

覺林菩薩偈講義

**Bodhisattva Forest of Awareness's
Praise of Buddha**

智海法師 述

from the lecture series of Master Chi Hoi

An Edited Explication of the Verse
from the *Hua-yen Sutra*:

Bodhisattva Forest of Awareness's
Praise of Buddha

Master Chi Hoi

translated by his disciples Hui-deng and Hui-yee

Printed in the United States of America
on the day of birth of Bodhisattva Ksitigarbha
2008

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of the Buddhist Wisdom Lecture Hall
1339-38th Ave,
San Francisco, CA94122
www.bwlh.org

From the Hua-yen (Avatamsaka) Sutra:

Then the Bodhisattva Forest of Awareness, endowed with the power of the Buddha, looked to the ten directions and said in verse of praise:

It is like a painter
Distributing various colors:
Delusion grasps different characteristics,
But the elements have no distinctions.

In the elements there is no form,
And in form, no elements;
Yet not apart from the elements
Is any form to be had.

In the mind there is no painting,
In painting there is no mind;
But yet not apart from the mind
Is any painting to be had.

The mind, forever, non-abiding,
Immeasurably, inconceivably,
Manifests all forms,
Unknown to one another.

Just as a painter
May not know his own mind,
Yet paints due to the mind;
So is the nature of all dharmas.

Mind is like the painter,
Able to paint various worlds:
The five aggregates thus originate;
There is no dharma it does not create.

As is the mind, so is the Buddha;
As the Buddha, so sentient beings:
Should know that Buddha and mind
In essence are both without bound.

If people know that actions of mind
Make all the worlds,
Then they will see the Buddha,
And understand the nature of the
Buddha.

Mind does not abide in the body,
Nor body abides in mind:
Yet it is able to perform deeds of
Buddha,
Freely, and unprecedented.

If people indeed wish to know
The Buddhas of the three time periods;
They should contemplate the nature of
the dharma-realm,
All is but mind's creation.

The Author

Dharma Master Chi Hoi (“Ocean of Wisdom”) was born in 1926 in a village near Beijing. At the age of seventeen he was initiated at Chi Fu Monastery, in the Hong Luo Mountains north of Beijing, originally founded by the venerable Master Tsou Wu, the twelfth patriarch of China’s Pure Land school. For three years, Chi Hoi learned the teachings of the Pure Land school and practiced the “recitation of Amitabha Buddha.” In 1944 he entered a Buddhist academy in Beijing to study literature, history, and logic in addition to religion. From 1948, Chi Hoi further studied the Pure Land teachings at Mount Lin Yan Monastery in Suzhou, the monastery of the Pure Land school’s thirteenth patriarch, the venerable Master In Kwong. Chi Hoi then learned the Buddhist doctrines of the Tien-t’ai school from the venerable Master Tan Shu in Hong Kong between 1952 and 1962. He was later appointed the forty-fifth dharma successor of the Tien-t’ai school. Chi Hoi’s philosophical perspective is based on the fundamental principles of both the Pure Land and the Tien-t’ai schools; his approach to enlightenment likewise combines the faith and devotion to Amitabha Buddha espoused by the former and the one vehicle teaching and emphasis on meditation from the later.

In 1967 Dharma Master Chi Hoi came to the United States to preach Buddhism and in 1972, founded the Buddhist Wisdom Lecture Hall of Fo Shan Monastery in San Francisco. Chi Hoi devotes his time not only to writing Buddhist literature, but also to traveling around the world to lecture on various sutras as well as Buddhist philosophy. Despite his reputation as a scholar, Chi Hoi always emphasizes the importance of both faith and prajna. Master Chi Hoi wishes to introduce Buddhism to all, and to bring harmony and serenity to the modern mind.

The Translator's Preface

The *Bodhisattva Ksitigarbha Sutra* is a popular scripture in Chinese Buddhist culture. Traditionally, as an inscription before the sutra proper, the verse by the Bodhisattva Forest of Awareness in praise of the Buddha is included in most publications of Chinese translation of this *Sutra*. According to legend, a Buddhist monk once taught a man how to escape from hell by chanting the last stanza of this verse. The man was indeed able to transcend from hell and this verse is revered for its efficacy of breaking through hell. Since Ksitigarbha's vow for Bodhisattva-hood is to save every sentient being from hell, this verse is given by tradition the role of prelude to the *Bodhisattva Ksitigarbha Sutra*. Originally, this verse is from the *Hua-yen (Avatamsaka) Sutra* and is quite representative of Mahayana Buddhist themes. Hence, it is the focus of this lecture by Master Chi Hoi.

Dharma Master Chi Hoi, a Mahayana scholar and practitioner of both the Tien-t'ai and the Pure Land schools, is well versed in the doctrines of the Tien-t'ai and the Mind-only schools. In *Bodhisattva Forest of Awareness's Praise of Buddha* he particularly employs the Mind-only teachings in approaching the profound meaning of the verse by the Bodhisattva Forest of Awareness. With lucid analogies Chi Hoi demonstrates this verse as a showcase of Mind-only Buddhist theory, embodying the fundamental themes of this school -- the non-duality of the subjective consciousness and the objective phenomenon, and of the true state of thusness and the imagined world.

Master Chi Hoi's lecture was originally given in Chinese, and his diction and references to sutras and discourses are all adopted from the Chinese Buddhist tradition. In translating Chinese characters the Japanese/English dictionary by Hisao Inagaki has been used given its wide recognition by Buddhist scholars. The translation of the verse by the Bodhisattva Forest of Awareness follows the translation of the *Avatamsaka Sutra* by T. Cleary with modifications. For adherence to mainstream vocabulary, attempts were made in some instances to conform to the Buddhist diction used by Rupert Gethin in *The Foundation of Buddhism*. An apology is in order here to Master Chi Hoi if this translation does not do full credit to his original speech.

Hui-deng and Hui-yee
November, 2007

Contents

1. Introduction
2. Explication of the Bodhisattva Forest of
Awareness's verse in praise of the Buddha

1

Introduction

According to the Chinese Buddhist tradition, sages of old have left this proverb: “Without reading the *Hua-yen Sutra* (the *Avatamsaka Sutra* or the *Flower Ornament Scripture*), one shall not know the richness and nobleness of the Buddha.”

With respect to Buddhism, the treasure of Dharma is priceless. As for worldly treasures, everything has a price but the treasure of Buddhist Dharma is priceless because it enables us to become Buddhas. The richness and nobleness of the Buddha can be found in every sutra of the Tripitaka, or the Buddhist cannon, but most comprehensive of all is the *Hua-yen Sutra*. How so? This is because the *Mahaprajnaparamita Sutra*, which is the longest sutra in the Tripitaka, consists of 600 volumes while the *Hua-yen Sutra* consists of only 80 volumes. So, wherein lies the points of difference? Though the *Mahaprajnaparamita Sutra* is voluminous it speaks of only the single method of *prajna* – one word, one subject, yet this single topic of wisdom fills 600 volumes. Now, the *Hua-yen Sutra* is renowned for representing the richness and nobleness of the Buddha because many methods of Buddhist practice are all contained in this sutra.

Generally speaking, the Bodhisattvas practice the six perfections (*paramitas*), but the *Hua-yen Sutra* includes ten perfections (the six perfections plus the four additional perfections). Compare that with the *Mahaprajnaparamita Sutra*, which focuses on only one perfection. Although in some places it does talk of all six perfections, it concentrates on the *prajna paramita*, or the perfection of wisdom. Therefore, it is said that without reading the *Hua-yen Sutra* one is not aware of the richness and nobleness of the Buddha. If time allows one should give it a review. It can broaden people’s perspectives, and also, eradicate the distressing passions of human existence – this is the richness and nobleness that the *Hua-yen Sutra* has in store for us.

The context of the Bodhisattva Forest of Awareness’s verse in praise of the Buddha

The *Hua-yen Sutra* as spoken by the Buddha may be divided in the following ways: seven locations (where the assemblies take place), nine assemblies, thirty-nine chapters, which comprise all together eighty-one volumes.

In the *Hua-yen Sutra*, the verse in praise of the Buddha by the Bodhisattva Forest of Awareness is in the fourth location, the fourth assembly, the twentieth chapter and the nineteenth volume.

A psychological approach to the Bodhisattva Forest of Awareness's verse in praise of the Buddha from the Mind-only doctrine

The ten stanzas for the present lecture are not very easy to understand. They embody the fundamental principles of Buddhist Dharma and demonstrate the logical reasoning of complete containment from the Mind-only perspective. The doctrine of the Mind-only school deals with Buddhist psychology, where complete containment in the Mind-only vocabulary means completely containing two psychological perspectives, the real and the imaginary. Consider for instance, historical figures: are they real or illusory?

Take for example the Chinese opera "General of the Yang Clan." The protagonist of the act "Fourth-Master Visits His Mother" is fashioned after a historical figure from the Sung dynasty. I bring this up to help us better understand through an analogy. The person on stage assuming the role of Fourth-Master Yang is obviously not Fourth-Master Yang himself, but an actor pretending to be the historical figure. We in the audience use the pretense to capture the real by exercising our imagination. From the perspective of Buddhist Dharma though, regardless of whether General Yang is real or not, he is an illusion either way.

However let us consider this question: where does the pretend, false one come from? Without the real there is no false. Therefore, who perceives the false objective world? It is perceived by those who favor the pretend. If one favors the false, he will not be able to find the real, nor will he believe in the real. As the uninitiated, all we see is the false in our every move; we can not see the real. The Buddha and Bodhisattvas can see the real because they have the eye of the Buddha, or the eye of wisdom, while we the uninitiated, with eyes of flesh, cannot see the real.

Therefore, to learn Buddhist Dharma, one should study both the real and the imaginary. This is what is meant by complete containment -- completely containing both the real and the imaginary aspects. Containing only one aspect does not count as complete containment. This Mind-only psychology deals with the containment of the mind. According to the *Discourse on the Awakening of Faith in the Mahayana* (by Asvaghosa), the dharma of the mind reveals two gates: 1. the gate of true thusness (the real gate), and 2. the gate of originating and ceasing (the delusional gate). But, who goes through which gate?

The Buddhas and Bodhisattvas go through the real gate, while we go through the delusional gate. We are not capable of going through the real gate, but do we have access to the real gate? We do but we can not see it, nor do we know how to go through it. Therefore, we need to figure out clearly which one is the real gate and which one is the false in order to know which gate to go through.

The complete containment of Mind-only is within each of our minds. It is not the case that some have it and others don't; everything we are studying now, we all already have within us. Because we are not aware of that though, we constantly seek dharma outside the mind -- the further away, the more eager we seek, even in the heavens and remote skies, we want to pursue. This is proof we are uninitiated, we leave what is near and seek what is far.

Buddhist Dharma is the practice of non-duality.

The first five stanzas use analogy while the second five stanzas focus on Dharma. Dharma shows us how to practice by cultivating our view and thoughts, or the content of our mind. The first and second stanzas deal with the phenomenal world, namely the real and the imaginary. What is imaginary arises from what is real; the analogy here reflects the inter-dependence of the real and the imaginary. The third and fourth stanzas explain the mind (internal) and the objective world (external). With respect to the gate of originating and ceasing, it may be explained by means of the eight consciousnesses. These eight consciousnesses, which we all possess, demonstrate the mutual dependence and inter-workings of the mind and the objective world. With respect to the gate of true thusness, it should be explained by means of the inter-dependence of the real and the imaginary.

Although these two approaches seem different, when practiced to fulfillment, they reach the same goal; but if not practiced fully, they will be different.

These two perspectives demonstrate the complete containment according to Mind-only teachings. Actually these two gates are not so separate as may be shown by the analogy of one's hand. One side of the hand is the palm and the other is the back. The palm and the back are not the same, but then again they are the same. Buddhist Dharma appears different when it is distinguished by two different perspectives. But though these approaches may be different, eventually they are the same. This is the so-called two but one. This is what we mean when we refer to Buddhist Dharma as the practice of non-duality. However, each of the two methods alone contains the entirety of all dharmas.

Explication of the Verse

**It is like a painter
Distributing various colors:
Delusion grasps different characteristics,
But the elements have no distinctions.**

Who is the painter? That's us! Everyone's mind is a painter, and our minds are all painting pictures. That is why it is often said that Buddhist Dharma is the Dharma of the mind. The *Discourse on the Awakening of Faith in the Mahayana* states: "What is referred to as Dharma is but the mind of the sentient being. The mind then embraces all dharmas of the world and those transcending the world."

Our mind is able to contain all worldly dharmas and the dharmas beyond the secular world. The mind is like a painter. For instance, consider the dharmas of the world: various worldly creations such as skyscrapers, trains, bombs, etc, are all painted by the mind of men. Thus our future, whether we are born in Buddha lands or go to hell, will also be painted in our minds.

Distributing refers to how the mind arranges. Blue, yellow, red and white are some of the various colors. The painter arranges the distribution of colors and the result becomes a painting. Similarly the directions our mind can take depend on circumstances. What does depending on circumstances mean?

As an example, when parents help their child choose good schools, even though the child may not want to go, the parents may insist. Suppose the teachers at the school teach very well, and after a length of time, the child comes to like the school and learns a lot there. This is so-called circumstance. That which the school offers, is called circumstance. Originally without such help, the child is only able to acquire an education by following this circumstance. This is called "perfuming" – the teacher and the environment of the school "perfume" the student until he becomes accomplished. No longer the person he once was, he is transformed from a person without knowledge to one who is learned. This is called "following circumstances, perfuming, transforming."

Therefore, we are able to practice to become Buddhas. Yet, there is also the possibility that we may go down to hell. It is all determined by what kinds of circumstance our minds follow and depend on -- what colors make what kinds of paintings. There is an idiom that says: "Those nearing the red dye become red, those nearing the ink become black." In other words, the helping circumstances after birth are very important for everyone. Thus, it is very important how one nurtures and cultivates oneself. This is because that which is given at birth is determined, but that which comes after is not yet determined. Therefore fortune tellers do not tell fortunes for the ordained monastic since they can hardly do an accurate job. In Buddhist diction this is called the "nature of origination dependent on others." Others refer to the various circumstances -- origination depending on these circumstances. It means that one does not have such nature to begin with, just as knowledge does not come with birth. It is acquired as a result of the teachers at school, originating by following these helping circumstances.

The next example is that of waves in the ocean, which are not apart from the water. It means that various different characteristics are not apart from our minds. The different characteristics are like the various colors of a painting; all of them originate by depending on other circumstances. Different characteristics are imaginary or false, yet we take them to be real. For example, a person who is afraid of the dark might not travel at night on foot. If incidentally, there is no light and he happens to step on a piece of rope, his mind may suddenly fear it is a snake. This is so-called delusion grasping different characteristics. It is pervasive grasping of imaginary existence because he takes the rope to be a real snake. In reality, there is fundamentally nothing to begin with; it all originates from nothing.

Take the example of a painter. If he paints a statue of a Buddha, we will feel an aura of kindness and affection, but if he paints the image of a devil, we will feel fear. This happens because of the grasping by oneself, where the delusional, imaginary mind frequently grasps various different characteristics. It is the same way when one carries out Buddhist practice in the secular world. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to observe and contemplate daily one's own mind and to be aware of what it is engaged in.

The elements mean the four great elements; all the myriad things and phenomena are not apart from the four great elements. The *four great elements* refer to earth, water, fire and wind. *Great* denotes general, all encompassing, while *elements* are what none can be apart from -- namely the fundamental makeup of all material substances of the world. The meaning here is that sentient beings grasp different characteristics through their delusions; they may grasp the image of a

Buddha or they may grasp the image of a devil. However, the elements that make up the colors have no distinctions and is analogous to true thusness having no distinctions.

**In the elements there is no form,
And in form, no elements;
Yet not apart from the elements
Is any form to be had.**

In this there is none of that, and in that, none of this. But yet, not apart from this, is any of that to be had -- meaning neither same nor apart. In other words, whatever is real is not imaginary, and whatever is imaginary is not real. The real may not be false and the false may not be real. Yet the false may not be apart from the real.

**In the mind there is no painting,
In painting there is no mind;
Bur yet not apart from the mind
Is any painting to be had.**

There is not any painting in the mind and there is no mind in the painting -- meaning the two do not coincide with each other. A painting in the mind cannot be seen, and that is why it is said *in the mind there is no painting*. An actual painting however belongs to the objective world, and therefore it is said *in painting there is no mind*. Our mind constitutes the ability to see while the painting represents the object that is seen. However, the painting that is seen may not be separated from the mind that is able to see. Thus, it is said: *but yet not apart from the mind is any painting to be had*. All things of this world are transformed by the human mind.

From the perspective of Buddhist Dharma, this is analogous to what happens in a dream, as in seeing mountains, water, people or other things in a dream. Suppose a person is told while dreaming that the mountain and water he sees are not from the outside world but created by his own mind and that the flaming pit he sees cannot burn or hurt him. Yet if he is told to jump in, dare he jump? What about

when he wakes up and thinks in retrospect whether that fire could actually harm people? Are the mountain and water real? Before waking up, who can say; it is only after awakening that such understanding can be reached. Now according to Buddhist Dharma, human existence is all a dream -- sleeping at night leads to small dreams, while decades of existence in this world constitute a great dream. If we are unable to wake up, then who is awake? The Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas have woken up. They see that everything in this world is imaginary.

Some of those studying Buddhism seek to acquire mystic power, but whatever they have learned is not the real thing at all. Such power may only be accomplished through practice! When the time is right, one will naturally attain mystic power. Why is this? Even if you lock an *arhat* in his room, he will still be able to get out; why is that? Why is it that he is able to get out while we cannot? It is because he practices the contemplation of emptiness. When he has perfected the contemplation of emptiness, as soon as he enters concentration the room immediately disappears. Why wouldn't he be able to get out? This is so-called mystic power. When you see mountains and water in a dream, it might seem impossible to cross over them. But when you wake up, are the mountains and water still there? Is it still impossible to cross over? Wherever one wishes to go, one may reach there. One is free and at ease, with neither attachment nor hindrance. This is what mystic power is all about.

To use another example, an ant which is walking, may think it's running very fast, yet, one step by us surpasses so many of its steps! In fact if we quicken our foot steps, the ant might not even catch a glimpse of us! Isn't our mystic power great indeed? The ant must think we are heavenly beings able to cross over its head in a blink. Would it not think we have great mystic power? Still, we probably would not be content having such limited mystic power and imagine only the mystic power of the Buddha as the real thing. Actually, this is all manifested according to the mind; everything is but mental construction. Therefore, *in the mind there is no painting, in painting there is no mind; but yet not apart from the mind is any painting to be had* means the objective world, namely all external phenomena, are not apart from the mind. Away from the mind there will be no painting at all.

**The mind, forever, non-abiding,
Immeasurably, inconceivably,
Manifests all forms,
Unknown to one another.**

The mind is joined together by the real (true thusness mind) and the imaginary (delusional mind). *Forever* means never discontinuing while *non-abiding* means not always abiding. Are these not contradictory or paradoxical? Describing it as never discontinuing and also describing it as not always abiding, what does this mean? To use an example, when waves originate in the ocean, the waves go up and down; they are *non-abiding* since the wave in the front and the wave behind it are not the same. Still, the waves are all water, and the water is fundamentally tranquil -- this is called *forever*. Waves originating and ceasing are non-abiding, but the wave in the front and the wave in the back are connected and continuous. This is so-called *forever, non-abiding*.

What does this say about the mind of us sentient beings? Some people maintain that humans will still be humans in the next lifetime following death. This is the eternalist view. Others maintain that once dead there is nothing. This is ceasing, or the nihilist view. From the nihilist perspective, once dead, that will be it, so being a good or evil person will have the same results. On the other hand, if one will forever be human lifetime after lifetime, then being a good person means becoming human again in the future, but also, being a evil person means becoming human in the future just the same -- there is no difference. Wouldn't it follow then that there is no karmic causality? These arguments help correct our thinking with respect to the notion of originating and ceasing, and yet continuous -- continuous is so-called forever, and originating and ceasing is so-called non-abiding.

This has relevance to our life. A lifetime is a flow of living light; a life is like a living light. In the decades of a lifetime, are there any amongst us for whom it is not sometimes things are smooth, sometimes not, and that sometimes one is happy, sometimes distressed? This captures entirely the meaning of *the mind, forever, non-abiding*.

Immeasurably, inconceivably: this refers to the immeasurable number of seeds in the mind. When one has very strong and deep impressions toward certain things or situations, these impressions become habitual tendencies that enter and are stored in the mind -- these are the so-called seeds. All that's been in the mind for decades may enter into present thoughts at any time. They are the seeds stored in our mind immeasurably and inconceivably. They are so minute and deep that it is impossible for us to find, but when the time comes and the right circumstances are met, they will come into the open.

Manifests all forms, unknown to one another: when those immeasurable seeds of good or evil in our mind come upon the right circumstances, various

phenomena will be manifested. Just like with dreams, one does not know what dream they are having, but various phenomena will evolve and manifest in his mind. Yet, these phenomena are not known to one another either. That is to say, though the different phenomena are all transformed and revealed by the mind, amongst them they are not able to know one another.

**Just as a painter
May not know his own mind
Yet paints due to the mind,
So is the nature of all dharmas.**

Just as a painter: this means that our mind is not able to know itself. The previous stanzas refer to outside realms or external phenomena where the various colors do not know each other as in *unknown to one another*. This stanza here means internally there is no knowledge either. The painter usually does not know what his mind intends to paint. It is only when he starts to paint that he knows. Would you know beforehand what you would paint? Would you have anything definite in mind? Yet, you can not proceed without the mind. That is why it is said -- *yet paints due to the mind*. One must have the mind to be able to paint. The mind needs to discern, to distribute and to arrange; then you may paint accordingly.

Actually, all dharmas, be they related to the mind or phenomena, are all empty and without inherent nature. The fundamental nature of all dharmas is empty and non-existent. Why? If they have substantial nature, then they must remain in one state and not be able to become any other. If they are one thing, then they will forever be that one thing. It is because they do not have self nature that they can be anything and everything. That is why it is said *so is the nature of all dharmas*.

**Mind is like the painter,
Able to paint all the worlds:
The five aggregates thus originate;
There is no dharma it does not create.**

Like a master painter, the mind is able to paint everything that is contained in the various worlds; all is painted by the mind. The *five aggregates* constitute the physical and mental make-up of each of us; as such all is encompassed by the five aggregates. The five aggregates are: form (the characteristics and shapes of the body belonging to the material), sensation (sense reception), perception (imagination), volitional activity (the mind thinking and reflecting, all mental formations), and consciousness (awareness and discernment of the object of thoughts). These five groups of attachments are all contained in our bodies. *Aggregate* has the meaning of gathering and joining. For example, just as a car is built by assembling all the various parts, the same goes for humans.

Who would not wish to be smart, good looking, and capable in their career? But this is not up to you. You are the painter; everything is painted from your mind. Whatever you wish for the future, you must first paint today the five aggregates for the future. There is not a single dharma that our mind is not able to create. You see how fantastically capable our mind is --from formless to having form and the formless surpassing the formed! That is why Buddhist Dharma teaches us how to cultivate our mind. The mind is not easy to be cultivated! One must start to cultivate the external, then, proceed to cultivate the internal. Everything is constructed by the mind. The formation of the five aggregates started from the interior to the exterior, but now for cultivation, practice starts from the external back to the internal. Thus it is said that the five aggregates all originate from the mind. For the mind, there is no dharma it does not create.

**As is the mind, so is the Buddha;
As the Buddha, so sentient beings:
Should know that Buddha and mind
In essence are both without bond.**

The previous stanza claims that there is no dharma not constructed by the mind; even Buddha is constructed by the mind. Becoming a Buddha is a mental creation, and so is becoming a sentient being. Hence it is said *as is the mind, so is the Buddha; as the Buddha, so sentient beings*. One should know that the essential nature of the Buddha and the essential nature of the mind are all without limit. Because we have not yet become a Buddha, the mind is very important. Indeed, we do have minds, and all those who have minds are capable to become a Buddha. Therefore the mind is of primary and central importance.

**If people know that actions of mind
Make all the worlds,
Then they will see the Buddha
And understand the nature of the Buddha.**

Actions of mind refer to all the ways that our mind works, but we really do not know the actions of our mind. Who among us knows the comings and goings of our mind? For instance, when we have imaginary or distracting thoughts, can we find the source of such imagination and distractions? When performing sitting meditation, one may observe one's mind and ask oneself, "where does my mind come from?" -- just like when one recites the name of Amitabha Buddha, one then asks oneself who prompts this act of recitation. Where does this chanting of Amitabha Buddha originate? Sit there and search for a while. Not finding the source? Not being able to find it means not being able to awaken yet! Those who are about to be enlightened will be able to find it. Therefore, it is said that if one is in the know (about actions of the mind), then one has found it.

Suppose someone realizes that the actions of their mind create the various worlds entirely, that it is the mind that constructs the world, that everything is constructed according to the mind. Then, this person will be able to see the Buddha and truly understand the real nature of the Buddha.

**Mind does not abide in the body,
Nor body abides in mind.
Yet, it is able to perform deeds of Buddha,
Freely, and unprecedented.**

The mind is capable of transformation. The myriad dharmas are all transformed solely by the mind. The body is the object of transformation. Thus, *mind does not abide in the body, nor body abides in mind.* In other words, in the body there is no mind, and in the mind, no body. The capability for transformation is the nature of the mind, the object of transformation is the distinguishing characteristics. Although they do not abide in each other, it is depending on the mind that phenomena manifest themselves, and it is depending on the nature of the mind that consequent actions will originate. Because the mind can cause the body to manifest, it can thus accomplish all the deeds of the Buddha.

With respect to body and mind then, because the mind is capable of constructing and the body is the object of its construction, it is from the very nature of mind that actions of body arise. As a result, it is then *able to perform deeds of Buddha, freely*, without hindrances. This principle of free and non-hindering correlation between nature and action is very rare. Therefore, it is called *unprecedented*.

**If people indeed wish to know
The Buddhas of the three time periods,
They should contemplate the nature of the dharma-realm,
All is but mind's creation.**

This stanza implies that we do not know our own mind and consequently often paint delusional phenomena. If we wish to know our minds, we must contemplate *all is but mind's creation*; then we will be able to know *the Buddhas of the three time periods*. The three time periods refers to the past, the present, and the future. Suppose one wants to know the various Buddhas of the three time periods, how can one go about that? There are two ways: first, contemplate the nature of the dharma-realm, and second, contemplate that all is but mind's creation.

1. Contemplate the nature of the dharma-realm: this means contemplating the gate of true thusness, the nature of all dharma-realm. All dharmas have their fundamental nature -- the true thusness. What does true thusness mean? True means truthful not false, and thusness means staying thus, like always, without moving or changing. Real things do not change. The conditioned dharmas of the secular world are not real things and are subject to change and transformation. For example, man goes through birth and death; material substance goes through formation and deterioration; the whole world goes through kalpas of creation, existence, destruction and annihilation. None of these are real; they are all temporary. Anything that is temporary is subject to originating and ceasing. Therefore the nature of the dharma-realm is real; its fundamental nature is the nature of true thusness. This is the true principle of the cosmos and human existence.

2. All is but mind's creation: this means that whatever involves construction and creation, belongs to the gate of originating and ceasing. Even if we are now practicing on the path to Buddhahood, this still belongs to the gate of

originating and ceasing. It should be noted that although this is proceeding forward from the gate of originating and ceasing, at the end, one is able to reach the realm of no originating and no ceasing. In this respect, ultimately becoming a Buddha is also considered *all is but mind's creation*.

These two methods of contemplation are in accordance with the Mahayana tradition of Buddhist practice. The true principle of Buddhist Dharma is beyond any academic theory, and given we have the rare opportunity to have both attained birth as humans and encountered Buddhist Dharma in this lifetime, we should take full advantage of such favorable circumstances. Indeed, we should all feel very fortunate and follow these practices taught by the Buddha!