

# *Chan Talks*

*by Tripitaka Master Hua*

## *Do Not Be Turned by States*

Sitting in Chan is practicing Samadhi, and practicing samadhi is sitting in Chan. Some people wonder whether these two are different things, or the same thing. Their very asking betrays their ignorance with regard to this subject. The purpose of sitting in Chan is to understand, to no longer be muddled. The reason people are muddled is because they allow their minds to be turned by external states. Once a state arises, they don't recognize it. When a good state comes along, they get turned by the good state. When a bad state comes along they get turned by the bad state. Everything we encounter in our daily lives is a state. Our eyes see forms and get turned by them; our ears hear sounds and get turned by them; our nose smells odors and gets turned by them; our tongue tastes flavors and gets turned by them; our body feels sensations and gets turned by them; and our mind thinks about dharmas and gets turned by dharmas; all of this is called "being turned by states," an indication of our lack of samadhi power. So, whoever has genuine samadhi power will be clear, understanding, and very composed. He won't, upon hearing a single word of praise, feel that it's as sweet as honey; or upon hearing a single word of slander, feel that it's more bitter than golden seal. To be influenced by either praise or slander is called "being turned by states."

If people possess true wisdom, they won't be turned by external states. There are states of the six sense organs (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind); states of the six sense objects (forms, sounds, odors, tastes, objects of touch, and dharmas); and states of the five desires (wealth, sex, name, food and sleep). If you can remain unmoved by any of these external conditions, then you can be considered as having some samadhi. Only then can you be considered a Chan cultivator.

If, even after sitting, you still have as much greed, contention, seeking, selfishness, striving for personal advantage, and lying as you had before, to the point that not only have those six problems not decreased, but instead they have increased, then you haven't understood the proper way to apply effort. That way you could easily become prone to catching contagious diseases and to becoming corrupted.

Right now an epidemic of AIDS is raging. The disease is incurable. It is also extremely contagious. Why is it that people catch AIDS so easily and so quickly? It's because they don't have any concentration power. If people have concentration power, they will generate a kind of resistance, a built-in immunity that will render them fearless. They will have nothing to be afraid of. Concentration power is the cure for all ills. If you possess concentration power, no external state can contaminate you. We are not talking in terms of spiritual powers. We are simply referring to a kind of invisible force that can dispel all disasters and deviant influences.

Why are people defiled by states? Because they don't have any samadhi power, and so they are easily contaminated and influenced. People are aware of the AIDS epidemic, but they are not yet aware that concentration power is the cure for it. In the Song of Enlightenment there are these lines:

Walking is dhyana; sitting is dhyana,  
In speech or silence, in movement or stillness, my body is at peace.  
Even if I meet with a knife's point, I am always tranquil.  
If I am given poison, I am still totally at ease.

"My body is at peace" is another way of describing concentration power. One is unmoved even if one is threatened with a knife's point. For example, Dharma Master Seng Jau (僧肇) when he was taken up to the executioner's block, spoke this verse:

The four elements are originally empty.  
The five elements basically without a self.  
My head meets with a sharp blade:  
Like chopping the spring wind.

He was fearless, unmoved by external conditions. What would one possibly fear attaining this kind of samadhi? An up-right, vast-flowing energy would sustain one and render one immune from all encroaching influences. All of you who investigate Chan should first get your bodies healthy. Then you will not be prone to different illnesses.