

CHAN TALKS

by the Venerable Chan Master Hua

V) Returning the Body and Mind to Order

Those of us who sit in Chan should know the purpose of sitting. Chan means, "cultivation of reflection (思惟修), also "stilling of thought" (靜意). At ordinary times, we are not thinking of cultivating. Confused, we follow the states of the six sense organs, the six defiling objects, and the six consciousnesses. Once we are sitting, we can return the light to shine within. Instead of running outside, we can tidy up the myriad distractions in our minds, harness our wild natures and crazy thoughts, our selfish desires, and make a clean sweep of the garbage that impedes our cultivation. If someone is overblown with pride to the point that he has no affinities with anyone; if he wants to get rich quick; if he is intent on enjoying pleasures, is selfish, seeks after personal advantages, and lies on top of that, then all those desires can be called the "crazy and wild mind."

Once we sit down, we can turn the light around and illumine within. Right at that place where the light pierces through the states of the seven emotions and six desires, you should contemplate: "Do I rush out after externals all day? Or am I seeking the truth within myself?" You should dust clean the mirror of your inherent nature. Once the mirror is clear of dust, the great, perfect mirror-like wisdom will manifest. The brilliance of that wisdom penetrates heaven and earth; but it is covered over by dust temporarily. That is what Great Master Syan Syiu meant in his verse:

The body is like a Bodhi Tree,
The mind, a bright mirror stand.
Time and again dust it clean;
And let no dust alight.

The Bodhi Tree is an analogy for enlightenment; the bright mirror stand is a reference to the great, perfect mirror-like wisdom. At all times, we have to dust the mirror clean so that no dirt accumulates on it. Basically, there is nothing that this mirror-like wisdom doesn't understand. It is all-seeing and all-knowing. However, we are lured away from this wisdom by the six senses (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind); the six defiling objects (form, sounds, odors, flavors, objects of touch, and dharmas); and the six consciousnesses that arise between the sense organs and their defiling objects. And so we leave our true mind and instead pursue external conditions.

The "cultivation of reflection" is simply this: to reverse the light and seek the fullness within ourselves. You should not be so caught up in getting rich, getting a high government position, or seeking after fame and glory.

Someone asks, "Well, if we don't pursue those things, what other meaning is there to life?"

Do you really feel that your present existence is very meaningful? Is everything that you do truly worthwhile? Does it help you develop your wisdom? It doesn't seem that way, does it.

If you can clean up your perfect mirror-like wisdom, then it will illumine heaven and earth. Its brilliance can shine throughout three thousand great thousand world systems, and you won't have any more stupid thoughts or afflictions. Won't that be fine? If you are worrying and fretful all day long, you are imprisoning yourself in a hell of your own making. Do you think that's much fun? The whole

purpose of cultivation is to put an end to afflictions. If you take afflictions as your daily bread, then ultimately what meaning does your life have?

Therefore, the purpose of sitting in Chan is to bring the mind to a single focus. Having brought your mind to a single concentration, nothing would trouble you any more. Even if the sky caved in, or if there was an earthquake or nuclear fallout, you'd simply let things take their natural course. Nothing would faze you.

"Well, isn't that being totally oblivious to the world situation," you ask.

Can you really control the world situation? Not to speak of you, a common citizen, being unable to control the world situation, even the rulers of the different countries are not able to control the world situation. Think about it: are they able to help people get rid of their afflictions? Can the leaders of the United Nations really watch over people's minds? Not to talk about other people's minds, are they even able to watch over their own minds? If you are able to be truly without afflictions, bringing peace to mankind, then you have what it takes to be a world leader. Since at the present moment you are unable to do that, you should begin by working on yourself. First, discipline yourself so that you do not engage in thoughts of fighting, greed, seeking, selfishness, seeking personal advantage, and lying. If you are able to fulfill those six conditions, in the very least you won't be contributing to environmental pollution. Rather, you will be reinforcing the righteous energy of the universe, and, in a quiet way, detoxifying noxious vapors and gases, and neutralizing the violent forces that fill the atmosphere.

Basically, sitting in Chan is for the purpose of getting rid of your faults, greed, and anger. However, if you crave good food, pretty clothes, and a fancy apartment, and at the same time you want to become a Buddha, then you are being crazy!

Someone says, "Once you start talking, you scold people."

I am not scolding people; I am scolding the ghosts--some people's stomachs are full of ghosts, so that when they hear these kinds of things being said, those people become upset and uneasy. The ghosts are upset, and they make it impossible for those people to sit in Chan.

And so you should really make use of this opportunity to tidy up your great, perfect mirror-like wisdom.

You say, "But I don't know how to put things in order...."

All you have to do is learn to be patient. Endure a little scolding, and bit-by-bit you will learn how to put things in order.

When the *weino* rings the bell signalling the end of the sit, you can slowly stretch out your legs and start to move around. Easy does it. There's no need to be rough. Although this is a small thing, nonetheless, it's right within the fine and subtle aspects that we want to regulate our bodies and minds. In a proper Chan hall, no matter how many people were there, you would never hear any distracting sounds. Everyone would be singlemindedly investigating their meditation topic and applying effort.

PLANS FOR NEW CHAN HALL AT BUDDHAROOT FARM

I have some news for you: over ten years ago, our Association bought a piece of land outside Eugene, Oregon. We named it Buddharoot Farm. We are preparing to build a Chan Hall on that property. Once the Chan hall is finished, we will enroll one hundred participants: twenty-five bhikshus, twenty-five

bhikshunies, twenty-five laymen, and twenty-five laywomen. That Way-place will provide you with food and lodging, and there will be ample space to walk and sit in meditation. In the winter we can hold Chan sessions there. Now that the Dharma Realm Buddhist Association is expanding, and we are establishing branch monasteries in different places, more and more people will be interested in cultivating. After the Chan hall is finished, we can hold a seven-week Chan Session there. In the past, in 1973, we held a fourteen-week Chan Session at the Buddhist Lecture Hall in San Francisco.

I will tell you the rules of the Chan Hall. Boards are hit at 2:30 a.m., and the first sit begins at 3:00 a.m. You sit until 12:00 midnight, with alternating periods of silent sitting and walking meditation, and "running incense." Throughout the entire day, there is a total of three and one half hours of sleep, there being a rest period from 4:00 to 5:00 p.m.

Those who wish to attend can sign up. Specify how many weeks of Chan you wish to attend. But when you attend a session, you have to participate fully for the time you are there, and adhere closely to the schedule. That's our only requirement, that you stick to the rules of the Chan hall and not be haphazard or sloppy about it.

We don't ask for money, but we expect you to observe the rules. The goal of this organization is to train cultivators of the Way. If you aren't able to follow the rules, then no matter how much money you give us, we still won't welcome you to the Chan session. On the other hand, if you are willing to work hard, then the temple will be glad to provide you with all your needs, and your food and lodging will be free of charge. This invitation is not only extended to residents of the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, but to all cultivators of the whole world. Anyone who wishes to practice the Way can come here to cultivate. We aren't interested in making money from cultivators. This is a Way-place for ending birth and death, especially prepared for those who wish to vigorously work on the Way.

I've been in America for over two decades now. You can take a close look at my actions. Tell me, have I ever solicited money from any one of you? Have I used various ways to cheat you? If I am guilty of such actions, you can publicize them if you want. However, if I have not been guilty of such things, then you should understand what I am about. Basically, I am a stupid person who doesn't attach much significance to money. It is for that very reason that I have managed to offend many rich people. They say that I am a monk who puts on airs. But that's my inherent nature. I was born with such a temperament. Under no circumstances would I bow to rich folks.

At the Opening Light Ceremonies at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, in the fall of 1979, several hundred laypeople flew in from Malaysia for the celebrations. Hundreds also came from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Indonesia, and Southeast Asia. They together with the local guests came to a total of over two thousand people. On that day, I got up on the platform to say a few words to our guests, and my opening speech began with these words:

"All of you rich people, pay attention. I want to speak truthfully to you. From the moment of my birth, the people I have the greatest distaste for are rich people. Why is that? It is because for however much money you have, you have a corresponding amount of offenses. If your money came through legitimate means, you certainly couldn't strike it rich overnight. But if you managed to strike it rich overnight, then your money must have come through devious means--through gambling, dealing in drugs, contraband, and so forth. Or maybe you robbed a bank or cheated on taxes. Since your money didn't come through legal means, what do you have to be so smug about? People like that are simply opportunists!"

Why am I poor? It is because I don't know how to wheel and deal. Someone protests, "Dharma Master, you aren't speaking truthfully. You say you don't have money, but you have established Gold Mountain Monastery, the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, Gold Wheel Monastery, Gold Summit Monastery,

Gold Buddha Monastery, and Ice Mountain Monastery. How could you call yourself poor after you have established so many branch monasteries?"

You should know that those monasteries don't belong to me. They are for the public. They belong to everyone. Whoever comes here has a share. If you are sincere and you come to the Way-place to study the Dharma, then I consider you part of the family. The only criterion is that you respect the rules of the Way-place: not drink, not eat meat, not smoke or take drugs, and not gamble. Also, if you can respect the division between the men and women, then you can live peacefully and harmoniously with everyone in the Way-place. And we'd be like one family.

"No, that's not so!" you say. "You are left-home people, but we are laypeople. How could you say we belong to the same family?"

As of now you haven't left the home life; however, maybe in the future you will.

"Oh, I will never, never leave the home life!"

Well, that's no problem. You can become a good Dharma protector, and that's just as good.