

# QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

*-Venerable Abbot Hua answers the questions of Bhikshuni Heng Lyan during the recent ten-week Ch'an Session.*

Q: During Ch'an if one hears the sound of recitation of the Buddha's name, what should one do? When I sit, in my mind, I recite the Buddha's name and I can hear a lot of people reciting the Buddha's name at the same time. I don't know whether to follow this or reject it. Can the Pure Land and Ch'an be combined together in that way?

A: When you are in a recitation session, it should be that inside and outside, the recitation is all the same, so that all internal sounds merge with all external sounds and become recitation of the Buddha's name. But if you are sitting in Ch'an, you shouldn't be listening to the sounds of the recitation of the Buddha's name. When you are sitting in Ch'an, you should be sitting in Ch'an. These are two separate Dharma doors. When you are sitting in Ch'an and you hear the sounds of recitation of the Buddha's name, if you follow that sound and become attached, it is very easy to get off on the wrong road. It's easy to catch a demon. When you are supposed to be reciting the Buddha's name and you hear other voices reciting the name, it is not the case that you are going to catch a demon, because when you are reciting the Buddha's name it should be that:

The wind blows and the water flows--  
Everything is reciting the Buddha's name.

The water is reciting the Buddha's name and the wind is reciting the Buddha's name, too. The bells sound out the Buddha's name--everything from the four directions is reciting the Buddha's name. But if you are sitting in Ch'an and you hear the recitation of the Buddha's name, you shouldn't be turned by it. Pure Land and Ch'an are two different methods of practice.

Q: When sitting in Ch'an, when I hear voices reciting the Buddha's name, I follow along with them and use the sound as a way to stop my false thinking.

A: If you are investigating Ch'an and hear the recitation of the Buddha's name, it's all right to use it in that way, but you shouldn't investigate it. When you investigate Ch'an you should investigate "Who is mindful of the Buddha?" You are looking for the "Who," the one who is being mindful of the Buddha's name. You should hold to your topic of "Who?" and remained detached from whatever state arises.