

The Great Dharma of Zen Practice

This announcement that is being disseminated contains the great dharma of zen (dhyana in Sanskrit but generally known as zen) practice that H.H. Dorje Chang Buddha III taught a group of cultivators in March of 2013 in the Hall of the Three Holy Ones at Bodhi Monastery in the United States. Today is December 4, 2013. We now for the first time formally publish this great dharma on the internet.

Today H.H. Dorje Chang Buddha III performed an initiation and transmission involving necessary mantras in the practice of zen. Additionally, this great dharma enables everyone to understand what the standard, proper practice of zen actually is. All of you will now be able to understand what the levels of those zen practice dharmas you encountered before this announcement actually are and whether such dharmas are correct. This great dharma will enable you to know whether those masters who teach you are qualified to give discourses on the dharma. Are those masters clear about what the practice of zen is? Are they clear about what zen practice is in the entirety of the Buddha-dharma? If one does not even understand zen practice, can one understand the Buddha-dharma? If one does not understand zen practice, one of course does not understand the meaning of zen. One also does not understand the meaning of samadhi. Thus, just the fact that one does not understand the meaning of zen practice shows that one does not understand Buddhism at all. Correspondingly, it shows that one also does not understand the Buddha-dharma.

Therefore, when a group of masters entreated H.H. Dorje Chang Buddha III to let them give discourses on the dharma to their disciples, H.H. Dorje Chang Buddha III said the following: Anyone who is a qualified master may give discourses on the dharma as long as he or she truly understands Buddha-dharma and transmits dharma according to the teachings. However, those who recklessly expound Buddha-dharma are certainly not qualified to give discourses on the dharma. Therefore, masters must pass a test. Only then may they give discourses on the dharma. Otherwise, one is not qualified to give discourses on the dharma no matter what one's status may be. That is because giving discourses without understanding Buddhism and Buddha-dharma is undoubtedly an act of deceiving the public. Thus, people who do not understand Buddha-dharma are not allowed to give discourses on the dharma. That is because the concept of discourses on the dharma means that those Buddhists who listen to the

discourses have to receive them as being the truth. If what they are receiving is evil karma, then their wisdom-roots will be destroyed.

This not only applies to not understanding the practice of zen. It applies to other problematic aspects, such as misunderstanding the sutras. All of these seriously harm the interests of living beings or even mislead practitioners. H.H. Dorje Chang Buddha III will not approve of any words or actions that harm or destroy the interests of living beings. With respect to anyone who pretends to understand but who truly does not understand yet who still wants to give so-called discourses on the dharma, H.H. Dorje Chang Buddha III has said that He has no right to control everyone. However, those who give erroneous discourses on the dharma will be unable to bear the ensuing karmic consequences. That is because the karmic hindrance produced from the sin of defiling the minds of living beings for millions of eons is passed on to those people who listen to the erroneous discourses.

Just as expected, the results of the exam on zen were completely as H.H. Dorje Chang Buddha III thought they would be. There were those of holy virtue who passed, including one with the status of three stars sun-moon wheel. There was a person of holy virtue with the status of two stars sun-moon wheel who barely passed with a score of 68. A person with the status of one star sun-moon wheel got a score of 61. Nobody else is qualified to give discourses on the dharma, no matter what their status may be. That is because they do not understand even basic Buddha-dharma. There was even someone who is the reincarnation of a very famous person whose answer to the exam question was devoid of a single good point. Moreover, the answer was unresponsive to the question and full of fallacies. How can this type of people, who on the surface are figures within Buddhism but who in essence are heretics who deceive disciples, be allowed to give discourses on Buddha-dharma and thereby mislead practitioners?

Therefore, those who did not pass that exam, no matter who they may be, may only lead people in respectfully listening to recorded dharma discourses given by H.H. Dorje Chang Buddha III. What those of you who are masters say to your disciples can be used as a reference only and cannot be used as the basis for set principles. With respect to receiving disciples who take refuge, transmitting rituals, and transmitting mantras, this is what you should do. You should tell people about the ten kinds of wholesome behavior, the four immeasurable states of mind, the six perfections, bodhicitta, the precepts, and the disciplines. However, you absolutely may not deviate from the sutras. You also may not pretend to understand that which you do not

understand. Anyone who pretends to understand that which he does not understand, who cooks up tales and speaks recklessly, is definitely engaging in the conduct of a fraud, the conduct of an evil spirit.

Below is the complete content of "The Great Dharma of Zen Practice" expounded by H.H. Dorje Chang Buddha III in March of 2013. This is a transcription of a discourse on dharma given impromptu.

H.H. DORJE CHANG BUDDHA III EXPOUNDS

"THE GREAT DHARMA OF ZEN PRACTICE"

Sit down, everyone.

Has everyone sat down? Is everyone ready?

(Everyone answers: Yes.)

First, put your palms together. Recite the Taking Refuge Vows once. Generate the four immeasurable states of mind and bodhicitta. All right, listen attentively. I will now begin to expound the dharma for all of you.

I summoned you disciples to gather here today mainly in response to the requests of some Westerners who are white, black, and Hispanic, as well as in response to some Asians. Some of those people are rinpoches. You have said that you especially like zen (pronounced *chan* in Chinese) and that you want to learn the practice of zen. Therefore, today I have come here to fulfill your wishes. I will transmit to all of you a high-level great dharma of zen.

Actually, all of you sitting here have heard the name "zen practice dharma." However, truthfully speaking, none of you know what is meant by zen practice. I can say that all of you present here and even many masters who teach zen practice, which include some of you sitting here today, do not understand what true zen practice is. Is what I just said going too far? I tell you unequivocally that what I just said is not going too far in the least! I will now ask you a few simple questions. What is zen practice? What is it used

for? Why should one practice zen? What is the goal of zen practice? What is zen? Do you know? Can those of you who are masters and who teach zen practice answer me?

(Some people say: We are not very clear about such things. Would the Buddha please teach such dharma.)

I am one with a heart of humility. It would be acceptable for you to just call me Master. You say you are not very clear about such things. Actually, that is wrong. It is not that you are not very clear about such things. Even if you claimed to know, your understanding would be wrong. If you do not even understand what the concept of zen is after all, if you know nothing about the path of zen yet still want to teach it to people, that would be harming living beings and ruining people's wisdom-roots! You would have to bear the consequences of such karma. Human life is a few dozen years or a hundred years. Why would you want to commit such an offense?

Today I will first talk about zen. Zen is divided into the four kinds of zen and eight kinds of samadhi. Of course, you know about these. The sutras contain this term. What, after all, are the four kinds of zen and eight kinds of samadhi used for? Why does one engage in zen? What are the effects of zen? All of you have scanty knowledge of the answers to such questions. Many people like to engage in sitting zen. Many people like to practice zen. What do they actually want to accomplish? What do they want to obtain? What goal do they want to achieve? Everyone should first clearly understand the answers to these questions.

Within Buddhism, there are more practitioners who engage in zen practice than there are practitioners of any other dharma. Moreover, most of them are learned people. However, they are all in blind pursuit. I will not speak any more about this now. I will now directly teach zen. Zen is a dharma method. It is one type of dharma practice that is part of the Buddha-dharma taught by the Buddha. However, this dharma practice is independent. Nonetheless, the dharma-flavor and the key or essence of this dharma practice relate to the practice of any dharma method.

To put it concisely, zen is the absolute truth. The absolute truth is truth that never perishes. It is the source of the unity and equality of the three times: past, present, and future. This is the meaning of zen. Of course, there are many other ways of expressing

this. I will not at this time talk about other theories. Those who engage in zen practice should understand certain simple principles. Today I will use the simplest, easiest to understand principles to teach you, principles that relate to a state when consciousness transforms.

That is, when consciousness that differentiates or discriminates changes into a state in which consciousness does not differentiate or discriminate, what is that non-conscious state? Is it devoid of wild fancy and improper thoughts? Is it nothingness? Is it very pure? Such an understanding is completely erroneous. All of you who want to thoroughly understand this non-conscious state must study *Expounding the Absolute Truth Through the Heart Sutra* that I spoke. After you study *Expounding the Absolute Truth Through the Heart Sutra*, you will apprehend what we are searching for, what our goal is, what we want to find, what we want to awaken to, and what we want to realize in the religious truths of zen.

Given that, will we be able to find the thing that we want to find? We will never find that thing through searching! As long as we search for it, we will not find it! Why will we not find it? It is because when we search we must use our own consciousness to search. It is like going outside and searching everywhere for your own child who is already being carried on your own back. You say, "Oh no, where did my child go? What place did my child go to?" You will never find your child since you are the one who is actually carrying the child on your back.

Therefore, you will never find zen by using consciousness, by using the mind to intentionally search. A type of practice method is necessary to find zen. Zen itself is not a practice method. However, we can find, obtain, and realize zen only through a practice method. Listen attentively because this is not at all easy to understand. If you do not listen carefully, if your thoughts are not focused, you will not understand. Today I will teach all of you this method of practicing zen.

Let's first understand the basic concept of zen. With this basis, it will be easier to obtain zen. We want to obtain a state of zen. It is called a state. Actually, there is no state. If a state appears and we are able to use our consciousness to differentiate what type of state has appeared, then that already is not zen. However, the word *state* must be used

as a figure of speech; otherwise, there are no words to express this. If *state* is not used, what word should be used? There has to be a term to express it.

What thing is that state? It is a thing that enables you to not be born and not die. That thing is you. You are that thing. The word *thing* is used as a figure of speech. It is an expedient way to explain something. Otherwise, just like with the word *state*, there would be no word to express it. Precisely because of this, there is the saying, "No speaking, no activities of consciousness." Simply put, the goal of practicing zen is enlightenment! The goal of enlightenment is to obtain the thing that is not born and does not die! It is a so-called thing. There is no such thing. I am talking about a so-called thing or state. Actually, there is no such thing. That is because if such a "thing" exists, it was produced by a differentiation or discrimination made in our consciousness. It was produced out of our thoughts.

For example, this is a round thing. This is a long thing, both ends of which are black. It is a pen. This is a string of beads. This is an image of a Buddha. This is a lotus. This is an expanse of emptiness. Who told you all of that? It came from differentiations, distinctions, or identifications made in your own consciousness. If your consciousness can distinguish and identify things such as an image of a Buddha or a lotus, then you are already not zen. Instead, your mind of differentiating thoughts is that of an ordinary person.

I return to what I said. If you read and are able to understand *Expounding the Absolute Truth Through the Heart Sutra*, you will solve all forms of zen. That is, you will obtain all forms of zen! Of course, you might say, "Since I have read treatises and writings by Nagarjuna, Aryadeva, Dignaga, Candrakirti, Fuhu, Asanga, Vasubandhu, Santideva, Xuanzang, and others of prior generations, I shouldn't have to read *Expounding the Absolute Truth Through the Heart Sutra*, right?" All I can tell you today is that those treatises and writings that you read are not bad, since they are expositions by people on the level of a patriarch. However, those books do not have the effect of *Expounding the Absolute Truth Through the Heart Sutra*. So I reiterate that you must study *Expounding the Absolute Truth Through the Heart Sutra*! If you truly understand it through studying it, you will have succeeded.

Speaking of zen, there are a great many types of zen. Other than the states of the four kinds of zen and eight kinds of samadhi, there are many methods to reach awakening or enlightenment. Each of those methods is different. The relative level of each method is also different. There is tathagata zen, patriarchal zen, altar lamp zen, wooden fish zen, thought cessation zen, one sense organ zen, unification of two states zen, introspection zen, breath counting zen, pure water zen, dharma characteristics zen, focusing on moon zen, guard the orifices zen, tummo (inner-heat) zen, cold air zen, "who is chanting the name of Amitabha Buddha?" zen, afflictions elimination zen, great enlightenment zen, and immovable zen of kalachakra. Of course, there are even more zen methods, a great many more. This would include the so-called cypress tree in front of courtyard zen and the so-called no-voice, no speech zen.

There are many forms of zen. There are so many. If I were to introduce you to them one by one, it would take three to five years. Therefore, today I will not go into such detail. What you mainly want to understand is what zen is, what you want to attain as a goal in engaging in zen practice. You want to attain introspection, enlightenment, understanding of your mind and seeing your original nature. You want to see your own original nature that was not born and does not die! Do you understand? I return to that principle: After you study and understand *Expounding the Absolute Truth Through the Heart Sutra*, zen will be kid's stuff. At that time, you naturally will clearly understand in one reading the *Diamond Sutra* and the *Sutra on Understanding and Realizing the Definitive Truth*, and you will realize the sameness of principles and essence.

We engage in zen for the purpose of realizing original nature, emptiness, or dharmakaya. This dharmakaya was not born and does not die. I will give an example to all of you. Some methods of zen practice are truly inexplicable but unfathomably profound. Take, for example, the Gaomin Monastery in Yangzhou. In ancient times, a great number of people there became accomplished through the practice of zen. At the Gaomin Monastery in Yangzhou, basically every seven days one person would awaken to zen, becoming enlightened and accomplished. That being the case, how did they do their zen practice? The dharma methods that they applied were not called by any of the names of those forms of zen that I just mentioned. Those dharma methods also did not include any of the zen practice techniques of those forms of zen that I just mentioned. That is why I say that there are a great many zen dharmas.

First of all, in ancient times when someone entered the Gaomin Monastery to practice zen, that person would first have to sign an agreement. That agreement was very simple. To put it bluntly, they agreed that they could be beaten to death with impunity. The one who beat them to death would not have to lose his own life. Additionally, they agreed to voluntarily carry out the dharma rules of the monastery. After they entered the monastery, there were many ways for them to practice zen. Here I will talk about three of those ways. They had to give up all of the dharmas that they previously learned. As soon as one arrived at Gaomin Monastery and entered the zen hall, one could not apply any previously learned dharmas.

Five people carried cudgels. Those five were called "the five great cudgel carriers." Their specific task was to beat people. The practitioners had periods of running zen, each of which lasted the time it took for a stick of incense to burn from top to bottom. The stick of incense was not long. It was only this long. The practitioners had to jog. In the zen hall, many practitioners formed a circle and jogged. As they jogged, one of the cudgel carriers would strike his cudgel against something, which made a loud noise. As soon as he struck his cudgel against something, that loud noise sounded. When the jogging practitioners heard the striking sound from the cudgel, they had to immediately stop jogging. They were not allowed to jog even one more step. When the striking sound of the cudgel sounded again, they had to immediately resume their jogging. Have any of you seen a cudgel used by a cudgel carrier in a zen hall?

(Everyone answers: No.)

Sometime in the future I will find a time to show you a cudgel from the Gaomin Monastery in Yangzhou that was used in the past. As soon as the striking sound from his cudgel sounded, if you were still jogging, you would be taken aside and beaten to death. If you were not beaten to death, you were at the very least maimed. Thus, the minds of those practitioners were of course extremely focused. They were always focused on the sound of the cudgel. They were always fearful that they would be taken aside and severely beaten for continuing to jog after the striking of the cudgel sounded, or, if they had stopped jogging, for not immediately resuming their jogging after the striking of the cudgel sounded. Do you understand?

There was a sitting period, which lasted as long as it took for a stick of incense to burn from top to bottom. As soon as they sat down, the cudgel carriers in back of them would keep an eye on them. While sitting, the practitioners were not allowed to move in any way. The practitioners were absolutely forbidden to move. They were not permitted to recite the name of any Buddha or chant any mantra. If one was seen moving a bit, he was taken aside and severely beaten, to the extent of possible death. Therefore, after they sat down in a settled posture, as soon as the striking sound of the cudgel carrier's cudgel could be heard, they did not dare move. They had to remain stiff for as long as the incense stick burned. They did not dare move in the slightest. The focus of their minds increased a hundredfold because they feared that they would inadvertently move, be taken aside, and be beaten, resulting in injury, deformity, or death.

Another example is the drinking of water. The practitioners had to go to the east side to draw water and then carry the water with both hands to the west side. Only then could they drink the water. Additionally, the cup of water had to be completely filled. If any water spilled to the ground as they were carrying the cup with both hands, they were taken aside and severely beaten.

Thus, the consciousness of those who practiced zen there did not wander. They did not think of other things. They did not rest. When they ate, they were not even allowed to make the sound of chopsticks hitting the bowl. As a result, their consciousness was forced to naturally not dare think of other things. Do you understand? Therefore, it is only natural that after our consciousness is united, we will not think things over and will not be distracted. Everyone fears being beaten to death. Do you understand? When you fear being beaten to death and death is used to force you, then you have no other choice. You must seriously deal with the matter. That is why in such circumstances it is very easy to cut off mistaken thinking. Through force, your thoughts are cut off. When your thoughts are cut off through force, your original nature emerges. As soon as your original nature emerges, you have broken through in your zen practice.

Therefore, by and large, at each seven-day retreat someone broke through in his zen practice at that monastery. Basically, there would be one breakthrough every seven days. How did they know someone broke through? The day someone broke through, he was ordered to write a verse for others to hear, enabling the abbot of the zen hall and

the zen master to recognize him. That practitioner was later tested again to see whether he truly awakened to the truth through the practice of zen, whether he understood his mind and saw his nature. Do you understand?

(Everyone answers: I understand.)

There is a school in Buddhism called the zen (chan) school. The Sixth Patriarch of the zen (chan) school was Patriarch Huineng. His was the sudden enlightenment method. At that time there were two patriarchs. The other patriarch was called Shenxiu. His was the gradual enlightenment method. Actually, both patriarchs were accomplished. It is just that they did not have the same level of insight.

After Shenxiu attained a certain level of realization, he composed a verse. The verse that he wrote is:

The body is the bodhi tree

The mind is like a bright mirror on a stand

At all times wipe it diligently

And let no dust sully it

He was saying that his body is like the bodhi tree that symbolizes accomplishment. The meaning here is that his body represents accomplishment. In other words, his body represents liberation. He was saying his body is a state of liberation. Why is that tree called the bodhi tree? It is because Sakyamuni Buddha attained full realization and perfect enlightenment under the bodhi tree. That is why later on the phrase "realize bodhi" was understood to mean become accomplished. That is how that came to be.

Shenxiu was saying that his body is the bodhi tree but that his mind is never confused, is clear, does not violate the laws of cause and effect, and knows everything. Thus, he wrote, "The mind is like a bright mirror on a stand." Additionally, he was saying that he was cultivating himself at all times and all places, that he would correct himself whenever he discovered something not good about himself. Thus, he wrote, "At all times wipe it diligently." Here, wiping means using a feather duster. He is saying that he

constantly holds a feather duster to whisk off his defilements. "And let no dust sully it" means that he would not let dirty things sully him. Here, dirty things refer to impure karma rather than dust visible to us. His meaning here was that he very seriously corrects whatever is not good about himself so as to comport with the teachings of the Buddha.

Generally, from Shenxiu's verse, people thought that he was already the bodhi tree. Moreover, he was still correcting his mistakes. Of course, that is good, isn't it? However, Huineng did not have such a view. That is because Shenxiu had not awakened to the essence of zen. That is, he had not truly realized great, complete zen enlightenment. His enlightenment was not thorough enlightenment. Huineng was very young. He was a child, but he had attained thorough enlightenment. When Huineng heard this verse by Shenxiu, he said, "I also want to write a verse." He said he also wanted to write one. Because he was illiterate, he asked a fellow-disciple to write his verse on a wall. Huineng responded to Shenxiu's verse based on the content of Shenxiu's verse.

He wrote, "Bodhi originally has no tree." That is, there is the term "bodhi tree," but there is no such tree. That tree does not exist. "The bright mirror on a stand is also not real." Although you know everything, there is no such concrete thing and there is no knower of it. Thus, there is no such real stand. Because Shenxiu said, "The mind is like a bright mirror on a stand," Huineng said, "The bright mirror on a stand is also not real." "Not a single thing has ever existed. What, then, could dust sully?" Originally, there is not one thing. Where can dust go to sully? What can dust sully? There is not one thing to be sullied by it. That is, there is no place for thoughts to abide in Buddha-nature. Since thoughts cannot arise, the zen state that is realized is one in which nothing sticks or clings. Dust or anything else does not stick to or cling to anything. That is because there is nothing to stick or cling to. Here you must carefully grasp what I am saying. Do not think this state is the emptiness of the four elements. Do not think that there is a state of emptiness. That would be a mistake. The truth is that this state of emptiness also does not exist. Thus, there is no place to be sullied by dust.

(Many Western rinpoches and scholars who are Caucasian or of another ethnicity were in attendance. Several people were all trying to translate a certain part of what the Buddha Master was teaching. Listening to them, the Buddha Master knew that their

translation into English was erroneous and disordered. At once, the Buddha Master sternly criticized them for their mistaken translation. The Buddha Master told them they were not allowed to feign understanding or continue with their chaotic translation. Finally, the Buddha Master instructed Bodi Wentu Rinpoche to continue translating.)

Shenxiu had a certain thing called the bodhi tree. The Buddha-dharma state that he realized had a certain thing that he wanted to have. However, Huineng then said that in the Buddha-dharma even consciousness does not differentiate. What thing, then, could still exist? No thing exists. What, then, could be sullied? Hence, in emptiness there cannot be consciousness that differentiates. If one's consciousness differentiates, one falls into the consciousness of any ordinary person and departs from emptiness. Having departed from emptiness, one naturally has the state of an ordinary person. Without consciousness that differentiates, one enters the state of a holy person. However, it is by and large impossible for people not to have a consciousness that differentiates. That is why they must learn from the Buddhas and cultivate themselves.

I can see today that your translation requires a great deal of effort and that many translation errors have occurred. I do not want to waste time by continuing to speak about the same subject matter. Without further delay, I will teach you zen practice methods. All right, I will now directly teach you those methods.

With respect to the zen I will be transmitting to everyone today, why is it that as soon as some people sit down to meditate, if their thoughts are not scattered, then they fall asleep; and if they do not fall asleep, then they are dull-minded; and if they are not dull-minded, they are unfocused? It is mainly because of karmic hindrances, evil karma, good karma, and ignorance-based karma that have accumulated since beginning-less time spanning many eons. That is, these karmic forces that are good, bad, and even neither good nor bad have besieged us. Therefore, when we sit down to meditate, we cannot quiet down our thoughts. Being unable to quiet down our thoughts, we will be even more unable to cut off our thoughts. Being unable to cut off our thoughts, it will be totally impossible for us to realize the zen state and enter samadhi. Thus, we will have no way to attain enlightenment.

Therefore, people who practice zen usually only know about teaching people how to practice zen. They themselves practice zen. However, people who practice zen generally do not know that there is a special mantra for zen practice. We must first purify the zen practice altar area. That is, when we sit down to engage in zen practice, we first have to recite this Altar Area Purification Mantra to remove impurities from the altar area, to completely dispel evil energy that is harmful to us, evil spirits, and other bad things. This is the first task we should do. If we are in the mountains, we should also invite the mountain spirits to guard the mountain passes, prevent the invasion of wild animals, and prevent the invasion of mountain and tree goblins. Thus, there would be two dharmas to practice. However, if we are in our homes, we do not have that problem. Still, people in some places fear typhoons, while people in some other places fear earthquakes, floods, and fires.

A very important point is that people do not have the knowledge of the dharma that prevents external hindrances while practicing the zen dharma. This dharma should first be applied to take precautions against such hindrances. There are two parts. The first part is the power of mantras. The other part is the power of one's body. With respect to mantras, there are three mantras, each of which is indispensable. If one of those three mantras is missing, it will be very difficult to have a breakthrough in one's zen practice. One's zen practice will become one of those ordinary, secular practices. The preventing external hindrances dharma is for people who practice zen inside or outside their home, who practice zen in the city rather than in the mountains.

The first mantra is called the Altar Area Purification Mantra. This Altar Area Purification Mantra does not necessarily mean purification of a mandala. Remember, altar area does not have the meaning of mandala. Altar area is the place in your home where you do your special daily dharma practice or any other place where you can sit in meditation. This is one mantra.

The second mantra, which is exclusively for the practice of zen, is to eliminate karma and contemplate emptiness. It is used in zen, specifically for those who practice zen. It can clear away one's karmic forces, temporarily removing them.

The third mantra is very important. It is the Mind Quieting Mantra. This mantra requires very strict observance of the precepts by those who practice zen. It is just as strict for all Buddhists. The conduct of anyone who chants this mantra must truly be that of a Bodhisattva. Such a person must strictly observe the precepts and disciplines, including the five precepts, and must truly carry out the three sets of pure precepts. If you commit a serious violation, this mantra will have no beneficial effect. If you commit minor violation, the mantra will produce no good results. It will be very difficult for you to attain quietude. If you cannot attain quietude, you will not be able to enter samadhi.

This mantra is also called Mantra to Read the Minds of Others. How could it be acceptable for a person to attain the power to read the minds of others if that person does not observe the precepts well and is not a true cultivator? If that were to happen, Buddha-dharma realms would fall into chaos. That is because people who do not observe the precepts well are likely to harm people and living beings and even harm Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Evil people, deceivers, and precept violators are not allowed to enter a Buddha-dharma domain.

Moreover, transmission of this Mantra to Read the Minds of Others, this Mind Quieting Mantra, requires an initiation in which bodhi holy water is sprinkled. You must especially bear in mind that if someone who learns this mantra casually transmits it to a third person without performing an initiation in conformity with the dharma, then such a master who transmits this mantra will never in his or her lifetime attain the power to read the minds of others no matter what the status of that master is. This is indisputable!!!

Additionally, if you attain the power to read the minds of others, you may not show others that power. If you violate this rule, it is possible that you will lose your power to read the minds of others. Instead, what you truly should show others is how to benefit living beings, how to cut off attachment to self and selfishness, and how to adopt the greatly compassionate and greatly kind conduct of a Bodhisattva. What you should show others is the undertaking of a Bodhisattva. A Bodhisattva enlightens himself first and then enlightens others. Therefore, you masters who transmit this mantra should think over who you really are. Do not harm yourself in order to show off in front of others.

You can practice zen with only the first two mantras and without the Mind Quieting Mantra. It is just that the results will be not be as good. These three mantras must first be recited. Only after you have performed this task may you start your zen practice. If you have not learned these three mantras, as long as your zen practice is correct, you will also experience beneficial effects. However, the beneficial effects you will be able to experience will at most be 30% of what you would experience with such mantras. I will now transmit to you the first mantra. I will teach it to you. I will now transmit to you that mantra. I do not want to speak too long.

To learn the first mantra, put your palms together. You must be very respectful and have a very sincere heart. Close your eyes. After I have empowered all of you, I will begin to recite that mantra....Repeat after me....All right, I have now transmitted to you the first mantra.

The first mantra is the Altar Area Purification Mantra for the practice of zen. The main function of this mantra is to purify the altar area, to totally clear away all impure, filthy things as well as all karmic impressions and obstructive karma. This is directed at the place in which one practices zen. It is not directed at oneself. Its main effect is directed at the altar area. Therefore, one's own karmic forces are still not cleared away. That is why any top-notch zen practice dharma must also include the Mantra to Remove Obstacles, Enter Samadhi, Purify Karma, and Contemplate Emptiness, which is exclusively used for the practice of zen. Everyone should now repeat after me as we recite this Mantra to Remove Obstacles, Enter Samadhi, Purify Karma, and Contemplate Emptiness. I will read a sentence, and all of you will then repeat that sentence. I will now teach the second mantra. The words of that mantra will not be written in the dharma booklet. Today I will not transmit the third mantra, the Mind Quieting Mantra, because I did not bring with me bodhi holy water necessary for such an initiation. Next time I will perform that initiation.

All right, I have finished transmitting both mantras. Having finished transmitting them, I will now teach everyone the methods of practicing zen. There are a great many principles and theories relating to the practice of zen. I will not explain them in detail. In order to save time, I will directly transmit to you the methods! I hope that you will bear in mind that because the dharmas of zen practice that I will be transmitting to you are

high-level zen practices, you therefore may not casually transmit them to other people. It is also not permissible for you to go so far as to transmit them to a disciple who has violated the precepts! You must transmit them to Buddhists who abide by the rules and precepts very well. Moreover, they should be good people of moral character who have realized a state of great compassion and awakening, who sincerely learn from the Buddhas, who have the four immeasurable minds, who carry out the myriad practices subsumed within the six perfections, and who strictly abide by the precepts and disciplines. They are the ones who should learn the dharmas of zen practice. Buddha-dharma should be transmitted to good people. Do not transmit Buddha-dharma to those bad people who have serious problems. However, after such people with serious problems repent, of course we will transmit Buddha-dharma to them as well. Additionally, do not transmit Buddha-dharma to those who take bribes and bend the law or who have their hands out for other people's money or offerings. That type of person is in fact problematic. So everyone should be especially careful about this.

As I said a moment ago, in order to save time, I will not speak superfluous words. I will directly teach you. After we have sat down and become calm, we enter the practice step by step. We first start with the meditation method that Sakyamuni Buddha used under the bodhi tree. This first step is a dharma of clear observation (vipasyansa) practice categorized as pratyutpana. That is, one observes the ocean of self-nature in which prajna will appear. It is called observation of thoughts that lead to realization of emptiness.

My way of beginning here is different from that of those zen practitioners in society. I first want all of you to start with counting your breaths. You will start with the minor samatha and vipasyana method of counting breaths. However, this is not totally the same as a minor samatha and vipasyana method. We do not care about which monster or demon corresponds to which of the 12 two-hour periods into which the day was traditionally divided. Because we have three mantras, we are not afraid if those monsters or demons try to disturb us. We simply bear in mind that those who are overweight should count the exhalations. Thin people should count the inhalations. That is, when you are breathing inward, count those inwards breaths if you are thin. That way, your physical condition will improve. If you are overweight and you cannot gain too

much more weight, you should count your exhalations. That way, you will avoid becoming too fat.

Of course, whether you are overweight or thin is not important. The key is teaching all of you how to count your breaths, whether you are overweight or thin. How should you count your breaths? Start counting from one. For example, if you are counting your inhalations, you count the breaths that go in. You will softly utter "one." You must say it out loud. Do not count when you exhale. When the next breath is inhaled, you utter aloud "two." If you cannot breathe in and utter aloud the numbers at the same time, then count the numbers silently in your mind. Continue like this until you count to ten, and then immediately begin counting all over again. Begin again from "one" and count until "ten." Then, once more, start all over. Make sure you do not count to "eleven" or "twelve." This is very important.

When counting, if your mind is not scattered for about a half hour, or better yet for even an hour, then at that time you should stop uttering numbers out loud and should silently count in your mind. The method of counting is the same when you silently count. It is just that you do not say the number out loud. When you inhale, you still count "one." Or when you exhale, you still count "one." When you exhale a second time, you count "two." In this manner, you count to ten time and time again, over and over again. Do not make a mistake in counting the numbers by going past "ten."

After this step, we then begin to enter the pratyutpana water stage, which is practicing the water-light observation dharma. Pour a cup of water. After the water has been poured into the cup, place the cup about three feet away from you. Use indoor lamplight or moonlight from the outdoor sky. In that water there will be light. You should fix your vision upon that light, tightly staring at it. At that time, do not count your breaths. Your mind is totally focused upon that light, never moving away from that light one bit. Your total focus is light, light, light, light. Your eyes are fixed upon that light, never moving away from that light one bit. Do not analyze the largeness or smallness of the light. Additionally, do not analyze the changes the light undergoes. Do not be concerned about the strength or weakness of the light. The longer you maintain your focus, the better.

If you can maintain your focus on that light for more than a half hour, if during that time your mind does not leave that light and is not scattered, or if you can maintain your focus on that light for more than twenty minutes and your mind does not run away, then at that time you should change to observing your inhalations or exhalations. When you exhale, you will feel an obvious sensation at the rim of your nostrils or at a certain position on your upper lip. Focus on that sensation at that particular location that stands out. You should very clearly feel that sensation when breathing in and breathing out. However, your mind absolutely may not follow your breath as it moves inward or outward. All of your effort is completely focused solely upon that small position or location on your skin or lip that feels the sensation of breaths. If your mind follows your breath inward or outward, you have already lost your concentration. So make sure to pay attention that your mind does not follow your breath as it moves. Your mind may only focus upon that particular position or location of your skin or lip that feels the breath. You should clearly feel the obvious sensation that particular position or location has when exhaling and inhaling.

That feeling will decrease or increase according to the decrease and increase of your zen practice concentration powers. There will even be some times when you will barely have any feeling at that position or location. However, there is no need to worry. The situation will improve when you focus your mind. When your power of samadhi strengthens, illusory phenomena will appear in your zen state, such as spots of light, circles of light, and figures. Do not be attached to or distracted by any of them. You must remember that if at that time your mind becomes scattered, like a wild horse, or if you are obstructed by drowsiness or sleep, then you should stop. You must switch to the dynamic mindfulness of observing waves. You should immediately hold level with both hands your cup from which you observed light. Place that cup on your hands and sit in the cross-legged posture. If you cannot sit in that posture, you may sit on a stool or bench. Hold the cup level with both hands and place it below your navel. Your hands should be resting firmly on your legs. At that time, because it is the nature of your body to slightly move, the cup you are holding will certainly move. Along with this, the light will move. The waves of water will move. You must completely fill the cup with water. Use a copper, brass, or bronze cup that is not too large. That is because if it is too large it will be too heavy.

At that time, fix your eyes upon the light inside the cup. If at that time the cup moves, the light will become blurred, which is not good. Blurred light indicates your mind has not calmed down. Therefore, you should strive to have the water not move. It should not move one bit. Not one bit. Not one bit. Not one bit. You absolutely must keep it from moving. It should be totally still. If you can sit for a half hour or an hour or even a few hours during which time the water does not move, then your skills in the practice of zen will soon mature. You must understand that the movement of waves means the movement of light, and movement of light means the movement of waves. Know that the movement of waves and light means the movement of your mind. You certainly will have become enlightened if at that time you can attain the following: "waves and light continue to come and go, yet mindfulness, remaining unchanged, is not moved."

It may be that you are unable to continue with your sitting practice. At that time, you are most susceptible to fatigue. As soon as fatigue sets in, people want to sleep. As a result, the light of the waves easily becomes scattered or your mind is sidetracked. Sometimes it is even the case that only when water spills on you do you discover how sidetracked you are. This shows that you were not in samadhi. At the very least, you lacked basic samadhi. Of course, I am not referring to tathagata samadhi. I am simply referring to a type of samadhi that is unmoving.

Given this type of situation, you should immediately stop if at that time your eyelids are heavy with sleep, your mind begins to dull, you will soon fall asleep, and you truly cannot persist. Place the cup right in front of you. Then, pull down on your earlobes with both hands. After that, rub your palms together until they are hot. Then, begin to rub your face with your palms. Rub your face. Your face will heat up. Rub softly. Continue to rub softly. At that time, after you have rubbed your face, the obstacle of drowsiness or sleep will have disappeared. Then resume your meditation.

If obstructions reappear after you have meditated for a period of time and you realize you cannot go on, then you should immediately change the dharma you are practicing. Change to what? You immediately get off of your meditation seat, fill a bucket with cold water, and recite the Using Water Mantra seven times. After that, wash your face with that cold water. Rub the water on your face, neck, and below your neck. At that time, your vitality will be restored such that you can immediately resume your zen practice.

Your eyelids will no longer feel heavy, and you will be clear-headed. At that time, resume your zen practice. Sit down and practice.

After you have resumed your sitting zen practice for a long time, it is frequently the case that you will once more be unable to continue with your practice. There is truly no way for you to continue your sitting practice. What should you do? At that time you must stop. You should stop. What should you do after you stop? You should sleep after you stop. After you awaken from your sleep, you will regain your vitality. You then continue your sitting practice.

If you had not stopped to sleep but rather tried to persevere in your zen practice even though you could not keep it up, then a zen malady will arise. At that time, such a zen malady is very serious. Why do I say it is very serious? It is because as soon as you form the habit of incurring a zen malady, you will still want to continue your zen practice when, for example, your eyelids are heavy. You will forcefully attempt to carry on even though your eyelids are still heavy with sleep. But because you sleep, you have formed a bad habit. Thus, problems arise at this time that are not easy to correct. It is possible that when you sit down to practice zen, you will want to sleep or the other three great hindrances will appear.

Therefore, when serious hindrances appear, you should immediately begin to pull on your ears and immediately begin to rub your face. If rubbing your face and pulling on your ears do not work, you should immediately get off your meditation seat and fill a bucket with cold water. Then, recite the Using Water Mantra and wash your face. If you still cannot go on after you have washed your face with cold water and have sat down and practiced zen for a short while, then at that time you immediately discontinue your zen practice. Get off your meditation seat and go to sleep without delay. After you awaken, you get up and practice zen once again.

This is very important, very important. Everyone must be very careful. You must remember that when practicing zen, if it is truly the case that the obstacle of drowsiness or sleep arrives, mental distraction arrives, wild fancy or improper thoughts arrive, or lack of focus arrives, then they must be dealt with. The obstacle of drowsiness or sleep is an especially formidable karmic obstacle. You do not know when it arrives. It causes

you to fall asleep. By the time you awaken, time has already passed by. That is why that obstacle is very difficult to deal with.

Remember that it is very easy for good states to appear in the course of practicing zen. This is called zen phenomena. Such zen phenomena that may appear include light, light spots, or even unusual phenomena, such as dharma protectors, demons, and so on, or an unusual fragrance wafts your way, or you hear sounds from outside or different places. You must remember that all such phenomena are illusions. All phenomena are false. In no case may you be attached to them. You must not be attached to them. Only with non-attachment will such phenomena deepen and progress. Only with non-attachment will you progress toward entering the pure dharmakaya. This is the truth of deeply entering the zen state. When you enter the zen state, truly attaining the state of non-abiding, your Buddha-nature will naturally appear. When you are able to be imperturbable in your Buddha-nature, then birth and death naturally end. You are able to end the cycle of birth and death. If you can be in your Buddha-nature, wisdom will naturally open up. You will be able to experience numerous kinds of holy states. You will realize all holy states. All of these are within the Buddha-nature.

Of course, this is a relatively high-level type of zen practice. This is a great dharma of the true practice of zen. However, what makes it truly high-level? The empowerment of the mantras and the way of observation and contemplation make it truly high-level. Both of them have a special effect. When you have practiced well this stage, depending upon the depth of your wholesome roots, perhaps I will perform for you a State-Practice Initiation from "The Supreme and Unsurpassable Mahamudra of Liberation." Such dharma is indeed high. It is supreme, great dharma that guarantees liberation. Nonetheless, in learning and practicing "The Supreme and Unsurpassable Mahamudra of Liberation," it is imperative that one learn well and fully put into practice the two great mind essences: the "Xiaman Magnificent Oceanic Mind Essence" and the "Most Magnificent Bodhi Emptiness-Practice Oceanic Mind Essence." You must have these two great mind essences as your foundation. Only then will you be able to instantly receive a state-practice initiation, instantly enter that state, attain great accomplishment, and unite with the dharma-realm through learning and practicing dharma of "The Supreme and Unsurpassable Mahamudra of Liberation." In this there is limitless profundity.

Today I have taken the first step to teach all of you this zen practice. I have already transmitted to you the part relating to the mantras. Those mantras will not be written in the booklet. To write them down in a booklet would not be permissible. It would not be in accord with the dharma rules. Those mantras must be transmitted from master to disciple. Otherwise, it would be treating the dharma disrespectfully. Moreover, transmission through different levels of initiation is the type of transmission that most accords with the dharma rules. That is why those mantras cannot be recklessly written down. In the booklet, the mantras relating to zen will not be transcribed. It will only include teachings on this high-level dharma of zen practice.

My teachings today will end here for the time being. After you have practiced well these teachings I just gave, I may perform for you a dharma selection ceremony to determine the dharma with which you have a karmic connection, the dharma you should deeply learn and practice. However, this will depend upon the beneficial effects and level of accomplishment you derive from practicing the teachings I just gave. It will also depend upon your devoutness. Remember one thing that is important. No matter what zen dharma you practice, you cannot deviate from cultivation. That is why you must go online and learn my teaching of "What Is Cultivation?" Furthermore, you must carry out that teaching in your daily lives. Only then will your practice of zen truly succeed. All right, that will be all. May all of you soon deeply enter samadhi, soon attain perfect good fortune and wisdom, and soon realize enlightenment.

Office of H.H. Dorje Chang Buddha III

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NOTE: Go to <http://holyvajrasana.org/buddha-dharma/what-is-cultivation> to read "What Is Cultivation."