

SILENT ILLUMINATION

By Zen Master Hongzhi Zhengjue, from Cultivating the Empty Field

Chant leader alone –

Instructions for the Zazen of Silent Illumination

All together –

The field of boundless emptiness is what exists from the very beginning. You must purify, cure, grind down, or brush away all the tendencies you have fabricated into apparent habits. Then you can reside in the clear circle of brightness. Utter emptiness has no image, upright independence does not rely on anything. Just expand and illuminate the original truth unconcerned by external conditions.

Accordingly we are told to realize that not a single thing exists. In this field, birth and death do not appear. The deep source, transparent down to the bottom, can radiantly shine and can respond unencumbered to each speck of dust without becoming its partner.

The subtlety of seeing and hearing transcends mere colors and sounds. The whole affair functions without leaving traces, and mirrors without obscurations. Very naturally mind and dharmas emerge and harmonize. An ancient said that non-mind enacts and fulfills the way of non-mind. Enacting and fulfilling the way of non-mind, finally you can rest. Proceeding, you are able to guide the assembly. With thought clear, sitting silently, wander into the center of the circle of wonder. This is how you must penetrate and study.

Accord and respond without laboring and accomplish without hindrance.

Everywhere turn around freely—not following conditions, not falling into classifications. Facing everything, let go and attain stability. Stay with that just as that. Stay with this just as this. That and this are mixed together with no discriminations as to their places. So it is said that the earth lifts up the mountain without knowing the mountain's stark steepness. A rock contains jade without knowing the jade's flawlessness. This is how to truly leave home; how home-leaving must be enacted.

Awakened mind can permeate universally without grasping the merit of its illumination, and apprehend without being bound by discursive thinking. Emerging from manifestations, surpassing the emotions of deliberation and discussion, merely interact positively and appropriately without dependence upon others. All buddhas, all ancestors, all leaves, and all flowers relate in this manner. When responding, they do not grasp at forms; when illuminating, they do not attach to conditions. Then they can stay wide open and unhampered. Only intimate awareness appears complete everywhere. Let yourself accept it.

In upright practice let go from the edge of the high cliff, not grabbing anything. The ropes around your feet are severed. In wholeness, take one step.... Just when involved in deliberations, turn around from the stream of thoughts.... Oars pulled in, the solitary boat drifts past without difficulty. At this time, please tell me, who would be anxious to display the eye of discrimination?

Chant leader alone –

Guidepost for Silent Illumination

All together –

Silent and serene, forgetting words,
Bright clarity appears before you.
When you reflect it you become vast,
Where you embody it you are spiritually uplifted.
Spiritually solitary and shining,
Inner illumination restores wonder.
Dew in the moonlight, a river of stars,
Snow-covered pines,
Clouds enveloping the peak.
In darkness it is most bright,
While hidden all the more manifest.
The crane dreams in the wintery mists.
The autumn waters flow far in the distance.
Endless *kalpas* are totally empty,

All things completely the same.
When wonder exists in serenity,
All achievement is forgotten in illumination.
What is this wonder?
Alertly seeing through confusion,
Is the way of silent illumination
And the origin of subtle radiance.
Vision penetrating into subtle radiance
Is weaving gold on a jade loom.
Upright and inclined yield to each other;
Light and dark are interdependent.
Not depending on sense faculty and object,
At the right time they interact.
Drink the medicine of good views.
Beat the poisoned-smear drum.
When they interact, killing and giving life are up to you.
Through the gate the self emerges and the branches bear fruit.
Only silence is the supreme speech,
Only illumination the universal response.
Responding without falling into achievement,
Speaking without involving listeners,
The ten thousand forms majestically glisten
And expound the Dharma.
All objects certify it, every one in dialogue.
Dialoguing and certifying, they respond appropriately to each other;
But if illumination neglects serenity then aggressiveness appears.
Certifying and dialoguing, they respond to each other appropriately;
but if serenity neglects illumination, murkiness leads to wasted Dharma.
When silent illumination is fulfilled,
The lotus blossoms, the dreamer awakens,
A hundred streams flow into the ocean,
A thousand ranges face the highest peak.