

**The Conversations of  
Nan Huai-chin and Peter Senge**

**2003-2005**

### **Publisher's Note to the English Translation**

This book is a translation of “*Nan Huai-chin and Peter Senge*,” first published in the Chinese language in 2006.

Peter Senge is an American professor of management science from MIT, a leading researcher on the subject of learning organizations. He first met Master Nan in Hong Kong in 1995 and has since paid many more visits to Master Nan, each time spending days staying with the Master practicing meditation.

Master Nan Huai-chin was born in 1918 into a scholar's family in the town of Lechin on the eastern sea shore of mainland China. Brought up in the traditional education environment, as a child he studied with private tutors at home learning classic Chinese literatures. By age seventeen, he had completed studies of all the major classic teachings, including the I-Ching and Chinese medicine.

During the Sino-Japanese War era he joined the armed forces and was stationed in the Southwest part of China. Following his discharge from the military he studied Chan, or Zen as it is popularly known outside of China, under his own master and observed a 3-year seclusion deep in the mountains during which time he read the entire Buddhist canon, called the *Tripitaka*.

In addition to being an adept teacher of the Chinese Mahayana traditions, Master Nan is also an *Acharya* of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. Since 2006, Master Nan has lived on the campus of a cultural and spiritual learning institute he founded in Miaogang, Suzhou, China where he continues to enlighten aspirants from all over the world. In recent years he has been promoting the research of life science, an area of which he has been a life time practitioner. There are more than thirty published books attributed to his name.

Collected in this book are three series of talks on meditation practice given by Master Nan for his visitor, Peter Senge. The talks covered three visits by Peter Senge, each in 2003, 2004 and 2005, respectively. The talks were centered on mindfulness breathing, or *Ānāpānasati*, a common means employed by almost all the major traditions of meditation, regardless of religion or faith.

Also included in this book are transcriptions of certain casual talks that took place during Peter Senge's visits with Master Nan; these are the “satsangs” of random topics not necessarily related to meditation practice. It is hoped that this book will allow the Western readers a rare glimpse into the teachings of an extraordinary Chinese master, one with profound experiential knowledge in the lineages of Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism as well as the Esoteric School of Buddhism, or Vajrayana.

The publisher wishes to acknowledge the contributions made by Ken Pang who tirelessly assisted Master Nan in oral translations in all the teaching sessions collected in this book.

We are also indebted to a team of volunteers, led by Bhikkhuni (Buddhist Nun) Hong Ren, who rendered selfless services in the recording, transcribing, typing and editing of all the transcripts so that it was possible to publish the book in Chinese. The current book was translated by Shi Hong and edited by William Bodri to whom we also owe our thanks.

Most of the terms in Chinese are transliterated using the *Pinyin* system as adopted in China today. For instance, Qi (meaning *prana*, energy flow or air flow, depending on the context) is used, instead of Ch'i. For those terms that do not yet have commonly accepted English translations the original Chinese texts are provided for reference.

Liu Yu-hong  
2008

### **Editor's Note**

Usually when we read books on mind-body cultivation, they usually neglect to reveal the underlying principles of what you are actually doing and trying to accomplish. In this series of conversations between Master Nan Huai-chin and Peter Senge, that tendency is reversed because the principles of breathing practices for spiritual attainment are finally revealed as well as an entire host of other related topics.

There are two basic roads of meditation practice that people often follow to try to find their true ground state of being. One entry road of practice is to cultivate consciousness directly and the other road is to cultivate breathing and thereafter consciousness. You can use either side of the coin to reach a state of quiescence.

One's vital breath, or Qi, and consciousness are interlinked, so one may chose either road to advance their level of spiritual training. You can approach cultivation through the road of breathing or Qi cultivation, or you can approach it through the cultivation of the mind directly. At the highest stages of training this linkage no longer holds absolutely, but for the beginning stages this linkage can be used to help propel you to spiritual heights.

In this series of casual conversations, we have a detailed description of how breathing practices help one to make meditation progress, and what one actually must physically cultivate along this route. Such priceless knowledge! We have been seeking this for a long time. All the different types of Qi are explained, along with various transformations on the cultivation trail.

When one can observe their thoughts, or consciousness, one is essentially somewhat outside of consciousness to be able to see it, and thus wandering thoughts will tend to die down when one forgoes attachment. When one can reach the stage where their breathing subsides, they can also reach a state of mind where consciousness is calmed. That state of

breath pausation is called Xi. The question is, how do you use breathing methods, or Anapana practices, to accomplish this?

Master Nan teaches us how to reach perfection in the practice of cultivating ones' Qi, and then Xi, to reach a state where the real nature of the mind is revealed. People lack the basic knowledge of many factors regarding this sort of practice, such as their method of "counting breaths" incorrectly, and finally we find someone who can reveal to us the many facets that have been misunderstood in Taoism, Buddhism, yoga, Tibetan Buddhism, Sufism, Saivism and other schools that teach practitioners to cultivate their breathing. Throwing in his exquisite knowledge of human nature, as well as culture and history, any spiritual aspirant is sure to find fantastic pointers for their spiritual practice in this short work.

There is only one major drawback to this work, in my opinion. I wanted more. It's just too bad that despite his great wisdom and ability to address almost any issue, Master Nan was not being visited by a whole host of experts in the life and cognitive sciences who could then ask the important questions puzzling modern science today. Nevertheless, there is enough within this short work to help anyone get started in truly understanding the various facets of Qi, reactions in meditation due to Qi, and actually how to properly cultivate the Xi to make meditation progress. Master Nan surely hopes that you attain great accomplishments from applying this knowledge to your practice.

Bao Zhou Li  
2008

**For Further Reading:**

Other Books by Master Nan Huai-chin that have been translated into English which can be found at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) or [www.meditationexpert.com](http://www.meditationexpert.com) :

- *Basic Buddhism* 中國佛教發展史
- *Grass Mountain* 習禪錄影
- *To Realize Enlightenment/Working Toward Enlightenment* 如何修證佛法
- *Tao and Longevity* 靜坐修道與長生不老
- *The Story of Chinese Zen*
- *The Story of Chinese Taoism*
- *The Insider's Guide to the Best and Worst Spiritual Paths and Practices*
- *Understanding This Chinese Generation*

Books on Buddhist Practice:

- *Twenty-Five Doors to Meditation* by Shu-mei Lee and William Bodri
- *How to Measure and Deepen Your Spiritual Realization* by Nan Huai Chin and William Bodri

## Chapter One

November 10, 2003

### Session One

**Nan:** Have you studied meditation, yoga or subjects of similar nature before you joined us for meditation several years ago?

**Senge:** My first encounter with meditation was at a Zen retreat center in California, founded by the Japanese Zen master Suzuki. I was about 21, still in college at the time. Subsequently I took part in a number of meditation retreats, with masters such as Swami Muktananda and others devoted to the human potential movement.

**Nan:** Given your age, I suppose you didn't meet Suzuki in person.

**Senge:** That's right. He was dead when I went to his center.

**Nan:** Suzuki talked about Zen at great length but I am afraid he limited himself only to the theoretical aspect of it. He didn't really endeavor in practice, a subject which we will be talking about in this session. Anyway, at least you started with Zen, which is a better way to start with, better than Tibetan Buddhism or other esoteric sects.

Before we start, I want to ask you a simple question: What did you try to achieve by doing the practice? Was it for a worldly or a transcendental purpose? Although ultimately all the practices converge, one may follow a particular practice to serve a particular purpose.

**Senge:** This is some simple question! Ok, I'll answer it simply: I wish to contribute to human sanity.

**Nan:** Fine. That is your answer – for now. Remember that.

Now, how often do you meditate each day?

**Senge:** Twice a day, one in the morning and one in the evening.

**Nan:** How long do you meditate each time?

**Senge:** Between 45 minutes to one and a quarter hour in the morning; and about half an hour in the evening. I also practice Qigong in the morning. Altogether, they take about 2 hours in the morning.

**Nan:** To serve the purpose you hope to achieve, we shall talk about the kind of practice you should follow. It will help to vitalize you while calming your mind at the same time.

By the way, when you were here last time, did we discuss how life came to be and what happened at death?

**Senge:** We did.

**Nan:** This time, we will talk only about life, which manifests in two aspects: perceptions (知覺), as in awareness, thoughts and emotions; and, the other aspect, sensations (感覺), as in feeling drowsy and hungry etc. Perceptions are mental while sensations are physiological. In the West, perceptions are considered to be related to reason whereas sensations to be related to physical responsiveness. In the West, reason is spiritual - but their spiritualism is different from the spiritualism in our discussion – while physical responsiveness is materialistic.

When you meditate, are you aware of the movements in your mind, i.e. sometimes the flow of thoughts gushes through while sometimes the flow trickles to almost nothing?

**Senge:** Yes, I am aware of that.

**Nan:** According to the School of Consciousness-Only (Mind-Only), this is the function of the discriminating consciousness (分別意識) of the Sixth Consciousness.

You will recall, as we discussed before, the Sixth Consciousness does not reside within your body or your brain. It is neither within nor without. It is nowhere and yet everywhere. The Tibetan Buddhists and Western schools believe that the sixth consciousness is a function of the brain. That is incorrect. The brain is but a part of the body consciousness (身識), the Fifth Consciousness.

It is the mind that is aware of the sensations in the body. We hear many people complain that they cannot do the sitting meditation for a long time due to discomfort in certain parts of the body. I always ask, if someone were to point a gun at your head and threaten to shoot if you move, would you dare to get up from the sitting posture? Here the Sixth Consciousness takes control and you are not influenced by the sensations of your body.

**Senge:** Yes. Sometimes I get a cramp in my leg during my sitting - and it hurts a lot - but I can maintain the position. If this were to happen during sleep, I would have instinctively released my leg and massaged it.

**Nan:** That's right. So, the question to ask oneself is this: When one wishes to get up from sitting meditation, is it the mind or is it the body that decides to quit? I am afraid it's the Sixth Consciousness.

The Sixth Consciousness flows day and night. It flows even during your sleep and manifests as dreams. The flow may seem to have stopped momentarily in deep sleep, in a dreamless state – but that in fact is still a state of the Sixth Consciousness, manifested in a state of dullness.

Do you ever experience a complete cut-off of the Sixth Consciousness?



**Senge:** Sometimes, but not often.

**Nan:** Unfortunately you couldn't seize that precious opportunity. Otherwise, we will have a different you today. It's not just you, very very few people can recognize that moment when it comes. No matter one is sitting, standing, walking or whatever – it is possible to attain a state in which the Sixth Consciousness is completely blocked. The perceptions are completely amputated like a flowing river is being blocked. The moment does not come very often. Next time this moment comes, seize it and stay there as long as you can.

**Senge:** I should say I experienced such moment a few times. About ten years ago, the moment came while I was standing by a frozen lake. No thoughts came through my mind. I had no perception of anything. That happened to me a few times during sitting meditation.

**Nan:** Good. I believe the Suzuki Zen School placed a great deal of emphasis on this state. But don't ever confuse this with enlightenment, for it is not. It was just an opportunity for enlightenment to take place – but is not enlightenment at all. For that matter, I would not even consider it a gateway to enlightenment. Throughout history many Zen masters attained enlightenment during moments of total cessation of the consciousness flow. One can say that enlightenment exploded on the masters when they had that state of mind.

This moment can even dawn on people when one is in an extreme state of emotions such as ecstasy (rapture), rage (anger), sorrow or excitement (thrill). If you can recognize it when it comes – and stay there as long as you can – you may achieve enlightenment one day.

A senior official in China's Sung Dynasty once asked a Zen master to explain a passage in the sutras where the Buddha said "a gale of black wind blew one to the depths of hell." The usually benign Zen master responded harshly, questioned insultingly whether the official was intelligent enough to deserve an answer. Deeply humiliated, the official

flushed with rage. Then the master returned to his benign disposition and said to him, “Your Excellency, your question has been addressed.” In great shame, the official gratefully bowed to the master.

It is also possible for people to experience this state of mind during war and the killing of an enemy. When I was young, people asked me about enlightenment. I told them the prelude to enlightenment was like the moment when you finally get to relieve yourself at the toilet bowl, after running up and down the streets desperately searching for a toilet.

In another Zen story, a layman practiced Zen for many years without achieving anything. In total frustration, he gave up and went home to his wife. That same night, they had sex. As he was just about to reach orgasm, the moment dawned on him. He jumped up and screamed, “I’ve got it!” Shocked by his move, his poor wife fainted. Of course I am not encouraging all of you here in this room to practice with your wife in order to attain that moment.

A Zen master once said, “Choking off all flows to attain sudden enlightenment” (截斷眾流, 頓然而悟). To choke off all flows is the state of concentration or Samadhi. To attain sudden enlightenment is the state of insight, wisdom or Prajna. In Buddhist terms, this is called attaining Samadhi and Prajna in parity (定慧等持).

In fact, it is possible for all beings to experience a moment of choke-off of all flows. The problem is no one can recognize it when it comes. Once, many years ago, I was in Sichuan Province of China. On my way down the mountain where I had been observing a retreat, I saw a farmer removing the heavy load from the back of an ox. The ox was completely exhausted that it just stood there and remained motionless. I went forward, patted the ox and said, “You poor fellow, why couldn’t you recognize the moment?” I knew the ox had that moment then. Too bad the ox could not recognize it.

Speaking of cattle, let me tell you another story from the “Biographies of the Eminent Monks” (高僧傳). An old monk, knowing he was about to die and would be reincarnated

as a cow due to his own karma, asked a younger monk to serve him a reminder in due course. After his death his body was cremated according to the Buddhist tradition. Eighteen years later, a disciple of the younger monk who is now a master was about to leave the monastery to go on a journey. The master told the disciple to look out for a cow at a certain place on a certain date. On that particular day, the disciple indeed saw a cow at a roadside where his master had predicted. The disciple approached the cow, called the cow by the name of the deceased monk and read to it a short message from his master: “It’s time to set yourself free!” Upon hearing it, the cow died while standing. It was indeed liberated.

Many people practice meditation aiming to reach that moment. But they don’t realize the best moment, for a lot of people, is that moment when one sits down and the legs are just crossed. A moment later, when the thought enters your mind that you are ready to meditate, the mind has wandered off already.

Now, we have talked long enough about perceptions, the mental aspect. We will now turn to sensations, the physiological aspect.

Let’s use the Buddhist terms. Our body is composed of five gross elements (五大): earth (地), water (水), fire (火), air (風) and emptiness (space) (空), which you are familiar with. By the way, are you aware that China recently launched a manned rocket into the orbit?

**Senge:** Yes.

**Nan:** Let’s use that as an example. The earth floats on water. Fire, or warmth, is always present for even at one hundred degrees below zero, there is still “warmth” in the relative sense. The earth, water and fire are surrounded by air. Air in stillness is not wind. Wind is the movement of air. When the rocket is launched through atmosphere, the surface of the rocket will glow because of friction with air. When the rocket rises further into outer space where there is no air, it has reached emptiness (space). Mind you, this is the

emptiness in the realm of the physics, which is not to be confused with the ultimate “emptiness” that Buddhists refer to.

Our physical body is similar to the planet we live in. All our organs, muscles and bones are earth and they float on water, which accounts for 70% of our total body weight. Fire is represented by the body’s heat. Surrounding all these is air. The air is still and becomes wind as it moves. Air is a material with substance but cannot be seen by naked eyes. And emptiness (space) is the same. The space encompasses our entire body and occupies as big an area as when you stretch out both arms to each side. Modern photography can capture this sphere of emptiness (space) on films. That sums up the five elements of earth, water, fire, wind and emptiness.

**Senge:** How is the aura you just described related to the five gross elements?

**Nan:** Ah, every one of the five gross elements glows. That is why, when one practices the White Skeleton Meditation (白骨觀)<sup>1</sup>, a particular meditation technique from Buddhism, at the advanced stage one can visualize in his mind that their skeleton glows with radiant white rays.

Of the five gross elements, wind is the most important. Wind, however, is not just breathing – but it becomes breathing once we are born. Why do we breathe? Science says we inhale oxygen and exhale carbon dioxide. Plants breathe too, but they do the opposite. They breathe out oxygen during the day and carbon dioxide at night. So don’t walk in the woods at night thinking you are breathing in fresh air.

**Senge:** Sorry for the interruption, I would like to ask if oxygen and carbon dioxide are essentially earth. I mean, isn’t it true that the movement of oxygen creates wind but oxygen itself is an element of earth?

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<sup>1</sup> Translator’s note: a form of meditation as included in *The Essentials of the Secrets of Dhyana Meditation* (禪祕要法), translated into Chinese by Kumarajiva at the turn of the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD.

**Nan:** Oxygen is wind. But there is also carbon inside your body as well.

Now, all things - plants, animals, and minerals, even down to a single cell – have expansion and contraction movements, which reflect the function of breathing. When breathing stops during meditation, one enters into a state of physical emptiness (space). The physical emptiness actually has tremendous pressure.

**Senge:** When you say the breathing stops, do you mean the stopping of respiratory breathing or the stopping of breathing by the entire body?

**Nan:** We will come to that later.

A fetus in a mother's womb cannot breathe with its nose. It breathes through the umbilical cord. At birth, the cord is cut and the baby will first exhale and then breathe in the fresh air. From that moment on, one will continue breathing through the nose until one dies (this may be stated differently in some of the Buddhist doctrines). At birth, the baby's mouth has to be thoroughly cleaned for the baby holds toxic stuff in its mouth which, if swallowed, may cause all kind of illnesses later in life. This is an issue upon birth – cleaning this material from within the mouth - that doctors, nurses, midwives and parents must be extremely careful about.

Just as a fetus does not breathe through the nose, you may experience the cessation of breathing (the respiratory breathing) during meditation - but you will also notice a gentle movement in your lower abdomen. For most people, this movement then becomes an energy flow that pushes forward to the area known as the “Youth Gland” (青春腺), which lies between the navel and pubic hair. When this happens, your sexual desire will become so intense that you will want to get relieved. This is a critical point: if one can pass this thrust of desire without having sex, one will advance to a higher level and, consequently, one's health will improve over time. When I was a lad, there was always a warm, comfortable sensation in my “Youth Gland” area. Did you have the same sensation when you were young?

**Senge:** I can't recall...

**Nan:** Because you are a smart person. Puberty comes early for smart people. You might have lost the innocence of youth very early on, ha ha ha! At least some of you should have had the experience of a shiver when you are about to finish urinating? Yes? No?

The particular practice I am about to elaborate in the next session is called Anapana (安那般那) Meditation. "Ana" (安那) is exhaling and "Apana" (般那) is inhaling (It should be noted that "Ana" means inhaling and "Apana" means exhaling, according to a different interpretation). Strictly speaking, Anapana refers to contraction and expansion, rather than just breathing.

That's quite enough for the day, let's break here.

**Senge:** Can I ask a quick question before we break, just for clarification?

**Nan:** Go ahead.

**Senge:** I would like to make sure I understand the five gross elements. Let's say water. When water is boiled, it's no longer water. It becomes gas. When frozen, water becomes ice or earth. Is that true?

**Nan:** Yes. Water is closely related to earth. That's why 70% of our body is water. But this does not mean that the elements are interchangeable or transformable. Buddha taught us: "Each of the great four elements is separated from one another" (四大性離). Every element has its own domain. Water does not transform into wind. The fact that water becomes steam is just a phenomenon, reflecting only how water is influenced by wind. Our body and every matter in the universe are composed of the four great elements. Ultimately these four great elements will converge into emptiness (space). The fifth great element, however, is not related to the first four.

November 11, 2003

Session Two

**Nan:** Today we will talk about Anapana meditation. In Buddhist terms, this practice is referred to as one of the “shared practices,” which means it is shared by and known to non-Buddhists in the pursuit for calmness of the mind or Samadhi. Kundalini Yoga and many other Yoga schools, the Tibetan Buddhists, the Theravada Schools, etc., you name it, all practice Anapana meditation.

What is unique to Buddhism is the pursuit of Prajna, or the accomplishment of Wisdom. This, however, is attained only on the foundation of the “shared practices.”

Let’s review the terms again. “Ana” means breathing in and “Apana” means breathing out. As I have said in the last session, a fetus does not breathe through its nose. It therefore does not have the in-and-out breath. Yet, the fetus has a “momentum” that continues to power life through a movement of expansion and contraction. This is the phenomenon of birth-and-death (生滅現象). If we have to use analogy it’s like the current of electricity ... remember it’s just an analogy! The phenomenon of birth-and-death is not on-and-off, but continues seamlessly.

At birth, as the baby’s umbilical cord is cut and its mouth cleaned, it will first exhale with a crying outburst and then it inhales. From that moment on, the in-and-out breathing continues until the final moment of death and then the person breathes out their last breath. What the Buddhist sutras didn’t elaborate clearly, as was lacking in Tibetan Buddhism and Taoism literature, is this: the fetus does not breathe through the nose or pores; its life is sustained by a continuous movement of expansion and contraction, or how energy functions. The goal of Anapana meditation is to cultivate that “movement,” not to cultivate the in-and-out of the respiratory breathing. This has to be clear from the outset.

Today there is much confusion surrounding the practice of Anapana meditation. The problems stem from the misconception of the word Xi or Hsi (息). Many cultivation sects, the Japanese Zen schools included, confuse the in-and-out breathing for Xi. Therefore when they teach the students to meditate by counting the Xi they are simply counting the breathing, not the Xi that stands for the source of life without the movements of inhaling and exhaling. Xi, by its original definition in the Chinese language, means stillness or rest. In the I-Ching, Xi carries the meaning of growing. The in-and-out breathing is the phenomenon of depletion and replenishment; inhalation and exhalation form the way of birth and extinction. Xi is not depletion but only standing still. Cultivating Xi is a practice to break away from the birth-and-death cycle.

According to China's Tian Tai School (Tendai) (天台宗), breathing can be divided into four categories. The first is panting (喘), the short and rapid breathing in the lungs, as when one runs. The second type is the unhurried breathing, which is called wind (風). The third one is Qi or Chi (氣), the deep and quiet breathing, as when one is in meditation or sleep. Qi is very subtle. It is inaudible but one can feel it as it passes through the nose. When a person falls into sleep, as long as the breathing continues, he is not really in deep sleep. His mind, or consciousness, is not at rest. Only when the breathing stops completely, albeit briefly, beyond the regular in-and-out pattern, is the person in deep sleep. This is the state of Xi (also transliterated as Hsi), the fourth kind of breathing, a complete stillness or resting.

For the average person, Xi occurs only briefly during meditation or sleeping. Very quickly, the in-and-out breathing resumes. You can judge whether a person is meditating well by observing his or her breathing. If you can observe short and shallow breaths, the person's mind must be wandering around. An experienced teacher can easily tell if a student is really in meditation by just watching or listening to the student's breathing patterns.

Leaving the Western sports aside, the martial arts and Qigong schools, even Yoga schools, teach the students to hold the breath at the area of the lower abdomen, or Dantian.



They call this Qi. This is not Qi at all, but playing with wind. At best, this kind of practice helps to massage the internal organs, but it will cause the abdomen area to bulge over time.

You should observe the body of a baby from the side – the chest and stomach areas are joined together to form one curved line, an indication that the child inhales into the whole body. The real martial arts or Qigong masters know that the abdomen should actually contract when inhaling to maximize force. When the masters strike, they strike with a loud “huh!” The thrusting of air through the mouth increases the force of the strike. Striking out in silence results in a weaker punch. However, here we are still talking about the wind, not Xi. When one reaches the state of Xi, the body will be filled with Qi. There will be no breathing in-and-out. Once the mind moves, the Qi follows.

A normal person uses only his lungs to breath. That’s just half breathing, not Xi, hardly even Qi. The ones who can reach the state of Qi will definitely see improvements in health. The ones who have mastered the practice of meditation will attest that breathing takes place in the navel area, quite by itself, instead of in the lungs.

When the child grows up, especially after the first sexual experience, the natural habit of Qi breathing is broken. He starts to breathe using the lungs only – the half breathing. Breathing with the Dantian refers to the natural navel breathing of a fetus. This is still Qi, not Xi.

One of my students told me recently that his 15-year-old daughter started to meditate together with her mother. After a few months of practice, the daughter told her mother that she noticed that her breathing actually took place at the navel area, even during her sleep. If a grown up person can breathe like the girl does all the time, good health is guaranteed. To achieve longevity, navel breathing is the starting point.

I am telling you all these principles since you reported experiencing cessation of breathing during meditation. Actually, you did not experience a real cessation. But still, it

is close. That's why you ought to have a better understanding of this subject. Once you reached cessation to experience the Xi, you will experience changes in your body and mind. We shall come to that later on. But there is one thing that you should know: the mind and the Xi are two distinct matters; if your every thought is in union with Xi, you will then have achieved a high level of concentration in your meditation.

One day, many years ago, I was walking along with my master. I was perhaps 25 or 26 years old then. Suddenly my master grasped me by the hand and asked, "Tell me, which one drives the other - the mind or the Qi?" Without any hesitation, I replied, "Of course it's the mind." My master let go of my hand and said, "Remarkable. I commend you for having truly figured it out. I have asked many and they all believed that the mind was driven by Qi and they were wrong."

So, the mind and the Qi are two separate matters. To describe a state in which the breathing stops and the mind is focused on one subject only, the Mahayana Buddhists in China say, "the mind and Xi lean against each other" (心息相依). The Tibetan Buddhists say, "the mind and Qi are in union" (心氣合一). It is an extremely important subject to know.

For instance, the daughter of my student was able to achieve navel breathing even though she was already fifteen and already had her first period, because her mind is relatively pure and still. As a person grows older, the mind becomes more chaotic. The breath tends to become shorter as more thoughts emerge in the mind, making navel breathing difficult.

During a sitting meditation if one can fill his lower body and then the four limbs with Qi, followed by the cessation of breathing in the nose, one will then experience the state of Xi.

**Senge:** In my meditation, sometimes the breathing stopped. I noticed that my breathing would resume as soon as the mind moved. In other words, the mind moved first and then the Qi followed.

**Nan:** Yes. That is correct. Mind moves, so the Qi moves. Samadhi is attained only through the union of the mind and Xi. Anapana meditation entails a great deal of subjects; I can't go into all those details with you at this session. We can only cover the basics.

Sometimes, when a person is totally absorbed by something that he is doing, he may also experience the cessation of breathing – as does a person suffering from extreme horror or startling fright. This is caused by the total concentration of the mind. Therefore, it is all about the mind. As the mind settles down, breathing will slow down as well. Once the mind moves, the Qi follows. Understanding this will greatly benefit your body and mind.

That is why the place to start the practice is to be aware of the length of one's breath. The Buddha said, "With a long Xi, one is aware. With a short Xi, one is aware as well." ["With a long Xi, be aware of it. With a short Xi, be aware of it as well."] By the same token, when your body is filled with Xi, you are aware of it. When the Xi transforms every single cell in your body, you are aware, too. Unfortunately, most people have mistaken Xi for breathing. Their attention is then drawn to the actions of inhaling and exhaling, making meditation into a breathing exercise. This is so wrong. To be aware of the Xi is to be aware of the interval during which one neither inhales nor exhales. In the beginning, the interval, or the Xi, is brief. With correct practice, the duration will gradually extend and the mind will settle down as well. When the mind arises in tandem with the Xi, you will feel the Qi, that energy, all over your body.

That will be quite enough for today. Go and practice. We will continue tomorrow.

November 13, 2003

Session Three

**Nan:** Following our discussions on Anapana yesterday, how was your practice?

**Senge:** It has been very helpful.

**Nan:** I am aware that you have studied the techniques of breathing meditation before and you know how to use them. Now is the time to learn Xi.

**Senge:** On that I have a question. When the breathing calms down, I am aware. Everything around me is calm. Even when my nose stops breathing, I can feel that breathing continues inside my abdomen, around the Dan Tian area. Is that the expansion-contraction function of the cells, which you spoke about on the first day of this session?

**Nan:** The question suggests that you haven't understood what was covered yesterday. Anapana is a difficult subject indeed. Let me first answer your question and then go over Anapana one more time.

I am afraid that you have been concentrating too much on the in-and-out breathing movements alone. The practice that I have been talking about goes beyond that. If you focus on breathing from the nose, then the practice becomes a practice of the Qigong.

We are dealing with the practice of Dhyana (禪定). When you sit down, the first thing you do is relax your mind totally, let go of all thoughts, the past, present and future, and breathe naturally. In the beginning, the breathing goes through the nose. After you have calmed down, your breathing will be long and deep and it will gradually and naturally become Dan Tian breathing. You don't need to meditate, or be particularly aware of the Dan Tian area. The Taoists or Tibetan Buddhists would ask you to concentrate on the Dan Tian. The Anapana practice we are talking about doesn't do that.

**Senge:** In my experience, it happens naturally. You can't make it happen.

**Nan:** Yes. As I said yesterday – you need to be aware that the breath has become long and deep. Now, let's quickly go over Anapana once more.

The Anapana meditation, as taught by the Tian-Tai School of China, makes use of “active practice” (有爲工夫) in tandem with “inactive practice” (無爲工夫). Once you are seated for meditation, let go of everything, your body and your thoughts. Settle yourself down – dwell in that calmness even if it is an imagined calmness.

Next, you do a cleansing or purification of your physical body. The average person is not detached from worldly activities of eating, drinking and sex. As such their bodies are not free from ailments, which can impede their practice.

The Tian Tai School uses a breathing technique of the “Six Healing Sounds” or “Six Words” (六字訣) to cleanse the internal organs. This technique, however, was not created by the masters of Tian-Tai School. It came to China with the Buddha's teachings. Later on, the Taoists in China also adopted the same technique.

The Six Sounds or Six Words and the respective organs they help cleanse and purify are:

Ho (呵)	for the heart
Hu (呼)	for the stomach
Hui (嘘)	for the liver
Chuei (吹)	for the kidney
Hee (嘻)	for the throat, chest and abdomen areas (thyroid gland, thymus gland and adrenal gland)
Sss (呬)	for the lung

The sounds by themselves are meaningless. You are to pronounce each sound silently with each out-breath. When trying to pronounce the sounds, it is the shape of the mouth that matters. You should not hear any sound coming out of your mouth as you do it. Now watch me (the master demonstrates).

As you breathe out the Ho in one slow, long breath, you should imagine that all the ailments and negative Qi in the heart area are expelled from inside you. At the end of each out breath, close your mouth and the inhalation will take place effortlessly through the nose. If you have to force the inhalation, you are doing it incorrectly. The same is applied to the remaining five sounds.

So, each time you practice the Anapana meditation you should first let go of all your thoughts. Relax your mind and body totally. Next, you can use the Six Healing Sounds breathing technique to cleanse the internal organs or any part of your body where there is discomfort. For example, if the chest area is congested, it might be caused by a heart or lung problem. You therefore practice breathing out the sounds Ho and Sss. The discomfort in the waist area might be caused by kidney problems. And so on. This technique can also be used together with martial arts. In the martial arts tradition there is a special technique that through training, one can convert the out breath into a dagger, turning that air stream into a destructive weapon.

After you are done with the Six Sounds breathing, which may take a while, your internal organs are cleansed and the passages of Qi unblocked, you will develop into Anapana breathing naturally – but don't focus your attention on breathing.

I've said it on the first day, wind is the most important of the five gross elements. All kinds of ailments are caused by the blocking of the internal flow of the wind (Qi).

By now, if you still feel any discomfort in your body, you can apply the same technique: imagine that you expel the ailments with the out breath. Exhaling will reduce the noises in your mind if you have a problem calming the mind. Have you noticed, whenever

people are exhausted or deeply troubled, what do they do? They emit a long - sometimes loud - sigh and then they feel better, right? People also sigh after an exhausting session of sex. Then they fall into deep sleep like dead pigs. When a man dies, his last breath is an out breath. At birth, the baby's first breath is also an out breath.

Now, back to meditation, after you are done with the Six Sounds breathing technique, you can now leave your breathing alone. Just "watch" it with your consciousness (again, remember the consciousness does not reside in your brain). If the in breath is long and deep, you are aware. If your mind has not calmed down, the breath will be short and shallow ... and you must also be aware of this.

The sutras tell us that there are short breaths within long ones, as there are long ones within short breaths. Why are there uneven breaths? The Buddha didn't elaborate. It has something to do with your own health. During meditation, you may experience uneven breaths which could reflect the upbeat swinging mood you are in on that day, the food and drink you took or even the changing weather.

When the breath is coarse, you feel it at the tip of your nose. Gradually, gradually it goes to the eyebrow center, and then to the top of your head. Of course it is not really air coming in and going out through your skull. You feel it in your mind only. The sensation will go away if your mind is silenced. Then the Xi arrives.

So, when you are practicing just be aware of the length of the in-and-out breathing. Do not pay attention to the thoughts in your mind. It's like observing a child running around in the room. You are aware where the child is but you don't go and help him. Also, it's like watching a fish swimming in the water. You are aware where the fish is but you don't touch it. You continue to watch the long-and-short, in-and-out of the breathing until it gradually becomes longer and deeper and finally stops, reaching cessation, or Xi (止息).

Once there, you will feel your body is filled with Qi. You can consciously direct the Qi toward any blocked area in your body to clear the negative energy there. You may feel

the Qi is blocked in your behind or elsewhere in the body. Sometimes you can even release the blocked Qi with a fart. The most difficult situation to handle is when the Qi is flushed into the genital area. It then becomes impossible trying to direct the Qi away and the only thing to do is just leave it be. Drop even the thought of watching it. The more you are aware of it or watch it when it's in that region, the more the desire will grow until you yield to sexual relief. When the problems come, you should know how to resolve them. Understand?

Now, as you reach the stage where the body is filled with Qi, let go of all thoughts. Empty your mind. Slowly, the Qi also will stabilize. You will then dwell in a state of non-breathing. In fact, it's not non-breathing in the absolute sense, only that the breathing takes place once in a long while. If you feel that any Qi remains in the body, discharge it. Let it all out until every cell in your body becomes translucent. This will be followed by light that glows from within. It may glow in the head area, in the back or, more preciously, in the lower body. Sweet saliva is generated in abundance and it seems to go down the throat without having to make an effort to swallow. The saliva now becomes the most potent nectar, or the best cocktail of male and female sexual hormones. The body senses will gradually disappear. You are dwelling in the light, pure and clean.

That is all I can reveal to you at this time. Further knowledge on this subject will actually do you a disservice.

You see, people think that since inhaling can sustain life so their practice is focused foolishly on inhaling. The secret is just the opposite: one should give - let go instead. In Mahayana, it is called giving unselfishly. We give out our Qi, even our lives, to all beings.

You will find that the most difficult part to unblock is that area under the waist down to legs and toes. The two feet are the most difficult. Once unblocked, a sensation of comfort will come to the two feet. This will be followed by a sensation of ecstasy, better than sex. Such sensation will move from the feet to the head. The blissfulness that arises in the brain is the ultimate joy which is beyond description. By this stage, the body no longer



impedes one's advancement. The average person feels the discomfort here or there in his body during a meditation because his consciousness of the body is still there. His body therefore becomes an impediment. Once the body is no longer an impediment, one should then pursue Bodhi or enlightened awakening (菩提). If not, one can easily go astray, dazzled by all kinds of "spiritual powers" that may arise. Up to this stage, it is still a "shared practice" which is common to Buddhists as well as non-Buddhists. As for the physical sensations one may experience during meditation, such as soreness, pain, swelling, numbness etc. – all 34 of them – we shall deal with them later. I believe we have covered quite enough. It can take you a year to digest this!

**Senge:** Yes indeed.

**Nan:** For those of you taking up the yoga exercises, remember to use the exhaling technique to help you in stretching. The more you breathe in, the harder the stretch will become. The Qi that stays in the head is the most difficult to release, more so than the Qi in lower body. Once the Qi that stays in the head is fully released, the skull disappears and all kinds of wisdoms may be attained. You see - the real problems all originated from up here in the head, not from down there. The problems from down below are fake ones, they all originated from up here. Therefore all the problems will disappear if the head is chopped off. This is not a joke. In the White Skeleton meditation practice, the Buddha taught us to meditate that the skull is chopped off and placed upside down inside the cavity below the rib cage. If you can visualize that, for sure you won't have high blood pressure.

This is enough for the day. Let's break here. Go practice.

November 14, 2003

Session Four

**Nan:** This is the last of our sessions on practice. I am going to use this session as a supplement to our previous discussions. Before we begin, I have two questions for you. First, how has been your experiment and are there questions so far on what you learned the past few days?

**Senge:** I have trouble understanding the distinction between cessation (止) and contemplation (觀) and I find them very confusing. I understand the cessation of Xi but I am not sure if that's the point where contemplation (observation or watching) starts and if that's the right sequence.

**Nan:** First, you should realize the subject of our discussions is the practice of Dhyana. Cessation and contemplation are root teachings; they are related to Dhyana but don't mix the two with Dhyana. Cessation is Samatha (奢摩他) and contemplation or watching is Vipashyana or Vipassana (毗鉢舍那). They are the two foundations used in all practices, regardless of the religion or tradition. They are related to the physical phenomena which have been the focal point of our discussions so far, but they are not limited to the physical aspects. Samatha and Vipashyana are nothing but means to an end. Dhyana meditation is only one kind of Samatha and Dhyana is not Samatha. In fact, when you are in a state of cessation or stillness of Xi, mental observation is already functioning. This is what we talked about yesterday – the awareness is a function of the consciousness. It is indeed not an easy thing for you to comprehend fully.

Let me reiterate, according to the Buddhist view, all the practices of Dhyana meditation, including the Mahayana practice of Precepts, Concentration and Insight, the Theravada practice of the Six Paramitas, the practice of prayers of all religions, the practice of Yoga and trans-meditations, etc. etc., are nothing but means to attaining Bodhi, or enlightenment. The means are never the end. The end - using modern terminology - is metaphysical (形而上) while the means are physical (形而下). Once in the realm of

metaphysics, all the physicals become vain and meaningless. The Surangama Sutra (楞嚴經) tells us: “All that are but words which have no essence” (但有言語, 都無實義). They are just matters of convenience. You should be clear on that.

Enough on this. Now, my second question, do you still remember the “Four Dhyanas and Eight Concentrations” (四禪八定), the subject we studied at the retreat in 1997?

**Senge:** Yes.

**Nan:** Good. Now we can begin with today’s topic.

People performing spiritual practices are often deluded by all kinds of illusions. On the first day I told you that life was constantly influenced by perceptions and sensations. Our emotions, such as ecstasy, anger, sorrow or excitement, are all sensations, not perceptions. In other words, they are the physical aspect of life, not mental.

The handout you are reading is an excerpt of the talks I gave earlier this year at a retreat in China. The handout lists the 34 types of sensations (三十四觸); they are related to form (色). We don’t have enough time for a detailed discussion of them. I will have to go over them quickly.

According to the teachings of Buddhism, the material or physical aspect of our lives is in the realm of form, one of the Five Skandhas (五陰). The Heart Sutra says that all Five Skandhas are empty. “Skandha” means cover. We humans are unaware that we are constantly shadowed or covered by the Five Skandhas.

The second of the Five Skandhas are feelings (受), which we gather through our senses, such as the feeling of cold or warmth, the pleasure or displeasure from food, drinks or sex, etc. Our feelings arise from contacts with the material world. Feelings and contacts (contact means touching something) are interrelated, which become the sensation.

Throughout our lives we are unaware that we follow our feelings around. There are people who seem to have attained certain spiritual power through their practices but actually the show of power is nothing but the physical transformation of the feelings. Don't ever fall for them.

According to Buddhist classification, feelings can be divided into three categories: pleasant (樂受), unpleasant (苦受) and neither pleasant nor unpleasant (不苦不樂受). We don't realize that the majority of our waking hours during the day are dominated by unpleasant feelings - there are few moments of pleasant feelings. The neither pleasant nor unpleasant (neutral) feelings are equally rare and we only experience them during sleep or when we faint.

**Senge:** Please clarify why the Five Skandhas are also known as the Five Aggregates (五蘊).

**Nan:** Skandha, or shade, means a function that is shaded so that it is not legible to the intelligence of mankind. It is also called an "Aggregate" which means to gather or to accumulate. Skandha means to cover. They are names representing a different aspect of the same thing. This is always the problem with translation. When Buddhism was brought to China, there was also the problem of translating from Sanskrit into Chinese. For instance, the Alaya consciousness (阿賴耶識) was transliterated into Chinese simply as "Alaya" in sound. Previous attempts to find an appropriate term in the Chinese language all failed to convey the full and complete meaning of Alaya, which means the capacity to store (能藏), the contents of the storing (所藏), and the obsession with the stores (執藏) – all in one. The Five Skandhas are closely related to the Alaya consciousness. Life's instincts are stored therein.

The Five Skandhas represent the categorization of the existence of life. The material aspect is the Form Skandha. Feelings, the second Skandha, arise out of interactions between the mind and the material world. Then there is the Perception or Conception (想)

Skandha which is the mental function to perceive. The Impulse (or Process) Skandha is very profound; it is the ultimate power that drives everything in the material world. All the energies known to man such as fossil fuel, or even solar power, will be depleted over time. Modern science has yet to discover that perpetual power. The discovery of such power will revolutionarily change the landscape of the human mind. Our lives are driven by something that is forever in motion. This view is definitely one of monism. What's behind the Impulse Skandha is pure idealism. It is the Consciousness Skandha, the fifth one, which is monistic idealism.

I am afraid we don't have time for further discussion on this topic. Let's go to the 34 types of physical sensations. They are the 30 sensations that can be sensed (所觸) and the four that can sense (能觸). The 30 are: buoyancy (輕), heaviness (重), smoothness (滑), coarseness (澀), softness (軟), hardness (硬), slowness (緩), rapidness (急), cold (冷), warmth (暖), thirst (渴), stuffiness (悶), forcefulness (力), inferior (劣), hunger (饑), fullness (飽), pain (痛), itchiness (癢), swollenness (脹), numbness (麻), thickness (粗), thinness (細), soreness (痠), stickiness (黏), aging (老), sickness (病), death (死), tiredness (疲), stillness (息 restfulness), and stirring (動). On top of the original 30, I add one more: calmness (靜). The four are: earth (地), water (水), fire (火), and wind (風) – the basic functions of the physical body.

These are the primary classifications only. There can be many sub-classes according to the classifications of medicine and psychology. Why do we need to know all these? You may experience any of these sensations randomly in your practice. You will not be intrigued by them if you already know what they are. As your practice advances, it's only natural that your health improves, your skin becomes fair and smooth, and the aging process slows. If you are not clear headed about these sensations you may believe that you have attained remarkable achievements, good enough to become a guru. You will then go astray. Knowing these sensations better, you will realize they are but manifestations of a psychological and physiological nature that happens naturally.

Each of the terms is a big subject on its own. For instance, simple terms such as aging, sickness, death, tiredness and restfulness all have almost inexhaustible contents upon close examination. It is very important that one follows a motto in your cultivation practices: timing and proportion above all (知時知量 - “Know when and know how much”). This motto is equally applicable to the worldly activities, such as the management discipline that you teach and topics such as investment or war. I can’t emphasize enough its importance.

The subjects covered today have broad implications in many areas. Taken as a course we will have to spend a full semester on them. One has to know how to deal with the problems that may occur on the path of practice. One will have to draw on the knowledge in medicine. For instance, you may experience itching all over the body at certain stage of your practice. How are you going to deal with it? You may want to resort to medicine for some relief. That may help - but the cure is in your own deep practice. Or you may consider alternative medicine such as the traditional Chinese practice which has four main categories: acupressure (砭), acupuncture (針), moxibustion (灸), and herbs (湯). Which one is the best for you? The treatment will have to take into account the climate at the time. That will require knowledge of the weather. You see, isn’t staying alive such a bother? We are better off dead!

**Senge:** What do I do then? I live so far away from you!

**Nan:** That I can’t help. You can move your entire family here and stay with me for the next ten years, provided I live that long. Some of the people here in this room have stayed with me for many years. One of them has been with me for close to thirty years!

We are running short of time. Let’s turn to the second topic of the day – the three aspects of form (色).

The first aspect is position (表色), manifestation of life. It comes in four pairs: walking (行), standing (住); sitting (坐), lying down (臥); bending (屈), stretching (伸); taking (取), and giving (捨).

The second aspect is shape (形色), in four pairs again: long (長), short (短); square (方), round (圓); high(高), low (下); straight (正), and slant (不正).

The third aspect is color (顯色). This is important. It does not belong to position or shape. There are ten in total: green (青), yellow (黃), red (赤), white (白), cloudy (雲), misty (霧 cloudy is lighter and misty is heavier), smokey (煙), dusty (塵 smoke becomes dust when settled), bright (明), dull (暗), light (光), and shadowy (影).

Again, why do we have to study these? During meditation, you may have visuals of all kinds of “colors.” If one is not aware that the colors are but an aspect of the Form Skandha, the person can be deluded by the phenomena, believing they reflect great achievements! These colors all arise out of the “Realm of Mere Shadow” (獨影境). You should understand that these are still matter, the natural phenomena of the changes happening in your body – certainly nothing supernatural at all.

Now, listen carefully! I am not saying that these phenomena are bad or undesirable. Don’t misunderstand me. We talked about them so that you know what they are when they arise.

There are people who deliberately cultivate certain phenomena for esoteric practices. I lived in Tibet for a while in my youth. Once a fellow student wanted to show off his achievements that he could go into deep meditation and make his body disappear into a cloud of lights. On seeing this, I reached my hand into the cloud of lights to tap him, telling him, “Stop this act of play!” Most people would have been very impressed by this show, believing he possessed supernatural power.

This kind of things are rather common in places like Tibet, Bhutan, Northern India and the high plateau areas of the southwestern part of China. I always felt these places are like fairylands. Our body feels lighter in those places. The feet also feel light.

Again, these are not necessarily bad. I am not telling you to ignore them, nor am I telling you to seek them. I told you before: timing and proportion (adequacy) above all. It is the hardest thing to get them right.

Even after the death of your physical body, the intermediate body (中陰身) can still have physical functions. The sciences of today discount the existence of such a body. However, we can see that more and more Western movies began to play on this, accepting the concepts of karma, life after death, and the intermediate body.

Can the intermediate body experience physical phenomena? Yes, it can still experience them but they are limited to the brightness, dullness, light, and shadow of the color aspect of form. In Buddhist terminology, they are referred to as “forms arising out of the field of concepts” (法處所攝色), which is a state of the soul conceived by consciousness. For example – and it is just an analogy – we can taste and smell in our dreams. Sometimes, you cried in your dream and found the pillow wet when you woke up. I don’t know about you but it happened to me many times, especially during the time of the Sino-Japanese war. I was an officer serving in the Chinese army stationed in the province of Sichuan. Without any means of communication, I had no way of knowing if my family in eastern China managed to survive the Japanese occupation or not. I was a commander then, with all the glory and power. As I retreated to my own room, I often cried when I dreamed of meeting my parents. Many times I found my pillow wet in the morning.

It is similar for the dead. Let’s say I am dead and you people gather around my dead body to mourn. Watching you all cry my intermediate body can be affected by the strong emotion and start to weep. The intermediate body of the Alaya consciousness can shed tears as well - but not the same kind of tears as those shed by a living person in this physical world. The “forms arising out of field of concepts” are very subtle. Only if



modern science can unlock this subject, we will then truly understand how the mind and matter interact and affect each other, as the Surangama Sutra has taught us.

All right! You are leaving tomorrow. Let's stop here this time.

## Chapter 2

November 8 – 10, 2004

### Session One

**Nan:** Just now we had tea sitting outside and Peter Senge described to me the ongoing researches by the U.S. scientists on the subject of cognitive science. As I suspected, the cognitive science has been sidetracked. The researchers have taken the wrong turn. I mean they have brought in researchers in the fields of neurology and psychology to collaborate with the Tibetan Buddhist monks – especially the sect headed by the Dalai Lama. They have turned the studies of life science into a research for the after life and for the existence of soul. It's moving further away from the root of cognitive science.

The cognitive science, as I understood it, is a branch of epistemology which was expounded by the ancient Greek philosophers. Epistemology is the study of that which can perceive and conceive. The same thing is referred to as “the nature of cognition” in the Chinese culture – the ultimate that can know everything. This should be the root subject of the discipline. Of course, questions such as the existence of soul are included. We are not going to talk about that this time. Let's deal with that next time you visit here. To properly set the parameters of the cognitive science will require the participation by scientists from a multitude of disciplines such as neurology, psychology, quantum physics etc. I will gather such a group of researchers under one roof for this topic, perhaps when our facilities in Miaogang are completed. On that note, let's leave this topic aside.

I must say the two of you (Senge and his companion) looked better when we met last time - perhaps you have been too busy. Do you sense that as well?

**Senge:** I am not quite sure...

**Nan:** I believe you have been too busy. It's the burden of your own reputation. Bigger fame brings more speaking engagements which will take a toll on you. The Keynesians propose that consumption increases productivity. But a person is not matter only. On the contrary, excessive use of the body and mind will result in reduced productivity. While it is true that you gain more knowledge by working harder, you are also likely to burn out more quickly. You just didn't notice. I am old, and the aging process continues year after year. I am 87 now, soon to be 90! You should be aware of it.

It was 1997 when you last visited this place and I lectured on meditation for you. Seven years have gone by! Some of the people in this room have become monks for ten years or longer. They are not even forty – younger than you are – and yet their lives are devoted to the practice of cultivation. They don't have wives or partners. Every one of them is here alone, to practice day and night, nothing else. How much they can advance in the path – I don't know but as monks they have renounced the secular world, spouses, children and all contacts with the society. As for you, and all the lay persons, I must say the progress will be slower to come by for it is more difficult for the lay persons to make progress because there are spouses, children, reputation, work, social connections, and all the lot to hold you back. You have just three days with us here. I will have to condense my lectures for you. I hope it will help to refresh your knowledge.

Now, any living being, as I told you before, manifests in two aspects: a physiological aspect and a spiritual or mental aspect. The spiritual/mental aspect is related to the cognitive science we spoke about just now. A human being is an organism that combines body and mind.

Shakyamuni was the first person ever to delve into the study of genuine life science. As I see it, the study of Buddhism, including Tibetan Buddhism, Zen - all the Mahayana and Theravada schools combined - is also the study of life science.

Why did Shakyamuni renounce the secular world? It was because he wanted to address the question of life. The question of life is one that's common to all religions of the world. It can be the life of human being alone or it can be the life of all beings of the universe. Questions such as: when did the universe begin, how did the world come into existence etc. are included. The entire universe can be viewed as a combination of two worlds: a material/physical world and a spiritual world. In the history of philosophy, thinkers such as Plato advocated the existence of dual worlds: a spiritual one and a material one – just as the body and mind for the human being.

This is the fundamental understanding you should have. You should know why you practice meditation and what you intend to achieve through the practice. In other words, know what it is all about.

Since 1997, and up to now, the things that you have been searching for - and experiencing - are all related to either physical or mental aspects. While you are here this time you should reflect on this.

From a materialist point of view, which includes the views of medicine and biology, our body is a physical one composed of many sub-systems such as skeletal, muscular (these two are like the steel and the concrete structures of a building), nervous, digestive, respiratory, endocrine, reproductive systems and so on, and which can be further broken down to countless cells, blood and so forth.

Over 2,000 years ago, Shakyamuni proposed that the human body was composed of 36 major components. He broke the human body into 36 broad categories. It is just a different system to use to study the body.

According to the Buddha, the entire physical world, including our bodies, can be decomposed into five gross elements, i.e. earth, water, fire, wind and emptiness. Do you still recall that?

**Senge:** Yes, I do.

**Nan:** Of the five gross elements, today we will focus on the wind, which concerns Qi. You have practiced meditation and the breathing techniques for some time now. Let me ask you this, why are you told to concentrate on your breathing during sitting meditation as a means to attain Xi? Why is that?

**Senge:** In order to bring the mind to a stop.

**Nan:** Is that how you understand it?

**Senge:** The mind stops as the body movements stop.

**Nan:** That's not good enough. Why did Shakyamuni ask us to begin our practice this way?

**Hanig:** I recall there are four kinds of breathing: wind, panting, Qi and Xi. We can gradually reach Xi through a step-by-step progression of the wind, panting and then Qi and Xi.

**Nan:** That's not good enough either. You were describing the different phenomena of the wind element. This is how we breathe. Your recollection of the sequence was wrong – perhaps due to mistake in translation. Let me correct it and expand on this subject for you.

Now, the fundamentals on wind... In Chinese, “wind” means air stream. When it comes to the human body, it becomes breathing. Breathing is of utmost importance to our lives, so it should be understood first. The coarse breathing is panting. A slower, more refined breathing is Qi. That which is even more subtle than Qi and which cannot be heard or sensed, as if the nose has stopped breathing, is Xi. These are the phenomena of the wind. Are we clear on that?

This is to explain the connection between wind, Qi and Xi, which is of critical importance to our present life. The Buddha's teaching on wind, panting, Xi and Qi relates to the present life only. The irregularity of Qi and Xi is often the contributing factor for aging, sickness and even death. Therefore, you are asked to first pay attention to this in your practice.

I emphasized a number of times that we are talking about Qi and its connection to our present life. This Qi is called the "Sustaining Qi" (長養氣) in Buddhist language, which is not the same Qi that life originated from.

We all know from modern medical research that a fetus in the mother's womb does not eat or breathe; it is sustained by the mother through the umbilical cord only. In the "Entering into the Womb Sutra" (入胎經), the Buddha describes for us in great details the evolution of the fetus in the womb from conception to birth. The original Sanskrit text of this sutra was lost in India. Luckily it was translated and preserved in China.

According to the Buddha, every seven days the fetus evolves into a new phase of growth. There are 38 of such seven-day-phases before birth. The fetus is sustained not just by the umbilical cord but also by the Qi. This is not the breathing Qi, for the fetus does not breathe! The breathing Qi is the "Sustaining Qi." For the fetus, the Qi that powered the growth is called the "Reward-Body (Sambhogakaya) Qi" (報身氣), which is a retribution derived from karma. The Taoists in China call it the "Yuan (Primordial) Qi" (元氣).

After having powered the fetus for 38 seven-day-phases, the Reward-body Qi pushes the fetus in a head down position and then birth begins. The first breath of the new born baby is the crying out with an out breath as the residual of the Reward-Body Qi is exhaled. When the baby breathes in from the nose for the first time, the Sustaining Qi begins and the in-and-out breathing cycle starts and will carry on until death.

As you enter into deep meditation, the breathing can become very subtle or even come to a complete stop. This is still the Sustaining Qi you are playing with, not the Reward-

Body Qi from which life originated. You must have correct understanding of the nature of wind, panting, Qi and Xi so you don't get confused. When the breathing in the nose stops completely, as if you are reverted to the state of a fetus, you will then come to know the "Primordial Qi." Genuine Dhyana meditation begins when one can recognize the Primordial Qi, which will enable one to control this life, and to transform it.

Indian yogis and, subsequently the Tibetan Buddhists, all practice very much along the same lines. The idea of the Primordial Qi was rooted into the practices of Yoga, Tibetan Buddhism and Dhyana meditation. The meridian channels are derivatives of Qi. Meridian channels, by the way, reflect the physical changes in our body.

You have been practicing meditation for many years now. I can see progress made to your body and mind. Yet, you have been working on the in-and-out breath of the Sustaining Qi only. That's not enough, not the ultimate. You need to reach the state of Xi cessation to be free from ailment and other bodily obstacles, to resume perfect health and to regain suppleness like a new born baby. Then, as you progress further, deeper in the meditation, many of life's secrets will unfold themselves to you.

Advancing further, you will come to realize the power behind life. That power, also a kind of Qi, is referred to as "Seed Qi" (種子氣) in Buddhism. This is the ultra-ultimate thing that the researchers of quantum physics are trying to uncover. Very few people can actually advance their practice to this stage.

This will help to reconstruct your understanding of this subject. I hope you can work harder on it so that your health will improve.

**Senge:** Thank you so much, Master.

**Nan:** Just to give you some idea of the magnitude of the meridian channels - the Buddha tells us there are approximately 108,000 meridian channels in our body.

The Seed Qi does not have mass. The study of quantum physics is helpful in making a connection here. The Seed Qi is the unity of both the matter and the mind. It is a power of the concentration, a power of the mind.

**Senge:** To me, the fetus grows just like a seed grows into flowers. The universe grows in the same way. The materialist philosophy can only explain what's already born or already dead but it cannot explain what exists before birth.

**Nan:** That's right.

**Senge:** I will be older next year – so I'd better work hard.

**Nan:** A Chinese poem says: “Flowers look alike, year after year. Year after year, people are not” (年年歲歲花相似，歲歲年年人不同). The Mr. Li of last year is not the Mr. Li of this year, who will not be the Mr. Li of next year. This is one way to interpret the poem, benignly. A not-so-polite interpretation: we meet the man this year but who knows if he will still be around next year?



Session Two

**Senge:** Yesterday the Master reminded me that I was getting old – and I didn't even realize it. I am worried. I do appreciate that I should make practice the center of my life and I am going to follow it through. Please point me to the right path.

**Nan:** You are resolved to practice with all your efforts, placing practice in the first place. That's very good! So many people also believe that practice should come first in life but, because they cannot properly arrange their lives, practice is dropped to the fifth or sixth places. Fortune, fame and family are often more important to them. This is so common.

When I was young, I walled away from everything at the peak of my career in order to pursue practice. It was not easy to do. Many are the ones who ventured onto the spiritual path but so very few are those who stayed unwaveringly on it. To be dedicated to practice, one has to completely re-prioritize one's life.

Take for example your trip to China this time. It's a long trip for you so you packed too many speaking engagements here. While giving speeches are important, they are scheduled too tightly. It's taking a toll on your body and mind. I worry about you.

I dropped everything to focus on my practice when I was in my 20's, at a time when my fame was on the rise. In the ensuing decades I had plenty of opportunities to access power and fortune but I discarded them completely.

There are many people out there wishing to gain access to me. I choose to avoid them all. There are so many books attributed to my name but most of them were actually compiled by my students based on the recordings of the classes I taught over the decades. I don't have time to write because I am devoted to practice. I will never have enough time to practice if I have to accommodate all those who want to meet me. A dedicated practice starts by looking after one's own life. It's our karma that you and I should meet – I turned down so many seekers from foreign countries.

You are becoming a celebrity in China through your books. As your fame begins to grow, you should sit down somewhere quiet to complete the books you want to write, and do them quickly. You will find it increasingly difficult to have time for writing. You can draw on the discipline of cognitive science to write books on management – even short ones are fine. Your reputation and influence will grow as you publish more books.

Americans do not really understand the East, China and India. If you can write books on the East and its cultures, you will be making contribution to America and the world in large. Perhaps you should collaborate with people to translate and to introduce Chinese books to the Americans. Each time you come, plan to stay longer to improve your practice before heading back. This should also help to reduce the fatigue.

**Senge:** I am very grateful for your advice. I probably have enough money to spend for the rest of my life. What is the best way to spend my time?

**Nan:** Practice.

**Senge:** My work can be divided into three areas: faculty affairs, writing and speech tours. I believe through my work I can make contributions to the world. For instance, I go to the Middle East where I can sit down with the oil sheiks talking about the world, the future of humanity and self improvements. I consider this to be a way of practice. However, I am spending more time on my work than on meditation. I don't have enough time to build a solid foundation for my own practice.

Each day I do a sitting meditation for 45 minutes or maybe up to an hour in the morning, and 30 minutes in the evening. I do different kinds of meditation, mostly the skeleton meditation. It does not take me long to calm my breathing when I start a sitting. My body does not hurt as much as it used to so that I seldom break meditation because the pains in the body are unbearable. It is my mind that tells me to get up. My body also feels lighter than before. My skeleton meditation is progressing nicely. A number of times, I could

visualize in my mind that my head was taken off from the body and I could experience the wind blowing through my skeleton. One time the wind blew the skeleton into ashes and I stayed in that state for about four minutes. I used to have bowel movements four times a day and it's down to three times. My weight is reduced by three to four kilos.

**Nan:** This is all related to what I talked about yesterday – the connection between the body and the wind element. By employing the skeleton meditation, aided by Anapana practice, one can eventually visualize in the mind the dissolving of the skeleton. Your experience was a correct one – unfortunately you only had it once. In practicing the skeleton or Anapana meditation, one will experience the following physiological sensations in sequence: (1) no more pain in the body; (2) total comfort of the body; (3) vanishing of the body and (4) glowing in the body. The longer you can stay concentrated in the last sensation, the better. Place your practice above everything else. We can talk about the next step you should follow once you have gone through these sensations.

**Senge:** When I return to the U.S. I will rearrange my work schedule so that I can meditate as long as I want. I will sit for at least two to three hours each day. I will try to travel less. Each year I shall come to China and stay with the Master for a few weeks to improve my practice. As for my work, I will maintain my contacts with people around the world but with a lighter schedule for speaking engagements.

**Nan:** That would be a good way to arrange your practice and life. As far as China is concerned, you can treat this place as a base from where you can travel to and from any other cities in the country for your speeches. You can rest and practice here as long as you wish. But this deal is good as long as I am still alive! You have to make different plans once I am gone.

Let me recap on the practice. When you reach the cessation of Xi, in a skeleton meditation or Anapana meditation, the next level to achieve is the cessation of all sensations. Your physiological body will be completely transformed if you can reach that level. This is all related to the Qi and meridian channels which we will cover later. The

ultimate objective of Anapana or skeleton meditation is to come to the realization of emptiness. Even though the sensations are gone the mind should remain aware in total silence, without any thought arising. It's just empty all around. Mind you, it is not the emptiness of the perception, but the emptiness of the impediments of the body. There is no suffering, only bliss. Eventually the bliss also vanishes into total emptiness. There will be light in the state of total emptiness. Stay in there long enough and your physiological body will begin to transform. This is a critical step. We will talk more about it when you reach that stage. OK, let's break.

Session Three

At the beginning of this session Bhikshu Gudao, one of the participants, read for the class a paper he wrote reflecting on a chapter of the Dharmatara-Dhyana Sutra (達摩多羅禪經) which was the subject of a class that Master Nan Huai-chin had started teaching for two months.

**Nan:** Just now Gudao reported to the class what he learned from the sutra. It was a good talk. He is qualified to lecture on the dharma. Nevertheless he missed a few points and I will fill them in. What we do here with this class is devoted to the practicing aspects of the Buddha's teachings; we don't emphasize as much on the theoretic aspects. His report was a good intellectual piece but lacked depth on the practicing aspect.

The subject of this chapter of the sutra is "The Twelve Limbs of Dependent Origination (Pratityasamutpada)" (十二因緣). The question to ask is why in this particular section the discourses shifted to skeleton meditation and impurity meditation? It is important that you know why.

It was stated in the sutra that we need to practice the skeleton and impurity meditations slowly, step-by-step and piece-by-piece. According to another scripture, "*The Essentials of the Secrets of Dhyana Meditation*" (禪祕要法), there are over 30 different ways to do such meditations. These detailed instructions are intended for the less initiated, or the dull ones. The sharp practitioners, however, can meditate on every part all at once without necessarily following the step-by-step instructions.

The Buddha taught the practice of skeleton and impurity meditations to his disciples more than 2,000 years ago. I suppose the knowledge of anatomy in those days was fairly rudimentary and Shakyamuni had to teach in such a way so that people could comprehend and follow. Let's not measure his exposition of the human body against the modern knowledge of anatomy.

Many of the sharp disciples of the Buddha realized instantly through the skeleton and impurity meditation that this body, this life, being of such construction, is not worthy of any attachment or affection. They let go of the attachment immediately and thereby liberated themselves from the erroneous view that the self and the body existed.

For those disciples who couldn't meditate successfully on this particular practice, the Buddha told them to visit the mass burial ground and observe the decomposing bodies. This was how the skeleton and impurity meditations came about.

Back to the sutra, the reason for talking about skeleton and impurity meditations in the midst of the discourses on Pratityasamutpada (the twelve links of dependent origination) is to use the meditations as the means to access the origin of life and death, the first limb of Pratityasamutpada. The skeleton and impurity meditations are but a means to an end.

Through skeleton meditation you can enter into a state of deep concentration in which the phenomena of life are revealed to you. Life begins when an egg is fertilized by a sperm and, at the same time, is joined by the intermediary body. When these three conditions mix, the egg is fertilized and from where our body and our skeleton begin to grow. According to the teaching of Pratityasamutpada, the consciousness of the intermediary body enters the embryo because of ignorance. What is ignorance?

Ignorance symbolizes darkness, lack of knowledge, the unknowing, the unknowable, that which cannot – and can never – be comprehended; in other words, ignorance is the inexplicable and the inscrutable. Every religion in the world tries to address the question of the origin of ignorance. In Western philosophy, it is called the first cause. What's the cause of life and death, and the world? Thousands of years ago the Buddha told us - ignorance was the first cause.

The word "Buddha" literally means "the one who has awakened." All the awakened sages know that ignorance is the first cause. The Buddha is the awakened one; he settled on calling the first cause "ignorance" even though it cannot really be conceptualized or

represented by language. Ignorance is the origin of life and death, and of the universe. Did the egg come before the chicken or chicken before egg? Were there men before women or women before men? Of earth, water, fire and wind, which one came first to form this material world? In physics, the studies of the big bang, the ether, the quark, the quantum ...are all efforts devoted to the pursuit for the first cause. Up till now, science has not found it.

Moreover, the first cause can be further divided into four causes. In the Mind-Only school of the Mahayana, a total of ten causes were expounded. Be that four or ten causes, they represent logical deductions. Logic is used to explain the cause and effect for you because you are not awakened. Once you understand that ignorance is the cause, all those elaborate arguments won't be needed at all.

People want to know who created the universe. Let the answer be God, dog shit or whatever – that will be the first cause. But where does the first cause come from? Religion would say: “Don't ask.” That's how religions deal with this question. Who is the mother of God? And who is the grandmother of God? You can't ask those questions in any religion – except in Buddhism, which is to say Buddhism is not really a religion in that respect.

In Buddhism, the answer will be: ignorance. From seeds come the fruits and so from the fruits one can back trace to the seeds. Therefore, the sutra says: “Meditate on the consequences. Consequence is, because of becoming. Becoming is, because of being” (修行觀果，果從生因，生從有因). Ignorance caused the very first thought. But where does ignorance come from? It's from the accumulation of karmas of past lives, as the Mind-Only school says, “seeds engender actions” (種子生現行). Therefore it's from the seeds of past lives, or from “being.” Where does being come from? “Being comes from grasping” (有從取因). Grasping exists in the mind of all creatures – it is self-engendered. Why do men have the thought of grasping? It is because the “I” wants everything to be mine and therefore the grasping. Becoming, being and grasping are caused by actions, or you can say by thoughts. Action means movement. Where does

action come from? From ignorance. So, action is the effect, and the cause. Cause and effect exist simultaneously.

Many people are fascinated by the book of I-Ching. Some study it so that they can predict the future. To these people I always advise them not to bother. Those who have a profound knowledge of I-Ching will agree with this: “Actions often provoke regrets” (動輒得咎). Actions are accompanied by liabilities. In his study of the I-Ching, Confucius summarized that actions can produce only four likely results: good, bad, sorrow and misery (吉凶悔吝生乎動) – only one out of four is good!

I often get asked by people to predict if their business will make money. I always ask them: what for? You will either make money or lose money any way. Let’s say even if your business barely breaks even, in the end you would still have lost your time on it – still a deficit! Therefore, action often provokes regret. Thought is the cause of action. Any slight thought will generate action. You should carefully study and observe every one of the twelve limbs of the dependent originations.

My advice to the ordinary person is: don’t attempt to find the cause of ignorance. It’s like ghost fire. Unless you are bestowed with profound wisdom, you will only become more confused the more effort you put into chasing it; the unintended result is you will become either an eternalist or a nihilist. Zhuang Zi (Chuang Tsu) said, “My life is limited but not so the knowledge. To pursue the limitless with that which is limited is perilous” (吾生也有涯，而知也無涯，以有涯隨無涯，殆矣). The same applies here. The Buddha tells us that the root cause of our endless cycles of life is ignorance. In other words, ignorance is the most difficult one to conceive. The remaining eleven limbs are easier to understand. An ordinary person simply does not realize that his whole life is led by ignorance.

“Of all the twelve limbs of the wheel, ignorance is the most uninhibited for it spins autonomously” (一切有支輪，無明最自在，自在力所轉), the sutra says. Ignorance is the most difficult to conceive because it is autonomous – and it is the master that



dominates you. Let's ask, "Do you know what is going to be your first thought when you wake up tomorrow morning?" Don't know? Such is ignorance.

Any time ignorance spins, you spin with it. In the Islamic tradition there is a story which is paraphrased from a story in the Buddhist sutras. A high priest living in the mountains saw a deer that was running away from the king who was hunting. So the priest hid the deer under his big robe to save the creature. Moments later the king arrived on horseback and asked the priest if he had seen the deer. The priest remained silent. After a few more attempts the king was furious and threatened to kill the priest if he again refused to answer. The priest then asked, "What made you believe that you are so mighty?" "I am your king!" "Why is it that I see you only as a slave to my servant?" The king became curious and asked why. The priest said, "You are but a slave to desires. I treat desires as nothing but my servants." The king then bowed to the priest for the precious lesson he learned.

"Ignorance is the most uninhibited for it spins autonomously." Ignorance becomes your master. It is uninhibited and we are all slaves of ignorance. You can't find the cause of ignorance. It arises for no reason and with no cause. You can be sitting quietly and then, suddenly, a thought comes to you and - before you can realize - it takes your mind away. If you really understand ignorance you will understand the twelve limbs of dependent origination.

That's why I said Gudao wrote a good report but he did not touch the very heart of the sutra. I am showing you how to read the sutras correctly. You have to read with the eyes of wisdom. Why do you have to study the twelve limbs while practicing the skeleton and impurity meditations? It is because the practice can help you break the chains of life and death cycles. You can identify the cause from the effect it produces. That's how you will understand the causality of life and death.

**Participant:** Can I say that we can't possibly conceive ignorance because our wisdom is shallow and therefore it is pointless for us to contemplate on ignorance? I mean if one

truly understands ignorance one would have been the awakened already. Therefore, the road to follow is still to practice the skeleton and impurity meditations.

**Nan:** That is correct.

(Bhikshu Gudao read the remaining part of his paper.)

**Nan:** Of the twelve limbs, so far we have been talking the ones from Being to Birth. We will now review the limbs of Old Age and Death.

There are four kinds of death: gradual death (漸漸死), abrupt death (頓死), end of procession death (行盡死) and Kshana death (剎那死).

Our body ages continuously until we die. This process is called “gradual death.” Zhuang Zi tells us: “Death arrives hard on the heels of birth, and vice versa” (方生方死, 方死方生). You began moving toward death from the very day you were born. The you on the second day of birth is already not the you on the day of birth. The you of 20 years old is not the you of 19 years old. Again, Zhuang Zi says: “One is just waiting for the end to arrive while one remains alive” (不亡以待盡). You live as you await death. This is his view on life and death.

Abrupt death is sudden death such as from a heart attack or stroke. Modern medical science would then determine that heart failure caused the death. If so, then what caused the heart disease in the very first place? Doctors have little clue.

Life ends when procession ends because volition is life itself. Procession is the driving power. Once the power ends, life ends as well. It’s like a blackout when the electrical power is cut off.

Kshana is a very short duration of time. There are 90 (some say 60) Kshanas in just one snap of the fingers. In every Kshana we experience the birth and death of the cells in our body and the birth and death of our thoughts. Death as a phenomenon reflects the impermanency of life. What is impermanency? It means everything changes constantly. Impermanency is the rule and changes are the phenomena. The Buddhists speak of “impermanency” while the book of I-Ching speaks of “changes” or “transformations.”

There are three kinds of impermanency: Kshana impermanency (剎那無常), phase impermanency (分段無常), and variety impermanency (種類無常). “Kshana impermanency” means uninterrupted changes. Take this watermelon in this plate on the table – changes are taking place in the watermelon all the time but these subtle changes are not obvious to our naked eyes. “Phase impermanency” would be the changes observed in morning, noon and afternoon, or during night and day, or at age ten, age twenty and thirty – all different in each phase. “Variety impermanency” means changes in kind or nature, such as water becoming tea as tea leaves are added to water. Likewise, don’t take pride in any achievement you have made because the achievement will change and fade because of impermanency.

Most people see death as the most dreadful thing. In fact, it is not - ignorance is. All the ill thoughts and desires are the fruits of ignorance, the cause. When a Zen master speaks of seeing one’s true mind or true nature, he means that ignorance is destroyed. Once ignorance is gone, profound wisdom emerges and there will be light and liberation. (Ignorance literally means “without light” in the Chinese language.) It’s like turning on the light to dispel darkness. Once enlightened, the light of wisdom shines forth, day and night, forever bright. One can then break the cycle of life and death, breaking the linking limbs from ignorance to old age and death. Then all becomes wonderfully pure, thus called the “Pure land.”

At this stage, as ignorance is destroyed, the body and mind will instantly be transformed. With every single cell of the body transformed the body becomes radiant and is as supple and tender as a baby’s. The Tibetan Buddhists call it “the body of light” (虹光之身).

The mind also becomes crystal clear and pure that in deep concentration the mind's eye can see the body and any of the internal organs vividly. Such attainment is referred to as "sailing across the realms" (於界得度) – a break away from the limitations of the three realms.

Our wisdoms are tainted by five delusions (癡) : realms (界) , entries (入) , Aggregates (or Skandhas) (陰) , unworthiness (卑賤) , and defilement (垢污) . The realms of delusion are the earth, water, fire, wind, and space elements and consciousness, which have boundaries and therefore are restrictive. All physical and spiritual worlds have boundaries. The concept of logic has boundaries, too. You are always boxed in by the boundaries.

The entries of delusion refer to effects on the six sense organs caused by outside stimuli that produce sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch and thought. The aggregates are the form, feeling, perception, procession (or impulse) and consciousness Skandhas which shield us from the pristine wisdom. The unworthiness and defilement delusions are self explanatory.

All the meditation practices, be that the meditation of the skeleton, impurity, five Skandhas, six entries or Anapana, are but the means to train the mind to investigate or to observe certain objects; the objective is to enhance the good deeds so that we can reach the other shore. But then there is also the practice that meditates on none of those but directly on the ultimate truth – and attaining enlightenment right here and now. This is the practice of Zen. Remember, all of the practices are just ways to treat delusions.

I have talked long enough. Let's change the pace. Feel free to discuss.

**Participant:** What about those who choose to kill themselves? Will their problems end with death?

**Nan:** Those who believe that death ends it all are committing to nihilism, an erroneous view. Zhuang Zi wrote a fable. A peasant girl was chosen by the emperor to be his concubine. On learning the news the girl cried because she did not know what was to become of her. After the girl moved into the palace, she discovered that life as a concubine was so much better than what she had thought. The girl then regretted that she cried at all. Our fear of death is just like the girl's fear of moving into the palace. The belief that everything ends with death is the same.

**Participant:** There are pre-conditions that have to be achieved before one can attain Samadhi. My daily life is preoccupied by the mundane affairs that there is no hope of achieving the pre-conditions, let alone Samadhi.

**Nan:** Samadhi is not limited to sitting meditation alone. Samadhi has no pre-conditions. It is up to the mind (not the thinking mind but the mind that embodies the unity of mind and matter). There are many kinds of Samadhi. Don't equate Samadhi with sitting meditation. Of course we should also recognize that it helps in your practice by following the proper steps.

**Participant:** For someone who has accumulated significant good deeds in this world, can he enter Samadhi without doing sitting meditation?

**Nan:** That will be very difficult – you may say impossible. He may experience some kind of deep concentration but it is not really Samadhi, just a fruit of the merits he accumulated.

**Participant:** Emperor Wu of the Liang Dynasty (in the fifth century) performed an incredible amount of good deeds - still Bodhidharma said those good deeds carried no merits.

**Nan:** Oh yes, definitely the emperor had merits! But those merits would yield fruits for him in the lower realms only, for they were generated from wholesome acts that were

contaminated. The genuine merit is anuttara-samyak-sambodhi, the perfect and utmost concentration. Why did Master Bodhidharma tell the emperor that there was no merit to the emperor's good deeds? The Master's intention was to point the emperor to the path of the Mahayana. What he meant was, "you as an emperor should seek the Buddha fruits of the Mahayana; what you had done were wholesome actions but they were contaminated causes and, as such, would only yield fruits in lower realms for you." The emperor then asked what the ultimate holy truth might be. Bodhidharma replied there was no such thing. "Then who was this man in front of me?" asked the emperor. "Don't know," was the answer from Bodhidharma.

Master Bodhidharma was insinuating that the emperor should dedicate himself to managing the country well, which would have been a great merit. Instead, the emperor devoted his energy to preaching the dharma; three times the emperor deserted his throne to seek refuge in the temples forcing his ministers to make generous donations from the national treasury to the temples so that the emperor would return to the palace. Such was the behavior of the emperor, what hope was there for the country and its people? In fact Master Bodhidharma had been too kind in his words to the emperor.

**Participant:** Could it be that the emperor intended to promote Buddhism in his country?

**Nan:** I don't think that was Emperor Wu's ultimate intension. Even if it was his intention he failed miserably. His was just a prejudiced religious belief and his acts were just a farce due to senility. A true statesman does not get involved in prejudiced religious beliefs.

By the way, the Dharmatara-Dhyana Sutra was translated from Sanskrit into Chinese by an Indian monk. He came to China, learned the language and then translated the sutra. We are all indebted to him. He died in China and was buried in Lu Shan.

**Senge:** Why did the Indian masters want to come to China in those days?

**Nan:** They saw the declining of Buddhism in India and the rising of China as a fertile ground for Mahayana. The Mahayana Buddhism was transplanted to China over several hundred years. Many of the valuable scriptures were brought into China and translated into Chinese.

Master Xuan Zang (or Hsuan-tsang) of the Tang Dynasty left China for India to study Buddhism. He returned with volumes and volumes of the original scriptures which he and his disciples faithfully translated into Chinese. Unfortunately that was the last of a wholesale import of Buddhism to China from India. About one hundred years after his visit, Buddhism disappeared from India altogether. Therefore, I often encourage the Indian yogis to study Chinese as a way to access and retrieve the splendors of their own heritages that have been preserved in China. However, many Western Indologists do not agree with this. They believe genuine Buddhism is preserved in South and Southeast Asia. They didn't realize the Buddhist schools that went south and gained footholds in southern and southeastern Asian regions were the marginalized schools in India.

Of course, China today is faced with a cultural fault line of her own. You can grow a tree in ten years but to shape a civilization will take one hundred years! For instance, the Chinese civilization went through a devastating destruction after the implosion of the Qin Dynasty and the ensuing wars. It was not until some eighty years later around the time of Emperor Wu of the succeeding Han Dynasty that civilization began to take shape again.

Session Four

**Senge:** I have been studying with the Master since 1997. All these years I have been busy with my own work that I couldn't devote much time to practice. Fortunately things started to improve around nine months ago and I have been able to do more practice. I tried to reach the cessation of Xi but I couldn't. All that I was able to do was to make my breathing subtler. Can the Master please teach me how to reach the cessation of Xi?

**Nan:** Anapana is a practice that uses breathing as the gate to entry. I mentioned the day before yesterday that a baby starts its first breathing at birth from the moment the umbilical cord is cut off. Life from that moment on is sustained by breathing, which is a wind element. This type of breathing, called Sustaining Qi, is what we rely on during our life. Although not the ultimate Qi it is nevertheless used as a tool of our practice. First - you should be very clear that the problem is with the mind. The mind moves and the breathing follows. When the mind is absolutely pure and silent, the cessation of Xi can be reached. Your very attempt to seek cessation of the breathing is a thought in itself. Naturally you cannot reach the cessation this way. Therefore, the key to cessation of the Xi is the cessation of the mind. It's not the breathing that's creating the problem.

**Senge:** I always wanted to spend more time on practice, such as blocking out one or two weeks each time just for practice. There are many retreat centers in the States that teach all sorts of practices, including sitting meditation. Ever since I began my study with the Master I have stopped going to these centers. All I want to do now is to find the time for in-depth practice either at home or somewhere else.

**Nan:** There are many, many different ways of practice in the world, most of which originated from India. China had extensive encounters with India dated back to the days of the Great Emperor of Qin, almost three thousand years ago. No matter which practice you do you have to deal with the mind. In other words, it's the mind that's doing it.



Anapana practice, in summary, is the practice of the physiological breathing together with the mind. You said you wanted to concentrate on your practice. But you might have missed this: in the Anapana practice, it is the function of the mind that makes you aware of the flow of your breathing. It is the mind (the union of the mind and matter) that takes this method to bring the breathing to a natural cessation, reaching a certain state. You have to come to know the mind. Don't try to achieve the cessation of the Xi by working on breathing alone. This should be understood first.

Second, I am telling you that breathing is the wind element. We can easily feel the in-and-out of the air through our nostrils. However, the wind does not only pass through the nostrils. To generalize, every single one of the 108,000 pores on our body also breathes. The average person does not cognize breathing just as fish is not aware of the existence of water. Fish breathe in water without awareness of the water. People breathe in air but do not cognize air. It is because of the breathing that our movements, talking – all actions – are possible. Yet we don't see it. We can't see the breathing because we don't have the profound wisdom. We just sort of understand intellectually that there is such a function of breathing. Only those with profound wisdom can clearly recognize their breathing.

When do the ordinary people come to be aware of the breathing? Usually the awareness comes when one is lying in bed, head on the pillow and as one is just about to fall asleep, one hears the breathing. However, at this moment if you concentrate on listening to the breathing you will stay awake. Those with problems sleeping know this very well. The rest of the day our breathing is barely audible to us - let alone the pore breathing. This is the second point I want to make.

Third, how do you reach cessation of Xi? Let me give you a couple of everyday examples. When watching something attentively, your breathing will become very light or may even stop, if you are highly concentrated on something. Also, when you are suddenly confronted with great fright or joy your breathing will stop at that moment. Why? - Because your mind is concentrated. This explains how the cessation point of Xi comes about.

To recap, as the mind is focused on a specific object, the breathing automatically joins the mind. This is concentration. When a scientist is focusing on solving a problem, or a writer focusing on writing, the breathing almost stops.

Understanding this, when you meditate you should let go of all your thoughts. Don't hang on to any thought when it arises. You only need to remain loosely aware of the flow of the breath. This is the practice of Anapana. When the mind is completely free from any noises of thoughts, is completely pure and empty, the Qi will slowly fill up and breathing will come to a stop on its own. This is the cessation of Xi.

The breathing is a very profound subject in itself. What I told you just now is an overview only. Those of you having a stressful life better take note. Anxiety produced by stress is an emotion, which is a thought buried deeply in your mind. This thought is so intense that it can cause the cells of the body to stop breathing from time to time and, consequently, can develop into all kinds of ailments. That is why if your work makes you nervous and anxious all the time, your breathing is likely to be suppressed often. You will age faster and get sick easily. In other words, it's destructive to life.

In practicing meditation, your mind has to be cleared of all thoughts and your attention lightly placed on the breathing. You should remain aware of the breathing all the time, without forcing it and without any stress. Gradually the breathing will slowly come to a stop until it becomes one with the mind. This is what a real practice is like. No one can be considered an accomplished meditator if this level is not reached.

To reach this level, one needs to be devoted to practice. It means dropping everything, renouncing the mundane world like a monk or nun. Of course it is not an easy path for the layperson to follow. But if one is serious about the practice then it is necessary to block out a phase of one's life devoting to practice. After that phase you can rejoin the world and go back to work. If you can't afford not to work, you should then always make use of short breaks such as a day, two days, three days or a week. Keep on experimenting.

You can build a good base by accumulating the short experiments, but it will be a slow process. At the same time you should restrain and reduce your desires for worldly objects. If not, it will be difficult for you to tame the mind to reach purity and emptiness.

This is to answer your question on how to reach Samadhi through breathing methods. In doing your practice, do not tie your mind rigidly to the breathing. Only if you want to, then observe the exhaling only, not the inhaling. A big mistake commonly committed by those practicing Qigong is to focus on the inhalation and to try to hold on to it. The truth is just the opposite. For correct practice, one should pay attention to the exhalation, if only for improving the health of the body and mind. The more one releases, the more one relaxes. This is the best of practice.

The Anapana meditation is to reach the cessation of Xi, or Samadhi. It is the practice of letting go, of abandoning. Haven't you noticed how people get relief from tension, pain or exhaustion? They sigh, a very long one. They feel more comfortable after releasing the breath with a sigh. Animals do that, too. When you release the breath remember to also release your thoughts together with the out breath. Experience and reflect on this carefully. Don't ever hold the breath to stop breathing. That won't do you any good and can actually do damages to your body and to your mind.

That was a lot to answer a simple question you raised. You have made a wonderful return on your investment, haven't you? Yes, that's right. People should laugh more. The action of laughing is out breathing in motion. You are relaxed when you laugh. You people always carry that serious look on your faces. Are you debt collectors? Buddha always wears a smile. Next time you look at the Buddha's statures, the ones from India, look closely. They all look relaxed with a smile. All you need to do is smile and you will feel relaxed.

The Chinese has a wonderful saying on the easiest way to do a good practice. "The deities know no better way. Breed only joy, not worry" (神仙無別法，只生歡喜不生愁). If you wish to join the deities, the best way is to drop all worries and sorrows and to

always remain joyful. Even if you don't become a deity, at least you can pretend to be one and live happily. Laughter is what you need.

**Senge:** Speaking of looks, I find certain political leaders in the US government do have that look of debt collectors. It is unbearable to even look at their faces. I wonder how they can become more relaxed.

**Nan:** I am afraid you can only laugh them off. The US is where she is today because of a natural development of politics, culture and doctrines. All matters will come to the turning point in the end when the tension reaches the peak level. You don't need to worry about it. Detest it as much as you want, you won't change the tide. This is the spirit of the Mahasthamaprapta, the bodhisattva of great power.

Amitabha Buddha (阿彌陀佛) is flanked by two great bodhisattvas: Mahasthamaprapta (大勢至) and Avalokitesvara (觀世音). Mahasthamaprapta represents great power, force, and momentum. Those forces are like a tidal wave when they come. How do you stop it? Avalokitesvara, the bodhisattva of great compassion, known in China as the one who heeds the calls of the beings of world, represents the staying power to observe without being carried away by the waves. These are all related to our practices. Once the tide is over, a new era will emerge.

For instance, Communism and socialism had to emerge in China. This was an irreversible trend in the evolution of the thousands of years of Chinese history. However, China will not remain status quo – just as the US won't. What we have in China today – including what you have in the US today – is nothing but a phase within the flow of a long history. The events are like a stop among the many stops along a long bus route. History will have to take its own course. The Taoist way is to recognize the changes and figure out where the future is going to be. Then you go to the next stop and wait for the bus to arrive. You can't pull the bus back. You can't rush it either.

Here is a serious issue to contemplate on. Most of the work you do are concerned with economic developments. This is a phenomenon common to both the East and West – everything is about the economy. I find it especially amusing that China is now putting all her energy on the economy. This is not the road to true prosperity. Historically China always subscribed to the doctrine that believes in having better culture and governance to resolve economic issues, to make even distribution of wealth and to maintain social stability. In the West, since the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the approach has been one attempting to resolve political and cultural issues by economic means alone, as expounded by the doctrines of Adam Smith, Karl Marx, John Keynes and their followers. These are two different approaches and one does not necessarily conflict with each other.

Ever since China subscribed to the Western doctrines, in particular the ideas of Keynes, the whole country is moving down the road of chasing money. Consumption is encouraged because it creates demand and employment. Therefore there is a good market for the management disciplines you teach. I always joked that the best way to accelerate consumption is to have wars everyday. War is the biggest of all consumptions.

What we lack today is a new school of thought that can assimilate both the Eastern and Western approaches in order to lead the world into a new era. If we continue the way it is there will be dire consequences.

I always tell people in China that the modern civilization of the entire world is built on the ideas created by four individuals: Charles Darwin's evolution theory, Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis focused on sexual desires, Karl Marx's analysis of capitalism and John Keynes's theory of consumption and productivity. There hasn't been any revolutionary thinker since.

The whole world is indulged and lost in the exhilaration of wealth building. The few sober souls can do nothing but watch from the sideline. You don't stand in front of the tidal wave trying to hold it back. You don't stand in the path of a tornado trying to stop it. You have to wait until they are gone. Take it slowly. This is the only way.

Don't blame the politicians in your country. They are defending the American interest. How do you create demand if you don't consume? The biggest consumption is to start a war. The politicians are the puppets of the captains of the defense industry. Yet there is still something that stands behind the captains of the defense industry. You should try to uncover it yourself. Meanwhile, Peter, why should you be upset?

**Senge:** I want to go to the next bus stop to catch the bus.

**Nan:** I have been standing at the bus stop for 87 years without getting on any bus so far. Buses arrived a few times but I didn't take the ride for they were the wrong buses.

**Participant:** I am from the States. About a year ago I spent one month in retreat in the U.S. I did sitting meditation four times a day, each time for two hours. The rest of the time was used on reading scriptures, meditative walking, and reciting mantras. I was very tense during the retreat. Having listened to what the Master just said I suspect that perhaps I had been concentrating with too much intensity.

**Nan:** The harder you force yourself to concentrate, the more difficult the meditation becomes. Just relax, it will come easily. When you practice meditating on the Buddha, don't think you have to visualize the real Buddha. Begin by trying to meditate on the drawn images of the Buddha. A mental image of that will be a good way to begin. Can you do that?

**Participant:** I can't picture that image.

**Nan:** You are putting too much effort into it. Where are you from?

**Participant:** I am from California.

**Nan:** When I mention California can you easily recall the image of your home in your mind?

**Participant:** Yes.

**Nan:** Right! That's a kind of meditation already. The same applies to recalling the drawn images of the Buddha. You tried too hard picturing a living Buddha standing in front of you. That won't work for you. You will find that the more relaxed you are the clearer the mental image becomes. You probably have a girl friend. Her image is in your mind even if you don't consciously think of her. The Sixth Dalai Lama wrote in one of his famous "love poems" that had he pursued Buddhahood with the same zeal for love, he would have turned into a Buddha in that very life time already! (若把此心移學道，即身成佛又何難?) You should meditate on the Buddha the same way you think of your loved ones, always keeping that image in your mind. Can you be more relaxed now?

**Participant:** Yes.

Session Five

**Nan:** Since you talked about life span, I will tell you how the Chinese culture perceives life. The Chinese culture believes that how long a man lives is governed by the Northern Star and Yama (閻王), the god of the dead. Commit one bad deed and then a point is taken away from you. The Northern Star and Yama keep the scores for you - and the two cross check their books. If too many points were deducted, your life may be terminated. If you have done some good deeds, points are added to your score card. This is how the Chinese think about good and evil and life and death.

For the monks and nuns, Yama keeps a separate set of score cards. One mispronunciation of the words in the scriptures during chanting is a demerit. Those who have attained the ultimate fruit will be elevated from the jurisdictions of the Northern Star deity and Yama. For those who haven't, Yama still has jurisdiction. However, there is a representative from Shakyamuni to wait on them in hell – the Earth-Store Bodhisattva (Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva 地藏王菩薩).

You are probably familiar with this expression: “If I don't enter hell, who will?” This is the vow made by the Earth-Store Bodhisattva. Those who have not attained the ultimate fruit will be sent by Yama to the Earth-Store Bodhisattva who keeps an animal that looks like a dog with a long horn on its head. If a person lies during questioning the animal will jump forward and stab him with its horn. In Chinese opera, there is an emblem symbolizing this animal on the hat of a judge. It is treated with great respect. This is a sober reminder to the monks and nuns: Don't slacken off or you will pay elsewhere.

If you wish to write a book on the religious beliefs of the Chinese I will tell you more about it. That will be quite fun indeed and will really be an eye opener for the Americans.

The gods in Chinese culture have rankings. The Buddhists talk about three realms: the desire realm, the form realm and the formless realm. What I just told you are within the desire realm. On each different level there is a different god in charge. The Maha



Brahman (大梵天) in the Hindu tradition is a universal god. But the Maha Brahman according to the Buddhists is a lower level god in the form realm. The top level god in the form realm is called Mahesvara (大自在天).

The Chinese culture believes, and so do the Hindus, a god can fall if he doesn't do a good job in his duties. A better one, more virtuous one, can replace the fallen god. This is absolutely a democratic system reflecting the moral perception of the Eastern religions. Unfortunately none of the Western scholars studying the Eastern cultures have paid any attention to this. There is a guiding principle behind either democracy or dictatorship by monarchs. What principle? - cause and effect. Whatever you sow, so will you reap. Not even the gods can escape from this principle.

The God as depicted by the Catholics and Christians is an absolute dictator. It appears that he created the effects for others but he is never caught by the cause and effect. Isn't that interesting?

There is a great Chinese classic fiction titled "Journey to the West" (Monkey 西遊記) which has an English translation. Have you read it?

**Senge:** No, I have not.

**Nan:** The hero of the tale is a monkey named Sun Wukong. What does the monkey stand for? He stands for our mind. The monkey challenged all the gods and Yama. He was a hyper active monkey born out of a rock on an island located in the continent of Purvavideha (東勝神洲). Later on the monkey pursued the cultivation path under his master Subhuti (須菩提) who was one of the ten great disciples of the Buddha and was known as one who had the best comprehension of emptiness. Subhuti really disliked the monkey for he was a mischievous yet intelligent student. The mischievous ones are usually intelligent. Therefore I say, naiveté equals dullness and cleverness equals slickness. You can't find one that is both clever and naïve.

Being a clever one, the monkey quickly learned to master magical power and could transform his body at will - but he did not attain enlightenment. Eventually the monkey was expelled by his master for flaring his magical power. Also, the monkey was forbidden to claim the lineage. If he should do so, the master would undo all his magical power. Subhuti and I share the same principle: no one is allowed to claim to be a disciple of mine.

Having been expelled, the monkey went straight to Yama to check if his name was registered on the Book of Life and Death. Indeed he found his name on record so he crossed his name out – a bit like jamming the computer memory with virus. Accordingly the monkey was liberated forever from life and death. Even Yama couldn't stop him.

Next the monkey went to the bottom of the sea to “borrow” a weapon from the Dragon King of the Ocean. The King showed all his weaponry to the monkey but none of them would satisfy him. So the King had to travel with the monkey to the deepest place in the sea to search for something else. The monkey eventually set his eye on a wonder needle that can subdue the sea (定海神針). The needle can turn soft or hard and become long or short. Where is the bottom of the sea? We have it in our body which is made 70% of water and 30% of bones and flesh, just as the world is made up 70% of ocean water and 30% of land.

The monkey took the wonder needle and placed it in his ear. According to the Chinese medicine tradition, the ear is linked to the sea of Qi (耳通氣海). The needle was then known as the “as-you-will golden banded cudgel” (如意金箍棒), which the monkey used to smash the palaces in heaven and hell. In fact we have this thing as well – it's the male's penis.

The monkey is our mind and consciousness which, with the cudgel, can ruin the world. To practice is to tame the monkey (i.e. the mind and consciousness) and turn it into Buddha – obviously not an easy task. The monkey received from his master the name of

Wukong which means awakened to emptiness, realizing the impermanence of the rising and disappearing of the thoughts. Trying to catch our thoughts is as impossible as trying to catch the moon from its reflection in water.

Later, the monkey's pilgrimage was joined by a companion named Zhu Bajie (Pig of Eight Prohibitions) who represented our desire for food and lust for sex. With the right guidance the desires can be turned into the power for practice. Therefore the pig was named Wuneng (awakened to power).

Along the way they took another companion, a monk named Sha (sand) who became a porter for the group of pilgrims. He represented the heavy burdens of karma we are carrying. The monk was given the name of Wujing (awakened to purity). The path of practice is to purify our karmic obstacles.

There was also a white horse, representing the Qi, to carry Tang Seng (the monk of the Tang Dynasty) who was leading the entourage to India to retrieve the Buddhist scriptures for China. Tang Seng represented our true nature so he was the leader. To retrieve the scriptures was a metaphor for the path of cultivation practice.

This fiction depicted the religious systems in the Oriental cultures of India and China, which pronounce the unity of heaven and mankind. Sun Wukong successfully protected Tang Seng for the pilgrimage, overcoming 81 obstacles along the way. Each obstacle was a metaphor for a particular obstacle arising out of our daily life. There were a few demons that Sun Wukong couldn't subdue. One of such demons lived in a bottomless hole which was a metaphor for our digestive system from mouth to anus – as well as a metaphor for our endless desires.

So the Journey to the West is much more than a great fiction or Chinese fairy tale. Embedded in the adventure was the spiritual belief held by the Indians and the Chinese of the unity of heaven and man. There are much, much more profundities embedded in the fiction.

**Senge:** The Western religion talks about the doctrine of Original Sin.

**Nan:** It shouldn't have been called the Original Sin. This is a misnomer. It's not a sin, but a force of life that is called karma in Buddhism. It was the driving force behind our desires for food, sex, etc. The force is not a sin. It is neither good nor bad, just a force of the instincts. The sin arises when the desire for food or sex becomes an action that harms yourself or another person.

**Senge:** About twenty years ago a group of Americans went to Uganda in Africa to help the natives. They found the natives all wearing a brilliant smile, much different than the smiles of the Southern Africans, Europeans or Americans. So these Americans concluded that the natives smiled so brilliantly because they had never been sold on the idea of the Original Sin by the Westerners. When we learn that we were born with Original Sin we can laugh no more.

**Nan:** Indeed.

## Chapter 3

November 12-14, 2005

November 12, 2005

### Casual Conversation with Guests

**Nan:** Everyone please sit. Peter Senge, you are having a sore throat so just sit and rest. I will treat you all with some fine Chinese tea. The Japanese have made drinking tea into a ceremony. My tea will cost about two US Dollars a cup – I am not joking! I will show you how the Chinese drink the tea.

Peter Senge, you can take the medicine now and you will feel better in half an hour. The second pack of medicine will sooth your throat. Don't swallow it. Just keep it in your mouth.

Ms. Li, so you are from the Center for Research and Development. The lady over there is Amber. She is a Lebanese and a friend of Peter Senge. She is in internet education systems for the children of developing nations. This is good. Children should be encouraged to recite from memory, which was the way children were educated in both the East and West before the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Recitation in those days was encouraged. Some American researchers have found that recitation and reading Chinese characters can improve the memory function of the brain. We should therefore bring this education practice back, if only for that.

You watch how he is making the tea now – there is a reason for each step. This is our way of enjoying tea. In Japan, they must have a dedicated table for it; you need to dress

accordingly and sip the tea slowly. The Japanese learned tea drinking from China and made it into a ceremonial Chado with all the glitters.

The Great Red Rope Tea is considered the best of the fine teas in China. This is the Rock Tea from the Wuyi Mountains. Once you have tasted it you will never want to drink any other teas for they all pale in comparison. Peter Senge, take three cups of this tea. Your throat will feel relieved. You will sweat a little bit.

Peter Senge, what was your impression after visiting Miaogang? Let them show you the aerial video. The site occupies an area of 300 Chinese acres and was done according to my design! We will build all kinds research facilities on the campus. You didn't walk through the linking corridors today. We put sixteen features there. The corridor connecting all three buildings is for walking meditation and practicing martial arts on snowy or raining days. The facilities cost a lot. We are doing it in the spirit of building an enterprise. No expenses were spared. We are doing it no matter how much it costs.

**Li:** May I ask the Master a question?

**Nan:** Oh, don't be so formal. What's your question?

**Li:** Over the past decade I have been leading a project studying entrepreneurs. In the process I noticed that a majority of the successful businessmen were not happy despite their business achievements.

**Nan:** That's right.

**Li:** So, we'd like to help the business people add a dimension of humanity, to inject more vigor and dynamics into them and into their organizations. I'd appreciate your comments on how we can help these people.

**Nan:** My comments are of no use. Don't listen to me. It can't be helped. I am being honest. My view is directly opposite to yours.

Unfortunately I see the entrepreneurs you referred to as a group of errant business people. Simply put, they went from rags to riches on the occasion of a sudden relaxation in economic controls post the Cultural Revolution. They had no prior experience running businesses, knew nothing about commerce. All of a sudden they rose to become business owners largely on speculations and all kinds of improprieties.

In the past twenty years, this country has not produced genuinely good businessmen. They rose on the occasion but lacked the mental capacity, knowledge and expertise. You say many of them have made big fortunes but none of them are truly rich, according to my observation. Their businesses are built on hollow grounds. Their minds are not at ease for their hearts are empty. The root problem is with the elementary education in this country. This is not just an issue of management. You can't correct the problem with improvements in managerial skills. The elementary education is the place to start. My advice to you is to carry on with whatever you are doing. It will do good. And that is my straight forward comment.

**Li:** At this morning's speech at Zhejiang University, Peter Senge said a majority of the population in the modern society are economic animals or economic people. Some of the students in the audience disagreed with him.

**Nan:** That was because the students couldn't understand him. The young students wouldn't have understood what I have just told you. But you could. People over a certain age group would understand and agree with me.

I say we don't have good businessmen but rather "errant people of business." Everything can be called "an enterprise" today. What does "enterprise" mean in the Chinese language? Not so many seem to care any more. "Enterprise," in the Chinese language, means the carrying on of a purposeful endeavor that brings hope to people and that makes

contributions to society. An enterprise is to last, passing on from generation to generation, not short term oriented. This, however, is not how people understand it to be. Nowadays an enterprise is understood to be a company whose sole purpose is making money. This is totally wrong. That's why I say we don't have truly good businessmen.

Prior to the Sino-Japanese War, or World War II, we had some decent businessmen in China. They built and ran the businesses to last. Those are real enterprises. Today's businesses are all short term oriented. Making money is the sole purpose, disregarding the spirit of enterprising. Short, cheap and quick are like mantras to the business people today. This is no enterprise at all.

Not only in China, there are no real good businessmen around – may be not in the whole world – in Southeast Asia, Korea, Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore ... all the businesses there are going for short, cheap, and quick, for quick profits, for doubling the money. This is speculating, not enterprising.

“Speculator” is a term used in the text books. In the context of China a special term was coined for proprietors: “Dao Ye” (倒爺). Dao Ye is not necessarily someone who speculates. This name was completely random. It referred to those daring proprietors who emerged at the end of the Cultural Revolution wandering around the country buying and selling all kinds of merchandise, without knowing if economic liberation was going to last. In the old days of the Republic, these people were called proprietors or, in ancient China, the “Hang Shang” (行商), meaning traveling merchants. The Communists called these people “Dao Ye,” a derogatory name implying unscrupulous practices were employed. I think it was unfair. They were only trying to make a living. Of course, given the socialism/communism environment at the time, merchants were considered the hideous class, the social outcasts.

In Chinese culture, merchants are those who travel around. Those who stay in one location become shop owners. To start a factory is called “Zuo Guo” (坐賈), meaning to



invest. Combined, “Hang Shang Zuo Guo” becomes a term referring to doing business in general.

The old school businessmen in China believed in “triple capital.” For instance, if a factory will cost a billion to build then three billion in capital is required to start a business that can last hundreds of years. In addition to the first one billion in building the factory, you need another one billion for working capital because your customers usually do not pay for your shipments immediately. On top of all that, you need another billion as your emergency reserve fund for rainy days.

Nowadays, you see people with ten thousand dollars who claim to have a million. He then starts borrowing from unsuspecting people, from friends to begin with and, in the end, from the banks. If he owes more, he owes his creditors. I never believe the newspaper story that so and so is worth so much. Those figures are totally random. When these people fail, they leave the banks and society to count the losses. Some businessmen they are!

The two gentlemen sitting here tonight are my good friends. They run big businesses and are wealthy people. But I would never ask them to support my project in Miaogang. I have to carry on the project on my own, not taking money from friends, banks or the society. I do what I can afford, without borrowing. If the project should lose money, it will be for my account only. This is enterprising according to my definition.

People talk about enterprise management all the time. The most important one to be managed in a business is the boss. His ideas, character and integrity have to be well managed. The boss is a leader. Leaders must have leadership, have vision, must have so many qualities. I don't see real business leaders around. The gentlemen here are my good friends but they are not up to my standards for a boss.

A majority of today's bosses lack self-management. They don't deserve my respect. Equally I don't have much respect for those armed with graduate degrees. Why bother to

obtain a doctor's degree - so that you can serve someone who does not have higher education? The man without a degree can hire a thousand people with doctor degrees, as long as he has the money.

**Li:** Many of today's bosses have no reverence for anything. I see the bosses who are here tonight have lots of reverence for you. They seem to like being watched over by you.

**Nan:** I am afraid there is not much to revere in today's society. I don't watch over their shoulders. We are friends because we are not in business together. If we are, and I am the boss, I certainly would treat them differently.

If I am running a business, we won't live our lives any differently. I will still treat them as if they were my family. But, I will be very strict if mistakes were made. I won't tolerate it. For instance, the man who made tea for us - and the gentleman here - they were government officials. They quit their political career to stay with me. Whenever I see something not properly handled, I will tell them so immediately, and in a straight face. We don't take it personally. Once the matter is behind us, we talk and laugh together.

A businessman should have this kind of quality, and then he will be a good businessman, a good leader or even a true political leader.

**Li:** You certainly have the charisma.

**Nan:** Oh, no, I don't. If I do, I will be out there charming people.

Take the couple sitting here. He is the chairman of a small, decent company. We first met when I was living the U.S. She has a Masters degree. He has a PhD from Stanford and, at the time, was a rising star at the World Bank. They were regular guests at my place, just as what we have here - a table of guests of all nationalities. One night, I told them it was about time that they pack up and move the whole family to China. They had many concerns about starting something in China. One, he was from Taiwan. Second, he had a

PhD degree in macro economics from Stanford. Third, her father was a staunch fighter against the communists, being a lieutenant general with the Taiwan military (of course he has now made peace with the Chinese communists). You know what? Despite these concerns, they listened to my advice and moved to China.

After moving to China, she started to complain nonstop about Shanghai and about the community. I asked her, “Why don’t you leave?” She said, “I won’t. Why? This is my country!” Now they own several factories with six or seven thousand employees. So I tell them they are stuck. If every employee has a family of four, that means there are twenty even thirty thousand people who are dependent on your business. Have no fear. You have to carry on. It is no longer a business. It is serving the society with an enterprising spirit.

**Participant:** In the English language, a company means a group of people doing things together.

**Nan:** That’s right. The same is also reflected in the Japanese translation for “company.”

I said one of the problems in the business world was poor elementary education. That is why I always advocate for better education for the children. I am afraid the younger generations are unfit to be parents. Yet they bear children irresponsibly. How do you expect them to educate their young? Don’t listen to me. I am the one who likes to present the opposite views. The kids of the best educated parents usually end up with getting the worst upbringing. Both parents are out working, leaving the kids with the nannies who are poorly educated.

Back on the subject of management, the place to start is self management. However, the individuals have become unmanageable. All over the world, a typical college graduate is hunting for the highest paid job when he joins the workforce. This is the first move. Next, after being trained by a firm for six months or so, he is out fishing for another job that pays more. Soon he will move on to a third firm. He is never loyal to his job. The

employer also knows the fellow is a job hopper - but what can the firm do when the whole generation is like that?

In my days, a young man starts a job first as an apprentice for three years. He is given room and board but no pay. After completion of apprenticeship, he will be entitled to pay which will be increased annually. Another five or six years later, he will then be considered mature enough to carry on his own trade.

Today you hire a young man with a graduate degree. Beware, he has a private agenda. He is here to take, not to give. He learns on the job while getting a high pay. Once he learned the tricks from you he will move on. He doesn't stick around. This is a cultural issue.

I take a philosophical approach on this problem. While I admit that the human society has progressed on the industrial and commercial fronts, we are regressing, generation by generation on the cultural and spiritual fronts. The more developed we are industrially and commercially, the more decay we suffer in the spheres of humanity and morality. It will only get worse in the days to come. That's why I say studying is of no use in today's China. The same for education. They can't change the people. Besides, the old family and marriage systems will fall by the wayside in tomorrow's world. Young men and women do not believe in marriage anymore. They'd rather stay as friends without commitments.

There is a catching line among the young people in China: "To marry is wrong. To have a baby is more wrong. To divorce is redeeming. To remarry is hopeless." You have all had higher education but, for example, can you cook? You can't even take care of the various basics of your daily life. So you always eat out – no wonder the restaurants are full all the time.

This is a serious problem. I apologize for rambling on for so long. You just go ahead with your research. Take your time. I would like to start a research institute, too. I will take my time doing it.

Today management training programs are offered at every university. I say some of them are there to make money for the university. The education system of the entire world is a mistake, according to me. We need to do lots of reflection on that. The education system needs an overhaul. Students no longer acquire knowledge from formal schooling – from elementary school and all the way to university. They get degrees so as to make a living. You say degree is just a label. Well, that's a nice way to put it. Good for you. So degrees are labels and solid knowledge is of no concern here. This is indeed serious.

Internet education for children is a means to conduct education. It will not resolve the root problem of education. What's the root problem? It is something to contemplate on.

Historically in Europe and America, religious concepts were threaded into education. The religious belief taught people to do good and don't do evil. God will punish you if you don't follow. Such concepts are gone. What's there to replace the religious belief? What's there to replace the belief in God? China has the same problem.

As far as I am aware, before the 20<sup>th</sup> century, recitation was taught in grammar classes all over the world. After the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, the education theory advocated by American John Dewey began to have its influence on a global scale and now we have a system that is oriented toward pragmatism. All educators should take a good reflection and reinstate recitation.

The objective of education, according to the prevailing believe, is for students to gather information and learn skills to make a living, not to acquire knowledge. Gone are inquiries into the foundations of humanity and human nature. We have forgotten how to be a human being.

Many of my old American acquaintance have passed away. Those who remain today, in their 70's and 80's, some of them soldiers, are very worried about the education system in the U.S. They are very pessimistic. The core issue in American education is the issue of religion. Prior to the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, America, then predominantly influenced by

Christianity, had strict norms for education and the society in general. Today, religion has retreated from American education system which has become very liberal.

The American culture lacks a center. A new one has yet to take shape while the old one is already destroyed. China is no exception and so are the European countries. I was in France years ago. One night a student of mine, a medicine doctor there, suggested that I go out with him, alone. He made it so secretive so I asked if he was going to take me to watch a nude show or something. He said, “No such luck. I am taking you to worship something of vital importance, to see how the young people like me are such staunch opponents of freedom and democracy!”

I told him that it was the French who sold the Americans on freedom and democracy. Are you opposing them? He said yes and told me how he hated these ideas. He went on to tell me that they wanted to restore the monarchy in France. He took me to the square where Louis XIV was executed on the guillotine! Every year on the anniversary day many people, like 3,000 or so, would gather there to pay their tributes to the King. They blamed freedom and democracy for the destruction of the society. This tells you that people in Europe, too, have lost that center on which their mind can gravitate.

I have said it before. The world today is shaped by the ideas of four thinkers: the evolution theory of Charles Darwin, the sexual psychology of Sigmund Freud, the analysis of capitalism of Karl Marx and the consumption economic theory of John Keynes. I am not in favor at all that consumption can create productivity. The ultimate consumption is war! These four ideas have messed up the world. The bottom of it is this: Not just the Americans and the Chinese, but the entire human race has lost the center of faith and belief.

There is more. We went to a famous Catholic cathedral in Paris. I remember vividly they had cafés in the street and bird droppings were all over the tables at which people sat drinking coffee. The cathedral was empty inside. That was such a magnificent cathedral but no one cared to go inside! I was told that very few French people wanted to become

priests or nuns anymore. People hated it. Christianity was at the heart of Western culture. Now that the religion is gone but they had found nothing to replace it.

**Participant:** There is a force of neo-conservatism in the U.S. that advocates strict moral behaviors.

**Nan:** I know. The Mormons in Utah is a case in point. I doubt they will make a difference to the general scheme of things. Just another new movement and won't be successful. Honestly, our hope now is on the sciences.

Peter Senge - we will discuss this topic the day after tomorrow – our hope is on the emerging researches in the fields of cognitive science and life science. It is very important so I hope you can make the switch over. In your next visit, I will lecture on cognitive and life sciences for you. You can switch your identity from a guru of management to a guru of cognitive science. That will do. This stuff is available from my shop only. You can't find it at any other places in the world. I am bragging but you ought to know that I am turning 90 very soon. Better buy it now or it's gone – like an old Chinese saying: “You won't see my shop again once you pass this village.”

You are famous for your achievements in management science. You can make the impact if you make the switch. They are researching cognitive science at Harvard and Duke. I read their published reports. It's laughable. They are so far off! You should consider taking it up at your Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The cognitive science and life sciences need to dig deeper. As for what this is leading to, well, that's another story. When we complete the facilities at Miaogang we can begin a rigorous study on this topic. That may take a few months time. As a foundation, you will need to study the doctrines of the Mind-Only School. Then you can add the experiments of Dhyana meditation with reference to scientific researches.

November 13, 2005

### Casual Conversations

**Amber:** Why do the Buddhist monks wear yellow robes?

**Nan:** It was not prescribed anywhere that the monks had to wear yellow. Shakyamuni set the rules that monks and nuns should only wear ragged clothing, i.e. rags stitched together, regardless of any color. A preference for color is just an attachment to beauty, which is wrong for the ones on spiritual path. Yellow was the color symbolizing royalty for the Kings in Burma. It was out of the highest respect for the monks that they changed the color of the robes to yellow. It was not laid down by Shakyamuni.

**Amber:** There is a theory that says each person will benefit from specific colors. A person should wear clothing of certain color and see which color suits him better.

**Nan:** Chinese medical theory knew all about this a few thousand years ago. Different colors correspond to different organs such as the heart, liver, spleen, lung and kidney. Therefore the color for each person varies, depending on the person's health condition.

Take clothing for instance, if you are exporting textiles for the Caucasian market, red will go well with black. The Chinese would prefer green with black. Of course I am only generalizing. At the individual level the preferences will be all different. Each person's eyes are different from one another. Also, the color preference is related to the health condition of the individual.

There are medical researches being conducted on the effects of using colors in treatments. It is still at a preliminary stage. Also, just as colors, sounds can be used in treatments as well – different sounds for different treatments. The Chinese talked about sounds and colors all the time. This could have been a serious subject for scientific study. The



Westerners are different from the Chinese in their approaches when it comes to pursuing a study or research. They are more rigorous and serious. The Chinese, however, tend to make literature out of studies with a more relaxed attitude. Each approach has its pros and cons.

Other than colors and sounds, tastes, too, can have strong effects. They not only stay vibrantly in memory but sometimes are projected by the memory to manifest in colors, sounds and tastes.

**Senge:** I still find the Aggregate of Procession (Tendency) difficult to understand.

**Nan:** It's hard to comprehend this one – and the same for the Aggregate of Consciousness. The revolutions of planet earth, the sun and the whole universe, any changes of the physical world – down to the changes of the smallest particles – are all functions of the Procession Aggregate. It is the power, the original force.

**Amber:** How do we unite all peoples of the world?

**Nan:** This is hard. Men have been searching for a solution for thousands of years – and still in vain. “All are brethren, within the space of the four seas” (四海之內皆兄弟也). This was a quote of Zi Xia (子夏) from the Analects of Confucius. Today we should say all are brethren within the space of the five Oceans. But, he did not say that the birds and pigs are our brethren. In that respect the teaching of the Confucius is the same as that of Jesus. Shakyamuni's teaching is different – he said birds, bacteria and ants, all the same, are our brethren.

**Participant:** I'd like to ask the Master what “surging and ceasing” (生滅) means.

**Nan:** They mean movement and stillness or coming and going.

**Participant:** Then what is life, to live the life?

**Nan:** This is a good question. It is a concept of surging in motion. In the Chinese language “live” and “life” are conceptually different but they are commonly used together to form one term. Of course, ceasing follows arising. This is the law of nature. “Life,” as used in the life science in the English language, means the living phenomenon of an animal, which is not the “life” I am talking about.

All these are academic definitions, as are the translations you are doing for me. Let me use the most graphic language and you will catch it immediately. A man and a woman having sex is “live.” The orgasm is “life.” Jesus, Confucius, all the gurus used the plainest language so that they were understood easily. The teachings became complicated as they passed through the mouths of the learned people. So, Peter Senge you pay attention to this. If you have an erection during meditation – that would be “live.” It is the surging in motion of the living force, which is a good sign. But don’t you carry it to making “life!”

**Participant:** Then is intermediary body a form of life?

**Nan:** The intermediary body is the body in an intermediary existence following the death of this body, before it is turned into a life form of any of the Six Destinies (六道). It is a mind-made body (意生身) in the yin realm. A ghost is another form of life. As the intermediary body is turned into a ghost it ceases to be an intermediary body. It has become a ghost. (The Six Destinies are: god, asura, human, hell, hungry ghost and animal).

**Participant:** Is a bacteria a form of life?

**Nan:** It is a form of life.

**Participant:** We usually think of ourselves as one life. In fact there are countless lives in our body.

**Nan:** That is true. Our body is a cosmos of lives. According to the Chinese Taoists, the universe is a body, is a life, like a human body. The human body is a small universe with countless lives and cells in there.

**Participant:** Then is a nation a life?

**Nan:** You may say so although a nation, or a geographic region, is a man-made concept. This applies to an ethnic group, a nation, a family, a planet, a universe, all the same. In the Chinese language and concept, universe is expressed in a combination of two characters: Yu (宇) and Zhou (宙). Yu is time while Zhou is space. Yu and Zhou in combination is the pairing of infinite space with infinite time. In the English language, universe is a concept of space only, of heaven and earth. Today, when people speak of universe (even in Chinese) they are referring to the concept used in the English language.

Yu is time and Zhou is space. Time is a continuum; it is man-made, a relative rather than an absolute. Time is absolutely a concept of relativity. Beware! Let's take the human emotions as an example. When one is in pain, a second may seem a hundred years long. Conversely, a hundred years may seem like only a second when one is in joy. This is the time for sensations. There is time for life. Some people live a hundred years while some may live only ten. Some organisms live from morning to nightfall only. Some organisms can live ten thousand years. So the times for life are different in each case; it's still a relative concept.

There is also time for the planets. Like, in Buddhism and Chinese literature we say a day in the moon is a month on earth. A day in the sun is a year on earth. In another world a day there is a year in the sun. Therefore the universe is infinite. So, is it time that constitutes space or the other way around? There is no conclusion yet.

**Participant:** Is space also a relative concept?

**Nan:** Absolutely. All things exist in real emptiness. It is like the “zero” in mathematics. The number “one” precedes all other numbers but “zero” precedes “one.” “Zero” represents not just nothing but also the unknown. So “zero” is not no-thing. It is the same as emptiness – emptiness is being and being is emptiness.

**Participant:** Ghosts probably see space differently than human do?

**Nan:** That’s right. All lives, such as fish, chicken, ducks and human, see space differently - not only in sizes but also in shapes. Cattle have large eyes. The Chinese farmers say all things are magnified through the eyes of the cattle so humans are seen by the cattle as many times larger. Geese have very small eyes therefore things appear smaller than they are. That’s why geese would attack people if we approach them. The Chinese has an expression to insult those who treat others with contempt. They say you see others through a dog’s eyes. Indeed, dogs tend to bark more often at those dressed like beggars than at those dressed smartly.

Let alone ghosts, children’s perception of time is different from the adults’. If a child is bored, even a short while can seem very long and he will fall asleep feeling tired. If he is excited, he can play the whole day not feeling tired.

I have a habit of reminding people to put on extra clothes. You say, “Why? It is over thirty degrees Celsius.” But that is the outdoor temperature according to the weather report by the Shanghai weather bureau. Mind you, Shanghai has several districts spreading over a very large area. Also we have to take into account the relative humidity and barometer readings. What I want to say is there is no absolute measurement of temperature to all, for each individual’s feeling for temperature is different. I am more sensitive to chills while he can be more sensitive to heat. Look, he is sitting here in a silk outfit but I am wearing leather. We have different sensitivities for temperature.

Environments and habits can also have their affects. People who grew up in desert or by the sea tend to speak loudly. I grew up by the sea so I speak with a loud voice.

Do you know how the Avatamsaka Sutra (華嚴經) come about? Around 500 years following Shakyamuni's passing away, there was a Bodhisattva Nagarjuna (in India) who thought he had surpassed Shakyamuni and wanted to start a new religion of his own. He believed he had read all the Buddhist sutras there were in the world until he encountered the Dragon King of the Ocean who took him to the Dragon Palace and allowed him free access to the library there. Nagarjuna was asked to ride a horse so that he could view all the sutras quickly – only the titles! After spent three months on the horse's back, Nagarjuna couldn't reach the end of the library's collection. In the end he checked out the Avatamsaka Sutra which has 100,000 verses!

The Chinese translation of the Avatamsaka Sutra has 80 volumes, which is only one ten-thousandth of the length of the original sutra. Later on people referred to this as “riding a horse to read the sutras' titles” (走馬看經題). The Taoist Zhuang Zi said, “My life is limited but not so the knowledge. To pursue the limitless with that which is limited is perilous. Should one still wish to pursue knowledge, the consequence is so predictable” (吾生也有涯，而知也無涯，以有涯隨無涯，殆矣，已而為知者，殆而已矣). Indeed, anyone who wants to spend his limited life pursuing immeasurable knowledge is certainly most stupid and is one in peril.

**Senge:** I would like to know what the Master think the future direction of the cognitive science should be.

**Nan:** To take it seriously, cognitive science is the ultimate pursuit for all sciences. Where did the ability of perception for human – and all living beings – come from? How did it start? The quest is not just an intellectual exercise. It should be a cross-disciplinary research involving many different fields, including all medical disciplines, neurology for sure, physics and chemistry. It falls under the realm of epistemology, a branch of philosophy that investigates the origin of human knowledge. The prevailing conclusion attributes the cognitive power to the brain. In fact it's not the brain.

For instance, this lady here had a large tumor removed from her brain five or six years ago. The surgeons had to open her skull to do the operation. Earlier this year, another tumor was discovered in the brain so she went to the U.S. for the operation. This time the doctors used laser beams for the surgery and no incision was made. Laser light was beamed from about one inch away from her head. She was beamed 138 times.

The doctors there said the patient should not feel anything, in theory. But she could clearly feel with each beaming and knew where it went. After the surgery the doctor asked her if she felt anything. She said she felt every single beaming. The doctor couldn't believe it but she seemed all normal. Mind you, the doctor was beaming from outside of her head, without making contacts. That's one case for you. I am not drawing any conclusion for you.

Years ago, I read on a journal that a man had his leg amputated but he still felt pain at where the leg was. So to relieve him of his pain, every week the doctor gave him a syringe injection at where his leg was. There are many similar cases reported. So life is not exactly like what the scientists would have us believe. This is the second piece of information.

A famous optometrist in Hong Kong, rated the best eye doctor in China, is having that lady as a research subject. She is clinically examined to be near blind and she needs to wear corrective lenses with strengths of up to -12D. But she can see well with contact lenses of only -7D. The doctor was amazed. Sometimes she does not wear any lens at all and has no problem seeing and walking around. The doctor found it very intriguing and asked how she did it. She said it had always been like that for her and she felt quite normal. This is the third piece of information.

We all know that the optic nerves are located in the back of the skull and the eye balls are at the front. To be precise, it is the mind that sees, not the eyes. The famous Surangama Sutra (楞嚴經) has a section titled, "In quest of the mind in seven places and debate regarding the sight in eight rounds" (七處徵心, 八還辯見) where, in the beginning, the

investigation was about the mind. Then the discussion turned to sight. There were many rounds of back and forth discussion on seeing the sight. What is seeing? What was the first function that enabled our eyes to see? These are issues for the cognitive science.

I believe that cognitive science and life science are going to be the main stream science. So my advice for you, Peter Senge, the guru of management science, you had better make the switch. If you do you will have a chance becoming the leading figure in this field, provided you make an early move. But, as I told you yesterday, it is sold at the one and only shop – my shop. Once this shop closes the supply will be lost forever.

If you really wish to study life science and cognitive science, I suggest that you don't follow the approaches they are taking in the U.S. Those researchers in the U.S. are investigating whether there is a soul that enters the embryo. They made lots of video documentaries. I am afraid they are taking the long road.

**Participant:** Master, the Taoists hold the view that our root is in the emptiness...

**Nan:** Which Taoist book says so? That came from me, not the Taoists. That is one of the original doctrines by me. You just sold me off to the Taoists for nothing. Ha ha...

**Senge:** Some of the scientists who collaborated with the Dalai Lama are my good friends. Not long ago they had an open forum at MIT, with the participation of five or six lamas, to discuss cognitive science. However, the lamas and the scientists couldn't communicate with each other. Both sides were very sincere but there was a big gap in between with respect to what the mind really was.

**Nan:** I feel they are scratching on the surface only. It's way off. These Buddhist – and I mean it with all frankness – have only a half baked understanding of Buddhism. Further, when it comes to experiential practice, they have not even reached the ground level. Thirdly, they are not familiar with Western culture, science and approaches. Conversely the Western scientists are equally ignorant of the practice. Of course they had problems

in communication because neither side could see things from the perspectives of the other side. What's more, experiential practice, which was a must for the research to be meaningful, was clearly lacking. It is natural that kind of exchange will bear no fruit at all.

These lamas probably were never exposed to Western philosophies, nor were they conversant in logic, so they could not understand the approaches and methodologies employed by the other side. The lamas' thinking pattern was shaped by the Buddhist scriptures – and they haven't really digested the scriptures well enough. How was communication possible? It's all a waste. Take our conversation here, for example, I wanted to make sure that you really got it so I said something about an erection, among other unsanitized things. You had a good laugh and you got it. This is a matter of approach.

There is a basic language common to all human beings, such as sex and eating. Expressed through this basic language people will understand immediately. The communication between the East and West should be like this. One side wants to sell forks and knives while the other side promotes the advantages of chopsticks. They will never make the connection.

**Amber:** What do we do then?

**Nan:** Like this dish of shrimp in front of you. Take the shrimp with your fingers, don't struggle with chopsticks. You will know the taste of it once you have it. So don't get boxed in by forms or tools. Every nation, every culture and belief has forms. Once the forms are dropped, communications will come easy.

I have a student who is French. She and her husband came to China to visit me. The husband does not speak a word of Chinese. One night he did not return for dinner. I was worried. Later that night, he came back and said he had fried rice with eggs at a Chinese restaurant. I asked if anyone had translated for him. He said, "I was not sure if I was



smart or the Chinese were smart but I went in and just gestured to the waiter the action of frying rice with eggs and, voilà, out came the dish I ordered.”

**Participant:** Wasn't it a good thing that the lamas follow the scriptures in their thinking?

**Nan:** It's good for his own sake but it won't be effective for communicating with others. It's not just thinking patterns that matter. There are patterns for languages, presentations, etc. Education is never easy. I have seen that many people trained under the Buddhist education system turned out to be very narrow minded persons that don't want to learn anything else, and naturally they don't know anything other than Buddhism.

People tend to be confined by habits, the habits of thinking and the habits of presentation. For instance, someone trained in physics may refer everything to Einstein's theories. He doesn't know anything beyond Einstein. This is habit.

**Senge:** That is the problem of communication. For the Westerners, the external world is a material one, a separate entity that is not communicating with us. What's next should be the recognition of our place in relation to the universe. It is not a universe that's separated from us.

**Nan:** Indeed. There appears to be a conflict of cultures between the East and West. The East stresses inner reflections while the West is more inquisitive about the external world. In fact, the two are one.

**Senge:** The American Indians believe all matters in the external world are alive. The average Western scientists do not hold that matter is alive. The Indians believe that mankind and the universe can live together in a balanced way. Human beings and the external world can benefit from each other and live better off. However, the Western scientists start with the objective of making use of the external world, instead of balancing with the external world.

**Nan:** That's right.

**Senge:** The funny thing is – the one who is financing the Indians' research is a science foundation of the American government. Why do they do this? Because the kids of the native Indians have been forced by the whites to attend schools where the teachings are basically anchored to the European traditions. In Australia, in the U.S., and in Canada, the children of the Indians and aboriginals all feel that the things they learn from schools are so different from the things that they have been brought up with. Often times, these children have trouble making the adjustment so they turn to heavy drinking.

**Nan:** Given the paths taken by both East and West, the conflicts are the same everywhere. The Chinese of today are losing that Chinese-ness and are becoming more like Westerners.

Today materialism is the mainstream in both the East and West. Many people think that materialism and idealism are mutually exclusive. In reality the two are one. You mentioned that the American culture was dominated by the Western culture. The Western culture is in effect an European culture that has its roots back with the ancient Greeks. Although materialists and idealists both existed in ancient Greece and they debated with each other all the time, the Greeks were fundamentally monists. It is not until later that the two schools became distinctly separate. The predominant culture in Europe and the U.S. is the epitome of materialism that pursues the external means. The idealism aspect had been completely abandoned.

Why did the West evolve in such a manner? The first and the second industrial revolutions have greatly advanced the development of industries and commerce. With the progress in science and technology, the Westerners lost their head. This fits a Buddhist expression: “galloping to quest the external” (向外馳求), running toward the external world like galloping horses. We are experiencing the third industrial revolution driven by high tech. This one has far more impact than the previous two. People are becoming more confused and the attentions are drawn outward. The time will come when people turn

their attentions inward. That's why I wish you can study the new science so that you can pull them back. No, not to pull them back but to stand in front of them to make them turn around.

So it was a fruitless exchange to ask those lamas or monks to the forum. They knew nothing about natural science, history of industrial revolution, or medicine. You can't carry on the dialogue.

**Senge:** There are many studies done measuring the brain waves and electrocardiograms of the lamas in meditation.

**Nan:** Yes, there should be more of this kind of test. But the first thing is to correctly assess the levels of the test subjects. I have done some of the tests myself. They connected the equipment to me to measure my brain waves and cardiograms. I told the scientist to observe the differences before and after I go into deep meditation. If the test subject does not possess some fundamental knowledge in science or certain mastery of Dhyana meditation, the test will not yield meaningful results.

It will be great for the tests we wish to do in Miaogang if, ideally, a device can be invented to show the thoughts in colors. For instance, if the fellow is thinking of something evil, black or blue colors will show on the device. Conversely white or yellow lights will show if he thinks of something virtuous.

This kind of test is not to confirm if a person has attained a certain level of practice or possesses certain power. It is to understand how the mind functions and to show how to reach the stillness of Samadhi and how physical boundaries are breached. Such technology is not yet available but is certainly something to look forward to. It will be a good way for the different cultures to communicate in the future. This belongs to the researches of life science and cognitive science.

If the questions of mind and matters are sorted out, it will have great impacts on the social sciences and political philosophies. Peter Senge, you are a teacher of management science. The entire political system is all about management.

**Senge:** There was a German that came with me during my previous visit. We talked about scientific researches and concluded that it was unrealistic to expect any significant achievements. This is because most of the scientific researches are sponsored by big corporations who want to make money from the researches. Therefore the scientists cannot have a free hand doing their work.

**Nan:** Yes, it is a big issue. The businessmen are dictating the American politics from behind the scene. It's all about money. It's all commercially driven. This is a mistake, a political pitfall and will become a disaster for the Americans. That's why I said yesterday there is no real good businessman in China. The same thing applies here. It all comes down to making money. "The merchants prefers profits to parting" (商人重利輕別離) was a line of a poem by Bai Juyi (白居易). Profiteering comes first.

All the academic researches of the world are hijacked by commercial motivations. China is of no exception. Therefore I don't hold the big universities in high regard. The teachers and scholars have become money chasers. They have lost that scholarly gusto. We should have it changed.

**Participant:** Wasn't it always like this - men die over money like birds die over feeds?

**Nan:** No, it wasn't always like this.

**Participant:** But the ancient historian Sima Qian (司馬遷) said so: "All those bustling, they came to gain; all those shoving, to gain they went" (天下熙熙，皆為利來；天下攘攘，皆為利往).

**Nan:** That was a sarcastic remark by Sima Qian. He didn't want to be blunt. We are dealing with the question of social evolution. The first and second industrial revolutions brought us developments in industries, commerce and technologies. This was a good thing. But the ensuing business expansion led to business competitions on a global scale. It was a means to an end but the end was lost. Due to the aid of knowledge, information and technology, industrial revolutions brought prosperity to people. In the end, people became money chasers.

I have said it so many times. Science and technology brought conveniences - not happiness – to mankind. In other words, science and technology brought more pain to mankind instead of peace. We need to start a new culture for mankind.

By themselves, the applied science and high-tech are not to blame. The subject of great importance is how they are employed to bring peace and harmony to mankind, to bring tranquility to life. Peter Senge, I am glad I haven't lost you so far.

If you are coming back again next year, I will ask my students in France and Germany to come together. They have all expressed interest.

**Amber:** Is there something I can contribute?

**Nan:** You have made big contributions already! It is a contribution from you by listening to me. I am a lunatic. Peter Senge is a madman. It's remarkable that you can stand the conversation between a lunatic and a madman. Did you receive Jewish education as a kid?

**Amber:** No. But I took some lessons in Jewish mysticism which I found similar in many ways to the traditions of other places.

**Nan:** That's right. It is identical in many respects to the ancient cultures of the Chinese and American Indians - identical, not similar.

**Participant:** I did not follow what you said about cognitive science and life science making impacts on social sciences and political philosophies.

**Nan:** I said if the unity of materialism and idealism is fully appreciated that will have impacts on social sciences and political philosophies.

**Participant:** Why?

**Nan:** This is another big topic. It's like the literal splendor embedded in the long verses of the "Preface to the Tengwang Pavilion" (滕王閣序) by Wang Bo (王勃) which must not be summarized in one or two sentences. However, you will have no problem understanding it if you reflect on the big pictures. In other words, the conclusive and comprehensive study of cognitive science and life science will not only serve to bridge the cultures but – speaking in Western concept – also lead to freedom and democracy. Mind you, it is not the democracy pronounced by the Americans, which is rather narrow. What's missing there is love, or as the Buddhists say, the compassion.

I have said it again and again that all the teachings of the saints are prescriptions. Confucius's teaching was centered on loyalty, obedience, benevolence and righteousness, which were the qualities lacking among the Chinese – and remained so today. The Indians had the caste system so the Buddha prescribed compassion and equality. The Westerners were prejudiced and so love was the prescription from Jesus. You can tell the problems of the Easterners and Westerners by the prescriptions made by their respective saints.

Session One

**Nan:** Peter Senge, I have read the report you wrote. I am aware of the progress you have made so far. Don't mind the other people sitting in this room. They are visiting us here today and would like to listen in. Please, have some tea.

**Senge:** I don't mind them at all. I have raised a couple of questions in my report. The first one concerns the practice of Anapana. I am still not clear about Xi.

**Nan:** "Anapana" is a Sanskrit word. Sanskrit was one of the many languages spoken in ancient India. It is different from the languages currently in use in India. The "modern" Sanskrit we see is Latinized Sanskrit which is not the same as ancient Sanskrit. The original Buddhist scriptures were written mainly in Sanskrit, not in Pali. Today I will give you a thorough lecture on this subject. It is my hope that you can become a leader in the research of cognitive science and life science.

"Anapana" is composed of "Ana," meaning exhaling (or inhaling, according to some scholars), and "Apana," meaning inhaling (or exhaling). All living beings, including animals and plants, must have the in-and-out exchanges as a life sustaining function. For humans, it is mainly the in-and-out and out-and-in breathing. For the universe, rather than Anapana, it is movement-and-stillness, or arising-and-disappearance. Everything in the universe arises then disappears – disappears and then arises. It's like the movement of waves. As a phenomenon, arising is movement while disappearance is stillness, which is how the physical world manifests.

Applied to human breathing, Anapana is the movement of in-and-out. To really study Anapana well, one needs to study the Buddhist scriptures - both the manifest and Tantric schools. When I say Tantric school I don't mean the sect led by the Dalai Lama. The Dalai Lama's sect emerged much later, only around 500 years ago. The genuine Tantric Buddhism of Tibet began 1,400 years ago, with the Nyingma sect (紅教). The real secret practice common to all Buddhist schools, be that Zen or Tantric, is the practice of

Anapana. Unfortunately, all the scriptures told us the “how” but did not elaborate the “why” of the practice. This is a serious problem.

Before Buddhism came to China, Lao Zi (or Lao Tzu) already said, “Wasn’t it like a bellows, all that in-between the heaven and earth” (天地之間，其猶橐籥乎) ? He couldn’t have been said it better. Have you ever seen how a bellows works? Lao Zi tells us there exists in the universe a force that’s in-and-out, inhale-and-exhale, arising-and-disappearing, and coming-and-going. Our very life depends on the bellowing action of the breathing. The universe is breathing, so is the earth, sun, plants and even minerals.

As I said, both the Zen and the Tantric Buddhism schools practice Anapana to reach Samadhi. Sadly there have been few who truly understood how it worked and even fewer who truly reached perfection in this practice – for the lack of even a basic knowledge on this subject.

After Buddhism gained popularity in China, the Taoists began to rebel against the Buddhists - but that is another story. In the Taoist lineage, there is a “Golden Light Mantra” (金光咒) which is of paramount importance to the Taoists. The first verse of the mantra is: “Tian Di Xuan Zong; Wan Qi Gen Ben” (天地玄宗, 萬氣根本), meaning “The inconceivable orthodoxy of heaven and earth; the root of the ten thousand Qi’s.”

The breathing of Anapana is one kind of Qi. There are tens of thousands of different Qi’s, each with a unique phenomenon. Qi is the energy of life. Everything has its own unique Qi and is radiating Qi all the time. The Qi of a sick person is distinctively different from the Qi of a healthy person, as an accomplished practitioner can tell easily.

Peter Senge, you admitted that you were not clear about Anapana. This tells me you are a honest scholar. This is a good question. There are so many practitioners and lamas who are equally ignorant of this practice.



The Buddha says there are mainly three kinds of Qi to life: the “Sustaining Qi,” the “Reward-body Qi” and the “Seed Qi.”

The first kind, Sustaining Qi, is the one that keeps a person alive and growing. It's like fertilizer to plants and food to animals. It breeds the person and keeps the metabolism going in your body. Metabolism is in effect a function of Anapana that generates new cells as old cells decay. Our in-and-out breath is the Sustaining Qi which grows and breeds.

Within the category of Sustaining Qi, there are four levels: wind, panting, Qi and Xi.

Wind is the fundamental of all four. It is an air stream – and becomes breathing inside of our body.

Panting is breathing, for the average person. Asthma is a disorder of the respiratory system. Except for those in excellent health, the average people are all mildly asthmatic – their breathing is shallow, reaching the upper lung area or, even worse, the throat only. Breathing produces sound. It becomes audible when you go to sleep. The sound is louder when you have a cold with a stuffed nose. This is panting which arises out of the conflict between the winds outside and inside the body over the passage of the Qi channels. This is another big topic. We will discuss it some day when we bring in a team of neurologists with their equipment. The normal breathing forces the air through the nasal cavity which is a hub of many meridian paths. The advanced practitioners can breathe through any part of the body, without necessarily going through the nasal cavity.

As a person ages, his breathing becomes shallower. At the moment of death, the breath is choked at the area of the thyroid cartilage that no air can flow through. Without breathing, the Sustaining Qi stops. The thyroid cartilage is something to watch out for. As one ages, the cartilage begins to constrict. This is why elderly people can easily choke on water. You can extend your life if the thyroid cartilage area is fully released through advanced practices. Once the thyroid area is open, the breath can reach inside of your head. At last,

the crown of the head will open up. Upon reaching that level, you will be energized all the time. You will never doze off or yearn.

The third level of the Sustaining Qi is simply called Qi. When one enters into deep meditation, the breathing becomes slow and refined as if no air was going through the nose. This is Qi. Qi is often misinterpreted and badly translated - perhaps impossible to translate. In ancient Chinese language there is a specific character, “炁”, for Qi, which literally means “without fire.” At this level the breathing function seems to have stopped, but it resumes after a long pause.

The next level is Xi, the subject of your question. Xi is the level extended from Qi. The exchange becomes even more subtle and the breathing seems to stop completely. The body is no longer an impediment, is without any sensations of pain, discomfort, itching, swelling or numbness - nothing at all. Total peacefulness is all there is that remains. The exchange is no longer the breathing through the nose, but becomes the exchange with the emptiness through the nine openings of the body (九竅), i.e. seven in the head and two in the lower body, the anus and the urogenital opening. Every single cell of the body feels full from the exchange. This is the state of Xi. This is difficult for the average person to comprehend so I rarely talk about it.

Now, somebody just asked whether medicine can help the practice at this level. This is a good question. It always helps to have knowledge of medicine from the beginning of your practice. Therefore the Buddhists and Taoists all recognize the importance of understanding medicine. Medicine helps you to clear the blocked channels within the body. Common Buddhist knowledge tells you there are 70,000 to 100,000 channels in your body which are the paths of the subtle Qi. If the channels are clogged, ailments will develop from within. However, we usually don't feel it (until the symptoms develop). Medicine is, after all, a tool, an external aid, to support your practice. The main thrust of the practice still comes from within.

The Zen practitioners and Tibetan Buddhist practitioners of the Kagyu lineage (not the Gelug lineage of the Dalai Lama) do not depend on external aids. They can attain the transformation of the physiological body with sheer mind power. As you empty the mind, the meridian paths will transform accordingly. However, this is a very, very difficult practice to master. Mantra chanting and certain practices of the Tibetan Buddhism can be used as a start to clear the channels. They are but means to an end.

What we have covered so far belongs to the Sustaining Qi. The next one, the Reward-Body Qi, or the Karmic Qi, is much more difficult to comprehend. The Sustaining Qi is in the outer layer while the Reward-Body Qi is in the inner layer. The Reward-Body is the retribution body which is the effect of karma. Our soul, the intermediary body, was sucked into the egg as the egg was fertilized by a sperm. It happens so fast that it is almost simultaneous. The three contributing conditions, compounded together, became life and the embryo started to grow, transforming in intervals of seven: seven days, seven hours, seven minutes, seven seconds...

During the 38 seven-day-phases inside the mother's womb the fetus grows by ingesting nutrition, including the Reward-Body Qi, via the umbilical cord. The nose and mouth of the fetus do not function at all and there is no breathing through the nose.

Buddhist scriptures tell you in great details how the fetus goes through changes in every seven-day-phase, including how each channel, bone and cell changes. The dominant Qi in each of the seven-day-phases has a unique name. In fact, this is just a gross description. While we are sitting here the body is going through changes every seven minutes, even every seven seconds - we are experiencing Anapana. This is the function of the Reward-Body Qi and is therefore the root of all Qi's (萬氣根本).

That was quite a lot we have covered. Let's break.

Session Two

**Nan:** In the last session Peter Senge brought up the question of Xi. We therefore reviewed the four kinds of Sustaining Qi and ended on the topic of Xi before the break. Now, once you have truly reached the level of Xi your body is fulfilled, not swelled. The body will feel light and be free from all pain and ailments. Only then can you recognize the Reward-Body Qi, the Qi that powered the fetus through the function of exchange even though the fetus does not breathe. At this stage, the attention will be on the lower part of the body and its connection with the head. I will not discuss what happens next. Ask me when you get there.

I would add just one point. As you are about to reconnect with the Reward-Body Qi, you will generate a reflexive Qi. How should you understand this? Well, those of you who have ever nursed babies should know. After a baby is nursed with milk, you need to pat its back to help bring out the air trapped at the bottom of the baby's stomach. Another example, it is like throwing a stone into the pond. As the stone sinks to the bottom of the pond a bubble of air will rise to the surface of the water.

So if you start to belch during sitting meditation it is an indication that your digestive path is clogged. It is normal even for a very healthy person that the digestive path is dirty and clogged. The belch is caused by the reflexive Qi. An accomplished practitioner can pinpoint a person's ailments by the sound of his belch. The problem can be in the stomach, the liver, the spleen and so on. The belch will sound differently.

The Reward-Body Qi is stored below the area of the diaphragm. As the Reward-Body Qi is fully depleted the person's belly will start to bulge. This happens to most people when they get old; and problems will develop in the stomach, intestines and guts. A person who has practiced Anapana correctly will never have a bulged belly even at old age.

From this perspective, disorders of the Qi can cause many ailments. For instance, according to traditional Chinese medicine theory, cancers are not induced by external substances but are symptoms reflecting that the flow of Qi is blocked. In the Chinese language there is an expression: “Qi got knotted over something” (爲之氣結) which vividly describes the agonizing emotion one has upon learning something detestable. The knotted Qi is a blockage which will develop into a tumor and cancer in the affected area. Psychosomatic disorders and stroke are all symptoms of blocked Qi.

Your practice is still at the beginner’s level. If you wish to advance your practice to higher levels, even to attain enlightenment, you need to devote yourself to full time practice, which means dropping everything. As a start, you need to spend 2 to 3 years doing nothing but practicing. To give you an idea of the time required, the Taoists describe the path to be:

“One hundred days laying the foundation” (百日築基): During the first one hundred days one must follow the correct breathing practices and abstain from sex and masturbation to build a solid foundation.

“Ten months in pregnancy” (十月懷胎): Having reached Xi, it takes another ten months to recognize the Reward-Body Qi.

“Three years in nursing” (三年哺乳): It will take three years to slowly cultivate Samadhi, like nursing a baby for three years after birth.

“Nine years facing the wall” (九年面壁): Stay in Samadhi for nine years, as what Master Bodhidharma did.

This, according to the Taoists, is the path to break ranks with the mundane world to become a deity. How many years are required in total? Just under twelve years to turn into a deity! That’s a bargain, isn’t it? We start schooling at the age of six. You can spend sixteen years of your life in school and that will only get you through college which may allow you to earn a meager salary. Why wouldn’t you rather take the path to become a deity? It’s quicker! However, it is not as easy as it seems to be. For every ten thousand aspiring practitioners, five thousand pairs of them will fail.

Take the first one hundred days need to build the foundation, abstaining from sex during this period is only one of the prerequisites. You have to drop all the worldly affairs and forego all your fame and fortune. Can you honestly stick to that? I doubt it. Whenever I hear people going to retreats – many of them lamas or monks – I say there goes another “three-cheater”: cheating oneself, cheating others and being cheated by others. None of them ever sticks to the prerequisites, ever.

**Participant:** Why is sex so crucial?

**Nan:** Of course it is crucial and that’s why most of you have had babies.

Seriously, as a layperson the path is very, very difficult unless one can see - and observe - emptiness at all times in every thought, action, and moral judgment. That will be the true character of a Mahayana follower.

The Tibetan Buddhists use the practice of Anapana to transform this physical body into a body of light. Upon accomplishment this body will glow like a rainbow and then vanish into emptiness. This, in their jargon, is the attainment of the ultimate achievement through this very body (即身成就). Please remind me later this evening to tell you how the body is transformed into a body of light.

Coming back to the topic of Reward-Body Qi, which is of much more significance than the Xi. The survival of the fetus depends on this Qi, which is not exchanged through the nose. You may call this the prenatal Qi. The Sustaining Qi, which is exchanged through the nose, is the postnatal Qi.

**Senge:** Once a baby starts breathing the Sustaining Qi after birth, does the Reward-Body Qi remain in the body?

**Nan:** It’s a good question. I am just coming to that.

After the baby starts with the postnatal Anapana, the Reward-Body Qi will remain in the body for about 7 to 12 months. Observe a new born baby and you will find movements in the baby's belly button area. This is the movement of Reward-Body-Qi. When a person is deep in meditation and reaching Samadhi, the nose breathing may stop but the breathing from underneath the belly button continues. In Taoist jargon, this is called "Tai Xi" (胎息), the Xi of the fetus.

As the baby's sixth consciousness, i.e. the perceptive and discriminative mind, begins to develop, the Reward-Body Qi recedes at the same time. Eventually, the Reward-Body Qi disappears and the Sustaining Qi takes over completely. Here is the issue: the more one consumes the mind – the more one depletes life's primordial energy. To restore that primordial energy, one has to resort to Dhyana meditation. Therefore it is necessary to reach Xi, at which level the mind becomes silent and pure, and from where it is possible to restore the Reward-Body Qi.

That was a brief introduction on Sustaining Qi and Reward-Body Qi. As for the third kind of Qi, the Primordial Qi, or the Seed Qi, it is the power that drives the intermediary body to join the fertilized egg. Without the intermediary body, an egg joined by a sperm alone cannot develop into life. All three conditions must be present for life to begin. The Seed Qi is very difficult to comprehend. You can't recognize it until you reach the highest level of Dhyana meditation.

Someone just asked if this power was the function of procreation (or tendency), one of the five Skandhas. That is correct. Procreation is the power of the Primordial Qi. It's the power that thrusts the intermediary body into the fertilized egg.

You may get a glimpse of the Primordial Qi at the very brief moment of an orgasm. That is the moment you encounter the ultimate emptiness while the breathing stops. How brief was the moment of an orgasm? That moment is even shorter than one Kshana, which according to the scriptures is only one-ninetieth (some say one-sixtieth) of the time it

takes to snap the fingers. All the men and women are going round and round seeking only for that moment, the joy that lasts only for a split second.

Let's say a thought arises in your mind – before it triggers any mental activities such as concepts, interpretations or discriminations – that first thought is the function of the Primordial Qi. You wake up from a sound sleep. Your very first thought is the awareness that you are awoken. That first thought came with the Primordial Qi. You should carefully contemplate this. It is sufficient to say that the Qi is disrupted by the mental activities and the emotions.

I have explained the three kinds of Qi's for you, only in so far as they are related to the human being. You should be aware that Qi also governs all the movements of any of the five elements of matters (earth, water, fire, wind and emptiness).

I hope people in the West can pick up the research of Qi. Unfortunately this knowledge is dying in the East.



Session Three

**Nan:** In the previous session we discussed Anapana in conjunction with the three Qi's: Sustaining Qi, Reward-Body Qi and Primordial Qi. If we were to expand on these topics, we would need to draw on the knowledge of modern science, including biology, medicine and physics. For now you only need to understand them conceptually.

We have also touched on the inception of an embryo in the previous session. In Buddhist terms, the joining of the sperm, egg and intermediary body (or soul) is referred to as the "the compounding of three conditions" (三緣和合). You can't think of them as three elements, for element is associated with materialism. An element belongs to the domain of matter. These three conditions are not physical phenomena only. The compounding is the combination of mind and matter, from which an embryo of a human being is formed.

Scientists have studied everything from the sperm to the cells and to the genes. They are still researching genes. What's behind the genes? I hope future scientists can provide the answer.

Loosely speaking, life is a combination of mind and matter. The Chinese cultural believes that mind and matter are one, representing two sides of a coin. In ancient China - we are talking about five or six thousand years ago - the combination of yin and yang was already proposed. Yin and yang are just symbols, so are the eight trigrams or the 64 hexagrams. None of them corresponds to any fixed object.

In pursuing the studies of life science and cognitive science, especially in pursuing the practice you are interested in, it is critical that you understand mind and matter are of one. I always hold the view that the entire studies of Buddhism, including Zen and Tantric Buddhism, are the studies of life science. This ought to be clear to you as you continue your pursuit.

Let's take the human fetus as an example. From the perspectives of the Mind-Only school, an instant of ignorance thrusts one into the embryo. Ignorance is just a term, a presupposed symbol expressed in language. Ignorance represents a state of confusion and disorder. An instant of ignorance triggers the power of procession (which we described as the power of life in our discussion of Anapana) which thrusts one into the embryo. Life begins from that moment.

Any thought, any sensation and any reaction we have are all functions of the consciousness. How should we understand consciousness? We can go on for hours and hours in a classroom style discussion on this subject alone. Or, let's take a practical approach. We are all sitting around this table. There is a candle at the center of the table. We are all "aware" of that. We are aware of this round table, the surrounding of this room, this candle, the people around us, etc. The first instant of such awareness, that is, before the awareness is interpreted and formulated into concepts of table, candle, people and so on, is consciousness. At that instant, that kshana, the awareness was not processed into a thought. For example, you hear me talking but your mind has not yet identified for you who was talking.

Is that clear so far? However, within that same kshana of the first awareness the discriminating function of the mind acts immediately. It happens so fast that they appear to arise simultaneously! The kshana is also a symbol. Ninety (some say sixty) kshanas go by in just one snap of fingers. In one kshana the consciousness records 960 thoughts. The thoughts spin out so rapidly in a revolving manner that we are unaware of their rising and the gaps in between. The stream of thoughts constitutes our cognition of everything. Shakyamuni told us thousands of years ago, our mind spins roughly 1.3 billion times in a day. Each and every single thought carries a body (mental image) with it. So in the space of making one yawn, your mind can have recorded thousands of thoughts already.

For those who believe they have reached Samadhi because the mind was quiet and still during the sitting meditation – I say they are deluding themselves! They didn't know that their mind was actually having a party during the meditation. It's only after one has

accomplished the perfect wisdom, the Prajnaparamita (般若波羅蜜), can one clearly recognize the flows in the mind.

Just as there are three kinds of Qi's, the mind can be divided into three layers: mind (citta), thinking (manas) and consciousness (vijnana) (心, 意, 識). Mind is the source of all consciousness. Thinking is the deliberating function of the source. Then the cognition function comes in to recognize and to discriminate, which is called the Sixth Consciousness or Discriminating Consciousness.

You may want to ask: Does a fetus inside the womb possess the capacity for thinking and consciousness? The mind (the Eighth Consciousness) and the thinking (the Seventh Consciousness) are with the fetus but not the Sixth. The Sixth Consciousness is not developed until three or four months later. Therefore, from around the fifth month and onward a fetus can actually distinguish and recognize sound and sense movement and temperature. However, the fetus's memory is only short-term so it does not remember anything after birth.

Nevertheless, in the case of the reincarnation of an accomplished practitioner, he can clearly recall his experience in the womb, or even recall how he entered the embryo. I am afraid many of today's so called reincarnated Living Buddhas are far from that. They appear to have suffered amnesia since birth. A real reincarnated Living Buddha will not lose memories when he goes through all three phases: upon entering an embryo, staying inside a womb and, most importantly, upon leaving the womb at birth. Such a being remembers all the books he has read, knowledge he acquired and everything he experienced in the previous lives. But such a being would not reveal that they have such memories.

All our habits, thoughts, actions and personalities are carried over by seeds that were accumulated in our previous lives, again and again. This is how karma works but most of us remain totally unaware of it.

Living in the womb can be boring and even unbearable for the fetus. The experience in the womb is like a dream for the fetus. There may be all kinds of things going on in the fetus's mind and it may move its limbs from time to time. In the old Chinese tradition, education begins when a fetus is formed. Once a woman is pregnant, she needs to change her life, thoughts and surrounding all for the prenatal education of the fetus. After birth, a person goes through a period of education with the family and then, finally, he goes to school which is the least form of education.

A fetus already has capacity for thinking and sensations. Sensation (觸) arises out of contact between the mind and the physical functions. All the physical functions and phenomena are generated by the interactions of five elements: earth, water, fire, wind and emptiness. The contact with the physical function, including the contact by a fetus in the womb, gives rise to sensations which then produce feelings. It is because of the contact of mind and matter that we have sensations and feelings.

Feelings (受), as we have mentioned in the previous sessions, can be divided into five broad categories. There is pleasure (樂受), the ones we enjoy and accept. There is pain (苦受), the ones that bring us discomfort. There is a neutral feeling which is neither pleasure nor pain (不苦不樂受). For instance, we are sitting here, having had our meals, with the temperature just right, and there are no special sensations in our bodies - this is the sensation of neither pleasure nor pain. There are two emotions: sorrow (憂受) and joy (喜受). These are the five sensations that arise from making contacts.

Further, even if a fetus is inside the womb, without external source of light, it can still feel light, darkness or even color. How does it happen? It is also the phenomenon of contact between mind and matter (the five elements).

Earth, water, fire, wind and emptiness are nature's phenomena familiar to men and therefore we use them to represent five different kinds of physical functions. Earth stands

for hard and solid. Water stands for moisture. Fire stands for warmth. Wind stands for flow. Emptiness stands for being without impediments.

There is one fundamental idea you should be aware of. The mind is ubiquitous; it can neither be created nor destroyed. And so is matter which functions like waves, which comes and goes like Anapana, one after another; but ontologically matter can neither be created nor destroyed.

Having a hard time following me? This is difficult to understand. Let's try another approach. There is a term called the "Ten Universal Entries" (十一切入) which includes ten modes: earth, water, fire, wind, blue, yellow, red, white, emptiness, and consciousness. Everything and anything in the universe can be contemplated by using any one of these ten modes. Entries are in-and-out, which is Anapana. Earth, water, fire and wind are fundamental elements. Blue, yellow, red and white are the derivatives of the four elements. Emptiness has no changes and is center to all. Consciousness is the cognitive nature of the mind. These ten modes constantly come and go.

Maybe it is still difficult for you to understand. Don't just try to remember the terms – you have to understand them. Let's take a break. I know you will try to figure these terms out during the break. I'll save you some effort. For instance, we are all sitting here. All the surroundings, the earth, water, fire, wind, blue, yellow, red and white etc., are in our mind, in every one of our cells. They are constantly in exchange with us, in and out, all the time. This is the Ten Universal Entries.

**Participant:** Are there nothing correspondent to blue, yellow, red and white?

**Nan:** Yes there are – they are derivatives of the earth, water, fire and wind.

**Participant:** Does that mean the earth transforms into blue?

**Nan:** It is not so rigid. Each can change into five or six different modes. It is like our mind recording 960 thoughts in one kshana. This is difficult to comprehend. Relax and take a break.

**Participant:** Will each of the 10 modes also enter each other? For example, the four elements are segregated by nature and yet interchangeable with each other?

**Nan:** For instance, milk and water are segregated by their nature, as milk is not water; but they are mixed together. Everything in the universe, cells, sperms, any material, you name it, is within the ten modes. This is related to the reflexes and reactions of neurons and the mind. You should understand the Ten Universal Entries. They are important to your practice of Anapana.

**Participant:** I found the weather in Shanghai very peculiar these days. It is wet yet the body feels there is heat. In the South, people regard this kind of weather as wet-poison.

**Nan:** This is a dis-complementary phenomenon of water and fire (水火不濟). There is also wind that will enter your body, not just water and fire. You can try to meditate on the Ten Universal Entries. The poisonous weather can indeed kill people.

Session Four

**Nan:** The physical aspect of our life, which is the same as the material world including all the changes, shapes and lights, is summed up as “Form Dharma” (色法) in Buddhism. The first category of Form Dharma is “Manifested Colors” (顯色) and there are twelve of them. Why don’t you (Participant A) explain to the class?

**Participant A:** Manifested Colors are the phenomena in manifestation and there are twelve of them: blue (青), yellow (黃), red (赤), white (白), cloud (雲), mist (霧), smoke (煙), dust (塵), bright (明), dull (暗), light (光), and shadow (影).

**Nan:** Dust is that which has become material, has turned into particles. These twelve are inclusive of all manifested forms. Shadow is the reflection of the rest of the manifested colors. There is light so there is shadow. What about “Shapes” (形色) and “Positions” (表色)?

**Participant A:** There are eight Shapes: long (長), short (短), square (方), round (圓), high (高), low (下), straight (正), and slant (不正). Positions show the actions and there are also eight: walking (行), standing (住), sitting (坐), lying down (臥), bending (屈), stretching (伸), taking (取), and giving (捨).

**Nan:** The Manifested Colors, Shapes and Positions, are all Form Dharma. They will appear during sitting meditations through the changes of the four elements of the body. When these phenomena appear, they should not be recognized as something generated externally, least of all as some kind of super natural accomplishments.

Sometimes you may feel that your body grows taller or shorter during meditation. Don’t be fooled. It’s just one of these phenomena caused by the changes of the four elements. The physiological changes of the four elements become sensations and there are 34

physical sensations. Whenever they appear, don't think that anything mystic has happened. Mysticism belongs to the realm of religion or esotericism. If you pursue them as such, you are doomed for devastating mental and physical consequences. From the viewpoint of Buddhism, it will cause bad karmas.

**Participant A:** Of the 34 physical sensations, there are 30 that can be sensed (所觸) and four - earth, water, fire and wind - are those can sense (能觸).

**Nan:** That which can be sensed is the state of the sensations. That which can sense is the function that causes the sensations. It is like the function of an electrical generator.

**Participant A:** The 30 that can be sensed are the sensations caused by earth, water, fire and wind, which are the source of the 30 sensations. The 30 are: buoyancy (輕), heaviness (重), smooth (滑), coarse (澀), soft (軟), hard (硬), slow (緩), rapid (急), cold (冷), warm (暖), thirsty (渴), stuffy (悶), forceful (力), inferior (劣), hungry (饑), full (飽), painful (痛), itchy (癢), swollen (脹), numb (麻), thick (粗), thin (細), soreness (痠), sticky (黏), old (老), sick (病), dead (死), tired (疲), still (息 restful), and stirring and calm (動靜).

**Nan:** Buoyancy – such as the light feeling during meditation.

Heavy – such as the heavy feeling in the body due to inadequate food and drink or due to weather influences.

Smooth – the smoothness of the skin.

Coarse – mild impediments such as blocked breathing; uninhibited breathing is smoothness.

Soft – the softness of the body.

Hard – such as the rigidness and stillness of the body that you can't get off from sitting meditation.



Slow – slow in movements. I tell you my own experience. It happened to me when I was in my 30's. I couldn't even hold a piece of paper with my fingers, no matter how hard I tried. You would have been petrified if that were to happen to you.

Rapid – becoming impatient with everything, like so many of you.

Cold, warm and thirsty need no explanation.

Stuffy – such that you can't even think.

Forceful – feeling very powerful as if one can knock down a mountain.

Inferior – the drain of power. There is a subtle difference with slow.

Hungry – feeling hungry all the time.

Full – feeling as if one just had a full meal and don't care for food any more.

Painful – pains in the body.

Itchy – itching in the body, sometimes in every square inch.

Swollen – feeling swollen by the air (Qi).

Numb – such as numbness in the legs, or other parts of the body.

Thick – feeling the body becomes thicker or fatter.

Thin – the body becomes thinner all of a sudden. it is also a petrifying experience.

Sore, sticky, old, sick, dead, tired, restful, stirring and calm need no explanation.

These are all physiologic sensations that will appear at random during your practice. Each person may experience different sensations at different lengths. These sensations can be very powerful. If you don't know what they are, you may get deluded and carried away by them. If so, all the efforts you put in the practice will be wasted. It's like giving up on the ninth floor before reaching the destination of the tenth floor.

Peter Senge, it must have been very difficult for you listening to all these in the last two hours. You should take note that he only mentioned colors, not light. The changes in colors are restricted to blue, yellow, red and white only. He did not mention black. Black belongs to deep blue. In outer space, the "sky" is deep blue. The blue sky we see is a kind of color, not light. Light is energy, the source of color. Light is ubiquitous, it can neither be created nor destroyed. The light of our mind comes from the same source of the light of the universe.

It is a daily practice for many Chinese Buddhists to chant the name of Amitabha Buddha (Amitofo). “Amitabha” stands for Immeasurable Life and Immeasurable Light. Namu Amitabha Buddha means taking refuge in Amitabha Buddha, committing our entire body and mind. Where do we seek refuge in and where do we commit our life and mind to? To the immeasurable light and life. This is a big topic for scientific research and we won’t get into.

Having understood these sensations, you should continue the practice of Anapana meditation to reach the stillness of body and mind. Once you can do that consistently, your mind and the four elements of the body will go through transformations, enabling you to attain the power of the light. Then, with just one thought the body becomes empty and is turned into immeasurable light and life.

I see we are all tired. Let’s break.

**Participant:** Isn’t black also a form of light?

**Nan:** Black is deep blue. It’s a kind of color, not light.

**Participant:** Is there light behind it?

**Nan:** Not behind, there is light in it.

**Participant:** Light is the source of color? Or are colors the reflections of light on objects?

**Nan:** It’s not the reflection but the phenomenon of light itself.

**Senge:** You mentioned that the mind and matter can be neither created nor destroyed.

What’s beyond mind and matter? How do the two interact?

**Nan:** This is indeed a difficult subject. Mind and matter represent two sides of the same thing. Phenomena, which are appearance and have birth and death, arise out of the noumenon, which is beyond birth and death. The changes in the earth, water, fire and wind of the physical world are phenomena which have birth and death. The source of the physical functions can be neither created nor destroyed, just as for the source of the mind. Mind and matter need to combine to have function.

As for how these two interact, I have touched on it when I explained the Primordial Qi and the formation of the fetus. I don't think you have the energy tonight to pursue this subject any further. After that dinner, the Qi in your brain all came down to your stomach to help the digestion. This makes your brain even more clouded. You have been struggling with this subject. Let's save it for next time. You will probably find answers to most of your own questions when you have a chance to review what we studied over the last few sessions. If you have further questions you can always send us a fax and I'll answer them. Relax and take a break, all of you.

**Senge:** I am still not too clear how the "Six Healing Sounds" (六字訣) work.

**Nan:** Do not make audible sounds when pronouncing the six sounds. You can ask one of the teachers here later for more instructions.

**Participant:** What's with the 1.3 billion thoughts?

**Participant:** Within each day and night the mind records 1.3 billion changes of thoughts. Within each one kshana, the mind changes 960 times. Each thought corresponds to a body.

**Nan:** Therefore you see how dependable is the love between a man and woman? In one kshana, the mind changes 960 times already!

