

CHAN TALKS

XVII. "If You Don't Consider It A Sagely Experience, Then It Can Be Called A Good State

by the Venerable Master Hua

When investigating Chan, inside we regulate our minds and outside we temper our bodies. Body and mind coordinate and function as one. As the saying goes, "Your words should match your actions, and your actions should match your words. Body and mind should blend together. Sitting in Chan, you try to gather in the wild horse and playful monkey that are your mind. Don't let them run outside and jump around. Instead, your every move should be in accord with proper decorum, and you should conduct yourself in an upright and composed manner. When you walk, sit, stand, or lie down, everything should be done in a proper way.

Walk like a gentle breeze,
Stand like a pine tree,
Sit like a big bell,
Lie down like a bow.

For example, when you walk you should move like a gentle breeze, not a hurricane that whips up trees and knocks down houses. The same principle applies to when you stand, sit, or lie down on your bed. At all times, conduct yourself as if you were still meditating. Be relaxed, calm, and centered. That way you will gain control over the wild horse and mad monkey of your mind.

You should coordinate your Chan investigation with your walking, standing, sitting, and lying down. That way you will gain a response in your skill. What does this mean? You will experience a state of "light ease" (輕安). You can't pinpoint this state. It's as if there, also as if not there. But in general, you feel a sense of lightness, ease, and joy. You won't have much polluted thinking; you'll be like still waters on which no waves arise. Look at the ocean: waves surge up one after another. The waves inside our minds are the same — polluted thoughts arise one after another. However, if you develop samadhi, then inside you can gather in your mind and outside you can regulate your body. When both your body and mind have gotten on the right track, you will experience a sense of light ease. This is a preliminary stage in the process of Chan. It is a foretaste of the Ground of Happiness of the Production of Concentration. It's a stage that many people go through as they start to apply effort in Chan. Therefore, don't take it as some very far-out or extraordinary state. Don't become attached to it. If you think this is some sort of incredible state, then you are finished. You won't be able to make progress. You have drawn your own limits and all of your former efforts have been wasted. You won't come to any true accomplishment.

For this reason the *Shurangama Sutra* says, "If you don't consider it a sagely experience, then it can be called a good state." You shouldn't think of it as some kind of fantastic achievement or think that you've really accomplished something, that you've become enlightened or have been certified to the fruit. Don't become smug and self-satisfied. Once you have become self-satisfied, you will call in the demons. Demons and those of deviant paths got to be where they are because they were greedy for spiritual powers, for extraordinary states. That's why they became demons in the first place.

The *Shurangama Sutra* goes on to say, "If you consider it a sagely experience, then you will be subject to deviant influences." You will very easily go down a wrong road and catch a demon. If you are greedy for small bargains, for small states, then you will easily go the wrong way.

Therefore, do not become attached to any state that might arise in Chan. Do not become attached to a good state or a bad state. "When the Buddha comes, slay the Buddha. When a demon comes, slay the demon." Even if a Buddha appears before you, you should not be moved. Simply consider it a minor incident in your application of effort. It's not such a big deal. When demons appear before you, don't be scared. When the Buddha comes, do not be happy; when the demons come, do not be afraid. If you allow yourself to be happy, you can easily get off the right track; if you allow yourself to be turned by fear, you can also catch a demon.

In general, do not be moved by the seven emotions: happiness, anger, sorrow, fear, love, hate, and desire.

Getting turned by happiness, losing your temper, becoming depressed or fearful, giving in to love, loathing, or desire -- any one of these states is not proper. You should put a stop to the seven emotions.

In walking, sitting, standing, and lying down, be like still water, which has no waves. Once the seven emotions and six desires move, the waters are stirred up, waves appear, and your mind-king will not feel peaceful. The host of your mind, the mind-king, should remain unmoving. When your nature is still and settled, the demons will be subdued, and everywhere, at all times, you will feel comfortable, calm, and serene. You won't feel afraid or worried. You will be quiet and composed, like still waters, and your wisdom will appear. Only when your mind is without distractions can you give rise to wisdom. Therefore, you should coordinate your daily actions with your investigation of Chan. It's not the case that you are investigating Chan only when you are sitting. Rather, in walking, sitting, standing, and lying down, at all times, you should be working hard!