

Class 3: 10/2/2007

"We are far more interested in explanations of reality than we are in reality itself... If you are really serious about Buddhism, don't just read about it. Do it." --- Brad Warner, author of "Sit down and shut up"

Chakras:

Literally, "wheel" in Sanskrit. Meaning, "energy points."

<http://www.heartzen.org/Main/130/120.html>

Turtle Breathing:

This exercise can help release tension in the neck and the spine. It also induces sweating and enhances metabolism.

First, sit up straight in a posture for Sitting Zen. Put your hands naturally on your knees. Close your eyes and take a deep breath. First, inhale and get ready, then exhale to start the first cycle. When you exhale, you bend down. Remember to let your chin touch your chest first while bending down to allow the back of your neck stretch. We bend down with one vertebrae at a time and finally the spine is curled. Then inhale while slowly sitting back up to position with straight spine. When you go up, pull your spine forward and stack your spine during inhalation. This whole set forms one cycle. Slow down and prolong your breathing as much as possible. You should not hear any heavy breathing. Adjust to your own pace while performing it. Don't hold your breath. If your breathing is not sync with the movement, take a break to adjust your breathing. Do not rush through each cycle. And do not hunch your back. Completion of 10 continuous cycles indicates good breath control.

Master Miao Tian's Teachings:

[Chan in Religion] Let's talk about Chan as a religion. In Christianity, Christians go to church every Sunday for sermons and to study the Bible. The goal is to connect the believer's heart with Jesus' heart and to witness God. The practice is to elevate oneself from a person, to God, through Jesus. Catholics also practice in a similar way; connecting a person to the Holy Mother through the Holy Spirit. It is when a person is at his purest form that he is connected with the Holy Spirit and thus is guided to the Holy Mother. In Buddhism, we practice by identifying the true nature within us, connecting to the dharma nature, and eventually to the Buddha nature. It can be concluded that all religions share similar stages

of practice; we just use different terms. Religions teach us to purify our hearts and bodies so that we can be free from wandering thoughts and cultivate the light in our hearts. When we are in touch with the light of our heart, there will be less crime and a more peaceful society.

Most religions teach their followers to observe good deeds and charity. Ministers and Dharma Teachers encourage people to attain wisdom to transcend their lives so they live a more fulfilled life. It does not mean we are to pursue wealth and social status. A person with an average living can also live a fulfilled life. It depends on how you define your life. By the same token, a man with wealth and high social prestige does not necessarily live a happy life. We know that a happy life does not come with material things or fortune; it comes from wisdom and contentment.

[Treat Yourself as an Empty Glass] Chan practice meets the ultimate goal of each religion, no matter what religion it is. Chan itself is the objective that each religion pursues. Thus, Chan can be a religion and can be independent of a religion. You experience Chan through your heart and prove yourself in reality.

When you come to the Zen center to practice, make sure to calm down your weary heart. Accept the instructions of the teacher during this one hour. When you receive the instructions 100%, you will make remarkable improvement. The only thing to watch out for is to be distracted in the class. If you can settle down and ask for nothing, you are selfless. When you reach the selfless realm, you are in the spiritual world.

During meditation, treat yourself as an empty glass. Follow each instruction of the teacher, thus fill up the glass with purified water. Try not to think too much or be skeptical, stay away from “Why do it this way”, “Why do it that way”; If you keep thinking like this, the enlightened practitioners have progressed while you are going backward.

Chan can not be thoroughly understood via intellect, academics, or thoughts. The goal of practicing Chan is to reconnect with the inner wisdom. Different than knowledge or skills, you only start to understand and improve when you truly practice and witness. How do we reconnect with the inner wisdom? That is revealed in the Chinese saying “stability, tranquility, peace, meditation, and obtainment”, where obtainment means reconnecting with the inner wisdom. Therefore, we will live a stable life, a happier family life, and more fulfilled careers. Then you will truly experience the benefits of Chan practice.