

## **Class 2: 2/12/2008**

### **Belly Breathing**

Breathing deep or shallow, affects greatly our longevity. Dogs, for instance, breathe shallowly, and thus live a short life. Most people breathe usually only with their chest. That is, breathing only into the upper parts of chest and then out. This way, they inhale inadequate amount of air, and as a result, they need to take another breath quickly. This kind of breathing allows only an inadequate amount of oxygen to enter capillaries for exchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide and limits the full functionality of our organs. In the long run, our body may degrade and illness may arise.

We all breathed through our belly in our infancy. Somehow, as we grew up, we gradually adopted Chest Breathing. Perhaps we needed to quickly inhale sufficient oxygen for our fast-paced modern life. If we can go back and readopt Belly Breathing, our organs will be massaged on one hand, and the amount of oxygen in our blood will be enhanced on the other. Additionally, all parts of our body will function better and the body as a whole will become healthier. All these benefits can not be gained by Chest Breathing alone.

Belly Breathing, like any kind of breathing, is a spontaneous process. We will not be able to do it well in our daily lives without training and practicing. Besides, a meditative state would be very difficult to attain without Belly Breathing. There are other benefits of doing Belly Breathing. For instance, the full concentration in meditation provides an excellent environment for cells to obtain

sufficient oxygen and other nutrients through Belly Breathing. This explains why, as we often see, Zen practitioners are healthier and younger in look, often with silky skin, than those who do not practice Zen.

Note that breathing without making any noise (even those hardly audible) is very important. Otherwise it is a sign of an unhealthy body. In which case try to find out the cause of it.

#### **[Life Force and Breathing]**

If you want to acquire true life force, you must restructure your physical form. The analogy is like this: If you want to watch TV shows in other countries, you must install satellites first.

Originally, we receive the solar energy indirectly through food consumption. Now, if we intend to acquire solar energy directly, what should we do? We must change the internal structure of our physical form.

First, change the way we breathe. We all know that we must breathe to live. Most people breathe through their lungs; that is breathing in the air into the lungs and breathing out; therefore the life span is short. If we intend to prolong our life, we must learn deep breathing – that is taking the air into the belly. This is the first step – extend the shallow lung breathing to deep belly breathing.

Next we must learn to breathe through belly. During our Chan meditation, we learn belly breathing. If we feel out of breath during the meditation, we must adjust it to make breathing slow, long and even.