

THE SHINING CENTRE

*by the Third Ch'an Patriarch
Chien-chih Seng-ts'an. (529 -606 AD)*



THE SHINING CENTRE (Hsin-Hsin Ming)

(Literally, Hsin/Xin now refers to the physical heart. It is still sometimes translated as "mind". The ancient Chinese believed the heart was the centre of human cognition. Actually, it indicates the Ultimate Reality which exists both outside the body and inside, where it refers to its location inside the body; usually at the centre of gravity.

*Mind tends to be associated with thought, and Heart with feeling. The true meaning is upstream of both. "The Centre" *qv* would be better.)*

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The Perfect Way is only difficult
for those who have preferences.
When freed from likes and dislikes,
it reveals itself fully and without disguise.

A hairsbreadth difference
and heaven and earth are set apart.
If you want to see Truth clearly before you,
take no thought either for it or against it.

To set up what you like against what you dislike –
this is the disease of the mind.
When the deep meaning of the Centre is not understood,
Peace of Mind is disturbed and nothing is gained.

It is like unlimited space, blank and featureless.
Nothing is too small; nothing is too big!
It is because we make choices
that we lose sight of it.

Pursue not the outer entanglements as though they were real.
Don't pretend Suffering is not real.
Seek serenity in the One
and suffering vanishes by itself.

Stopping motion to get rest –
and rest itself will be restless.
Stay with dualism –
and you lose the Oneness.

Those who cannot attain to Oneness, fall short.
If we deny Reality, we lose ourselves in the “Real”.
If we assert that the Void exists,
we end up in self-contradiction.

The more we talk and think about it,
the further astray we go.
Stop verbalising and thinking
and there is nothing that cannot be understood.

Return to the root and we gain the meaning.
Pursue external objects and we lose the reason.
The moment we are enlightened within,
we go beyond the emptiness of a world before us.

Transformations in an empty world
appear real all because of Ignorance.
No need to seek after the true,
only cease to cherish opinions about it.

Stay not with dualism.
Carefully avoid pursuing it.
As soon as we have right and wrong,
the result is Chaos and mind loses itself.

The two exist because of the One.
But do not grasp even after this One.
When the One mind is not disturbed,
the ten thousand things cannot be blamed.

No blame, no ten thousand things.
When the mind is not disturbed, there is no mind.
The subject is quieted as the object ceases
and the object ceases when the subject is quieted.

The object is an object for the subject,
the subject is a subject for an object.
Know that the relativity of the two
rests ultimately on the oneness of the Void.

In the oneness of the Void the two are one.
Each contains within itself all the ten thousand things.
When no discrimination is made between this and that,
how can a one-sided and prejudiced view arise?

The Great Way is calm and big hearted,
it is as wrong to call it easy as it is to call it hard.
Small and one-sided views are irresolute.
The more haste, the less speed.

Clinging itself is never kept within bounds.
It is sure to go the wrong way.
Let go of clinging and things are as they are,
while the essence itself neither comes nor goes.

Accept the nature of things and you are in concord with the Way;
calm and easy and free from annoyance.

But thoughts that are fettered turn away from the truth.
They sink into not-liking and weariness of the spirit.

When they are not sound, the spirit is troubled.
What is the use of being partial and one-sided then?
If you want to tread the path of the One Vehicle,
be not prejudiced against the six sense-objects.

Accept the world of the six sense-objects,
and you identify yourself with the One.
Those who know the most, do the least.
Only Ignorance clings to preferences and attachments.

In the One, there is no individuation.
But the ignorant attach themselves to particular objects.
It is their own mind that creates illusions!
Is not this the greatest of self-contradictions?

Ignorance creates the dualism of rest and unrest.
The enlightened have no likes and dislikes.
All forms of dualism
are contrived by ignorance in the mind itself.

They are like visions of flowers in the air.
Why take the trouble to grasp after them?
Gain and loss, right and wrong –
“Is” and “isn’t”, banish them forever!

If an eye does not sleep,
all dreams cease by themselves.
If the mind makes no distinctions,
the ten thousand things are of one suchness.

When the deep mystery of the One is fathomed,
suddenly we forget the external entanglements.
When the ten thousand things are seen as One,
we return to the origin and remain what we are.

Forget the origins of things,
and there are no "things" we can set against each other.
Movement stopped and there is no movement.
Rest set in motion and there is no rest.
When dualism has gone, even oneness disappears!

The ultimate end of all things
is not bounded by rules and measures:
Thought becomes impartial, karma becomes quiescent.
Uncertainty completely disappears.

Nothing is held onto now. Nothing is remembered.
All is void, lucid, and self-illuminating.
Mind does not exert itself. Thinking cannot reach this.
Sense and feeling cannot comprehend it.

In the highest realm of True Suchness
there is neither "other" nor "self".
When direct identification is sought,
we can only say, "Not two."

In being not two, all is the same.
Yet all things are included in it.
The Wise in the ten quarters
all have accessed this Primal Truth.

It is beyond Time and Space.
One instant is ten thousand years.
Whether we see it or fail to see it,
it is manifest always and everywhere.

When external boundaries are forgotten,
the infinitely small is as large as large things can be.
When its outlines are not seen,
the infinitely large is as small as small things can be.

What is, is the same as what is not.
What is not, is the same as what is.
Where this is not the case, do not linger there.

One in all,
All in one –
if only this be realized,
everything else follows of its own accord.

The One Mind is not Two,
the Not Two is the One Mind.

This is where words fail,
for it is not of the Past, Future, or Present.

One Reality only!
How deep and far-reaching!
The ten thousand things –
how many and varied and confusing!

The true and the conventional all mingled together.
Yet essentially they are all the same!
The wise and the unenlightened can be distinguished.
But in the Way they are united as one.

Try to find its boundaries.
It extends into infinity
and vanishes into the distance!
Its terminals can never be reached!
It originates in beginningless time.
It terminates in endless time.