

參禪的祕訣

The Secret Formula for Investigating Chan



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—A talk given by Venerable Master Hua during a Chan session
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參禪的「參」，就是觀。觀什麼？觀照般若。教你念茲在茲觀自在，不是觀他在。觀觀自己在不在？自己在，就能參禪打坐，用功修行；若是沒有，就在那兒打妄想，想入非非。身在禪堂，心就跑到紐約去觀光，或是到意大利去旅行，到處攀緣，所以就不自在了。

參禪的祕訣，就是「朝也思，夕也思。」思什麼？思「念佛是誰？」今天也參，明天也參，天天在禪堂裡行深般若波羅蜜多時。禪的味道不是在短期能嘗到，要經過長時間才可以。有了行深般若波羅蜜多時的功夫，才能照見五蘊皆空。

The word “investigation” in the phrase “investigating Chan” means “to contemplate.” What is there to contemplate? We use contemplative Prajna to contemplate our own presence in thought after thought. Rather than contemplating others’ presence, we should contemplate whether or not we are fully here. If we are, then we have the ability to investigate Chan and meditate, and we can use our skill in cultivation. But if we are not here, and are indulging in idle thoughts instead, our mind scatters to the four winds. Then even though our body may be present in the Chan hall, our mind has run off to New York for a bit of sight-seeing, or perhaps run off to Italy for a holiday. Our mind races everywhere exploiting conditions, as a result, we lack self-presence; we are “not here.”

The secret formula for investigating Chan is to stick to it day and night. Keep reflecting. Reflect on “Who is mindful of the Buddha?” We contemplate today and contemplate tomorrow, and every day we are in the Chan Hall, practicing the profound Prajna Paramita. We cannot expect to taste the actual flavor of Chan in a short period of time. Only after long practice can we know its real taste. When we have the skill of practicing the profound Prajna Paramita, then we can contemplate the Five Skandhas¹ as empty.

¹ Also known as Five Aggregates. They are form, sense-perception, cognition, mental formations, and consciousness.