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# FOOD FOR THE SPIRIT

## "Gasoline for the Self-Nature"

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*Dharma Talk by Venerable Abbot Hua*

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Most people say that we need to eat and drink to sustain the body. But that's referring to bolstering the coarse, physical body. We may not be aware that we also need to eat wisdom-light of the Buddha nature. Most people don't understand this principle. Perhaps a simple analogy will help explain. People need food to keep their bodies going just as a car needs gasoline to keep its motor running. The ordinary food and drink we consume only nourishes the coarse, physical body. But there are some cultivators of the Way who don't need to eat or drink and yet they can live. Why is this? It's because they eat the wisdom-light of Buddhas and for them that acts as nourishment. Even those of us who sustain ourselves with coarse food also thrive on the Buddhas' efficacious nature and wisdom-light.

How does the wisdom-light of the Buddhas enter our bodies? During the daytime, we work all day long and use up a lot of energy. At night, we are very tired, so we take a rest. When we rest, all the pores in our bodies open up and get connected with the wisdom-light of the Buddhas and we get replenished. The Buddhas' efficacious nature just pours into our bodies and fills us up. The following day when we awake, we feel rested and alert, very light and happy and full of energy. It's not only a matter of letting our coarse physical bodies take a break, but also because of being filled up with the Buddhas' light. So then someone thinks, "If you get filled up with Buddha-light when you sleep, then I think I'll just sleep all day long and get more!" Well, that won't work. Too much is just like not having enough. That is the wrong approach. Why? Because whatever amount of wisdom-light you can hold is however much you should have and that's what you get. When you're full, you can't put any more in, just like a car can't hold any more gasoline when the tank is full. If you try to force more gas in than the tank can hold, it just runs out on the ground. That's what too much sleep is like too. You just end up with a big headache. For example, if after you're all filled up with wisdom-light of the Buddhas, you continue to sleep then you'll start to dream. In that way you will use up the wisdom-light and waste it. This entire process isn't something that people can see with their ordinary eyes. But people who cultivate the Way become very sensitized to these various energy levels. That's why they often stop to meditate. They are adding gasoline and filling themselves up with Buddha-light.

So now someone hears this and says, "Well, I won't sleep all the time, but if we can add wisdom-light by meditating, then perhaps I should meditate all the time. I'll add on a lot of meditation." But no, that's also a wrong attitude. What's behind that kind of thinking is greed. This kind of greed makes people run east and west, north and south; they run all over the place looking for things and as a result they waste a lot of gasoline. So they just end up becoming more stupid and dull. They run around looking for secret dharmas, esoteric tricks to "instant enlightenment." But because their greed is insatiable, the more they look outside, the stupider they get. In the end these people become mice. Mice are people who were extremely greedy; that's why they got reborn as mice. They still harbor secrets. How do we know they have secrets? Because they only come out at night when nobody is around. They go "mousing" around doing secret things.

The principle about spiritual "gasoline" I've just explained is not a superficial analogy or sheer metaphysical rambling. You could say it is a spiritual, divine principle, something which even the forefront of science hasn't fathomed and which even the best analytical minds would be hard-put to understand. This is something they haven't discovered yet and they can't possibly conceive of it. In fact, it's something they couldn't even dream up in their dreams.