

Verses on the Faith-Mind

By Seng-ts'an, Third Chinese Patriarch

Translated by Richard B. Clarke

The Great Way is not difficult
for those not attached to preferences.
When neither love nor hate arises,
all is clear and undisguised.
Separate by the smallest amount, however,
and you are as far from it as heaven is from earth.

If you wish to know the truth,
then hold to no opinions for or against anything.
To set up what you like against what you dislike
is the disease of the mind.

When the fundamental nature of things is not recognized
the mind's essential peace is disturbed to no avail.
The Way is perfect as vast space is perfect,
where nothing is lacking and nothing is in excess.

Indeed, it is due to our grasping and rejecting
that we do not know the true nature of things.
Live neither in the entanglements of outer things,
nor in ideas or feelings of emptiness.
Be serene and at one with things
and erroneous views will disappear by themselves.

When you try to stop activity to achieve quietude,
your very effort fills you with activity.
As long as you remain attached to one extreme or another
you will never know Oneness.
Those who do not live in the Single Way
cannot be free in either activity or quietude, in assertion or denial.

Deny the reality of things
and you miss their reality;
assert the emptiness of things
and you miss their reality.
The more you talk and think about it

the further you wander from the truth.
So cease attachment to talking and thinking,
and there is nothing you will not be able to know.

To return to the root is to find the essence,
but to pursue appearances or "enlightenment" is to miss the source.
To awaken even for a moment
is to go beyond appearance and emptiness.

Changes that seem to occur in the empty world
we make real only because of our ignorance.

Do not seek for the truth;
Only cease to cherish opinions.

Do not remain in a dualistic state;
avoid such easy habits carefully.
If you attach even to a trace
of this and that, of right and wrong,
the Mind-essence will be lost in confusion.
Although all dualities arise from the One,
do not be attached even to ideas of this One.

When the mind exists undisturbed in the Way,
there is no objection to anything in the world;
and when there is no objection to anything,
things cease to be— in the old way.
When no discriminating attachment arises,
the old mind ceases to exist.
Let go of things as separate existences
and mind too vanishes.
Likewise when the thinking subject vanishes
so too do the objects created by mind.

The arising of other gives rise to self;
giving rise to self generates others.
Know these seeming two as facets
of the One Fundamental Reality.
In this Emptiness, these two are really one—
and each contains all phenomena.
If not comparing, nor attached to "refined" and "vulgar"—
you will not fall into judgment and opinion.

The Great Way is embracing and spacious—
to live in it is neither easy nor difficult.

Those who rely on limited views are fearful and irresolute:
The faster they hurry, the slower they go.
To have a narrow mind,
and to be attached to getting enlightenment
is to lose one's center and go astray.
When one is free from attachment,
all things are as they are,
and there is neither coming nor going.

When in harmony with the nature of things, your own fundamental nature,
and you will walk freely and undisturbed.
However, when mind is in bondage, the truth is hidden,
and everything is murky and unclear,
and the burdensome practice of judging
brings annoyance and weariness.
What benefit can be derived
from attachment to distinctions and separations?

If you wish to move in the One Way,
do not dislike the worlds of senses and ideas.
Indeed, to embrace them fully
is identical with true Enlightenment.
The wise person attaches to no goals
but the foolish person fetters himself or herself.
There is one Dharma, without differentiation.
Distinctions arise from the clinging needs of the ignorant.
To seek Mind with the discriminating mind
is the greatest of mistakes.

Rest and unrest derive from illusion;
with enlightenment, attachment to liking and disliking ceases.
All dualities come from ignorant inference.
They are like dreams, phantoms, hallucinations—
it is foolish to try to grasp them.
Gain and loss, right and wrong; finally abandon all such thoughts at once.

If the eye never sleeps,
all dreams will naturally cease.
If the mind makes no discriminations,
the ten thousand things
are as they are, of single essence.
To realize the mystery of this One-essence
is to be released from all entanglements.
When all things are seen without differentiation,

the One Self-essence is everywhere revealed.
No comparisons or analogies are possible
in this causeless, relationless state of just this One.

When movement stops, there is no movement—
and when no movement, there is no stopping.
When such dualities cease to exist
Oneness itself cannot exist.
To this ultimate state
no law or description applies.

For the Realized mind at one with the Way
all self-centered striving ceases.
Doubts and irresolutions vanish
and the Truth is confirmed in you.
With a single stroke you are freed from bondage;
nothing clings to you and you hold to nothing.
All is empty, clear, self-illuminating,
with no need to exert the mind.
Here, thinking, feeling, understanding, and imagination
are of no value.
In this world "as it really is"
there is neither self nor other-than-self.

To know this Reality directly
is possible only through practicing non-duality.
When you live this non-separation,
all things manifest the One, and nothing is excluded.
Whoever comes to enlightenment, no matter when or where,
Realizes personally this fundamental Source.

This Dharma-truth has nothing to do with big or small, with time and space.
Here a single thought is as ten thousand years.
Not here, not there—
but everywhere always right before your eyes.
Infinitely large and infinitely small: no difference,
for definitions are irrelevant
and no boundaries can be discerned.
So likewise with "existence" and "non-existence."

Don't waste your time in arguments and discussion
attempting to grasp the ungraspable.

Each thing reveals the One,
the One manifests as all things.

To live in this Realization
is not to worry about perfection or non-perfection.
To put your trust in the Heart-Mind is to live without separation,
and in this non-duality you are one with your Life-Source.

Words! Words!
The Way is beyond language,
for in it there is no yesterday,

no tomorrow

no today.