

# CHAN TALKS

## XI. *"Sweet Dew": The Wonderful Elixir for Ending Birth and Death*

In investigating Chan, it's not the case that we work at it only when we are sitting in Chan. Rather, whether walking, or sitting, standing, or reclining, we are applying our effort at Chan. It's just that when sitting, even more concentration is used than at ordinary times. When walking, you investigate, "Who's mindful of the Buddha?" When sitting, you investigate, "Who's mindful of the Buddhas?" When standing, or when lying down, you do the same. And so it's said,

Walking, standing, sitting, and reclining.  
Do not leave this.  
If you leave this,  
You've made a mistake.

What's "this"? It's simply the meditation topic, "Who's mindful of the Buddha?" You have to constantly look into it.

When sitting in Chan, the tip of your tongue should touch the roof of your mouth. If saliva forms in your mouth, then swallow it. The saliva is called "sweet dew," because after you've been sitting for a period of time, your saliva will become sweet. Although it's sweetness is not as thick and pronounced as that of honey or sugar, still, it has a delicately sweet flavor to it. If you swallow this "sweet dew," then even if you don't eat anything, you won't feel hungry, and without drinking anything, you won't feel thirsty. As you progress, you will get to the point that while walking, you won't be aware that you are walking; when sitting, you won't be aware that you are sitting; when standing, you won't be aware you are standing, and if you lie down, you won't be aware that you are lying down. Your skill will become unified and complete, and you will be in a state of concentration at all times:

The Nagas are always in concentration;  
There isn't a time when they are not in concentration.

This "sweet dew" is able to cure all illnesses, and can bring health to the body. It can cause your wisdom to open up, too. But you must use effort at all times, without interruption. Why is it that those who cultivate the Way prefer not to talk? Because they are constantly engaged in applying effort. Whether they are carrying firewood, or carrying water, greeting guests or seeing them off, coming in or leaving, they're always using effort. When their skill reaches maturity, when this application of effort becomes a continuous, closely-knit process, then even if they are not intentionally doing this work, they are still working. Even if they aren't consciously investigating "Who's mindful of the Buddha?" the meditation topic will always be in their minds, and they will be investigating without even making a conscious effort to do so. Their investigation will become so tightly woven that the wind won't be able to blow through it and the rain won't be able to get in. Of course, such skill isn't acquired overnight. Therefore, you must be mindful in every passing moment.