

The Mahaprajnaparamita Sutra of the Direct Teaching of the Southern School of the Supreme Mahayana
The Platform Sutra

Delivered at Tafan Temple in Shaochou by the Sixth Patriarch, Master Hui-neng, in one volume, compiled and recorded by Fa-hai, recipient of the Formless Precepts and advocate of the Dharma.

1. Master Hui-neng took his seat in the lecture hall of Tafan Temple to expound the teaching of Mahaprajnaparamita and to transmit the Formless Precepts. Seated below him on that occasion were more than ten thousand monks, nuns, and laypeople, along with Magistrate Wei Ch'u of Shaochou and more than thirty officials and thirty scholars. Together they asked the Master to explain the teaching of Mahaprajnaparamita. The magistrate then instructed the Master's disciple Fa-hai to make a record to pass down to future generations so that students of the Way who carry on its guiding principle and who transmit it to others might have this testament as their authority.

2. When he spoke this Platform Sutra, Master Hui-neng said, "Good friends, purify your minds by reciting the teaching of Mahaprajnaparamita." Then the Master stopped speaking, while he purified his own mind. After a long time, he spoke again, "Good friends, please listen. My kind-hearted father was originally from Fanyang. But he was dismissed from office and banished to Lingnan and lived in Hsinchou as a commoner. My father died when I was quite young. And my widowed and destitute mother moved to Nanhai, where I experienced hardship and poverty and sold firewood in the marketplace.

Then one day a shopkeeper ordered a load of firewood brought to his store. After he took the delivery and paid me, I walked toward the door and met a customer reciting the *Diamond Sutra* out loud. As soon as I heard the words, my mind felt clear and awake, and I asked the man, 'Where did you get this scripture you're reciting?' He said, 'On Huangmei County's East Fengmao Mountain in Chichou Prefecture, when I was paying my respects to the Fifth Patriarch, Master Hung-jen. His congregation included more than a thousand disciples. And while I was there, I heard him tell the monks and laypeople that just by memorizing the *Diamond Sutra* they would see their natures and immediately become buddhas.' As soon as I heard this, I felt drawn by something from a past life. I said goodbye to my mother and left for Huangmei's Fengmao Mountain to pay my respects to the Fifth Patriarch, Master Hung-jen.

3. Master Hung-jen asked me, 'Where are you from? And what exactly do you hope to get from me by coming to this mountain to pay your respects?' I answered, 'Your disciple is from Lingnan, a commoner of Hsinchou. The reason I came all this way to pay my respects is I want to be a buddha. I don't want anything else.' The Master scoffed, 'But you're from Lingnan and a jungle rat as well. How can you possibly be a buddha?'

I replied, 'People come from the north or south, not their buddha nature. The lives of this jungle rat and the Master's aren't the same, but how can our buddha nature differ?' The Master was about to say something more to me. But when he saw his attendants standing there, he didn't say anything else and sent me to join the sangha workforce. A novice then led me to the milling room, where I pedaled a millstone for more than eight months.

4. One day, the Fifth Patriarch suddenly called all of his disciples together. After they had assembled, he said, 'I've told you that the greatest concern for a human being is life and death. But you disciples spend your days making offerings, just looking for ways to reap merit and not for a way out of the bitter Sea of Samsara. If you're blind to your own nature, how can you find the doorway to merit? Go back to your rooms and look into yourselves. Those of you who are wise, make use of the prajna wisdom of your own nature. Each of you write me a gatha. When I read your gathas, if any of you understands what is truly important, I will give you my robe and my Dharma and appoint you the Sixth Patriarch. Hurry, as if there were a fire!'

5. Having received these instructions, his disciples headed back to their rooms and said to one another, 'There's no need for us to clear our minds and trouble ourselves about writing a gatha to show the abbot. The venerable Shen-hsiu is our precept instructor. After he receives the Dharma, we can look to him. Why should we write a gatha?' So they all stopped worrying about it, and no one dared to submit a poem. At that time, in front of the Patriarch's Hall, there was a three-section-long corridor. Because people left offerings at the foot of the wall, the abbot wanted to cover it with scenes from the Lankavatara Sutra and paintings of the five patriarchs transmitting the robe and the Dharma as a record to be passed down to future generations. The painter Lu Chen had inspected the wall and was going to begin work the following day.

6. The venerable Shen-hsiu thought, 'No one is going to submit a mind-poem, because I'm their precept instructor. But if I don't submit one, how can the Patriarch tell if the understanding of my mind is deep or not? It would be right for me to show the Patriarch a poem that reveals my understanding, as long as what I wanted was the Dharma. But it would be wrong, as long as what I wanted was the patriarchship. I would be no better than a fool who thinks he can usurp the position of a sage. But if I don't submit a mind-poem, I'll never receive the Dharma.' As he considered this, he kept thinking, 'What a predicament!'

Finally at midnight, without letting anyone know, he went to write his poem on the middle of the south corridor wall in hopes of obtaining the robe and the Dharma. 'When the Patriarch sees my gatha and reads these words,' he thought, 'if he comes to find me, the moment I see him, I will tell him I wrote it. But when he sees my gatha, if he says it's not good enough, it will be because I'm deluded and the obstruction of my past karma is too great, and I'm not ready to receive the Dharma. The Master's mind is impossible to fathom. I may as well stop worrying about it.' So the venerable Shen-hsiu held up a lantern and wrote his gatha on the middle of the south corridor wall at midnight, and no one saw him. His gatha went:

'The body is a bodhi tree
the mind is like a standing mirror
always try to keep it clean
don't let it gather dust.'

7. After Shen-hsiu wrote this gatha, he returned to his room unseen and lay down. At dawn, the Fifth Patriarch sent for the court artist, Lu Chen, to come to the south corridor to paint scenes from the Lankavatara. The Fifth Patriarch suddenly saw this gatha. After he read it, he told Lu, 'You've gone to so much trouble and come so far,

we will pay you thirty thousand cash, but we won't need any images now. The Diamond Sutra says, "All images are illusions." It would be better if we kept this gatha for deluded people to recite. If they rely on it for their practice, they won't fall into the three unfortunate states of existence, and it will be a great help to anyone who cultivates the Dharma.'

The Master then called his disciples together and burned incense before the gatha. When everyone saw this, they were filled with admiration. 'Unless you all recite and understand this gatha,' he said, 'you won't see your nature. Anyone who relies on this for their practice won't regress.' As his disciples recited it, they all did so with respect and exclaimed how wonderful it was. Later, the Fifth Patriarch called Shen-hsiu to his room and asked, 'Did you write the gatha? If you did, you're ready to receive my Dharma.' Shen-hsiu said, 'I'm guilty. It's true. I was the one who wrote it. But I don't dare ask for the patriarchship, only for the Master's consideration as to whether your disciple has acquired enough wisdom to understand what is truly important or not.'

The Fifth Patriarch said, 'This gatha of yours shows your understanding has only reached the threshold and has not yet entered inside. If ordinary people use your gatha in their practice, they won't regress. But someone with such an understanding who seeks perfect enlightenment will never realize it. If you want to enter the door, you have to see your nature. Go back and think about this for a few days and write me another gatha. If you're able to enter the door and see your nature, I will give you the robe and the Dharma.' Shen-hsiu left, but after several days he still hadn't written anything.

8. A novice walked past the milling room chanting this gatha. As soon as I heard it, I knew it was by someone who hadn't seen his nature or understood what was truly important. I asked the boy, 'What gatha were you reciting just now?' The novice said, 'Don't you know? The abbot said nothing is more important than life and death, and he wants to pass on his robe and his Dharma. So he told his disciples to write a gatha and show it to him, and he'll give his robe and Dharma to whoever understands what is truly important, and that person will become the Sixth Patriarch. One of the senior monks, Shen-hsiu, wrote this "Formless Gatha" along the south corridor. And the Patriarch told all of his disciples to recite it and whoever understands this gatha will see their nature and whoever uses it for their practice will achieve liberation.'

I replied, 'I've been treading this mill more than eight months, and I've never been to the front of the Patriarch's Hall. Could you please lead me to the south corridor so that I can see this gatha and pay my respects? Hopefully, by reciting it, I'll establish a karmic connection and be reborn in a buddhaland.' The novice then led me to the south corridor, where I bowed before the gatha. Because I was illiterate, I asked someone to read it. Once I heard it, I understood what was truly important, and I also composed a gatha. I asked someone who could write to write it on the west corridor wall so that I could reveal my mind. Unless you know your own mind, studying the Dharma is useless. But once you know your mind and see your nature, you understand what is truly important. My gatha went:

'Bodhi doesn't have any trees
 this mirror doesn't have a stand
 our buddha nature is forever pure
 where do you get this dust?'

Then I composed another one:

‘The mind is the bodhi tree
the body is the mirror’s stand
the mirror itself is so clean
dust has no place to land.’

When the disciples in the courtyard saw these gathas of mine, they were all dumbfounded. After I left and went back to the milling room, the Fifth Patriarch suddenly came down the corridor and also saw them. He knew I understood what was truly important, but he didn’t want others to know. So he told everyone, ‘This one doesn’t get it either.’

9. At the beginning of the third watch, the Fifth Patriarch called me into his room and explained the Diamond Sutra to me. As soon as I heard the words, I understood. And that night, unknown to anyone, I received the Dharma, as he transmitted the robe and the direct teaching to me, and I became the Sixth Patriarch. The robe is an embodiment of trust that has been handed down from one generation to the next. But the Dharma is transmitted from mind to mind and must be realized by people themselves. Then the Fifth Patriarch said, ‘Hui-neng, since ancient times the lives of those to whom this teaching has been transmitted have hung by a thread. If you stay here, someone will harm you. You must leave at once.’

10. After receiving the robe and the Dharma, I left during the third watch, and the Fifth Patriarch accompanied me personally to the Nine Rivers Ferry. As I boarded, we said good-bye, and the Patriarch instructed me, ‘Go now. And do your best to take the Dharma south. But don’t spread this teaching for three years. Wait until the hard times are over before you go around teaching. And be skillful when you guide those who are deluded. Once they are able to open their minds, they are no different than those who are enlightened.’ Our farewells done, I headed south.

11. Less than two months later, I reached Tayu Ridge. Unknown to me, several hundred people had been chasing me, hoping to catch me and take away the Patriarch’s robe. But they had all given up halfway, all except one monk, whose surname was Ch’en and whose Buddhist name was Hui-shun. He had previously been a general of the third grade, and he was a rough character. He caught up with me at the ridge, and I offered him the Patriarch’s robe, but he wouldn’t take it. He said, ‘I’ve come all this way for the Dharma. I don’t want the robe.’ So I transmitted the Dharma to Hui-shun there at the ridge. He was ready to hear, and as soon as I spoke, his mind opened up. Then I told him to go back north and teach others.

12. I have come here today because I have a connection of many lifetimes with you officials, clerics, and laypeople. This teaching has been passed down by the ancients. It isn’t something I discovered by myself. But if you wish to hear this teaching of the ancients, you must listen with pure minds. And if you wish to get rid of your delusions, you should understand it as past generations have.”

Hui-neng then yelled out, “Good friends! You already possess the prajna wisdom of enlightenment! But because your minds are deluded, you can’t understand by yourselves. You need to find a truly good friend to show you the way to see your nature. Good friends, buddha nature isn’t different for the ignorant and the wise. It’s just that people are deluded or awake. When people are deluded, they’re ignorant. When they wake up, they become wise.

13. Good friends, this Dharma teaching of mine is based on meditation and wisdom. But don’t make the mistake of thinking that meditation and wisdom are separate. Meditation and wisdom are of one essence and not two. Meditation is the body of wisdom, and wisdom is the function of meditation. Wherever you find wisdom, you find meditation. And wherever you find meditation, you find wisdom. Good friends, what this means is that meditation and wisdom are the same. Fellow students of the Way, be careful. Don’t think that meditation comes first and then gives rise to wisdom or that wisdom comes first and then gives rise to meditation or that meditation and wisdom are separate. For those who hold such views, the Dharma is dualistic: If the mouth speaks of goodness, but the mind doesn’t think of goodness, meditation and wisdom aren’t the same. But if goodness pervades both the mouth and the mind, if what is external and internal are alike, then meditation and wisdom are the same.

14. One Practice Samadhi means at all times, whether walking, standing, sitting, or lying down, always practicing with a straightforward mind. The Vimalakirti Sutra says, ‘A straightforward mind is the place of enlightenment,’ and ‘a straightforward mind is the pure land.’ Don’t practice hypocrisy with your mind, while you talk about being straightforward with your mouth. If you speak about One Practice Samadhi with your mouth, but you don’t practice with a straightforward mind, you’re no disciple of the Buddha. Simply practice with a straightforward mind and don’t become attached to any dharma. This is what is meant by One Practice Samadhi.

Deluded people who cling to the external attributes of a dharma get hold of One Practice Samadhi and just say that sitting motionless, eliminating delusions, and not thinking thoughts are One Practice Samadhi. But if that were true, a dharma like that would be the same as lifelessness and would constitute an obstruction of the Way instead. The Way has to flow freely. Why block it up? The Way flows freely when the mind doesn’t dwell on any dharma. Once it dwells on something, it becomes bound.

18. Good friends, in this school of the Dharma, when we practice Zen, we don’t contemplate the mind, and we don’t contemplate purity, and we don’t talk about being dispassionate. If someone says to contemplate the mind, the mind is basically a delusion. And because a delusion is the same as an illusion, there is nothing to contemplate. If someone says to contemplate purity, your nature is already pure. It’s because of deluded thoughts that reality is obscured. But once you are free of deluded thoughts, your original nature is pure. If you don’t see that your nature is already pure, and you rouse your mind to contemplate purity, you create the delusion of purity instead. A delusion has no actual location, which is how we know what we contemplate is a delusion. And purity has no form. If someone establishes a form for purity and thinks they have achieved something, those who hold such a view separate themselves from their own nature and become trapped by purity instead.

And if someone cultivates dispassion, as long as they don't pay attention to the faults of others, their nature is dispassionate. But deluded people act dispassionate then open their mouths and talk about right and wrong and turn their backs on the Way. Meanwhile, contemplating the mind and contemplating purity are actually what separates them from the Way.

19. In that case, what do we mean in this school by 'to practice Zen'? In this school, by 'to practice,' we mean not to be obstructed by anything and externally not to give rise to thoughts about objective states. And by 'Zen,' we mean to see our nature without being confused.

Your nature itself is pure and focused. It is just that you come into contact with objects, and as you come into contact, you become confused. When you are free of form and not confused, you are focused. To be free of form externally is 'Zen.' Not to be confused internally is 'meditation.' External Zen and internal meditation, this is what we mean by 'Zen meditation.' The Vimalakirti Sutra says, 'Suddenly all at once, we return to our original mind.' And the Bodhisattva Precept Sutra says, 'Our original nature is pure.' Good friends, see the fundamental purity of your own nature. Cultivate and put to work for yourselves the dharma body of your own nature. Practice for yourselves the practices of a buddha. Begin and complete for yourselves the path to buddhahood.

21. Good friends... let us now make Four Boundless Vows. Good friends, recite after me:

'I vow to save all beings, no matter how numberless.
I vow to end all afflictions, no matter how countless.
I vow to master all teachings, no matter how limitless.
I vow to attain buddhahood, no matter how transcendent.'

Now recite this three times. Good friends, as for 'I vow to save all beings, no matter how numberless,' it isn't Hui-neng who does the saving. Good friends, every being you can think of saves themselves with their own nature in their own bodies. What does it mean 'they save themselves with their own nature'? The wrong views and afflictions, the ignorance and delusions in their own material bodies already possess the nature of original enlightenment. It is just this nature of original enlightenment that saves them with right views. Once they realize the prajna wisdom of right views, they dispel their ignorance and delusion, and each being saves themselves. The false are saved with truth. The deluded are saved with awareness. The ignorant are saved with wisdom. The bad are saved with goodness. And the afflicted are saved with enlightenment. Those who are saved like this are truly saved.

As for 'I vow to end all afflictions, no matter how countless,' this means to get rid of the delusions of your own mind. And 'I vow to master all teachings, no matter how limitless' means to study the true, unexcelled Dharma. And 'I vow to attain buddhahood, no matter how transcendent' means always to practice with humility, to respect all beings, to avoid attachments, to give rise to prajna from your own awareness, and to put an end to delusions. It is through self-realization that buddhahood is attained. This is the power of making vows.

24. Good friends... each of you should clear your mind, and I will convey to you the teaching of Maha Prajnaparamita. ... *Maha Prajnaparamita* is Sanskrit. In our language it means 'The Great Wisdom That Leads to

the Other Shore.’ This teaching must be practiced and not simply chanted with your mouth. If you chant it with your mouth but don’t practice it, it’s like an illusion or a mirage. But the dharma body of those who practice it is the same as a buddha’s. What does *maha* mean? *Maha* means ‘great.’ The capacity of the mind is so great, it’s like space. But if you practice Empty-mind Zen, you will fall into a featureless void. In this world of ours, space has room for the sun and the moon and the stars, the earth and its mountains and rivers, every plant and tree, bad people and good people, bad teachings and good teachings, heavens and hells. All of this exists in space. The emptiness of our nature is also like this.

25. Our nature contains the ten thousand dharmas. That’s how great it is. And the ten thousand dharmas are our nature. To see humans and non-humans, both the good and the bad, good dharmas and bad dharmas, without rejecting them and without being corrupted by them, this is to be like space. This is what we mean by ‘great.’ This is what *maha* means.

26. What does *prajna* mean? *Prajna* means ‘wisdom.’ At all times to keep your thoughts free of ignorance and always to practice wisdom, this is what we mean by the practice of *prajna*. One thought of ignorance, and *prajna* stops. One thought of wisdom, and *prajna* reappears. A person whose mind is full of ignorance says ‘I’m practicing *prajna*.’ But *prajna* has no form. It’s the nature of wisdom.

And what does *paramita* mean? This is Sanskrit. In our language, we say ‘what leads to the other shore,’ which means what transcends birth and death. When we are attached to objects, we give rise to birth and death, like when waves form on the water. This is what we mean by ‘this shore.’ When we are free of objects, there is no birth or death, like when a river flows on forever. So we say this ‘leads to the other shore.’ This is what we mean by *paramita*.

Those who realize this teaching realize the teaching of *prajna* and practice the practice of *prajna*. Those who don’t practice it are fools. But if they did practice it, for even one moment, their dharma body would be the same as a buddha’s. Good friends, affliction is enlightenment. One moment you’re deluded and a fool. The next moment you’re awake and a buddha.

Good friends, *Maha Prajnaparamita* is the noblest, the highest, the ultimate. It isn’t present, it isn’t past, and it isn’t future. And yet the buddhas of the present, the past, and the future all come from it and use this great wisdom to reach the other shore and to break through the afflictions and passions of the Five Skandhas.

29. When people of small capacity hear this direct teaching, they’re like the plants in the ground that have shallow roots. If they should ever get drenched by a heavy rain, they’re quickly uprooted, or they don’t grow very tall. People of small capacity are also like this. But they all possess the wisdom of *prajna*, the same as people who are truly wise. So why don’t they understand the Dharma when they hear it? It’s because their barriers of mistaken views are so thick, and their roots of passion are so deep. It’s like when heavy clouds cover the sun. Unless the wind blows them away, the sun can’t shine through. It isn’t the wisdom of *prajna* that’s great or small. It’s because all these beings have deluded themselves into looking for a buddha through external practices and haven’t yet realized their own nature that they remain people of small capacity. And yet, on hearing this direct teaching, if they depend not on external practices but simply on their own minds and they

let their own nature give rise to right views, even all these beings with their mistaken views, their passions, and their afflictions will suddenly wake up, and like the ocean that takes in all rivers, the great and the small, and combines them into one, they will see their nature and not dwell on the inside or the outside. They will come and go freely and be able to get rid of attachments and penetrate everything without restriction. The mind that cultivates such a practice is basically no different from the *Prajnaparamita Sutra*.”

... After the Master had finished his discourse on the Dharma, Magistrate Wei and his fellow officials, the clerics and laypeople, all praised this without cease as something they had never heard before.

35. The Magistrate bowed respectfully and asked, “Your disciple sees monks and laypeople who keep chanting ‘Amita Buddha’ in hopes of being reborn in the Western Paradise. Could the Master please tell us if we can be reborn there or not, so that our doubts may be put to rest?”

The Sixth Patriarch said, “I will take Your Eminence to the Western Paradise right now, and you will witness it for yourself. Would Your Eminence like to see it?” The Magistrate bowed respectfully and said, “If I could see it right now, why would I need to be reborn there? If the Master would be compassionate enough to show us the Western Paradise, that would be wonderful, indeed!”

The Master said, “All of you should listen carefully. Everyone’s physical body is a city. Your eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and skin are the city’s gates. These five gates are on the outside, and on the inside is the gate of the intellect. Your mind is the kingdom, and your nature is the king. When your nature is there, so is the king. When your nature is gone, the king is gone too. When your nature is present, your body and mind are present. When your nature is absent, your body and mind cease to exist. The Buddha is a creation of your nature. Don’t look outside your body. When you’re blind to your own nature, the Buddha is an ordinary being. When you’re aware of your own nature, an ordinary being is the Buddha.”

40. Master Shen-hsiu often heard people say that Hui-neng’s teaching was fast and pointed straight to the path. So Shen-hsiu told his disciple Chih-ch’eng, “You’re intelligent and perceptive. Go to Huineng’s place on Tsaohsi Mountain for me and pay your respects, but just listen. Don’t say I sent you. When you hear something important, make a note of it and come back and tell me. We’ll see whose understanding is fast or slow, mine or Hui-neng’s. And come back right away. Don’t leave me hanging.”

Chih-ch’eng gladly accepted the mission and left, and within half a month he reached Tsaohsi Mountain and met Master Hui-neng. After he paid his respects, he just listened and didn’t say where he was from. But as soon as Chih-ch’eng heard the Master teach, he understood, and he grasped his original mind. He stood up and bowed and said, “Master, your disciple has come from Yuchuan Temple. At Shenhsiu’s place, I didn’t experience any realization. But as soon as I heard the Master speak, I grasped my original mind. I hope the Master will be compassionate enough to instruct me.”

Master Hui-neng said, “If that’s where you’re from, you must be a spy.” Chih-ch’eng said, “I’m not a spy.” The Sixth Patriarch said, “And why not?” Chih-ch’eng said, “Before I spoke, I was. But now that I’ve spoken, I’m not.” The Sixth Patriarch said, “It’s the same with ‘affliction is enlightenment.’”

48. The Master passed into Nirvana on the third day of the eighth month in the second year of the Hsientung Era. On the eighth day of the seventh month, he called his disciples together to say good-bye. In the first year of the Hsientung Era, he built a stupa at Kuo-en Temple in Hsinchou. And it was there, in the seventh month of the following year, that he bid them farewell. The Master said, "Everyone come closer. In the eighth month, I expect to leave this world. If any of you have questions, ask them now, and I will answer them for you. Let me put an end to your delusions so that you can know joy. After I leave, there will be no one to teach you."

When Fa-hai and the other monks heard this, they wept and cried. Only Shen-hui was unmoved and shed no tears. The Sixth Patriarch said, "Shen-hui is a young monk, but he understands that the good and the bad are the same, and he isn't moved by praise or blame. The rest of you don't understand. What exactly have you been practicing all these years in the mountains? And who exactly are you crying for? Are you worried that I don't know where I'm going? If I didn't know where I was going, I would never leave you. You're crying because you don't know where I'm going. If you knew, you wouldn't be crying."

Our nature isn't subject to birth and death or coming and going. All of you sit down. I have a gatha for you: 'The Gatha of Truth and Falsehood and Movement and Stillness.' If all of you recite this gatha, your thoughts will be the same as mine. Put this into practice, and don't lose sight of the basic principle." The monks all bowed and asked the Master to leave them with this gatha, which they received with reverence. The gatha went:

"Nothing that exists is true, don't think what you see is true
if you think you see the true, what you see is surely false
if you want to find the true, the mind free of the false is true
unless your mind forsakes the false, nothing is true where true can't be.

Living things know how to move, lifeless things stay still
those who practice staying still resemble motionless lifeless things
to see what truly doesn't move in movement find what doesn't move
what doesn't move is what doesn't move, lifeless things have no buddha seeds.

If you can perceive its attributes, the ultimate truth doesn't move
if you can realize this, you will see how reality works
all you students of the Way be relentless and concentrate
don't stand at the entrance of the Mahayana clinging to views about birth and death.

If those before you are ready, tell them the Buddha's teaching
and if they aren't truly ready, bow and tell them to be good
there's nothing to argue about in this teaching, those who argue lose sight of the Way
clinging to blindness arguing about teachings, they lead their nature into birth and death."

53. The Master said, “You disciples, be well. I will leave you with a verse called ‘The Liberation of Seeing the Real Buddha of Your Nature.’ If deluded people in future ages understand the meaning of this verse, they will see the real buddha of their own mind and their own nature. After I give you this verse, I will leave you:

The pure nature of suchness is the real buddha
the Three Poisons of falsehood are the real mara
people who see falsely have a mara in their house
people who see truly have a buddha as their guest. ...

The nature of defilement is the cause of purity
there is no pure body in the absence of defilement
just keep your nature free of the Five Desires
the moment you see your nature it is real.

If the direct teaching makes sense to you this life
you will understand before you is a buddha
if you try to find a buddha through your practice
I wonder where you’ll find one that’s real.

If you can find something real inside yourself
this something real is the cause of buddhahood
don’t look for a buddha outside what is real
all those who go in search for one are fools.

This direct teaching came here from the West
but liberating others is up to you to practice
I urge you students of the Way today
don’t act so depressed when you hear this.”

After he finished reciting this gatha, the Master told his disciples, “Be well. I am leaving you now. After I’m gone, don’t engage in the worldly customs of crying and accepting condolence money and wearing mourning garments. That would not be the Buddhist Way. And you would not be my disciples. Act the same as when I was here. Sit together in meditation, but remain free of movement and stillness, birth and death, coming and going, right and wrong, present and past. Be at ease and at peace. That is the Great Way. After I’m gone, just practice in accordance with the Dharma, the same as when I was with you. And if I were here, and you disobeyed my teaching, even my presence would be of no help.”

After he said this, the Master spoke no more. During the third watch of the night, he passed away peacefully. He was seventy-six years of age.

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