

CH'AN MEDITATION INSTRUCTION

GOLD WHEEL TEMPLE, 6/82 cont. from issue 147

-Venerable Abbot Hua

This current trend of taking dope is ruining young people and it is extremely painful to witness.

However, those of you who have gathered here today have good roots and have come to study the genuine principles of cultivation. Therefore, I stress to you: Don't try to get by cheap. Don't try to do it fast. Don't think that without putting out any effort, you can cash in on welfare. There is nothing of value obtained without doing some work for it.

3. PERSEVERENCE. You must be constant in your practice of Ch'an. This is the third requisite. The best is to sit in full lotus. This posture is achieved by placing your left ankle on your right thigh and then lifting your right ankle onto your left thigh. This posture can subdue demons and can quiet the mind. From it, wisdom comes forth. It is another requisite of meditation. It is your foundation in sitting Ch'an. It is called the Lotus Posture and the Vajra Posture. You should train yourself to sit that way. But some of you protest, "My legs are stiff and I can't sit that way."

Well, then, try "half" lotus, which is putting your left ankle on your right thigh.

"But I can't even do that!" some may say.

Well, then you'll just have to sit in a cross-legged position in whatever way is possible for you. But you should be working to get into half lotus and eventually into full lotus. Full lotus is the foundation of sitting meditation. When you achieve it, then you can give rise to samadhi and from samadhi comes wisdom. Since it is fundamental, you should work to master it. If you try to build a house on the bare ground, the first big rain that comes along will wash it away. The first big wind that blows up will dismantle it. The same is true for meditation without a foundation. Full Lotus is the foundation of Buddhahood. If you want to become a Buddha, first master full lotus.

Once your legs are in full lotus you should hold your body erect. Sit up straight, and do not lean forward or backward, do not incline to the left or right. Keep your spine absolutely straight. Curl your tongue back against the roof of your mouth. Then if you have saliva come, you can swallow it into your stomach. Therefore, people who cultivate Ch'an should not smoke cigarettes or dope, because those turn your saliva bitter. By curling the tongue back against the roof of your mouth, you unite the two meridians of *ren*(任) and *du*(督). Originally they are not hooked up, but if you can hook them up, then you can turn the Dharma wheel. Once you can turn the Dharma wheel, you can develop samadhi power and wisdom power.

Your eyes are not necessarily open and not necessarily closed. If you leave your eyes wide open while meditating, it is very easy to have false thinking about what you see. If you completely close your eyes while sitting, it is very easy to fall asleep. So keeping your eyes half open and half closed is a good way to counteract both problems. That way you will be inclined to have less false thinking and will not be as likely to fall asleep.

As to your mind--don't think of anything. "Don't have any false thought. Don't think about what state you are experiencing or hope to experience and don't think about how you want to get enlightened. The affairs of this world are not that simple. A thief who steals others' money ends up with wealth that is not his own. The same principle applies to Ch'an. Don't be greedy for speed, hoping to become enlightened fast. Don't be greedy to get a bargain. If in your cultivation you are greedy for small benefits, then you will never get the big ones.

As to experiencing states--at the level you are, any "state" you experience is simply a result of your false thinking. So don't get turned by them, and think something special is happening to you.

Cha'n is called a Dharma door that leads upwards. But one's practice must be done with an utterly true mind. There are no easy roads to enlightenment. No tricks will work. No drugs will activate it. You have to actually and truly practice and go through the process until eventually you obtain a response with the Way, and gain a little skill. I cannot predict what that skill will be for each of you. I can't tell you in advance what kinds of states you will experience. I don't know what you will hear, smell, see and so forth. When it happens to you, you will know. If you use effort, you will have some accomplishment. If you don't use effort you won't.

This month I have given you initial instruction. You can return to your homes and practice sitting. If any special things happen to you during the course of the coming month you can tell me about them next time we have class. Next time I will first ask what states you have experienced and then I will be open to answering your questions. This time, it's too soon to talk about states, because you have just begun sitting in this class. Anything that happened to you before the beginning of this class is not material for discussion here. When you ask questions, make them brief and to the point. Don't talk from Pei ching to Nan ching, and all the way up Bear's Ear Mountain to watch them practicing their *gung fu* as they do *Shao Lin*--in other words, don't write an essay when you ask a question.

Remember that full lotus posture is the foundation of your sitting. Train yourself in it. Actually I have a lot I could say, but there's no use in saying too much right at the beginning. Just don't drink alcohol, don't smoke cigarettes, don't take dope. It would be best not to eat meat. When you eat meat you get really fat and blubbery. You should realize that there's no market value on human flesh, so why do you want to accumulate so much of it?