



The Scripture of the
Founding Master

The Scripture of the Founding Master

Chapter Eight Buddhahood

1. The Founding Master said, “There may be many tall and low mountains in this world, but only the mountains that are the tallest, deepest, and densest with trees sustain the lives of numerous animals. Large and small streams flow everywhere, but only the deepest and widest sea sustains the lives of infinite numbers of fish. In the same way, many people might claim to guide the world, but only the person with the greatest merit and most wide-ranging loving-kindness and compassion will be able to sustain the bodies and minds of numerous sentient beings and help them all to live in peace and happiness.”

2. The Founding Master said, “The great loving-kindness and great compassion of the Buddha radiates more warmth and brightness than the sun. Thus, where this loving-kindness and compassion reach, the ignorant minds of sentient beings melt away into the mind of wisdom; their minds of cruelty melt away into the mind of loving-kindness and compassion; the mind of miserliness and greed melts away into the mind of generous charity; and the discriminative mind of the four signs melts away into the all-encompassing mind. Therefore, the awesome power and radiant brightness of this loving-kindness and compassion are incomparable.”

3. The Founding Master said, “‘Great loving-kindness’ means that, if an innocent child is healthy and robust, giving no trouble to its parents, and if its temperament is gentle and its speech and behavior well mannered, it will arouse much happiness and adoring thoughts in its parents’ minds so that they will love it even more. In the same way, when the Buddha observes all sentient beings, if he sees a person whose temperament is gentle, who is loyal to his country, filial to his parents, affectionate to his siblings, respectful to his teachers, and harmonious with his neighbors, who helps the poor and relieves the sick, who practices the great Way and is making progress toward the wisdom of prajñā, who remains free of thought in his applications, and thus accumu-

The Scripture of the Founding Master

lates merit that is free from the outflows, then, overjoyed, he so loves that person that he would guide him even more toward the wholesome path. ‘Great compassion’ means that, if parents see their blundering child hurt itself by poking its eye with its own finger or injure its hand by grabbing the sharp edge of a knife, and cries and throws a fit without knowing why, the parents would then feel such pity and sympathy in their minds that they would want to protect and guide the child even more. In the same way, when the Buddha sees all sentient beings become attached to greed, hatred, and delusion, and thereby bring suffering to their minds and injury to their bodies, creating the causes that could make them fall into unwholesome destinies where they would receive retribution accordingly – and yet they instead blame their punishments on heaven, earth, ancestral spirits, fellow beings, and laws – he then feels extremely sad and feels great pity toward them and tries to guide them with millions of expedients. Such is the Buddha’s great loving-kindness and great compassion. But sentient beings do not realize his grace even though they all live amid his great loving-kindness and great compassion. However, he does not mind their ingratitude, but merely devotes himself to the work of delivering sentient beings over thousands and tens of thousands of kalpas. Therefore, the Buddha is the great teacher of the Way throughout the triple worlds and the compassionate father of the four types of birth.”

4. The Founding Master said, “Buddhas and bodhisattvas have a Way for being free from hindrances and for remaining autonomous regardless of whether they are walking, standing, sitting, reclining, speaking, keeping silent, active, or at rest. Accordingly, they readily know when to be at rest and when to be active; when to become large and when to become small; when to be bright and when to be dark; and when to live and when to die. In this way, no matter what they do or where they are, they do not deviate even slightly from the rules of the dharma.”

5. The Founding Master said, “If a person who cooks or tailors well has the right materials, he can make whatever he wants or fix whatever may be defective. So too, a great person of the Way who has penetrated into all dhar-

The Scripture of the Founding Master

mas can manipulate the myriad dharmas in order to create a new one or to rectify an old one, but a person of the Way of lesser caliber may utilize or transmit dharmas that already exist but does not have the competence to create new ones or to rectify old ones.” A disciple asked, “Which dharma rank do we need to reach in order to acquire such ability?” The Founding Master said, “One will have to be a person of the Way of at least the status of beyond the household. For such persons of the Way, the activity of their six sense organs all manifest as the dharma, thus becoming models for tens of thousands of generations.”

6. The Founding Master said to Song Pyökcho, “Interpret the phrase ‘the Way of commanding the nature’ in the Doctrine of the Mean (Zhongyong).” Pyökcho replied, “In Confucianism, to conform well to the Way of the heavenly principle and the nature is called ‘the Way of commanding the nature.’” The Founding Master said, “Just conforming well to the Way of heaven is the state of the bodhisattvas, but the buddhas’ state must include using the Way of heaven well. This is like an experienced horseman who can ride confidently both trained and unbroken horses. Therefore, ordinary sentient beings are dragged into the cycle of the six destinies and the twelvefold chain of dependent origination, but the buddhas break through their natural karma, and thus come and go, ascend and descend, freely and with complete autonomy.”

7. A disciple asked, “It seems that the Great Master Chinmuk was attached to wine and women. Is this true?” The Founding Master said, “I have heard that the Great Master Chinmuk liked drinking rice wine. The story goes that one day he went to get himself a bowl of rice wine and drank a bowl of brine by mistake, but it is said that he thought nothing of it. On another occasion, it is said that he was under a persimmon tree, when a lustful woman came over to him and wanted to entice him. He was about to comply with her wish, when a ripe persimmon fell from the tree. Without thinking, he walked over to pick it up, so that the woman felt embarrassed and went away on her own. How could a mind such as this harbor thoughts of wine and women? A master such as this is a tathāgata who is attached neither to wine when he drinks it nor to women when he is with them.”

The Scripture of the Founding Master

8. The Founding Master said, “Sentient beings use their minds while being attached to joy and anger, sorrow or happiness, thus bringing much harm to themselves and others. Bodhisattvas use their minds while transcending joy, anger, sorrow, and happiness, thus they do not bring harm to themselves or others. The buddhas use joy, anger, sorrow, and happiness as if they were his servants, thus bringing much benefit to themselves and others.”

9. The Founding Master said, “If someone ascends even to the dharma rank of Māra defeated, heavenly beings and asuras will recognize it first and venerate them. If such persons of the Way decide to conceal themselves, however, only someone of superior dharma rank will be able to recognize their traces.”

10. The Founding Master said, “If you see that your practice has reached its ultimate stage, there will be three types of penetrations. One is the numinous penetration where one clearly understands, without seeing, hearing, or thinking about them, transformations of the myriad things in heaven and earth and the retributions and responses of cause and effect in human beings throughout the three time-periods. Two is the penetration of the Way, where one becomes fully proficient in the great and small, being and nonbeing of heavenly creation, the right and wrong, benefit and harm of humanity. Three is the penetration of dharma, which, having attained proficiency in the great and small, being and nonbeing of heavenly creation, elucidates the right and wrong, benefit and harm of humanity; it thus establishes the dharma that sentient beings over many generations can take as their mirror and model. Of these three, only the penetration of dharma cannot be attained without first achieving great, perfect, and right enlightenment.”

11. The Founding Master said, “No matter how great the household, there is none greater than the one that has assimilated heaven’s livelihood. No matter how great the person, there is none greater than the one who has assimilated heaven’s energy.”

The Scripture of the Founding Master

12. The Founding Master said, “A person who grasps the truth of the universe and applies it to the functioning of the six sense organs of human beings is in fact a heavenly being, a sage, and a buddha.”

13. The Founding Master said, “Even though in heaven and earth there are infinite principles and awesome powers, if people do not recognize the Way and apply it, then heaven and earth will be nothing more than an empty shell. Since human beings recognize the Way and then apply it as if it were their tool, they are called masters of heaven and earth and lords of the myriad things. Humans cannot do everything that heaven can, nor can heaven do everything that humans can, but, as heaven and earth are for use by humans whether in terms of human affairs or universal principles, buddhas and bodhisattvas who freely utilize the Way of heaven because they have completely awakened to the great and small, being and nonbeing of heavenly creation, exercise the great authority over the triple worlds. In the future, human beings’ authority will be respected more than that of heaven, and the great authority of the buddhas and bodhisattvas will be revered by all.”

14. The Founding Master said, “The capacities of sentient beings are limited, so that if they acquire things they did not have before or learn something they did not know before, they can even endanger their own lives by becoming overly complacent or acting rashly. However, the capacities of the buddhas and bodhisattvas are limitless, so that even if they have something, nothing is added, and even if they have nothing, nothing is subtracted. Thus, what their households have or don’t have cannot be easily seen. Hence, they safely secure what they have and comfortably preserve their lives.”

15. The Founding Master addressed the congregation at a meditation hall, “Since ordinary beings are attached solely to worldly happiness, their happiness does not last long; but the buddhas and bodhisattvas are gratified by the formless happiness of heaven, so they are also able to acquire worldly happiness. The ‘happiness of heaven’ is the happiness of the mind that takes

The Scripture of the Founding Master

pleasure in the Way; ‘worldly happiness’ is a term for the pleasures of the five worldly desires in our tangible world. To explain it simply, worldly happiness means gaining self-satisfaction through one’s spouse and children, property and position, through any other tangible material things, or your surroundings. The crown prince Siddhartha in ancient times had the status of a future king and was already above all his subjects, and could satisfy himself by doing whatever he liked and enjoying whatever he pleased. This was worldly happiness. On the other hand, after he attained right enlightenment, he was able to transcend tangible material things and his surroundings and liberate himself from suffering and pleasure, birth and death, as well as the causes and effects of wholesome and unwholesome deeds, so that his mind was always at peace no matter what situation he was in. This was the happiness of heaven. In ancient times, Confucius said, ‘Even if I am just eating vegetables, drinking water, and lying down with my elbow as my pillow, my happiness lies therein. For me, unjust wealth and fame are like floating clouds.’ These words are the statement of a heavenly being who has acquired the happiness of heaven while still being in a human body. Moreover, worldly happiness eventually must come to an end: the impartial law laid down by heaven is that what comes will go, what is prosperous will decline, and what is born will die. Even if a person possesses the most wealth, honor, fame, and reputation under heaven, no one has the power to resist old age, sickness, and death. When one’s physical body finally dies, one’s spouse and children, property and position, and indeed everything in which one previously invested all one’s effort and desire, will scatter like floating clouds. However, since the happiness of heaven is originally recognized and achieved through the formless mind, that happiness will never change even if you change bodies. To make a comparison, it is like a person’s talent, which remains the same even if he moves from one house to another.”

16. The Founding Master continued, “Therefore, an ancient sage said, ‘Three days of practicing the mind becomes a treasure for a thousand years; an object coveted for a hundred years becomes dust in a single morning.’ Ordinary beings, however, do not understand this principle, so they treasure only their physical bodies and neglect to seek their minds even once. Those

The Scripture of the Founding Master

who cultivate the Way understand this principle, thus they forget their bodies in order to seek their minds. Therefore, you must not become attached to any existence, which is all too impermanent, but instead work hard to seek the eternal happiness of heaven. If one maintains the happiness of heaven for a long time, one will eventually attain freedom from body and mind and gain sovereignty over the triple worlds, so that one will transcend the being and nonbeing of myriad phenomena and the transmigration between the six destinies, will be able to freely tour the worlds of the ten directions as a numinous spirit without even receiving a physical body, and may freely enter and exit the world of birds, beasts, or insects, without any hindrance to one's comings and goings, birth and death. No matter which world one enters and receives a physical body, one does not become contaminated by that condition, but enjoys happiness forever. This is the paradise of Ultimate Bliss. However, one fails to receive the happiness of heaven for long because one covets tangible happiness and returns to the material. Even if one is a person who has received the happiness of heaven, once he begins to covet only happiness without continuously performing deeds that are deserving of that happiness, then he will one day regress, losing the freedom of his body and mind and being dragged back into the turning wheel of great nature itself, so that he will be unable to avoid transmigrating between the six destinies."

17. A man paid homage to the Founding Master and, while conversing with him on various subjects, said, "The narrow-gauge railway between Chŏnju and Iri was originally managed by the stock investments of wealthy people from various places in Chŏlla province, and these people can take the train any time they want without charge." He seemed very envious, so the Founding Master said, "You truly are poor. You still don't own even a single train of your own?" The man was surprised and said, "It takes an awful lot of money to own a train. How can a poor man like me own one?" The Founding Master said, "That is why I called you a poor man; and even if you owned a train, I would not call you a wealthy man because of it. Now, listen to how I manage my household affairs. It has already been quite a while since I acquired for myself not only that Chŏnju train but also all the trains in this country and this world. Didn't

The Scripture of the Founding Master

you hear this news?” The man became even more puzzled and said, “What you say is an instruction far beyond me. In my ignorance, I can’t comprehend it.” The Founding Master said, “For a person to acquire his own train, he not only requires an enormous amount of capital but he also receives much hardship from having to manage all the responsibilities personally. However, my way of ownership is different: it requires neither an enormous amount of capital nor any direct responsibility for managing the entire operation. It merely requires that when I need to go anywhere, I pay the fare each time and use it at my convenience. Aren’t the salaries and expenses of all our workers cheap considering that they must run our trains without rest day or night, repair our tracks, and manage our operations? Moreover, the other day I visited Seoul and went up to Hanyang Park for a stroll, breathing in as much fresh air as I wanted and enjoying all the beauty of the park, but there was no law demanding that I leave and no one warning me not to come back again. It requires a substantial maintenance cost every year just to keep a small pavilion in a resort area, but wasn’t I able to use that beautiful park to my heart’s content as if it were my own? Generally, the real reason people in the world want to make something their own is for their own convenience. Since I used the train and the park exactly as I wished, what other kind of ownership could possibly be better? Therefore, I told you that all these things are mine; and not only that, but all the things in the world, and even the earth, rivers, and mountains that contain all these things, are mine. I use them as occasion demands, and as long as I use them properly, no one can prohibit it or stop me. How bountiful a livelihood is this! But ordinary people of this world, being such small vessels, only concentrate on owning whatever they can, so they are busy acquiring things that involve much work, anxiety, and heavy responsibility to no real purpose. This is truly because they have not yet discovered the plentiful household goods of their original home.”

18. After closing a winter Sōn-retreat, the Founding Master walked over to Pongsō monastery together with several of his disciples. While they were on their way, one disciple lamented, “Because we have no money, we have to make you walk along the road. What a shame!” Upon hearing this, the

The Scripture of the Founding Master

Founding Master said, “Whoever in this world uses their six sense organs well will find all dharmas working their effects accordingly and their money too will also increase. Therefore, everyone’s minds and bodies are organs for making money, and depending on how one uses all the things of this world, they can all turn into his money. So why do you lament not having money? However, the fundamental duty of us practitioners of the Way is to develop our lives without being attached to money, and being settled in mind regardless of whether we have money or not. Such people are truly wealthy.”

19. A disciple asked, “A grand exhibition has just opened in Seoul. Wouldn’t you like to go see it?” The Founding Master said, “Grand exhibitions are held in order to present advanced information on such fields as scholarship, farming, artisanry, and trade, to provide information on the state of progress in the various walks of life by comparing the present with the past, and to help enhance peoples’ intelligence by such exchanges of information. If one attends an exhibition with the right intent, there can certainly be many benefits. Today, however, I will tell you about a truly grand exhibition, so listen carefully! Generally speaking, the exhibition that I am going to tell you about is wide and vast without limits; the four cardinal directions of east, west, south, and north, as well as the zenith and the nadir, are all the exhibition venue. The myriads things in heaven and earth, without exception, are being exhibited. And the exhibition period is eternal, as it has been for several billions of years. Compared to this grand exhibition, the exhibition in Seoul that you mentioned would be less than the tip of a single hair. Even if all objects were displayed and presented at the Seoul exhibition, Pae Mountain and Hwangdŭng Lake, which we are viewing here now, could not be transported there for display and the world-famous Diamond Mountains could not be put on exhibition. Again, it is said that various antiques have been sought out to put on display in the museum, but they could not put on display the mountains, rivers, and the earth, which are the most ancient objects of all. It is said that they have displayed several species of fish in the aquarium and several varieties of rice in the rice granary section, but those fish are not even a single fraction of the millions of species of fish that exist in the five great oceans, and those rice grains that have

The Scripture of the Founding Master

been selected will be like a single grain of sand on T'ai Mountain when compared with the enormous varieties of rice in the six continents. How can a person with great knowledge and wide perspective not but feel that all the objects in man-built exhibitions are small and artificial? Therefore, a person who discovers this grand exhibition, and who always views from this broad perspective the site of that limitless exhibition, will always obtain immense benefits, gaining whatever he sees and hears. Therefore, from ancient times up till now, all the buddhas and sages, by observing this eternal exhibition, have established right and wrong, benefit and harm in human affairs, by modeling themselves on all the principles of great and small, being and nonbeing, which are on display at this exhibition site. Thus, they have never been even slightly destitute."

20. The Founding Master, accompanied by Cho Songgwang and Chŏn ũmgwang, went for a stroll one day through the outskirts of Namjung village. By the roadside there were several huge pine trees, which were exceptionally gorgeous. Songgwang said, "These pine trees are truly gorgeous! How I would love to transplant them to our temple!" Upon hearing this, the Founding Master said, "Why can't you transcend your narrow-mindedness and limited scope? Our temple has not left this old pine tree and this old pine tree has not left our temple; they are both within our boundaries. What is the point of insisting on transplanting it? This is because you have not yet discovered the original home of the grand universe, by transcending the discrimination and the gaps between things." Songgwang asked, "What sort of a place is this original home of the grand universe?" The Founding Master said, "Since you would not understand it even if you were to see it now, I will show it to you by drawing a symbol." He then traced the Il-Won-Sang on the ground and said, "This is the original home of the grand universe. Within it are included, without exception, infinite arcane principles, infinite treasures, and infinite creative transformation." ũmgwang asked, "What can I do to find my way to this house and become its owner?" The Founding Master said, "One may enter by acquiring the key of the three great powers. That key is forged through belief, zeal, questioning, and dedication."

The Scripture of the Founding Master

21. A Christian minister paid a visit to the Founding Master, who asked, “What is the purpose of your visit?” The Christian minister said, “I have come to hear your good dharma-admonitions.” The Founding Master said, “Then, have you been able to overcome the limits of Christianity and see the vast heaven and earth?” The minister asked, “Where is that vast heaven and earth?” The Founding Master said, “You’ll find it when once you open your mind and take a broad perspective. A person who does not take a broad perspective is always preoccupied with his own affairs, and familiarizing himself only with his own traditions, criticizes others’ affairs and rejects their traditions. In this way, each person cannot overcome his own norms and conventions, and will eventually fall into onesidedness, producing gaps that become like mountains of silver and ramparts of iron. This is the reason for all the antagonisms and conflicts between countries, churches, and individuals. Why should you separate the great household that is originally perfect, and divide the great dharma that is infinite, into bits and pieces? We must abolish this gap right away, and interconnect all households to develop a full and energetic new life. Then, there will be nothing in this world that should be discarded.”

22. The Founding Master continued, “If one uses all the goods in this world, whether they are of high or low worth, appropriately according to each situation, then all things in the universe will become convenient objects for one’s use, while all dharmas in this world will become a support system for oneself. For example, among the things displayed in the marketplace, there are different varieties and colors of expensive or cheap goods, but we do not just seek out expensive goods and disregard the rest. No matter how valuable an object might be, there are situations where one has no use for them; and even if an object is cheap, there still will be situations where it will obviously be needed. Gold and jade may be rare treasures, but to remedy one’s immediate hunger, they are not as good as a bowl of rice. Lye is extremely noxious to the human body, but for washing clothes, it is a necessary ingredient. In this way, the characteristics and usage of each object are different. By not understanding this principle and only by considering one aspect, if one thinks all goods in the

The Scripture of the Founding Master

market are unnecessary except for the ones he needs, then how narrow-minded and ignorant is this?” The minister was moved and said, “Your scope is truly immense, Master!”

23. The Founding Master said, “The buddhas and bodhisattvas may take heaven and earth as a resting place where they temporarily live in peace, as a workshop where they take up the task of the day, or as a playground where they pass the time leisurely and freely before moving on.”

