cut off a source of defilement.

When neither hatred nor love disturb our mind Serenely we sleep.

Those who intend to be the teachers of others Should themselves be skilled in the various expedients which lead others to enlightenment.

When the disciple is free from all doubts It indicates that his Essence of Mind has been found.

The Kingdom of Buddha is in this world, Within which enlightenment is to be sought.

To seek enlightenment by separating from this world Is as absurd as to search for a rabbit's horn. Right views are called 'transcendental'; Erroneous views are called 'worldly'.

When all views, right or erroneous, are discarded Then the essence of Bodhi appears.

This stanza is for the 'Sudden' School. It is also called the 'Great Ship of Dharma' (for sailing across the ocean of existence). Kalpa after kalpa a man may be under delusion, But once enlightened it takes him only a moment to attain Buddhahood.

Supreme Nirvana Gatha

The Supreme Maha Parinirvana Is perfect, permanent, calm, and illuminating. Ignorant people miscall it death, While heretics hold that it is annihilation. Those who belong to the Sravaka Vehicle or the Pratyeka Buddha Vehicle Regard it as 'Non-action'. All these are mere intellectual speculations, And form the basis of the sixty-two fallacious views. Since they are mere fictitious names invented for the occasion They have nothing to do with the Absolute Truth.

Only those of super-eminent mind Can understand thoroughly what Nirvana is, and take up the attitude of neither attachment nor indifference towards it. They know that five skandhas And the so-called 'ego' arising from the union of these skandhas, Together with all external objects and forms And the various phenomena of sound and voice Are equally unreal, like a dream or an illusion. They make no discrimination between a sage and an ordinary man. Nor do they have any arbitrary concept on Nirvana. They are above 'affirmation' and 'negation' and they break the barrier of the past, the present, and the future. They use their sense organs, when occasion requires, But the concept of 'using' does not arise.

Even during the cataclysmic fire at the end of a kalpa, when ocean-beds are burnt dry, Or during the blowing of the catastrophic wind when one mountain topples on another, The real and everlasting bliss of 'perfect rest' and 'cessation of changes' Of Nirvana remains in the same state and changes not. Here I am trying to describe to you something which is ineffable So that you may get rid of your fallacious views. But if you do not interpret my words literally You may perhaps learn a wee bit of the meaning of Nirvana!

Reality and Illusion Gatha (Temperament and Circumstances section)

What makes you cry is that you don't know whither I am going. If you did, there would be no occasion for you to cry. In Suchness there is neither coming nor going, neither becoming nor cessation.

Sit down, all of you, and let me read you a stanza on reality and illusion, and on motion and quietude. Read it, and your opinion will accord with mine. Practice it, and you will grasp the aim and object of our School." The assembly made obeisance and asked the

Patriarch to let them hear the stanza, which read as follows:

In all things there is nothing real, And so we should free ourselves from the concept of the reality of objects. He who believes in the reality of objects Is bound by this very concept, which is entirely illusive. He who realizes the Essence of Mind within himself Knows that the 'True Mind' is to be sought apart from phenomena.

If one's mind is bound by illusive phenomena Where is Reality to be found, when all phenomena are unreal? Sentient beings are mobile; Inanimate objects are stationary. He who trains himself by exercise to be motionless (Gets no benefit) other than making himself as still as an inanimate object.

Should you find true Immobility There is Immobility within activity. Immobility (like that of inanimate objects) is immobility (and not Dhyana), And in inanimate objects the seed of Buddhahood is not to be found. He who is adept in the discrimination of various Dharmalakshana Abides immovably in the 'First Principle' (Nirvana). Thus are all things to be perceived, and this is the functioning of Tathata (Suchness).

Treaders of the Path, Exert yourself and take heed That as followers of the Mahayana School You do not embrace that sort of knowledge Which binds you to the wheel of birth and death. With those who are sympathetic Let us have discussion on Buddhism.

As for those whose point of view differs from ours Let us treat them politely and thus make them happy. (But) disputes are alien to our School, For they are incompatible with its doctrine. To argue with others in disregard of this rule Subjects one's Essence of Mind to the bitterness of mundane existence.

Having heard this stanza, the assembly made obeisance in a body. In accordance with the wishes of the Patriarch, they concentrated their minds to put the stanza into actual practice, and refrained from religious controversy.

The Real Buddha of the Essence of Mind Gatha (final instructions section)

"Now, let me show you how to get acquainted with the nature of the sentient beings within your mind, and thereby realize the Buddha-nature latent in you. Knowing Buddha means nothing else than knowing sentient beings, for the latter ignore that they are potential Buddhas, whereas a Buddha sees no difference between himself and other beings.

When sentient beings realize the Essence of Mind, they are Buddhas. If a Buddha is under delusion in his Essence of Mind, he is then an ordinary being. When your mind is crooked or depraved, you are ordinary beings with Buddha-nature latent in you. On the other hand, when you direct your mind to purity and straightforwardness even for one moment, you are a Buddha.

"Within our mind there is a Buddha, and that Buddha within is the real Buddha.

If Buddha is not to be sought within our mind, where shall we find the real Buddha? Doubt not that Buddha is within your mind, apart from which nothing can exist. Since all things or phenomena are the production of our mind, the Sutra says, 'When mental activity begins, things come into being; when mental activity ceases, they too cease to exist.'

In parting from you, let me leave you a stanza entitled '**The Real Buddha of the Essence of Mind**'.

People of future generations who understand its meaning will realize the Essence of Mind and attain Buddhahood. It reads:

The Essence of Mind or Tathata (Suchness) is the real Buddha, While heretical views and the three poisonous elements are Mara.

Enlightened by Right Views, we call forth the Buddha within us. When our nature is dominated by the three poisonous elements We are said to be possessed by Mara; But when Right Views eliminate from our mind these poisonous elements Mara will be transformed into a real Buddha. The Dharmakaya, the Sambhogakaya and the Nirmanakaya - These three Bodies emanate from one (the Essence of Mind). He who is able to realize this fact intuitively Has sown the seed, and will reap the fruit of Enlightenment. It is from the Nirmanakaya that our Pure Nature emanates; Within the former the latter is to be found. Guided by Pure Nature, the Nirmanakaya treads the Right Path, And will some day attain to the Sambhogakaya, perfect and infinite. 'Pure Nature' is an outgrowth of our sensual instincts; By getting rid of sensuality, we attain the Pure Dharmakaya. When our temperament is such that we are no longer the slaves of the five sense-objects, And when we have realized the Essence of Mind even for one moment only, then Truth is known to us. Should we be so fortunate as to be the followers of the Sudden School in this life, In a sudden we shall see the Bhagavan of our Essence of Mind. He who seeks the Buddha (from without) by practicing certain doctrines Knows not where the real Buddha is to be found. He who is able to realize the Truth within his own mind Has sown the seed of Buddhahood.

He who has not realized the Essence of Mind and seeks the Buddha from without is a fool motivated by wrong desires. I have hereby left to posterity the teaching of the Sudden School For the salvation of all sentient beings who care to practice it. Hear me, ye future disciples! Your time will have been badly wasted if you neglect to put this teaching into practice.

Having recited the stanza, he added, "Take good care of yourselves. After my passing away, do not follow the worldly tradition, and cry or lament. Neither should messages of condolence be accepted, nor mourning be worn. These things are contrary to the Orthodox Teaching, and he who does them is not my disciple. What you should do is to know your own mind and realize your own Buddha-nature, which neither rests nor moves, neither becomes nor ceases to be, neither comes nor goes, neither affirms nor denies, neither stays nor departs.

Lest your mind should be under delusion and thus fail to catch my meaning, I repeat this to you to enable you to realize your Essence of Mind. After my death, if you carry out my instructions and practice them accordingly, my being away from you will make no difference. On the other hand, if you go against my teaching, no benefit would be obtained, even if I continued to stay here."

Then he uttered another stanza:

Imperturbable and serene, the ideal man practices no virtue. Self-possessed and dispassionate, he commits no sin. Calm and silent, he gives up seeing and hearing. Even and upright, his mind abides nowhere.

Song of Enlightenment

By Zen Master Hsuan Chuen of Yung Chia, the Dharma Successor of Hui-Neng.

I There is the leisurely one,
Walking the Tao, beyond philosophy,
Not avoiding fantasy, not seeking truth.
The real nature of ignorance is Buddha-nature itself;
The empty delusory body is the very body of the Dharma.
When the Dharma body awakens completely,
There is nothing at all.
The source of our self-nature
Is the Buddha of innocent truth.
Mental and physical reactions come and go
Like clouds in the empty sky;
Greed, hatred, and ignorance appear and disappear
Like bubbles on the surface of the sea.
When we realize actuality,
There is no distinction between mind and thing
And the path to hell instantly vanishes.
If this is a lie to fool the world,
My tongue may be cut out forever.
Once we awaken to the Tathagata-Zen,
The six noble deeds and the ten thousand good actions
Are already complete within us.
In our dream we see the six levels of illusion clearly;
After we awaken the whole universe is empty.
No bad fortune, no good fortune, no loss, no gain;
Never seek such things in eternal serenity.
For years the dusty mirror has gone uncleaned,
Now let us polish it completely, once and for all.
Who has no-thought? Who is not-born?
If we are truly not-born,
We are not un-born either.
Ask a robot if this is not so.
How can we realize ourselves
By virtuous deeds or by seeking the Buddha?
Release your hold on earth, water, fire, wind;
Drink and eat as you wish in eternal serenity.
All things are transient and completely empty;
This is the great enlightenment of the Tathagata.

Transience, emptiness and enlightenment --
These are the ultimate truths of Buddhism;
Keeping and teaching them is true Sangha devotion.
If you don't agree, please ask me about it.
Cut out directly the root of it all, --
This is the very point of the Buddha-seal.
I can't respond to any concern about leaves and branches.
People do not recognize the Mani-jewel.
Living intimately within the Tathagata-garbha,
It operates our sight, hearing, smell, taste, sensation, awareness;
And all of these are empty, yet not empty.
The rays shining from this perfect Mani-jewel
Have the form of no form at all.
Clarify the five eyes and develop the five powers;
This is not intellectual work, -- just realize, just know.
It is not difficult to see images in a mirror,
But who can take hold of the moon in the water?
Always working alone, always walking alone,
The enlightened one walks the free way of Nirvana
With melody that is old and clear in spirit
And naturally elegant in style,
But with a body that is tough and bony,
Passing unnoticed in the world.
We know that Shakya's sons and daughters
Are poor in body, but not in the Tao.
In their poverty, they always wear ragged clothing,
But they have the jewel of no price treasured within.
This jewel of no price can never be used up
Though they spend it freely to help people they meet.
Dharmakaya, Sambogakaya, Nirmanakaya,
And the four kinds of wisdom
Are all contained within.
The eight kinds of emancipation and the six universal powers
Are all impressed on the ground of their mind.
The best student goes directly to the ultimate,
The others are very learned but their faith is uncertain.
Remove the dirty garments from your own mind;
Why should you show off your outward striving?
Some may slander, some may abuse;
They try to set fire to the heavens with a torch
And end by merely tiring themselves out.
I hear their scandal as though it were ambrosial truth;
Immediately everything melts
And I enter the place beyond thought and words.
When I consider the virtue of abusive words,
I find the scandal-monger is my good teacher.

If we do not become angry at gossip,
We have no need for powerful endurance and compassion.
To be mature in Zen is to be mature in expression,
And full-moon brilliance of dhyana and prajna
Does not stagnate in emptiness.
Not only can I take hold of complete enlightenment by myself,
But all Buddha-bodies, like sands of the Ganges,
Can become awakened in exactly the same way.
The incomparable lion-roar of doctrine
Shatters the brains of the one hundred kinds of animals.
Even the king of elephants will run away, forgetting his pride;
Only the heavenly dragon listens calmly, with pure delight.
I wandered over rivers and seas, crossing mountains and streams,
Visiting teachers, asking about the Way in personal interviews;
Since I recognized the Sixth Founding Teacher at Ts'ao Ch'i,
I know what is beyond the relativity of birth and death.
Walking is Zen, sitting is Zen;
Speaking or silent, active or quiet, the essence is at peace.
Even facing the sword of death, our mind is unmoved;
Even drinking poison, our mind is quiet.
Our teacher, Shakyamuni, met Dipankara Buddha
And for many eons he trained as Kshanti, the ascetic.
Many births, many deaths;
I am serene in this cycle, -- there is no end to it.
Since I abruptly realized the unborn,
I have had no reason for joy or sorrow
At any honor or disgrace.
I have entered the deep mountains to silence and beauty;
In a profound valley beneath high cliffs,
I sit under the old pine trees.
Zazen in my rustic cottage
Is peaceful, lonely, and truly comfortable.
When you truly awaken,
You have no formal merit.
In the multiplicity of the relative world,
You cannot find such freedom.
Self-centered merit brings the joy of heaven itself,
But it is like shooting an arrow at the sky;
When the force is exhausted, it falls to the earth,
And then everything goes wrong.
Why should this be better
Than the true way of the absolute,
Directly penetrating the ground of Tathagata?
Just take hold of the source
And never mind the branches.
It is like a treasure-moon

Enclosed in a beautiful emerald.
Now I understand this Mani-jewel
And my gain is the gain of everyone endlessly.
The moon shines on the river,
The wind blows through the pines,--
Whose providence is this long beautiful evening?
The Buddha-nature jewel of morality
Is impressed on the ground of my mind,
And my robe is the dew, the fog, the cloud, and the mist.
A bowl once calmed dragons
And a staff separated fighting tigers;
The rings on this staff jingle musically.
The form of these expressions is not to be taken lightly;
The treasure-staff of the Tathagata
Has left traces for us to follow.
The awakened one does not seek truth--
Does not cut off delusion.
Truth and delusion are both vacant and without form,
But this no-form is neither empty nor not empty;
It is the truly real form of the Tathagata.
The mind-mirror is clear, so there are no obstacles.
Its brilliance illuminates the universe
To the depths and in every grain of sand.
Multitudinous things of the cosmos
Are all reflected in the mind,
And this full clarity is beyond inner and outer.
To live in nothingness is to ignore cause and effect;
This chaos leads only to disaster.
The one who clings to vacancy, rejecting the world of things,
Escapes from drowning but leaps into fire.
Holding truth and rejecting delusion--
These are but skillful lies.
Students who do zazen by such lies
Love thievery in their own children.
They miss the Dharma-treasure;
They lose accumulated power;
And this disaster follows directly upon dualistic thinking.
So Zen is the complete realization of mind,
The complete cutting off of delusion,
The power of wise vision penetrating directly to the unborn.
Students of virtue will hold the sword of wisdom;
The prajna edge is a diamond flame.
It not only cuts off useless knowledge,
But also exterminates delusions.
They roar with Dharma-thunder;
They strike the Dharma-drum;

They spread clouds of love, and pour ambrosial rain.
Their giant footsteps nourish limitless beings;
Sravaka, Pratyeka, Bodhisattva--all are enlightened;
Five kinds of human nature all are emancipated.
High in the Himalayas, only fei-ni grass grows.
Here cows produce pure and delicious milk,
And this food I continually enjoy.
One complete nature passes to all natures;
One universal Dharma encloses all Dharmas.
One moon is reflected in many waters;
All the water-moons are from the one moon.
The Dharma-body of all Buddhas has entered my own nature,
And my nature becomes one with the Tathagata.
One level completely contains all levels;
It is not matter, mind nor activity.
In an instant eighty-thousand teachings are fulfilled;
In a twinkling the evil of eons is destroyed.
All categories are no category;
What relation have these to my insight?
Beyond praise, beyond blame, --
Like space itself it has no bounds.
Right here it is eternally full and serene,
If you search elsewhere, you cannot see it.
You cannot grasp it, you cannot reject it;
In the midst of not gaining,
In that condition you gain it.
It speaks in silence,
In speech you hear its silence.
The great way has opened and there are no obstacles.
If someone asks, what is your sect
And how do you understand it?
I reply, the power of tremendous prajna.
People say it is positive;
People say it is negative;
But they do not know.
A smooth road, a rough road --
Even heaven cannot imagine.
I have continued my zazen for many eons;
I do not say this to confuse you.
I raise the Dharma-banner and set forth our teaching;
It is the clear doctrine of the Buddha
Which I found with my teacher, Hui Neng.
Mahakashyapa became the Buddha-successor,
Received the lamp and passed it on.
Twenty-eight generations of teachers in India,
Then over seas and rivers to our land

Bodhi Dharma came as our own first founder,
And his robe, as we all know, passed through six teachers here,
And how many generations to come may gain the path?
No one knows.
The truth is not set forth;
The false is basically vacant.
Put both existence and non-existence aside,
Then even non-vacancy is vacant.
The twenty kinds of vacancy have no basis,
And the oneness of the Tathagata-being
Is naturally sameness.
Mind is the base, phenomena are dust;
Yet both are like a flaw in the mirror.
When the flaw is brushed aside,
The light begins to shine.
When both mind and phenomena are forgotten,
Then we become naturally genuine.
Ah, the degenerate materialistic world!
People are unhappy; they find self-control difficult.
In the centuries since Shakyamuni, false views are deep,
Demons are strong, the Dharma is weak, disturbances are many.
People hear the Buddha's doctrine of immediacy,
And if they accept it, the demons will be crushed
As easily as a roofing tile.
But they cannot accept, what a pity!
Your mind is the source of action;
Your body is the agent of calamity;
No pity nor blame to anyone else.
If you don't seek an invitation to hell,
Never slander the Tathagata's true teaching.
In the sandalwood forest, there is no other tree.
Only the lion lives in such deep luxuriant woods,
Wandering freely in a state of peace.
Other animals and birds stay far away.
Just baby lions follow the parent,
And three-year-olds already roar loudly.
How can the jackal pursue the king of the Dharma
Even with a hundred-thousand demonic arts?
The Buddha's doctrine of directness
Is not a matter for human emotion.
If you doubt this or feel uncertain,
Then you must discuss it with me.
This is not the free rein of a mountain monk's ego.
I fear your training may lead to wrong views
Of permanent soul or complete extinction.
Being is not being; non-being is not non-being;

Miss this rule by a hair,
And you are off by a thousand miles.
Understanding it, the dragon-child abruptly attains Buddhahood;
Misunderstanding it, the greatest scholar falls into hell.
From my youth I piled studies upon studies,
In sutras and sastras I searched and researched,
Classifying terms and forms, oblivious to fatigue.
I entered the sea to count the sands in vain
And then the Tathagata scolded me kindly
As I read "What profit is there in counting your neighbor's treasure?"
My work had been scattered and entirely useless,
For years I was dust blown by the wind.
If the seed-nature is wrong, misunderstandings arise,
And the Buddha's doctrine of immediacy cannot be attained.
Shravaka and Pratyeka students may study earnestly
But they lack aspiration.
Others may be very clever,
But they lack prajna.
Stupid ones, childish ones,
They suppose there is something in an empty fist.
They mistake the pointing finger for the moon.
They are idle dreamers lost in form and sensation.
Not supposing something, we see clearly the Tathagata. This is truly called Kwan-Yin, the
Bodhisattva who sees freely.
When awakened we find karmic hindrances fundamentally empty.
But when not awakened, we must repay all our debts.
The hungry are served a king's repast,
And they cannot eat.
The sick meet the king of doctors;
Why don't they recover?
The practice of Zen in this greedy world --
This is the power of wise vision.
The lotus lives in the midst of the fire;
It is never destroyed.
Pradhanashura broke the gravest precepts;
But he went on to realize the unborn.
The Buddhahood he attained in that moment
Lives with us now in our time.
The incomparable lion roar of the doctrine!
How sad that people are stubbornly ignorant;
Just knowing that crime blocks enlightenment,
Not seeing the secret of the Tathagata teaching.
Two monks were guilty of murder and carnality.
Their leader, Upali, had the light of a glow-worm;
He just added to their guilt.
Vimalakirti cleared their doubts at once

As sunshine melts the frost and snow.
The remarkable power of emancipation
Works wonders innumerable as the sands of the Ganges.
To this we offer clothing, food, bedding, medicine.
Ten thousand pieces of gold are not sufficient;
Though you break your body
And your bones become powder, --
This is not enough for repayment.
One vivid word surpasses millions of years of practice.
The King of the Dharma deserves our highest respect.
Tathagatas, innumerable as sands of the Ganges,
All prove this fact by their attainment.
Now I know what the Mani-jewel is:
Those who believe this will gain it accordingly.
When we see truly, there is nothing at all.
There is no person; there is no Buddha.
Innumerable things of the universe
Are just bubbles on the sea.
Wise sages are all like flashes of lightning
However the burning iron ring revolves around my head,
With bright completeness of dhyana and prajna
I never lose my equanimity.
If the sun becomes cold, and the moon hot,
Evil cannot shatter the truth.
The carriage of the elephant moves like a mountain,
How can the mantis block the road?
The great elephant does not loiter on the rabbit's path.
Great enlightenment is not concerned with details.
Don't belittle the sky by looking through a pipe.
If you still don't understand,
I will settle it for you.

The Song of the Jeweled Mirror Samadhi

by master Dongshan Liangje

Translated by Toshu John Neatrour, Sheng-yen, and Kazu Tanahashi

The teaching of suchness, is given directly, through all buddha ancestors,
Now that it's yours, keep it well.

A serving of snow in a silver bowl, or herons concealed in the glare of the moon
Apart, they seem similar, together, they're different.

Meaning cannot rest in words, it adapts itself to that which arises.
Tremble and you're lost in a trap, miss and there's always regrets.

Neither reject nor cling to words, both are wrong; like a ball of fire,
Useful but dangerous. Merely expressed in fine language, the mirror will tarnish.

At midnight truly it's most bright, by daylight it cannot still be seen.
It is the principle that regulates all, relieving every suffering.

Though it doesn't act it is not without words.
In the most precious mirror form meets reflection:

You are not It, but It is all you.
Just as a baby, five senses complete,

Neither going or coming, nor arising or staying,
Babbles and coos: speech without meaning,

No understanding, unclearly expressed.
Six lines make the double *li* trigram, where principle and appearances interact.

Lines stacked in three pairs yet transform in five ways.
Like the five flavors of the hyssop plant or the five branches of the diamond scepter,

Reality harmonizes subtly just as melody and rhythm, together make music.
Penetrate the root and you fathom the branches, grasping connections, one then
finds the road.

To be wrong is auspicious, there's no contradiction.
Naturally pure and profoundly subtle, it touches neither delusion nor awakening,

At each time and condition it quietly shines.
So fine it penetrates no space at all, so large its bounds can never be measured.

But if you're off by a hair's breadth all harmony's lost in discord.
Now there are sudden and gradual schools with principles, approaches so standards arise.

Penetrating the principle,
Mastering the approach, the genuine constant continues outflowing.

A tethered horse, a mouse frozen in fear, outwardly still but inwardly whirling:
Compassionate sages freed them with teaching.

In upside down ways folks take black for white.
When inverted thinking falls away they realize mind without even trying.

If you want to follow the ancient path then consider the ancients:
The buddha, completing the path, still sat for ten eons.

Like a tiger leaving a trace of the prey, like a horse missing the left hind shoe,
For those whose ability is under the mark, a jeweled footrest and brocaded robe.

For others who still can manifest wonder there's a house cat and cow.
Yi the archer shot nine of ten suns from the sky, saving parched crops, another
bowman hit targets at hundreds of paces:

These skills are small to compare with that in which two arrow points meet head on
in mid air.

The wooden man breaks into song, a stone maiden leaps up to dance,
They can't be known by mere thought or feelings, so how can they be analyzed?

The minister still serves his lord, the child obeys his parent.
Not obeying is unfilial, not serving is a useless waste.

Practicing inwardly, functioning in secret, playing the fool, seemingly stupid,
If you can only persist in this way, you will see the lord within the lord.

Harmony of Difference and Equality (relative and absolute)

by Great Master Shitou Xiqian

The mind of the great sage of India
is intimately transmitted from west to east.

While human faculties are sharp or dull,
the Way has no northern or southern ancestors.

The spiritual source shines clear in the light;
the branching streams flow on in the dark.

Grasping at things is surely delusion,
according with sameness is still not enlightenment.

All the objects of the senses
transpose and do not transpose.

Transposing, they are linked together;
not transposing, each keeps its place.

Sights vary in quality and form;
sounds differ as pleasing or harsh.

Darkness merges refined and common words;
brightness distinguishes clear and murky phrases.

The four elements return to their natures,
Just as a child turns to its mother.

Fire heats, wind moves,
water wets, earth is solid.

Eye and sights, ear and sounds,
nose and smells, tongue and tastes;

Thus for each and every thing,
according to the roots, the leaves spread forth.

Trunk and branches share the essence;
revered and common, each has its speech.

In the light there is darkness,
but don't take it as darkness;

In the dark there is light,
but don't see it as light.

Light and dark oppose one another
like the front and back foot in walking.

Each of the myriad things has its merit,
expressed according to function and place.

Existing phenomenally like box and cover joining;
according with principle like arrow points meeting.

Hearing the words, understand the meaning;
don't establish standards of your own.

Not understanding the Way before your eyes,
how do you know the path you walk?

Walking forward is not a matter of far or near,
but if you are confused, mountains and rivers block your way.

I respectfully urge you who study the mystery,
don't pass your days and nights in vain.

Contemplating Mind

By Great Master Hanshan Deqing (1546-1623)

Translated by Sheng Yen

from: 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.

Search for Truth - Experience Chan

by Great Master HsuYun (Deqing Yangche)

Experience Chan! It's not mysterious.
As I see it, it boils down to cause and effect.
Outside the mind there is no Dharma
So how can anybody speak of a heaven beyond?

Experience Chan! It's not a field of learning.
Learning adds things that can be researched and discussed.
The feel of impressions can't be communicated.
Enlightenment is the only medium of transmission.

Experience Chan! It's not a lot of questions.
Too many questions is the Chan disease.
The best way is just to observe the noise of the world.
The answer to your questions? Ask your own heart.

Experience Chan! It's not the teachings of disciples.
Such speakers are guests from outside the gate.
The Chan which you are hankering to speak about
only talks about turtles turning into fish.

Experience Chan! It can't be described.
When you describe it you miss the point.
When you discover that your proofs are without substance
You'll realize that words are nothing but dust.

Experience Chan! It's experiencing your own nature!
Going with the flow everywhere and always.
When you don't fake it and waste time trying to rub and polish it,
Your Original Self will always shine through brighter than bright.

Experience Chan! It's like harvesting treasures.
But donate them to others. You won't need them.
Suddenly everything will appear before you,
Altogether complete and altogether done.

Experience Chan! Become a follower who when accepted
Learns how to give up his life and his death.
Grasping this carefully he comes to see clearly.
And then he laughs till he topples the Cold Mountain ascetics.

Experience Chan! It'll require great skepticism;
But great skepticism blocks those detours on the road.
Jump off the lofty peaks of mystery.
Turn your heaven and earth inside out.

Experience Chan! Ignore that superstitious nonsense
That makes some claim that they've attained Chan.
Foolish beliefs are those of the not-yet-awakened.
And they're the ones who most need the experience of Chan!

Experience Chan! There's neither distance nor intimacy.
Observation is like a family treasure. Whether with eyes, ears, body, nose, or tongue -
It's hard to say which is the most amazing to use.

Experience Chan! There's no class distinction.
The one who bows and the one who is bowed to are a Buddha unit.
The yoke and its lash are tied to each other.
Isn't this our first principle... the one we should most observe?