

# Investigating Chan 參禪

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Chan is a specific form of cultivation with the purpose of waking up your mind. It is not the same as reciting the Buddha's name. That is a different kind of cultivation, though it has the same purpose. Just like different streams leading to the same river, these different practices have the same purpose.

In Chinese, they say “investigating Chan.” So, what are you investigating? You are investigating “who?”—“Who is it that recites the Buddha's name?” Or, “Who is this person sitting here asking who?” That's really what you are doing. You're becoming a detective that has to solve this great riddle of the self — Who is the self? Who am I? Who just asked that question? That is what you're really supposed to be doing. You're not supposed to be reciting Namo Amitufofo or Namo Guanshiyinpusa. That is a different kind of cultivation. In Chan, you are like a detective, you are investigating your meditation topic, which typically is “who.”

禪是一種特定的修行方式，目的是喚醒你的自性。它與念佛不同，雖是不同的修行方法，但最終的目標是一致的。就像不同的小溪匯入同一條河流，這些不同的修行方法都有相同的目的。

中文說「參禪」，那，你在參什麼？你在參「誰」？——「念佛是誰」？或者坐在這裡參「誰」的是誰？這就是你真正在做的事情。你化身為一名偵探，必須解開這個關於自我的大謎團——自我是誰？我是誰？誰方才問了這個問題？這就是你真正應該做的事情。（參禪時）你不應該念「南無阿彌陀佛」或是「南無觀世音菩薩」；那是不同的修行方法。禪修中，你就像一名偵探，你正在參你的話頭（話頭通常是「誰」）。

因此，我們參坐在這裡的這個人——這是誰？這個自我是什麼？我是什麼？我如何來到這世上？什麼是父母未生前的本來面目？誰在問這些問題？我為什麼會在這種情況？基本上，身為一名偵探，你必須解開這個大謎團。這是一個在書本上找不到解釋的謎團。並且，別人也不能直接告訴你答案。這是一個唯有你才能解開的謎題，唯有你才能從中突破。因為它是以這種方式修行，因此我們稱之為「參禪」。

So, we investigate this person sitting here — Who is this? What is this ego? What was I? How did I get here? What was I like before I was born? Who's asking these questions? Why am I in this situation? Basically, you are being a detective and you have to solve this great riddle. This is a riddle that can't be explained in books. And, somebody else can't just tell you the answer. It's a kind of a riddle that only you can solve, only you can wake up to it. Because it is cultivated in this way, we call it “investigating Chan.”

You can also investigate, Who is it that feels this pain in my legs? When you meditate for a long time and your legs are hurting and your mind gets all whiny, just ask Who is feeling this pain? It is really one of those unanswerable questions that can only be understood by waking up to it.

For me personally, Chan is how I got interested in Buddhism. I read the poetry by the great, iconic Chan Master Hanshan—“Cold Mountain.” He lived in a cave in the Tiantai mountains where he wrote poems. He wrote them on trees, on rocks, on buildings. These poems were a great source of enlightenment. They were written by a mind that was completely clear, that had no obstruction of false thinking.

The first time I was involved in a Chan session at Gold Mountain Monastery, I decided that I really had to wake up. So I was working very hard. Every sit I would be grinding my teeth as I was trying to wake up. Now, Shifu used to come down and walk through the Buddha Hall. He would look at all of us to see what was going on with us. So this one time when he did this, he stopped by me, leaned down and goes, “What, doing?” And I said, “Shifu, I'm trying to wake up.” He started laughing, shaking his head as he said, “Stupid!”

He said, “The more you chase after that, the more it runs away from you.” So, you don't want to be greedy for enlightenment. You just cultivate. And if it comes, it comes. If it doesn't, it doesn't. You just go on with your life. He also told me “Don't be so attached to just the Chan. When we do recitation, then you do recitation. When we do repentance ceremonies and bow, then you just do that too. In any case, don't be attached to gaining anything.” The more you chase after waking up, the more it runs away from you.

When you are ready to wake up, your mind will naturally open like a flower. You will feel at ease—everything's good, everything's natural and in harmony. You return home. It will be like, Oh, I've been this way my whole life. I don't know why I struggled so much. It is a great release, you no longer have a burden of false thinking clouding your every move. ❀

你也可以參，是誰在感受我的腿疼？當你打坐很長一段時間後，你的腿很痛，你的心隨之煩躁，就問問是誰覺得痛？這確實是那些無法回答的問題之一，唯有開悟才能理解。

對我個人來說，禪宗是我對佛教感興趣的起點。我拜讀禪宗寒山大師的詩集《寒山詩》。他住在天台山的一個山洞裡，在穴中作詩。他把詩寫在樹皮上、岩石上、房子上。這些詩是開悟的重要線索，是由一個非常明白、毫無妄念的心所作。

我頭一次在金山禪寺打禪七時，暗自決定自己一定要開悟。我埋頭苦幹。每支香，我都咬緊牙根努力想要突破。那時，師父經常下來，在佛堂裡，看看我們大家的狀況。有一次，師父下來察看時，在我身邊停下來，俯下身子，說：「在幹什麼？」我說：「師父，我在努力開悟。」他開始大笑，說：「愚痴！」

他說：「你越想要開悟，就越不會開悟。」所以，你不要貪圖開悟，只要按部就班的修行。因緣成熟了，自然有好消息。時候未到，就沒有消息。你繼續過你的生活，做自己該做的事。師父還告訴我：「不要只執著修禪。當大家誦經，你就跟著誦經。當大家拜懺和禮佛，你就隨眾。在任何情況，都不要執著想得到什麼。」你越想要開悟，就離開悟越遠。

當開悟的時機成熟了，你的心會像妙華一樣綻放。你會感到自在——一切都很好，一切都很自然與和諧。你回（自性的）家了，會覺得「喔！原來我一直都是這樣的。我不曉得為什麼自己要這麼費力。」這是一個很大的解脫，你的一舉一動不再有一絲妄想雜染。❀