

# Address to the Annual Members' Meeting in 2025<sup>1</sup>

Master Xiao Pingshi

Let me take off this mask. (Some fellow practitioners have requested that Venerable Pingshi conduct his speech while seated.) I will try to stand for now; if it becomes too much, I will sit down. With my current physical strength, I should still be able to manage. Since this topic has come up, I would like to respond to some requests from colleagues. Almost every year, a request is made for the association to organize a vehicle and driver to pick me up. I am sincerely grateful for the care and concern of all colleagues, as this request is made almost every year and has been for nearly a decade.

However, I would like to inform you that I am already eighty years old. According to the Taiwanese custom of calculating age, I will be eighty-two, as one is considered one year old at birth and becomes two years old after the New Year, even if only two or three months have passed. However, I feel that my current physical age is closer to seventy, and it's still manageable for me to sit in front of the computer every day and complete tasks. The only thing is that I must get up and move every half hour or so, and I make sure to get at least half an hour of proper exercise every day. With this routine, I manage to maintain my current level of fitness. Of course, now that I'm eighty years old, I can no longer utilize the elements of earth, water, fire and wind as easily and fully as I used to. In my younger years, for example, I could walk from the first to the seventh floor, take two flights of stairs at once and get to the top without feeling much shortness of breath. Now that's no longer possible. Even if I walk slowly, I can only take one step at a time and move steadily step by step. Nevertheless, I make a point of using the stairs and not the elevator. That's why I rarely use the elevator at home — it is mainly for transporting things. That way, I can maintain my routine.

Next, I would like to remind everyone, especially older colleagues, to be cautious in avoiding congestion of the cardiovascular system and brain stem during the cold winter months. This is something you should definitely do as you get older, so that you don't end up like Sun Yun-suan, whose entire life came to a standstill after a stroke. Our eyesight also deteriorates with age, whether due to reduced vision or astigmatism. This is nothing to worry about, as wearing glasses can help solve this issue. ... So, I've been taking ○○ eye drops for six months, and now the floaters have disappeared, and the cataract in my left eye has probably reduced to about a fifth. That's more or less the situation, so my condition is relatively stable at the moment.

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<sup>1</sup> Editor's note: The Buddhist True Enlightenment Practitioners Association (Zhengjue; 正覺同修會) holds an annual members' meeting where Master Pingshi gives inspirational speeches and teaches Buddhist dharma.

There is only one constant problem — sometimes I have too much stomach acid. When colleagues bring me food, they occasionally overlook whether it contains pepper. When I eat pepper, I inevitably get gastroesophageal reflux. But that's fine — if I just eat cabbage, the problem is solved. If I eat two slices of raw cabbage, my gastroesophageal reflux goes away. (Editor's note: This is Venerable Pingshi's personal experience, but people's constitutions are different, so reactions to food may vary.) I also use Traditional Chinese Medicine. For example, if my body retains water, I take “Wu Lin San”; if I notice a deterioration in the functions of my five viscera and six bowels, I take “Liu Wei Wan”; if the condition of my body is cold at that time, I add two more ingredients and change to “Gui Fu Di Huang Wan”; if I feel dryness and heat at other times, I change to “Zhi Bai Di Huang Wan”. In this way, I can take good care of my health. (Editor's note: Venerable Pingshi can accurately assess the cold-heat and deficiency-excess nature of his own constitution and has a thorough understanding of TCM diagnoses and prescriptions so that he can choose the formulas that are most suitable for him. If you do not have this knowledge and skill, you should consult a Traditional Chinese Medicine practitioner.)

The most important thing is that you don't have a stroke or heart attack, because if you have a heart attack, you can “say goodbye” in a heartbeat. And if you suffer a brain stem infarction, you can get hemiplegia, which makes it impossible for you to continue your bodhisattva practice.

The above points all relate to daily health care. I hope that each of you stay safe and healthy. Please don't leave before I do — you must give me a proper send-off! Only then can you truly be considered good Bodhisattvas.

Yesterday I was still thinking about what I should talk about today. This morning, I made a few notes. I want to share some key points with you all.

The Chairman began with a report on the many virtuous deeds of our association in the past year. Some may ask, “Since we are an organization dedicated to the definitive meaning of the Three Jewels, why would we use these funds to distribute them to sentient beings?” Others may ask, “Are they even qualified to receive our donations?” However, I would like to clarify this: As practitioners of the Great Vehicle teachings, the most critical cultivation practice is that of the Six Pāramitās. Almost every *Mahayāna* sutra explains this. The first of the Six Pāramitās is giving, and its purpose is to cultivate the 'disposition of renunciation.’ I rarely speak of this disposition of renunciation, but it is an extremely important topic in the Buddha Dharma. Simply put, you must be willing to renounce if you want to become a bodhisattva — without it, you cannot hope to become a bodhisattva.

The first manifestation of the willingness to renounce is giving. Some of us can provide Dharma, which is not possible for most people. When we impart Dharma to ordinary people, they often cannot truly receive its benefits because the conditions have not yet matured. Therefore, we begin by giving material items to foster karmic bonds with sentient beings. These karmic conditions will mature, regardless of whether they are established in this life, in the future, in the

next life, in the next kalpa, or even in the next great *asaṃkhyā* kalpas. Therefore, we must continue to uphold the practice of giving.

Moreover, the construction of the True Enlightenment Temple is expected to be completed next year, after which we will begin promoting the "Xuanzang Culture." In this way, the names of the True Enlightenment Practitioners' Association, the True Enlightenment Temple, and the True Enlightenment Education Foundation will become more visible in society, allowing people to develop a sense of appreciation for "True Enlightenment." This is also in line with the principle of giving. We will continue to donate ambulances, medical vehicles, technical vehicles and other necessary resources to public institutions whenever the causes and conditions mature. Currently, it is somewhat challenging to donate ambulances due to the high number of people interested in making such donations. But we are not concerned with what we donate, but whether it benefits society or the public. That is why we will continue this work. In other words, giving is a responsibility that bodhisattvas should naturally fulfill. There is no reason to feel anything inappropriate in this matter.

In the second part, I would like to address the question: "**What exactly are the conditions for realization?**" Since I started spreading the Dharma, people have asked me, "Why can I never attend the three-day Chan retreat?" I want to discuss this point here today. The purpose of attending the three-day Chan retreat is to attain realization, a matter of utmost importance on the path to attain enlightenment, also known as Buddhahood. Realization itself is even more critical than cultivation after enlightenment.

As long as one has not attained realization, what is referred to as Buddhist cultivation is merely the accumulation of merit. Realization, however, means awakening to the fundamental Great Dharma of realizing the Bodhi Path. Since one aspires to awaken to this fundamental Great Dharma and enter the Dharma gate, this means that one's identity must be that of a bodhisattva. However, there is the notion of "nominal bodhisattvas" and "authentic bodhisattvas." Anyone who has not truly realized the quest for reality-suchness is called "nominal bodhisattvas." In contrast, a true "authentic bodhisattva" has realized and aligned oneself with the reality-suchness and is focused on it, not regressing. This realization is the most difficult undertaking in the world — there is nothing more challenging than the realization of reality-suchness.

Some may ask: "Isn't cultivation even more difficult after enlightenment?" This is actually not the case. The realization of reality-suchness or the Path of Vision of reality is the greatest challenge. After this "realization of reality-suchness," the practitioner will enter the Dharma gate and become a member of the Bodhisattva Sangha. One becomes a true Bodhisattva, also known as an "ultimate Bodhisattva" or "*Mahāsattva*," as described in the *Lankavatara Sutra*. Therefore, the realization of reality-suchness is by no means a minor matter. Furthermore, all cultivation

after enlightenment must be based on this realization of reality-suchness. Therefore, this realization is of the utmost importance.

Since this is the case, your identity must be that of a bodhisattva. However, if your identity is not that of a bodhisattva, you are not qualified to realize the reality-suchness. Hence, if you want to go to the mountain to participate in the three-day Chan retreat, it is straightforward — you have to be a bodhisattva. So how can we tell if you are a bodhisattva? That is the crux of the matter. In other words, the crucial question is **whether you have proven that you are a bodhisattva**. How can we determine that? Look at the back of the application form for the Chan retreat. You will see the assessment criteria, and ultimately it precipitates to one key question: **Are you a bodhisattva?** That is, have you truly cultivated the Six Pāramitās? From the *pāramitā* of generosity to the *pāramitā* of *prajñā*, have you realized the Six Pāramitās? All the criteria revolve around this one thing: **have you cultivated these Six Pāramitās?** If you cultivated them well and still don't enroll, I'll even ask, "Why hasn't so-and-so enrolled?" Because he/she really is a bodhisattva! But he/she is not intent on enrolling, and that makes me uneasy instead. That's the way it is. The Tathāgata and all great Bodhisattvas are the same. What really matters is **how you become a bodhisattva** — that's the most important thing. Again, it all boils down to the Six Pāramitās, and there's no need to go into detail here.

Now let's talk about the next topic: **"emptiness-nature with formation," "emptiness-nature without formation,"** and the **"Uninterrupted Path."** How does the Buddha explain the emptiness-nature with formation and without formation? (Here "formation" refers to "activity," such as walking, and not "form" in physical shape) As you all know, the hallmark of the True Enlightenment Practitioners Association is the attainment of the "Path of Vision." Apart from our Association, no other place or institution can truly guide people to attain the Path of Vision, especially the Mahayāna Path of Vision. But how can we determine whether this Path of Vision is right or wrong? There is a prerequisite for this teaching: the reality-suchness that one comprehends must be correct. However, even if this understanding of reality-suchness is correct, it should not necessarily be referred to as the Path of Vision. For this reason, the Tathāgata spoke of "emptiness-nature with formation" and "emptiness-nature without formation." As you all know, emptiness-nature refers to the reality-suchness of the eighth consciousness. The Tathāgata said that if, after realizing reality-suchness, one indulges in self-satisfaction and boasts, "I have realized reality-suchness!" and walks down the street, shaking one's head at the monastics and thinking, "They have wasted their whole lives as renunciants and are still entangled in the theory of the six consciousnesses." This is called "reality-suchness with formation," which denotes an emptiness-nature with formation. This is not the true realization of emptiness nature.

The Tathāgata teaches that after realization, one no longer distinguishes between sentient beings, the reality-suchness of sentient beings or one's own reality-suchness. All return to a state

of no attainment, as the *Heart Sutra* puts it: "no wisdom and no attainment." When one aligns with reality-suchness and becomes one with "no wisdom and no attainment," there is no self, no self-belongings, not to mention the Bodhi one has realized. They are all gone, every single one of them! This is true liberation, not fettered by any dharma. This liberation is attained through *prajñā* wisdom (the eradication of cognitive hindrances). It differs from the liberation of the Two Vehicles, which is achieved only through the removal of afflictive hindrances. By relying on this true liberation, bodhisattvas will progress from the three stages of worthiness to the Tenth Ground, Virtual Enlightenment, Sublime Enlightenment, and finally Buddhahood, while being sustained by the same liberation, which is "without wisdom nor attainment." This is what "emptiness-nature without formation" means. In other words, when you align yourself with the emptiness-nature mind of reality-suchness, the six consciousnesses mind will be free of "formation," even though on the surface it may appear as if we are partaking in "formation" within the states of the six sense objects or the three realms. In truth, it is "formation, but without formation." Such an empty nature is called "emptiness-nature without formation," which is the completion of the "Uninterrupted Path."

In the past, I have rarely spoken about the concept of the Uninterrupted Path, except in lectures on *The Treatise on the Demonstration of Consciousness-Only* or *Cheng Weishi Lun* (Editor's note: first delivered over twenty years ago). But in view of those who have regressed, I feel compelled to explain this once again. Without this, their cultivation cannot progress. Even if they have regressed, we still need to embrace and guide them. It's okay if we can't embrace and guide them in this life. What is important is that we provide them with the correct view so that they can return to the true Dharma in their future lives. This is also a form of embracing and guidance. Don't just focus on the present moment. As long as they can return to the true Dharma in their next life, that is enough.

This shows that, after realizing reality-suchness, even in this state of reality-suchness, it is "original liberation, original purity, original nirvana," and the intrinsic nature of reality-suchness will manifest in our five aggregate bodies and minds. Nonetheless, this nature denotes the intrinsic nature of the emptiness-nature mind. Our five-concealment body and mind itself do not possess any intrinsic nature. Accordingly, you will not possess a "self" or "that which belongs to the self." No matter how others slander you, you simply pay no attention to it; whether others treat you well or not is of no interest to you. You will do what you are supposed to do. You will constantly dwell in the state of (the sign of reality and liberation) in which your own mind should dwell and continue to do what needs to be done. This is "emptiness-nature without formation," and this is liberation through *samādhi*. This *samādhi* is called "*vajra samādhi*" or the *vajra samādhi* on the causal ground, because the reality-suchness you have realized is indestructible and has a nature like diamond. Hence, when this *samādhi*, or the mental concomitant of concentration, is fully accomplished, it means that you already possess *vajra samādhi*, and from

this *samādhi*, countless and limitless *samādhis* can arise. There are many *samādhis* that I have not explicitly explained to you, but when I propagate the sutras, I have already spoken of them — simply without naming them as such for you. Nevertheless, you are already able to attain many *samādhis*. This is because you have this mental concomitant of concentration called *samādhi*. This is wisdom *samādhi*, not meditative absorption *samādhi*.

Next, let us discuss the statement: **"Without truly enlightened mentors, there would be no Buddha Dharma."** This description is not found in just one sutra. Instead, it be located in many scriptures, differing only in the degree of explicitness with which it is expressed. For this reason, many of our Dharma teachers like to quote from the *Mahayana Sutra of Contemplation on the Mind Ground* when preparing and recording Dharma propagation programs. This sutra is relevant for both ordinary beings and worthies and sages who have attained realization. Its teachings are far-reaching and include instructions for those attracted to the states of signs and forms to contemplate the various appearances, develop the power of concentration through direct observation of signs, and dedicate the resulting merit to the signless *vajra samādhi*.

The *Mahayāna Sutra of Contemplation on the Mind Ground* explains and describes the various conditions necessary to attain the Buddha Dharma. The most important of these conditions is to be close to virtuous, knowledgeable masters and to associate with them. If one does not approach and associate with such masters, or if one mistakenly associates with nominal virtuous and knowledgeable masters, then there is neither a cause nor a condition for the direct realization of the Buddha-Dharma, and one is completely cut off from these causes and conditions. Therefore, seeking virtuous, knowledgeable masters is of vital importance and absolutely crucial. In other words, a virtuous, knowledgeable master offers not only teaching instructions but also admonitions, whereby he can point out what you have done wrong and advise you on what you should not repeat in the future. This type of guidance from a true master is called admonition. We can consider ourselves to be dealing with a virtuous, knowledgeable master if both teachings and admonitions are present.

Since ancient times, numerous instances of virtuous and knowledgeable masters have guided practitioners to attain realization, including those in the Chan school. The problem is that Chan patriarchs were extremely "frugal" (in the sense of diligent and frugal) in their approach, really frugal! In the Hokkien dialect, there is a saying about being "tight-fisted." Have you ever heard of this term? In other words, they believed that ordinary people are generally not adequate to take up the task of attaining enlightenment. So, if you wanted to be awakened by a Chan master, you had to follow him for at least ten years or more! This is not unusual. During these years, the masters taught very little, and you were only assigned daily chores. One day, this Shishuang Chuyuan said goodbye to his master with the words: "Master, I have spent another summer here with you." This meant that he had already spent two summers here — almost two years and he



was ready to leave. His master asked, "Where are you going?" Shishuang replied, "My path is uncertain; I will seek out other virtuous, knowledgeable masters." When asked why, he replied, "I have been here for two years, but you have not been willing to teach me anything. Every day you make me do this or that and send me to work." His master reproached him: "How can you blame me for not teaching you? When you offered me tea, I drank it; when you bowed to me, I nodded or returned a bow. When did I not teach you?" Shishuang replied: "How can you call that teaching?" Unexpectedly, his master suddenly raised his staff and struck him. Startled, Shishuang was about to cry out when his master quickly covered his mouth — and at that moment, realization dawned on him!

Have you just attained enlightenment when you hear this *Gong'an*? That is correct! You should have attained awakening, because that is precisely how Shishuang's realization came about! Most Chan masters take over ten years to help their disciples awaken, but this master was exceptionally compassionate. Therefore, the notion of "hitting is tenderness, scolding is love" is truly what it is. When you meet genuine, virtuous, knowledgeable masters, you should understand it is the same way. Such masters seldom resort to physical discipline with their students. If they do, it means they already have this goal in mind and will only act on it.

Very good! Look at this — when Master Zhiyi wrote the treatise *The Great Calming and Contemplation*, the scope was immense! Have any of you read it? Please raise your hand. Very few. What about the other Dharma Halls — is there anyone who has read them? If you have read them, please raise your hand. Also, very few! *The Great Calming and Contemplation* is a work of considerable content, but let me tell you: the whole thing can be described as a "parrot learning to speak," just as a parrot mimics the words of its owner without really understanding them. Even if he didn't understand the meaning, at least he was honest and openly admitted to being a fifth-level disciple. That's still commendable because he didn't make a profound false statement. So, when did he attain awakening? Only after his rebirth after several lifetimes and when he became Tiantai Deshao, was he finally awakened. However, even at the time of realization, he could only attain awakening after following his teacher for over ten years.

Dear practitioners, should you feel a deep sense of joy when you spend just five, six, seven or even eight years in our Practitioners Association to attain awakening? The basis for this joy is "reaching ascertainment" — being free from doubt about what you have realized. In other words, you must complete the Uninterrupted Path. However, completing the Uninterrupted Path is a great challenge. Venerable Sariputra had already attained the Path of Vision countless *asaṃkhyā* kalpa ago, but at that time, he had not yet completed the Uninterrupted Path. Only later, under the guidance of Shakyamuni Tathāgata, did he finally complete this path, although this completion was also a superficial appearance. In reality, his realization of reality-suchness had already taken place many kalpas earlier. Nevertheless, after many lifetimes of cultivation, he went through ninety-one kalpas before finally completing the Uninterrupted Path. With the help of Shakyamuni Tathāgata, he entered the Tenth Ground at that time because his virtues, merits, and

wisdom had reached perfection. However, because he had not completed the Uninterrupted Path in the past, none of his previous accomplishments count. This really emphasizes the importance of the Uninterrupted Path.

If you are attending our three-day Chan retreat, I urge you all to listen carefully to what I have to say about eliminating self-view. If listening once is not enough for you, listen twice or even three times, and you will definitely be able to eliminate the *satkayadrishti* view and self-view. It is even beneficial to visit the retreat several times, as this allows you to ensure that you complete the Uninterrupted Path. The teachings on the elimination of self-view sow the seeds of the Uninterrupted Path for everyone in advance. Once you have realized the *tathāgatagarbha*, these teachings will prevent you from regressing even if doubts arise. Even if you fall back into self-view, this process of elimination will enable you to contemplate again by following the guidance from the three-day Chan retreat. This will bring you back to the reality-suchness you previously realized. Therefore, the content of eliminating self-view is of utmost importance as it supports everyone in completing the Uninterrupted Path and ensures that you do not fall into doubt after realization. When no doubt arises, the "mental concomitant of concentration" will be present. When you have this "mental concomitant of concentration," you can truly be said to have attained "*vajra samādhi*" or what is called "*samādhi* of reality-suchness."

Great! In conclusion, I would like to emphasize the following: **"The definitive meaning of the wondrous Dharma should not be casually explained to others."** The eradication of self-view in the teachings of the Path of Vision in the Two Vehicles can be shared freely, but again, one must always keep the audience in mind. Although most of the people in my residential community know that I teach the Dharma, I never discuss it with them when I encounter them because their conditions have not yet matured. Currently, two other households in my community also promote Buddha Dharma, but when I meet them, I just nod, greet them and say nothing more. Additionally, one of these households is located right next to mine, and its windows face mine. I have installed a dark acrylic panel with a heat protection film for car windows (not the reflective one, but the older version with perforations) to prevent being photographed. In principle, they can still see through the light and shadow and that I am sitting in front of my computer. It is entirely normal for me to sit there for several hours at a time. One day, when I happened to meet one of them, he asked, "Do you always read sutras?" I replied, "Yes! Yes! Yes!" but nothing more was conveyed.

This means that expounding definitive Dharma is a special responsibility conferred by the Buddha and a duty that bodhisattvas should fulfil. However, this Dharma must not be shared with everyone, especially not definitive Dharma. This morning, I consulted the scriptures specifically. The *Tathāgata* makes it clear that the wondrous Dharma of reality-suchness, or sometimes the Six Pāramitās, should not be explained to those who sit on high seats. In other words, if you want to teach someone about this wondrous Dharma of reality-suchness or the meaning of the Six



Pāramitās, you must be on the Dharma seat; you should never teach someone from below who remains seated above you. This is the first principle. What does this mean? If someone seeks this Dharma, they must leave their high seat and refrain from remaining seated above to listen to your teaching, as this is not in accordance with the Dharma. This means that their arrogance persists, and as long as it persists, no Dharma you present will truly touch their hearts. They need to shed their arrogance, disembark from their seats, bow respectfully and salute. Only then is it appropriate for you to explain the Dharma to them. The first principle is: **"The definitive Dharma must not be passed on to those sitting in high seats."**

Secondly, **"The definitive Dharma should not be passed on to anyone who walks in front of you."** In other words, if someone is walking ahead of you on the path, you should not teach them. If they want to hear the definitive Dharma, they must be prepared to walk behind you but not in front. Why? Because they must show respect for the Dharma. If they walk in front of you, it means they have no respect for the Dharma. If they have no reverence for the Dharma, what Dharma can really be offered to them?

Thirdly, **"Don't teach those with their heads covered."** In India, people often like to wrap turbans around their heads, which is a traditional form of headdress. Hence, if someone comes to you to learn the Dharma but does not remove his hat and keep it worn high up, you should not teach him. He must take off his hat and leave his head uncovered as a sign that he is not hiding anything — this is the proper expression of reverence for the Dharma. So, if someone comes to ask you for advice but does not remove his hat, you should only discuss the supporting Dharma, not the definitive Dharma.

There is also another kind of person who sits on the seat and leans back against the chair — imagine this posture. If someone is leaning back like that, you should not discuss the Dharma with them. So, during the three-day Chan retreat, if I give specific guidance to someone in person and they lean back against their chair, regretfully, they will not be included in the next retreat. Why? Because it shows a lack of respect for the Buddha Dharma. If they really had respect, they would at least sit upright in their chair, if not on the edge, and demonstrate an attitude of genuine reverence. This is what it means to honour the Dharma. So, if someone listening to your Dharma talk leans back in their chair, especially if they stretch out their legs and cross them in front, you can say, "Let's finish our talk for today," and then leave. Because such behaviour unmistakably shows contempt for the Dharma.

This incident reminds me of a time in the past when Master Sheng Yen did not know how to guard a *huatou*. He discovered that I was teaching this method and asked me to document its contents, indicating that it could be published in the *Human Life Monthly*. At that time, I had not yet started expounding the teachings to others and was very resourceful and straightforward, so I agreed to record my method. I ended up writing three articles, but I later retrieved them all

because he never published them. His real intention was to study them himself. But looking back, I remember him leaning back in his chair, stretching out his legs and crossing them when he spoke to me. I want to ask you all: Does this show the proper “monastic deportment”? A monk should not demonstrate this kind of deportment. If a monk's deportment is not appropriate, he is violating the *śrāvaka* precepts. What does that mean? It shows that although he wanted to learn from me how to guard a *huatou*, he lacked a respectful spirit. At the time, however, I did not examine this aspect of his behaviour because I never judged others, as I only examine myself.

However, the Tathāgata has explained that there are four situations in which one should not explain the definitive Dharma to someone. In other words, it is important to approach the Dharma with respect and reverence. The “Dharma” is considered a treasure, hence the name “Dharma Jewel,” one of the Three Jewels. If someone does not show respect and reverence to the Dharma, we do not need to teach them the Dharma. So, please remember these four circumstances: if someone walks in front of you, takes the high seat, covers their head, or sits without reverence, for example, by leaning back in their chair, then you do not need to teach them the Dharma.

Essentially, I will end this casual conversation with everyone here. I felt like to go over the “contemplation of emptiness, contemplation of provisional existence and the contemplation of the Middle Way.” Since we already talked about these items on Tuesday, there is no need to repeat them now. Nevertheless, I must emphasize that these contemplations are imperative. Suppose you have read Master Zhiyi’s *The Great Calming and Contemplation*. In that case, you will find that he discusses the contemplation of emptiness, the contemplation of provisional existence and the contemplation of the Middle Way in great detail. This is mainly because he was very well-read, and when he came across these contemplations in the scriptures, he treated them in detail. However, he had not empirically realized the contemplation of emptiness, let alone the contemplation of provisional existence or the contemplation of the Middle Way. The reason for this is that someone who cultivates these three contemplations cannot skip any one step and proceed directly to the next. They must practice them correctly and in sequence: first, the contemplation of emptiness, then the contemplation of provisional existence, and finally the contemplation of the Middle Way.

However, the contemplation of emptiness does not mean simply thinking that all phenomena arise and pass away, do not abide and are therefore empty due to impermanence. This is not the true meaning. In the Two-Vehicle Bodhi, anything that arises through conditions inevitably ceases. Yet, practitioners do not truly understand the concept of dependent arising. Why is dependent arising possible? Behind all these phenomena is this source that “causes the arising.” This source of arising is the eighth consciousness, *tathāgatagarbha*, which they do not recognize. If anybody denies the existence of the eighth consciousness, there will be no

contemplation of emptiness to realize. For those who do not have the contemplation of emptiness to realize, talking about the contemplation of provisional existence or the contemplation of the Middle Way becomes mere conceptual proliferations. They become mere intellectual frivolities because they lack the true meaning of ultimate reality.

I will continue to encourage you all: those who are caught up in the theory of the six consciousnesses, there is no reason to talk to them about the three contemplations, not even the contemplation of emptiness, because our efforts would be in vain. Therefore, I hope that each of you will sincerely respect the Dharma. If you respect the Dharma, the people you introduce it to must also show respect for the Dharma. If this is not the case, you only need to plant the seed. Whether it matures or not is no longer your concern, because these people still have karmic hindrances. Most of them belong to the four groups of Bhikshu Kuan from unnumerable *asamkhyā* kalpas before — this is true for the majority.

From my perspective and attainment level, it seems quite natural to attain enlightenment, and it is a straightforward process. But why is it so difficult for sentient beings to attain enlightenment? The reason lies in karmic hindrances. These karmic obstacles do not typically manifest in daily life. These karmic obstacles become obvious and manifest as resistance when sentient beings encounter the true Dharma. There is no other explanation for this resistance; the karmic obstacles are what they are, and people themselves cannot explain why. Even if we understand the reason, it is not necessary to tell them bluntly, “These are your karmic obstacles!” It's simply not required, because that could disrupt the cause and condition that allow you to lead them, not just for the next few decades, but potentially for dozens of eons. Please always remember: **The passing on of the definitive Dharma may only occur if the other person shows respect and reverence for the Dharma.** Only then will you really be able to pass on the teachings to them. That is our principle.

Therefore, I hope everyone will endeavour to attend the three-day Chan retreat whenever possible. Only through repeated participation can self-view truly be overcome. If self-view remains like a lotus root cut off but still connected with fine threads, these roots and branches may grow again after a few decades. This would become a problem that inevitably leads to defamation of the Three Jewels. So I urge you to pay special attention to this matter. This is it for today's talk. Thank you all for your support. Thank you! Thank you!

March 9, 2025, at the True Enlightenment Lecture Hall in Taipei