

Class 4: 10/9/07

Appreciation & Repentance

Yi-ping's Sharing:

[Appreciation] It's that special time of the year again, Thanksgiving, the day in which we look forward to seeing our families and feeling the enjoyment of what Holiday will bring to us, mentally and spiritually. This holiday reminded me of my Zen class. That is, Appreciation, or be appreciative of the people that had given me so much in my life. Such as be appreciative of my parent, who had given me my life, caring, education, and love. Appreciating my brothers, sisters, relatives, and friends that had given me care and happiness throughout my life.

As I ponder on this thought, I remembered that very first Thanksgiving meal that I had in the States, that special stuffed turkey and mashed potatoes, made me feel like I was home while I was thousands of miles away from my parents and relatives in this foreign land. I also appreciate the fact that I am fortunate to have a place to stay away from the wind and rain.

At night, I appreciate that I have a warm bed to sleep in. I also appreciate that I have a wonderful husband that will cook and prepare a delicious meal for me when I return late from work or school. There are so many things in my life that I feel appreciation for. Whenever I started Zen meditation, I would calm my self first, and in my heart feeling of appreciation just pours out like a discovery of a new fountain; how lucky am I, to have all that I have today.

[Repentance] The second class in Zen Meditation is understanding of the importance of Repentance. Why do we have to repent? When things in life are going well we shall appreciate. However, when things are not going the way we wanted, we should repent. Why repent? There must be an inherent reason why sometimes things in life don't go our way or "My way." Maybe you didn't say the right thing at the right time, maybe you unintentionally hurt someone from something that you said or did. Whatever reason it might be, we should repent. Through repentance, it helps us to re-think from a more positive perspective, a perspective that will help us to be calm, and be realistic about the things that we say or do. Not blaming someone else, or finding excuses for your self for everything that had gone wrong.

In this materialistic world that we live in, it's not hard for us to understand or comprehend that our mind is the source of all our miseries or happiness. I feel that we must use this gift (Mind) to create a positive outlook in life. So, don't forget, repent when things are not going your way. Truly appreciate from your heart when things are going well. This way, you will be more content in your life that you wish for.

Navel Chakra & Navel Chakra Breathing

The Navel Chakra is the starting point from where we were developed into a baby. It is about three fingers, or about an inch and half behind our navel.

What Is Navel Chakra Breathing?

When we breathe through our diaphragm, our belly expands and contracts rather extensively. Our entire midsection may be moving vigorously. Our oxygen intake volume is usually huge. This, what we called "belly breathing", usually involves large movements. On the other hand, "Navel Chakra Breathing" is soft and refined. It is more focused and concentrated around a smaller region. All breathing in and out are through this particular passage without huge volume of air. It is very refined, elegant and exquisite.

- There are two types of Navel Chakra Breathing:
 - 1) **Back-and-Forth:** Take Navel Chakra as the center, our attention moves towards the navel while inhaling and moves back towards the spine while exhaling. The range of back-and-forth is about the width of your palm.
 - 2) **Up-and-Down:** Take Navel Chakra as the center, our attention moves downwards while inhaling and moves upwards while exhaling. The range of up-and-down is about the width of your palm.

Understand Navel Chakra

Navel Chakra represents the beginning of our lives. Spiritually, it corresponds to the karma of our parents and the karma we inherited from them. By focusing on Navel Chakra we can purify their karma as well as our own. Therefore, when guarding Navel Chakra, we are grateful to our parents. This is one of the best ways to show our gratitude to our parents.

Why practice Navel Chakra Breathing?

1. Navel Chakra is the most important chakra in our body, because it is closely related to all other chakras. If we can connect to our navel chakra well, it can channel our energy to the other chakras. Then when we focus on our second chakra, it can quickly respond to us. If the Navel Chakra is filled with Qi, pronounced "Chi" in Chinese, it can automatically transfer the "Qi" to other parts of our body.
2. Practicing Navel Chakra Breathing is like building a house. A big house requires a big foundation. A skyscraper cannot be constructed on a foundation for a three-story house. Therefore, sitting Zen is not just breathing smoothly. We need to breathe deeply, deeply into our stomach, then breathe with our Navel Chakra. We must practice it until it becomes our second nature, so that we can achieve deep meditation. Building a solid meditative base on our navel chakra is more important than jumping into other chakras hastily.
3. Why need to meditate deeply? Only when we are into deep meditation, we can surpass our senses and in touch with the grand universe. This is a state beyond the realm of our brain and our biological senses. It is a boundary-less, beautiful and peaceful state. This is the state of Zen. Without entering into deep meditation, or Profound Ding, our experience of such state is fuzzy at best. Therefore we need to practice Navel Chakra breathing in order to experience the true power of Zen.

Worthwhile Reading

Sit Down and Shut Up, by Brad Warner