



# 參禪問答 (一)

## Questions & Answers on Chan (I)

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• 問題一：打坐的時候，用什麼方法提起「念佛是誰」的話頭？可不可以解釋一下，「念佛是誰」的誰是哪一個？應該怎樣參，怎樣深入這個話頭？

關於參話頭，其實在虛雲老和尚的開示裡已經講得很清楚詳細，或者來果老禪師的開示錄裡面也有記載。

大致介紹兩位古德在教人參話頭上的不同處。來果老禪師教人參話頭時，先教人念話頭。念話頭，就是好像念佛這樣念，一句一句來念這個話頭。念了一段時間之後，就不再念了，就開始參。參的時候，就在「誰」字上面著手用力。

**Question 1: When sitting in meditation, how do we bring up the topic of “who is mindful of the Buddha”? Could you explain... who is the “who” in this topic? How should we investigate this topic and how could we investigate it deeply?**

Regarding investigating meditation topics, actually it has already been explained very clearly and in detail by Venerable Master Hsu Yun in his Dharma talks. It can also be found in the Dharma talks by Chan Master Lai Guo.

Now I'd like to briefly explain the difference between the approaches taught by these two great masters on investigating meditation topics. The Chan Master Lai Guo taught people to recite the topic first. Reciting the topic means repeating the question over and over, just like how we recite the Buddha's name. After you have recited the topic for a while, you could stop reciting and start investigating the topic. When investigating, put your effort on the word “who.”

So what is the purpose of this approach? Most people are unfamiliar with the topic “who is mindful of the Buddha,” especially beginners. But what are we familiar with? False thoughts. It is so easy for us to have false thoughts. Why do we recite the topic? It is to help us transform the unfamiliar into the familiar, and the familiar into the unfamiliar. That means we turn false thoughts into something we are no longer familiar with any more, and turn an unfamiliar topic into something familiar, so we may be constantly mindful of this topic. When you are mindful of this topic at all times, you will be able to enter the state of reciting the topic unconsciously. When your mind clings this topic tightly, you can start to apply effort into the word “who” and mindfully investigate it. This is the teaching of Chan Master Lai Guo regarding this Chan investigation method.

Venerable Master Hsu Yun, on the other hand, taught us to directly investigate the word “who” in “who is mindful of the Buddha.” Investigating the meditation topic is to investigate the arising of the phrase (in Chinese, ‘meditation topic’ literally is written as ‘the beginning of the phrase’)—that is, the phrase or thought that enters your mind before your conscious mind is at work. Once we investigate the entire phrase of “who is mindful of the Buddha” and the topic appears in your conscious mind, then it is already the “end of the phrase,” not the beginning. In other words, if you were to investigate the topic of “who is mindful of the Buddha” by its shape, mark, or sound, you are investigating the end of the topic.

那麼這方法的作用是什麼呢？我們對「念佛是誰」這個話頭不熟悉，尤其是剛開始學，很陌生的。我們對什麼熟悉呢？我們對妄想熟悉，很容易打妄想。為什麼要念話頭呢？是要讓我們轉生為熟，轉熟為生。將我們熟悉的妄想轉為陌生、不熟悉，將陌生的話頭轉為熟悉的，心心念念都記掛著這個話頭。當你心心念念都記掛著這話頭，就能不念自念了；當把這個話頭抓住了，就開始在「誰」字上著力，用心去參這個「誰」字。這就是來果老禪師教的參話頭的過程。

虛雲老和尚則是教直接參「念佛是誰」這個「誰」字。參話頭是參話之頭，參一句話之頭，就是這個話未出來之前是什麼？所以叫「參話頭」。如果參話頭「念佛是誰」，有「念佛是誰」，已經是話尾了，不是話頭了。所以你要是參「念佛是誰」，有形、有相、有聲音，這已經是話尾了。

那該怎麼參呢？虛雲老和尚教在「誰」字上下手。主要是「誰」字，將這個「誰」字拉長，究竟是誰？到底是誰？有耐心，久而久之，就可以拉得很長。上人在開示裡講過，古人參禪，有的可以把「誰」字拉得很長，甚至在禪堂行香走圈，這個「誰」字可以拉到走一個圈也不停止。就在這個「誰」字上著眼注意，從「誰」字上鑽進去。

大家都知道「誰」字怎麼寫，但知道「誰」的內容是什麼，要表達什麼嗎？從文字上講，這個「誰」字有形有相；但是它的意思呢，你沒有辦法拿出什麼給人看、給人知。就從這個疑問鑽下去，這個疑問解決不了，就不斷在這個疑問上面鑽，但又不知道怎麼鑽？又不知怎麼辦？這種狀態就是「疑情」，一個疑的情緒。

這個疑不是懷疑的疑，是疑問的疑。不是說懷疑別人做了什麼事，而是對一件事情你不明白，你又想要去了解它、清楚它，在這個問題上起疑，起這個疑的情緒。參禪最大的作用就是要起這個疑情，所以古德說：「大疑就大悟，小疑就小悟，不疑就不悟。」

So how do we investigate? Venerable Master Hsu Yun taught us to work on the word “who.” Prolong the word “who”—who is it indeed? If we hold our patience and keep practicing, we will be able to prolong it by a lot. The Venerable Master Hsuan Hua also mentioned in his talk that when ancients practiced Chan, some could prolong the word “who” to the extent that it could last longer than the time of walking meditation around the Chan Hall. The key is to focus on the word “who,” and dig deep into it.

Everyone knows how to write the word “who,” but do you know what is in it? What is it trying to deliver? Literally, this word “who” has a form of a character; however, you have no way to truly bring out its meaning and show it to other people. We can start investigating this question and not stop until we find the answer. Yet we don’t know how to dig or what to do, so we investigate with “a questioning mind.”

This questioning is not being suspicious, but curious. It is not to suspect whether others have done something. It is that you don’t understand something, and you want to figure it out, so you bring forth a mind of questioning. The biggest usage of Chan practice is to bring forth this questioning mind. The ancient sages said, “Big questioning leads to big enlightenment; small questioning leads to small enlightenment; no questioning leads to no enlightenment.”

### **Question 2: Can we investigate the six-Chinese-character phrase “Homage to Amitabha Buddha” instead?**

Do you mean investigating “who is mindful of Amitabha Buddha”? (Audience answers: to investigate each character of the six.) The principle of Chan meditation is to bring forth the questioning mind. We practice to bring forth the questioning mind, which could lead to the answer. Once we find the answer, the questioning mind then vanishes. Investigating the topic is to bring forth the questioning mind.

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參話頭是參話之頭，參一句話之頭，就是這個話未出來之前是什麼？所以叫「參話頭」。

Investigating the meditation topic is to investigate the arising of the phrase (in Chinese, ‘meditation topic’ literally is written as ‘the beginning of the phrase’)—that is, the phrase or thought that enters your mind before your conscious mind is at work.

· 問題二：參話頭可不可以參「南無阿彌陀佛」六字洪名？

你的意思是參「阿彌陀佛是什麼」嗎？（回答：參每一個字。）參禪的道理，主要是講疑情。為了起疑情來參，這個疑情是為了找答案；如果答案找到了，並且知道了，這個疑就不成疑了。所以，參話頭為了起疑情。

怎樣才能起疑情呢？你不明白、不知道，你才會去生起這個疑情，所以才說是「話頭」——話之頭。你可以參「南無阿彌陀佛」這六個字，這六個字本身是有形有相的，你可以參每一個字的內容，它的內容是什麼？表達什麼？如果能在「什麼」裡面生起這個疑慮、疑情，也是可以的。

好像有人參「父母未生我之前的本來面目是什麼」，虛雲老和尚跟鏡融老法師學經教的時候，老法師教他參「拖著這個死屍的是誰」，拖著這個的死屍東奔西跑的是誰？你能夠在這個「誰」上面起了疑就可以。主要就起個疑，你用什麼方式、什麼文字，只要能撩起疑慮，撩起這個疑的情緒，保持這個疑的情緒，一直用下去，都有成功的一日。

**聽眾：**我想補充一下，其實參話頭是以妄制妄，所以如果用「南無阿彌陀佛」一個字一個字來參的話，你就會生出六個妄想，每個字一個妄想。如果你用「南無阿彌陀佛」一句話來參，你就是以一個妄制住其它的妄想。我記得師父曾經講過參「為什麼媽是女人」，這其實是一個很普通的問題，目的就是要以熟轉生，來參這樣的事情。儘量不要將妄想顯示出來，打坐就是不要起妄想；妄想一起，就會跟著妄想走了，我們就靜不下來了。

**興法師：**轉生成熟、轉熟成生，這是來果老禪師講的「念話頭」。參話頭的目的，不是在有妄想、沒有妄想這個地方來注意。參話頭的「參」，是要起疑情。疑情能起，就是參；疑情不起，其實就是念。如果只是念，那就是話尾，還在話尾的範圍裡面。

How can we bring forth the questioning mind? It is actually through not knowing and not understanding that you begin to question. That is why we say the meditation topic is “the beginning of the phrase.” You could investigate the six characters in “Homage to Amitabha Buddha.” These six characters all have their own form. You could investigate each of them—what is in it, and what is it trying to deliver? If you can bring forth the questioning mind by this “what,” then, yes, you can contemplate “Homage to Amitabha Buddha” too.

Some people investigate “what was my original nature before I was born?” When the Venerable Master Hsu Yun was learning sutras from Master Jing Rong, he was taught to investigate “who is dragging this dead body?” Who is dragging this corpse around? As long as you can bring forth the questioning mind from this “who,” you are doing it right. The key is to bring forth a questioning mind in whatever approach you use; as long as you can raise such questions, keep and hold it in practice, then you will succeed one day.

**Audience:** I would like to add something: Investigating the topic is actually subduing your false thoughts with false thoughts. If you investigate “Homage to Amitabha Buddha” character by character, you will raise six false thoughts - one per character. However, if you investigate the entire phrase of “Homage to Amitabha Buddha,” you are subduing other false thoughts with just one single false thought. I recall that the Venerable Master once said that we could investigate “why moms are female.” This is actually a very ordinary question, yet the purpose is to turn the familiar to unfamiliar so as to investigate it. Try our best to not let our false thoughts manifest. The purpose of sitting meditation is not to have false thoughts. Once false thoughts arise, we will follow them and won't be able to focus.

**Dharma Master Hing:** Turning the unfamiliar to familiar, and turning the familiar to unfamiliar—this is what Chan Master Lai Guo referred to as “reciting the topic.” The purpose of “investigating the topic” is not to focus on whether or not we give rise to false thoughts. The investigation is to bring forth a questioning mind. If the questioning mind arises, you are investigating; if there is no questioning mind, you are just reciting the meditation topic. If you are just reciting, then it still only belongs to the end of the phrase.

You can investigate anything as long as it enables you to bring forth a

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參話頭的「參」，是要起疑情。疑情能起，就是參；疑情不起，其實就是念。如果只是念，那就是話尾，還在話尾的範圍裡面。

You can investigate anything as long as it enables you to bring forth a questioning mind. Once the questioning mind arises, you will naturally be free of false thoughts or anything else, except the single question. If you are not questioning, you are just reciting the meditation topic. If you are just reciting, then it still only belongs to the end of the phrase.

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參任何事情都行，只要能夠令你起疑情就行。當疑情一起的時候，自然就沒有妄想，自然就沒有其它的事情了，只有一個疑慮在。如果不在疑情裡面，沒有掌握疑情的話，都是在念話頭。好聽來講是「念話頭」，更準確來說是「念話尾」。

用功的方法越簡單越好，不要多，每一個法門都是要專一。譬如挖井找水，挖了三、四尺不見有水，就停下來到其它地方挖，這樣挖得不夠深，還沒有有水的地方就不挖了，當然找不到水了。古人用功，一個功夫用到尾，趙州禪師用八十年的功夫觀一個「無」字，後來才能夠在禪宗裡做出一番大事業。

古人用功就是這麼專一，我們要找到適合自己的法門，喜歡就要死心塌地抓住去修行，就像救生圈一樣，緊緊抓住，在苦海裡能救我們的法身慧命。不開悟就不放手，一參到底，甚至今生不開悟，發願再來再參。最主要是要一心，不要多心，一心的力量才大；如果你分心，力量就小了很多，離成功就遠了一點。所謂「制心一處，無事不辦」，參禪講參禪的法門，念佛講念佛的法門，經教就講經教的法門，主要是一門深入，功夫才深，才有成功的時候。✿

questioning mind. Once the questioning mind arises, you will naturally be free of false thoughts or anything else, except the single question. If you are not questioning, you are just reciting the meditation topic. It is “reciting the beginning of the phrase;” if we put it in a nicer way, it is actually just “reciting the end of the phrase.”

The simpler your practice approach is, the better. Don't experiment too much. Being single-minded is always the key for any Dharma door. It is like digging a well for water. If you stop digging at three or four feet in depth because you find no water and change to another location, surely you won't find any water in any place because you didn't dig deep enough. When the ancients practiced the Way, they focused on one thing all the way through. For example, Chan Master Zhao Zhou spent eighty years investigating the word “void” and that led to his great establishment in the Chan School.

This is how single-minded those ancients could be in their practice. We also need to find the Dharma door that is suitable for ourselves. Once we find our own Dharma door, we should stick to it tightly in our practice, like grasping firmly a life buoy in the sea of suffering so that we can save our Dharma body and wisdom life. Don't let it go until enlightenment. We simply investigate one meditation topic all the way through; if we don't obtain enlightenment in this life we should vow to keep investigating in our next life. The most important is to be single-minded, not “multi-minded.” Only the power of being single-minded is strong enough; if you split your mind, the power will be weakened and you would be farther away from the success. It is said, “If you focus your mind on one thing, there is nothing you cannot achieve.” When we practice Chan, we focus on the Dharma door of Chan. When we practice Buddha name recitation, we focus on the Dharma door of Buddha name recitation. When we study sutras and teachings, we focus on the Dharma door of sutras and teachings. The main point is to go deeply in one Dharma door. That would make it possible for us to gain great strength through focused practice and succeed one day. ✿