In Investigating Chan, First Lay the Foundation

Among the students of Buddhism, some like to investigate Chan; some like to study the teachings, speak the Dharma, and lecture on the sutras; some like to investigate the precepts; some enjoy cultivating the Secret School; and some like to practice the Pure Land School. No matter which school you like, you must concentrate single-mindedly and cultivate with diligence. Then you will be able to achieve your goal and realize your hopes. But if your mind isn't concentrated, then no matter what you study, it's the same as not studying. So after investigating Chan for two and a half days, you decide to recite the Buddha's name; after reciting the Buddha's name for half a day, you wish to study the Vinaya (moral code). After studying the Vinaya for a while, you decide to study in the Secret School. Since you keep changing your goal, you cannot concentrate. The reason you cannot concentrate is because you are seeking outside. You have your feet in two boats, and you can't decide whether you want to go north or south on the river. In that way, you end up wasting your whole life.
In investigating Chan, you must be vigorous at all times; don't be lazy for a single minute or second. You should investigate until:

The mountains disappear and the waters vanish, and you doubt there is a road ahead. Beyond the dark willows and the bright flowers is another village.

At that point there is another heaven, another natural paradise. But you must investigate to the utmost point and reach the summit. Then there's a bit of hope, but not much. Although there's a tiny bit of hope, don't hang onto it, because that would be superfluous (adding a head on top of a head).

To investigate Chan, you must honestly put in the effort. First of all, you must practice sitting until your legs are compliant — until they don't hurt or cause any trouble. How can you get your legs to stop hurting? Is there a mantra you can recite to stop the pain? Is there a medicine you can take to keep them from hurting? No. You must endure the pain, and then they will become obedient and stop hurting. If you cannot endure it, and you move your legs and let them rest as soon as they start hurting, your legs will never become obedient because you are spoiling them. Whenever they hurt, you simply placate them as if placating an unhappy child. If the child knows his parents cannot bear to see him suffer, he won't be able to endure any suffering in the future. Your legs are just like a child; if you fear the pain, they will hurt all the time, even when they aren't supposed to hurt. That's because you've spoiled them rotten.

You must train your legs and your back to be compliant, so that they won't ache or hurt. When your eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and mind are all compliant, so that they don't seek after sights, sounds, smells, tastes, objects of touch, or dharmas; when you are not influenced by the six sense organs and six sense objects, and you can turn your attention inwards, that's true obedience. As it is said,

The eyes see forms, but inside there is nothing. The ears hear sounds, but the mind does not know.
You constantly reflect within instead of seeking outside, and you always stick to your basic Dharma-door: "Who is mindful of the Buddha?" Holding to what is basic, you "only attain the root, and don't worry about the branchtips." There's no need to worry about unimportant matters; bit by bit, everything will become clear to you.

In cultivating the Dharma-door of investigating Chan, you shouldn't try to learn the details of how to investigate when you haven't learned how to sit in full lotus, or even half lotus. You haven't finished laying the foundation yet! To investigate Chan, you must first lay the foundation.

During the first week, you can clear the land. When you want to build a house, you must first make the land level.

In the second week, you can drive in the stakes. Driving in the stakes requires some effort--this is where you must cultivate patience and endure the pain, hunger, and cold. You must endure everything, and it takes a lot of strength. It's arduous, but you must travel this path. You have to lay a good foundation and drive in good stakes. Otherwise, your house will not be sturdy; the wind will blow it down and the rain will wash it away. That's the consequence of not driving in the stakes well and not setting a good foundation.

In the third week, you can put up the beams, rafters, column bases, and columns.

During the fourth week, you can erect the walls, install doors and windows, and put up the ridgepole. That's how a house is constructed, step by step. You can't "dig a well with one thrust of the shovel"; there's no instant accomplishment.
参禅如此，念佛也是如此，學教、修密、習律也是如此，都要念茲在茲的，把心弄老實，不教它好高騖遠，不要聽人說密宗好啊！就跑到密宗。我們人不要迷得死不開竅，食古不化。明明眼前都擺著事實，還迷頭迷腦地密密密，密來密去也不知怎麼就死了，這真是密！這不是「密」，是「迷」——糊里糊塗！

各位信佛的人，要研究真理，不要盲從。要「親近有德，遠避凶人」，凶人就是專門欺騙人；有德之人就是不欺騙人。無德的人專用奸詐手段，所以德存不住；唯獨不欺騙人的人，才能日積月累地修功立德，故其德行存在。所以你們觀察人就是從這兒著眼。不是單單在表面上看，說：「我看這人有德，是善知識。」根本沒有確實的標尺。你必須要設身處地，真正了解那人才算。末法時代，人都犯了一種通病，就是好高騖遠，以耳代目，聽人家說什麼好，就往那兒跑。跑到那兒，好不好也不知道，甚至被人騙了還不醒覺。學這種迷信財色，迷信風水，是非常可憐的。

今天從報紙上轉載大陸福建某地，有六個小孩子集體跳海自殺去成仙。這為什麼呢？就因為邪說把人迷住了，說人做壞事就要做鬼，做好事就成神仙。什麼叫好事呢？就是不怕死。在鄉下地方，小孩子天真純樸，聽了什麼也容易入腦。

This is true not only of investigating Chan, but also of reciting the Buddha's name, studying the teachings, cultivating the Secret School, and practicing the Vinaya—in any of these, you must devote your full attention to the task at hand. Make your mind honest, and don't yearn for what is lofty and distant. Don't run over to join the Secret School just because you hear someone talk about how wonderful it is. We shouldn't get so deluded that we obstinately refuse to see the truth and rigidly hold onto old ways. The facts are right in front of us, but with addled brains, we still chase after what's "secret, secret, secret" until we die for no apparent reason. That's truly secret! Actually, it's not secret, it's confusion; it's totally muddled.

Buddhists should study true principles. Don't blindly follow others. You should draw near virtuous people and stay away from bad people. Bad people are those who do nothing but cheat others. Virtuous people do not cheat others. People without virtue use all sorts of fraudulent means—that's why they can't preserve their virtue. Only those who don't cheat people can store up the merit and virtue they cultivate over the days and months. That's why their virtue endures. Pay attention to this when you observe people. Don't just judge by appearances and say, "That person looks virtuous; he seems to be a Good and Wise Advisor." You don't have any real way to determine that. You must really get to know him thoroughly before you can make such a statement. In this Dharma-ending Age, we all have the same problem, which is that we like to seek what is lofty and distant. Instead of using our eyes to see, we let our ears do the "seeing" for us. When we hear someone say something is good, we rush over. When we get there, we have no idea of whether it's really good or not, and without realizing it, we get duped. People who confusedly put their faith in wealth and sex and in geomancy are really pathetic!

In today's newspaper, there was an article about six children in the Fukien province of China who committed suicide together by jumping into the sea, hoping to become immortals. Why did they do that? They had been misled into believing that people who do evil become ghosts, and people who do good turn into immortals. And what did "doing good" mean? It meant not being afraid to die. Children in rural areas are quite naive and will believe whatever they hear. Since someone told those six children that good people are not afraid to die and will become immortals after death, they decided to kill themselves as a group and become immortals.
They thought, "The Eight Immortals of the past probably committed suicide together. Now we can commit suicide together and become the Six Immortals and escape the cycle of rebirth in the six paths." Then they killed themselves, hoping to become immortals.

Well, did they become immortals? I can guarantee that they didn't. Why? They were too confused. People who become immortals are very intelligent. They aren't as foolish as these children, who had no understanding of true principles and couldn't tell right from wrong. How could they all die together and become immortals? If becoming immortal were that easy, everyone should just hurry up and die and become immortal. But that's impossible. How pitiful those foolish villagers are, blindly following this superstitious and deviant theory and leading their children astray. This is very sad.

But why were those children so eager and unafraid to die, saying they were going to become immortals? You could say their environment forced them to feel that life wasn't worth living, that it would be better to die than to be living corpses. So seeking liberation, they all went to their deaths together. The children had written the word "death" over a thousand times in their notebooks. Every day, it was "death, death, death." They thought of death from morning to night. In their ignorance, those boys and girls were seduced by superstition and lost their true goal and direction.

Buddhists should not believe in superstition. You must break through superstition. What is superstition? It is being reckless and confused in your belief. You simply believe anything people say, and you end up all muddled. Being confused in your belief is still not that serious. It's only to be feared that you believe in confusion, that you believe in the confused, upside-down teachings of externalist ways. Some people try to be clever; they don't believe in what is true but instead believe in what is false. This is a case of being confused within confusion. They don't recognize true principles. They take the true to be false, and the false to be true. For example, in the case of the six children, the theory that "death leads to immortality" is actually just a false claim meant to cheat people, but they believed it. If someone had told them they have to cultivate before they can become immortals, they might not have believed that. There are many pathetic people and many woeful situations in the world; we could never finish speaking of them!
經文:

以無所得故。菩提薩埵。依般若波羅蜜多故。
心無罣礙。

偈誦:

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文解:

前邊講了無智亦無得，「無智」，沒有這個藏教菩薩事六度的智慧；「無得」，無得二乘有餘的涅槃。

「以無所得故」，「無所得」是本經的宗旨，這部《般若波羅蜜多心經》有什麼宗旨呢？就是破去你的執著，令你沒有執著有所得的心，沒有執著證果的心，要證而無證、無證而證。怎麼叫「證而無證」？你證得這個果，不要有得果的這種執著；沒有這種執著，這才是真正的得到究竟涅槃。所以「無所得」是本經的宗旨。

Sutra:

Because nothing is attained, the Bodhisattva, through reliance on prajna paramita, is unimpeded in his mind.

Verse:

There is no cultivation, verification, or attainment. What has characteristics and is conditioned has a time of demise,
And Bohisattvas, in becoming enlightened to this truth, Trust to prajna, and become even with the other shore.
The mind without impediments leave the retribution-obstacle behind; A nature totally, truly empty puts an end to words and thoughts.
I send these words to those of future worth: seek it in yourself;
A head piled on top of a head is the height of stupidity.

Commentary:

When the sutra says, and no understanding and no attaining, “no understanding” means not having the wisdom-paramita of the six phenomenal paramitas of the Storehouse-Teaching Bodhisattva, while “no attaining” means no attainment of the nirvana with residue of the two vehicles.

Because nothing is attained: no-attainment is this sutra’s purpose and intend. The beneficial function of the Prajna Paramita Sutra is the eradication of your attachments, so that your mind has no attachment to attainment and no attachment to verification of the fruition. You should verify, yet not verify; not verify, yet verify. What is meant by verifying, yet not verifying? Although you are certified as having attained the fruition, you shouldn’t be attached to having attained it. That is genuine attainment of ultimate nirvana. That is why no-attainment is the sutra’s purpose and intent.
「菩提薩埵」，菩提薩埵就是菩薩。「依般若波羅蜜多故」，他依照般若波羅蜜多這種深智慧的法去修行。修行得到什麼呢？得到「心無罣礙」。我們人所以不能自在，就因為有所罣礙；有所罣礙就不能自在。無罣礙就得到自在。無罣礙就能破除報障。現在講到本經的宗旨和力用了，「無所得」是本經的宗旨，「破除三障」是它的力用。本經的宗旨就是以實相無所得為宗。

現在因為「無所得」的緣故，「菩提薩埵」，就是菩薩他依照深般若這個法門來修，就破除報障了。

障有三種：報障、業障、煩惱障。「心無罣礙」就能破報障；你有所罣礙，這個報障就破不了。無罣礙就是怎麼呢？就是得到人空、法空，證得人、法二空這種境界。

無修無證無所得。到這種程度就無修了，為什麼？修完了。也無所證了，為什麼？已經證得了。他已經「所作已辦，不受後有」了。他所應該做的事情都做完了，大事已畢，所以叫無證、無所得。那麼無修、無證是不是能有一個所得呢？也無所得。你若有一個所得，就有所執著。

有相有為有盡時。你若是著到相上，或著到有為法上，都會有窮盡的時候，不會永遠無盡的。你若想無盡就要無修、無證、無所得。你什麼也無所得了，這時候就是無罣礙了。

The Bodhisattva, through reliance on prajna paramita, is unimpeded in his mind. In order to cultivate, he relies on the deep wisdom of the prajna paramita dharma. What is obtained through cultivation is an unimpeded mind. We cannot be at ease because we have impediments. If you have no impediments, you can be at ease. Is unimpeded means that the retribution-obstacle has been eradicated through the use of no-attainment. That is the kind of power this sutra has. No-attainment is this sutra’s purpose and intent, and eradicating the three obstacles is its beneficial function.

Because nothing is attained, the Bodhisattva, through reliance on prajna paramita, on the dharma-door of profound prajna, brings about the eradication of the retribution-obstacle, which is to say that he is unimpeded in his mind.

The three obstacles are the retribution-obstacle, the activity-obstacle, and the affliction-obstacle, as I explained above. If you have impediments, you cannot destroy the retribution-obstacle. To be unimpeded is to attain the state where both people and dharmas are empty.

The verse says, There is no cultivation, verification, or attainment. At this level there is no cultivation, because you have finished cultivating; there is nothing to verify, because you have already obtained verification. “What there was to be done is already finished, so you undergo no further existence.” Everything that you were supposed to do is done. Because the great matter is all completed, the verse says, “no verification or attainment.”

No cultivation and no verification means that although one is unable to have a place of attainment, there isn’t anywhere to attain to. If you were to have a place of attainment, then you would have a place of attachment.

Therefore, the verse continues, What has characteristics and is conditioned has a time of demise. If you are attached to the characteristics of conditioned dharmas, there will be a time of demise, since you cannot be without a time of demise forever. If you don’t want there be a demise, there must be “no cultivation, verification, or attainment.” You will be unimpeded at the point when you have nothing whatever that is attained.
And Bodhisattvas, in becoming enlightened to this truth, Trust to prajna, and become even with the other shore. What is the meaning of the word “Bodhisattva”? Bodhi means “enlightenment,” and sattva means “sentient being.” The Bodhisattva is one who causes all beings to become enlightened. The term “sentient beings” refers to everything with blood and breath – not only people, but all creatures with a span of life. Those without a span of life are called non-sentient beings. To enlighten sentient beings is to cause all sentient beings to attain an enlightenment the same as one has attained oneself. Not only can one recite the Shurangama Mantra oneself, but one wants others to be able to recite it also. It isn’t to say, “I’m the only one who can recite it. I don’t like other people to be able to recite it, because my being the only one shows that I am not the same as other people.” It isn’t that way. If you achieve some benefit, then you like other people to have it too. “I listen to sutra myself and gain the benefits of listening to sutras. Because I understand the principles of being a person and of studying the Buddhadharma, I also urge all my friends and relatives to come and listen to the Buddhadharma and to study it, so that all obtain equal benefit.” That is what is meant by enlightening sentient beings.

(待續 To be continued)
The above heavy offenses such as Five Rebellious offenses and the offenses of destroying the eternal dwelling Triple Jewel are immeasurable and boundless, and they are difficult to be eradicated through repentance even when a thousand Buddhas come into the world. Shakyamuni Buddha is now the fourth Buddha in the Worthy Kalpa. To eradicate these offenses, it is not adequate by repenting even before the Buddha. However, the Dharani Sutra said: Now when one is reciting the Great Compassion Mantra Dharani. Masters of the ten directions will come to certify that all the karmic offenses are eradicated. The only exception is that one is doubtful about the mantra, in which case even the small offenses or light karma can not be eradicated.

When this body is cast aside, it is fitting that I fall into the three paths of rebirth and there be entangled in a myriad of ills. Moreover, in this present life, because a swarm of troubles embroils me, foul illsnes which bind me up, and oppressive conditions brought about by others, I am obstructed in the dharmas of the path, and do not become well-seasoned in my cultivation.
Now having met (bow) the perfect spiritual mantra of great compassion, I am able to quickly wipe out the obstacles of offenses like these. (Rise, Remain Kneeling) Therefore, on this day, with utmost sincerity, I recite and hold this mantra and return (bow) to Guan Shr Yin Bodhisattva and to all the great masters of the ten directions. (bow) I bring forth the Bodhi-mind and cultivate the practice of true words. Together with all living beings I confess my many offenses and seek repentance so that they will be extinguished at last. I only wish (bow) that the greatly compassionate Guan Shr Yin Bodhisattva, Mahasattva, will protect and uphold us with this thousand hands. And that with his thousand eyes, he will illuminate us and look upon us and cause our inner and outer conditions of obstruction to become still and extinguished. I vow that my practice and the practice of others will be complete in accomplishment. I vow to open the knowledge of my original seeing and to have control over demons and externalist paths. I vow to be vigorous in the three karmic actions and to cultivate the pure land cause, so that when this body is cast aside I will have no other destiny but to attain rebirth (bow) in Amita Buddha's land of ultimate bliss, and draw near to, serve, and make offerings to the greatly compassionate Guan yin. (Rise, remain kneeling) I vow to be complete in all the Dharanis and on a wide scale to cross over the many classes of beings so that they all escape the wheel of suffering and reach the ground of wisdom together.

(待續 To be continued)
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**January 2017 SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES**

1/28 正月初一 7:45am 點吉祥燈
Lighting of Auspicious Lamps

01/29 正月初二 慈悲三昧水懺
Compassionate Samadhi Water Repentance
# December 2016 Schedule of Activities

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<td>12/11/16 (日 Sun)</td>
<td>萬佛聖城</td>
<td>慶祝阿彌陀佛聖誕法會</td>
<td>Celebration of Amitabha Buddha’s Birthday at CTTB</td>
<td>請與金山寺聯繫交通安排 (415-421-6117)</td>
<td>Please contact us if you would like to participate!</td>
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| 六齋日（Six Vegetarian Days） | 12/11/16 (日 Sun) | 萬佛聖城 | 慶祝阿彌陀佛聖誕法會 | Celebration of Amitabha Buddha’s Birthday at CTTB | 請與金山寺聯繫交通安排 (415-421-6117) | Please contact us if you would like to participate! |

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