

Introduction to Ch'an

I. Introduction

- A. What is Ch'an?
 - 1. The word "Ch'an" is a translation of the Sanskrit word "Dhynama," which means to meditate.
 - 2. In Japanese it is pronounced "Zen."
 - 3. In Korean it is pronounced "Son."
- B. The mission of Ch'an is "Not radiant on he written word, A special transmission separate from the scriptures; Direct pointing at one's mind, Seeing one's nature, becoming a Buddha."
- C. We study this topic for two reasons.
 - 1. Ch'an meditation will help us to realize the meaning of life and the truth of the universe.
 - 2. I Kuan Tao is closely associated with the Ch'an Language.

II. Brief History of the Ch'an Lineage

- A. It began at a Dharma Meeting where Sakyamuni Buddha transmitted the lineage to his disciple Mahakasypa.
 - 1. The Buddha told Mahakasypa, "I have the Treasure of the True Dharma Eye, and the wondrous Mind of Nirvana; Its true image is no image, and its dharma door is subtle and wondrous; Not radiant on the written word, it is a special transmission separate from the scriptures."
 - 2. Mahakasypa became the First Patriarch of the Ch'an lineage, and the lineage continued in the Indian region for twenty-eight generations.
 - 3. The Twenty-eight Patriarch was Bodhidharma, who brought Ch'an to China.
 - 4. The lineage continued in China for six generations, for a total thirty-three patriarchs, all of whom are patriarchs of the Lineage of Tao.

- a) Both lineages are not about philosophy, teachings, language, or methods of cultivation.
 - b) The spirit and mission of Ch'an and I Kuan are the same.
- B. The Ch'an Sect of Buddhism really began in China, with the arrival of Bodhidharma in China around 526 AD
 - 1. The Early Ch'an period has two schools
 - a) Bodhidharma School teaches the "two entrances," it uses the Lankavatara Sutra as the guide.
 - b) The East Mountain School teaches "guarding the one," it uses the Diamond Sutra as the guide.
 - 2. The Middle Ch'an period has two schools.
 - a) The Northern School began with Master Shen-Hsiu, and it teaches graduate enlightenment.
 - b) The Southern School began with Master Hui-Neng (638-713, the Six Patriarch, and it teaches sudden enlightenment.
 - (1) Shen-Hui, one of Hui-Neng's disciples, established the Ho-Tse Monastery. Shen-Hui debated zealously against the Northern School and graduate enlightenment.'
 - (2) The disciples of Huai-Jang, one of Hui-Neng's disciples, developed the Hung-Chou school, which later became Lin-Chi School.
 - (3) The disciples of Hsing-Ssu, one of Hui-Neng's disciples, developed the Shi-T'ou School, which later became the Ts'ao-Tung School.
 - 3. Five main schools developed from the Southern School.
 - a) Ts'ao-Tung takes a more moderate approach.
 - b) Yun-Men School takes a concise and swift approach.
 - c) Fa-Yen School takes a firm and steady approach.
 - d) Lin-Chi takes a more radical approach.
 - e) Kuei-Yang takes a more patient approach.
 - 4. Two main schools developed in Japan.
 - a) Ts'ao-Tung developed into the Soto Sect.
 - b) Lin-Chi developed into the Rinzai Sect.

III. Ch'an Meditation According to the Sixth Patriarch Hui-Neng

- A. Meditation may not have to take the form of physically sitting down.
 - 1. Hui-Neng said, "Learned Audience, what is sitting for meditation? In our School, to sit means to gain absolute freedom and to be mentally unperturbed in all outward circumstances, be they good or otherwise. To meditate means to realize inwardly the imperturbability of the Essence of Mind." (Platform Sutra, Chapter Five).
- B. Forcing one's mind to be blank is the wrong way to meditate.
 - 1. Hui-Neng said, "Learned Audience, what the ignorant merely talk about, wise men put into actual practice with their mind. There is also a class of foolish people who sit quietly and try to keep their mind blank. They refrain from thinking of anything and call themselves 'great.' On account of their heretical view we can hardly talk to them." (Platform Sutra, Chapter Two).
- C. The correct way of meditation is to have "No thought," "Objectivity," and "No Attachment."
 - 1. No thought does NOT mean a blank mind, No Objectivity does NOT mean a nihilist world, No Attachment does NOT mean apathy.
 - 2. Hui-Neng said, "Learned Audience, it has been the tradition of our school to take 'Idea-lessness' as our object, 'Non Objectivity' as our basis, and 'Non-attachment' as our fundamental principle. 'Non-objectivity' means not to be absorbed by object when in contact with objects. 'Idea-lessness' means not to be carried away by any particular idea in the exercise of the mental faculty. 'Non-attachment' is the characteristic of our Essence of Mind." (Platform Sutra, Chapter Four).

IV. Existence Within Emptiness

- A. The Essence of all things is empty. Hui-Neng said, “ All Buddha Ksetras (lands) are as void as space. Intrinsically our transcendental nature is void and not a single Dharma can be attained. It is the same with the Essence of Mind, which is a state of ‘Absolute Void’.” (Platform Sutra, Chapter Two).
- B. But, do not attach to Emptiness (Void) because Emptiness is not nihility. Hui-Neng said, “ Learned Audience, when you hear me talk about the Void, do not at once fall into the idea of vacuity, (because this involves the heresy of the doctrine of annihilation). It is of the utmost importance that we should not fall into this idea, because when a man sits quietly and keeps his mind blank he will abide in a state of ‘Voidness of Indifference.’” (Platform Sutra, Chapter Two).
- C. Exchange between Hui-Neng and Huai-Jang: “What thing is it (that comes)? How did it come?” asked the Patriarch. “To say that it is similar to a certain thing is wrong” he retorted. “Is it attainable by training?” asked the Patriarch. “It is not impossible to attain by training; but it is quite impossible to pollute it,” he replied. Thereupon, the Patriarch exclaimed, “It is exactly this unpolluted thing that all Buddhas take good care of. It is so for you, and it is so for me as well.” (Platform Sutra, Chapter Seven).
- D. Gatha by Ch’an Master Hsiang-Yen: I have One Thing, See It by blinking the eyes, if a person does not know, then don’t call him a novice.

V. I-Kuan Tao’s Relationship with Ch’an Lineage

- A. I Kuan Tao does not equal to Ch’an, but the spirit and the general direction of both traditions are the same.
- B. The causes and conditions of the Lineage of Tao used to be with the Ch’an Lineage, transmitting through the thirty-three Ch’an patriarchs.
- C. Now the causes and conditions of the Lineage of Tao are with I Kuan Tao, which is a continuation of Ch’an’s transmission of the essence of Tao (but I Kuan Tao may not be a continuation of Ch’an philosophy and methods).
- D. Story of One Finger Ch’an of T’ien-Lung.

VI. Conclusion

- A. Receiving the Tao is a method of “Direct pointing at one’s mind, Seeing one’s nature, becoming a Buddha,” which in the same spirit of Ch’an.
- B. Hui-Neng said, “Learned Audience, the Wisdom of Enlightenment is inherent in every one of us. It is because of the delusion under which our mind works that we fail to realize it ourselves, and that we have to seek the advice and guidance of enlightened ones before we can know our own Essence of Mind.