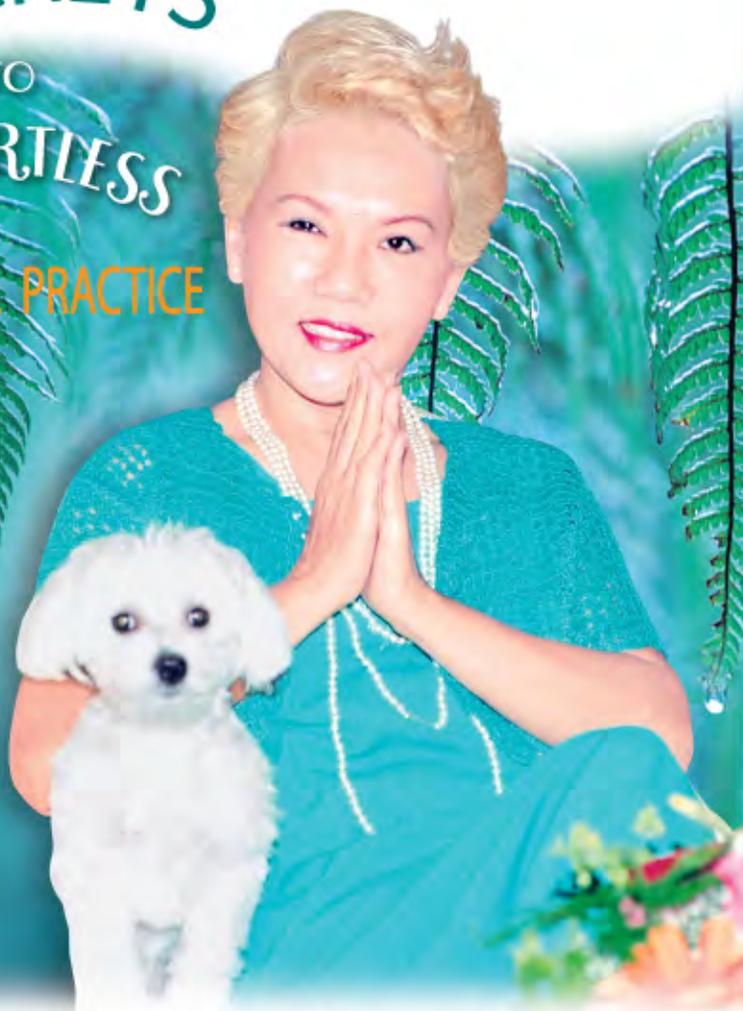




SECRETS TO EFFORTLESS SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

The Supreme Master Ching Hai

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Secrets to Effortless Spiritual Practice

The Supreme Master Ching Hai International
Association Publishing Company



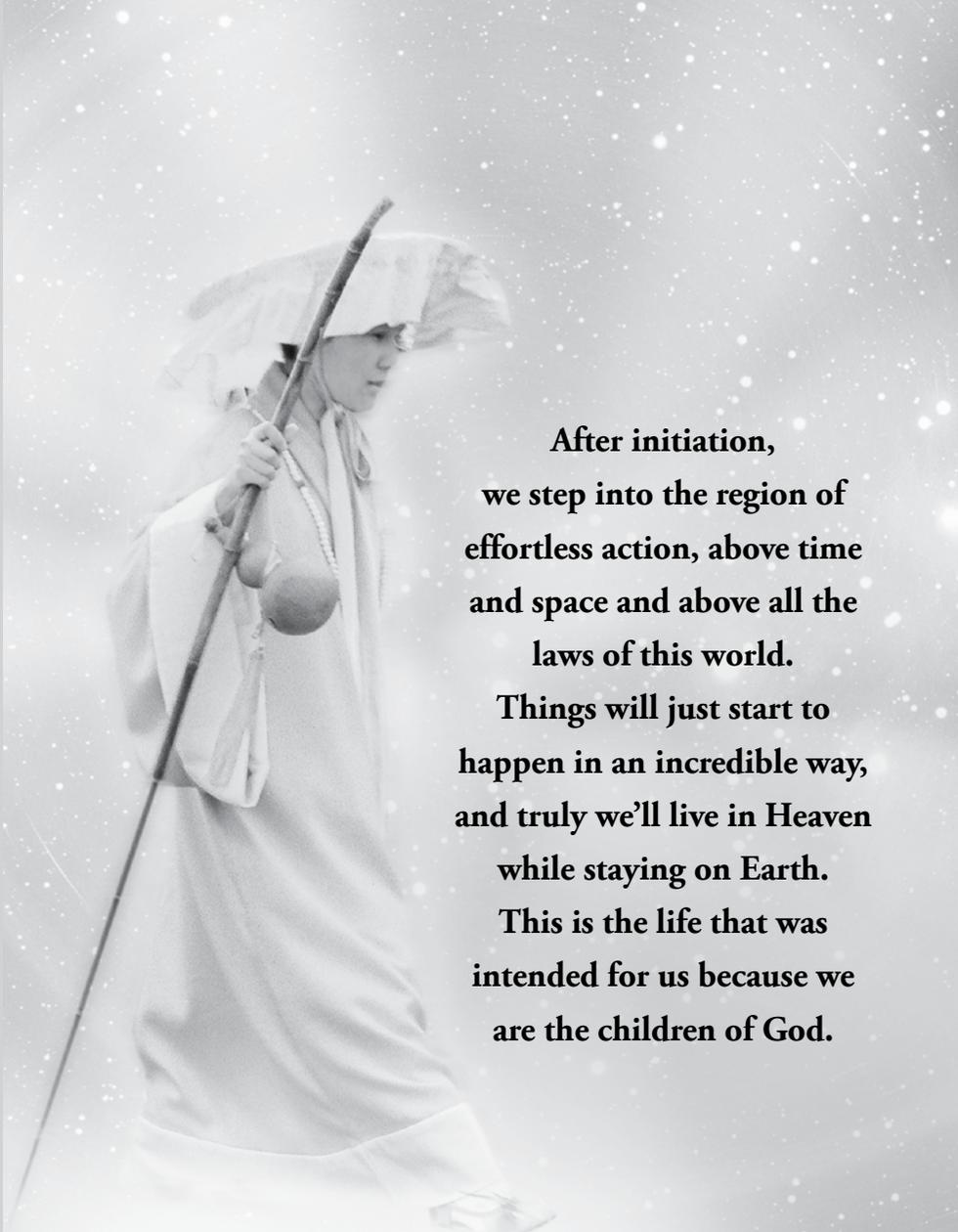
DEAREST BELOVED,

New Year comes,
I greet you with afresh enthusiasm and expectation for
the beginning of a great new spiritual awakening.

May your days be filled with wonders and happiness,
love and wisdom.

May the blessing of God be your most treasured
prosperity in the new chapter of Life.

(Master's New Year's Wishes to All in 2003)



**After initiation,
we step into the region of
effortless action, above time
and space and above all the
laws of this world.**

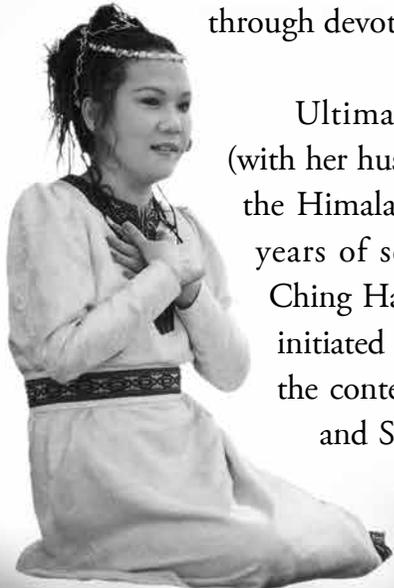
**Things will just start to
happen in an incredible way,
and truly we'll live in Heaven
while staying on Earth.**

**This is the life that was
intended for us because we
are the children of God.**

Brief Biography of Supreme Master Ching Hai

Supreme Master Ching Hai was born in central Au Lac and moved to England during Her youth, eventually settling in Germany, where She helped refugees and immigrants as a Red Cross interpreter. She later married a German physician, lived as a householder and all the while pursued Her lifelong quest for spiritual enlightenment through devotional prayer and study.

Ultimately, She left Her marriage (with her husband's blessing) and went to the Himalayas to seek the Truth. After years of searching, Supreme Master Ching Hai found a living Master, was initiated into the Quan Yin Method - the contemplation of the inner Light and Sound, our true essence - and attained full enlightenment.



Since that time, in response to the sincere requests of Truth seekers, She has circled the globe teaching meditation and engaging in humanitarian work with refugees, disaster victims and the needy, supporting Herself and Her spiritual group through creative work and the publication of Her lectures, music and poetry. Her unceasing efforts to enhance the spiritual and physical well-being of humankind have earned Her recognition from numerous governments and organizations.

Like most of us, Supreme Master Ching Hai was not enlightened from birth, but for years lived a worldly life. However, since Her enlightenment She has come to know the Heavenly Realms firsthand and is ready to guide Her fellow human beings to true God Realization, offering free initiation into the Quan Yin Method to all. As one of Her book titles states, if you are ready, She has “come to take you Home.”

Foreword

Quan Yin Method practitioners are the luckiest people in the world! Not only have we learned a priceless technique that enables us to attain eternal liberation in one lifetime, but we have acquired it from a true living Master. However the way back to our Heavenly Home is full of obstacles and temptations. So we may often ask ourselves: “How can I safely and smoothly fulfill my destiny?” But there is no need to worry: Our merciful Master offers us many helpful tips derived from Her personal experience that serve as practical and effective tools to assist us along the spiritual path. If we keep these guidelines in mind and apply them in our daily practice, we will gain tremendous help in overcoming Maya’s temptations and other worldly problems until we finally arrive safely Home.

There are secrets to success in all types of mundane affairs, and the same is true of spiritual endeavors. When we learn these secrets, we will spend less time and energy in our practice and attain the same results more quickly. The wish to facilitate these efforts and remind ourselves of the many pearls of wisdom uttered by Master over the years, has resulted in this collection. As Master says, “I have searched high and low, and I know there is nothing better than what I have taught you.”

Thank you, Master, for giving us such invaluable spiritual treasures.



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In speaking of God or the Supreme Spirit, Master instructs us to use original non-sexist terms to avoid the argument about whether God is a She or a He.

She + He = Hes (as in Bless)

Her + Him = Hirm (as in Firm)

Hers + His = Hiers (as in Dear)

Example: When God wishes, Hes makes things happen according to Hiers will to suit Hirmself.

As a creator of artistic designs as well as a spiritual teacher, Supreme Master Ching Hai loves all expressions of inner beauty. It is for this reason that She refers to Vietnam as "Au Lac" and Taiwan as "Formosa." Au Lac is the ancient name of Vietnam and means "happiness." And the name Formosa reflects more completely the beauty of the island and its people. Master feels that using these names brings spiritual elevation and luck to the land and its inhabitants.



Ten
Secrets
on the
Journey
of the
Soul

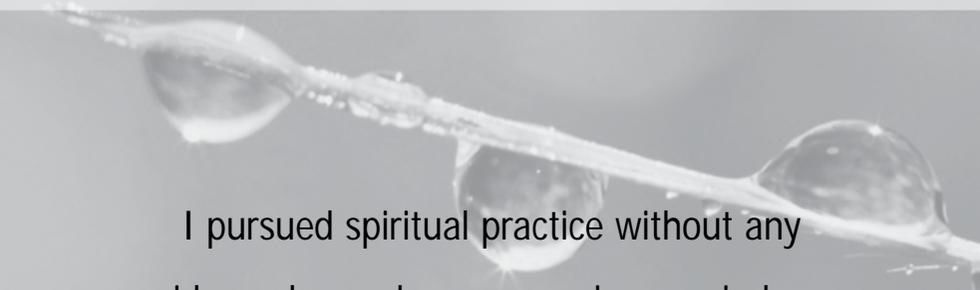


Focus on the Truth

How Master Attained the Ultimate Truth



When a Master comes to Earth, not only are the disciples uplifted and shown wisdom, but the whole race of humankind is purified and uplifted to a certain higher level of consciousness.

A close-up photograph of a thin, light-colored stem with several clear, spherical water droplets of varying sizes attached to it. The background is a soft, out-of-focus grey.

I pursued spiritual practice without any ideas, demands or person in my mind ...

Even if you asked me to die
for the Truth at that time,
I would have done it
as I was not attached to anything
in the world.



✿ **All I Had Was Pure Sincerity** ✿

As I recall, there was no secret behind my attainment of the Truth. All I had then was pure sincerity. I pursued spiritual practice without any ideas, demands or person in my mind. I was naturally like that. Even if you asked me to die for the Truth at that time, I would have done it as I wasn't attached to anything in the world. Whether I had food or not I persisted in my spiritual practice. I never complained, nor was I distracted from the Truth by food.

I remember, when I was in India, I offered all my money to the so-called masters that I met so I was left without a penny. I never anticipated that I might sometimes yearn to have some biscuits,

candy or ice cream. I had a better appetite at that time and ate a lot each day. Since I had no money then, every day I dreamt crazily about having some biscuits, but I couldn't get any. Only when I occasionally went out with people would I swallow anything I was offered like a hungry ghost. Even then, those things didn't distract me from my aspiration for the Truth. That's the only quality of mine that I can remember, and that's why God loved me, and let me have a taste of what the "Truth" is like.

Therefore, I want to impart this secret way to you. Should we want to attain the Truth quickly, apart from securing an experienced master, we also need to have a sincere aspiration for the Truth; then it's enough. God doesn't require us to offer money, or to be a pure vegan. We observe a vegan diet to reduce our obstacles, and to refrain



from incurring blood debts. However, God never imposes harsh demands of any kind on us.

For instance, when we go to school, the teachers never demand that we go to bed late, get up early, or learn this or that. They don't make harsh demands on us, but as students, we know that we can't study well unless we get up early and go to bed late. Also, when we're studying, we refrain from indulging in pleasures. Didn't we have a tough time when we were students? We sacrificed everything, and pleasures were very rare. Only occasionally would we go to dances or parties; we couldn't go every day. It wasn't because our professors or teachers forbade us, but we knew we must not be lazy and that this was the way to successful learning. If we were sluggish, we'd have to stay another year, or fail the exams.

✿ Focus on the Truth ✿

We spiritual practitioners also have to follow some secret guidelines; for instance, being a vegan to keep our body, speech and mind pure. Free from the annoyance of subtle guilty feelings, our conscience will be at peace. We also have to take good care of the family and observe monogamy. Why? Because if there is turbulence and bad feelings within the family we can hardly continue with our spiritual practice. Our minds will be distracted, and we can't focus on spiritual cultivation. The precepts are there to help us, to give us more time to concentrate, just like when we're studying in school.



Another example is that we should refrain from watching bad movies and reading erotic publications. This is meant to prevent us from getting stimulated, and then forgetting our inner Self and our aspiration for the Truth. Keeping the precepts alone will not take us to Godhood. No! no! no! Let me cite another example: A student never goes dancing or indulges in pleasures, but can he graduate without studying? He can't! These are only helpful ways. In the same sense, you won't reach Godhood by merely keeping the precepts, being a vegan or chanting the scriptures. At the most, you can only acquire some knowledge and know more about ethics. Attaining Godhood requires an entirely different lesson of training yourself to discover and dig out your treasure from within.

✿ Total Surrender ✿

So when you've reached Godhood, perhaps I won't comment anymore about what you should do, but not now. Now you still have to follow the rules and train yourself to be disciplined. Otherwise, you'll be distracted and won't be able to concentrate on the ultimate goal. As a new spiritual practitioner, you had better keep the precepts strictly to build up your faith in the Truth. Therefore, don't ask me, "Why are You so strict?" I'm not strict! I just offer you the secret ways of spiritual practice. If we're too casual in spiritual practice, it will be difficult for us to learn the supreme techniques; so new practitioners should follow the teacher's instructions. It's very difficult to follow the Master's instructions. You all think that you can do it, but you may fail when a test comes.



It's written in an Indian scripture: The Muslim commandment says that not only should you not consume alcohol, but even your clothes and your prayer rug must not be placed near alcohol. However, there's another saying that goes, "If your Enlightened Master tells you to soak all your clothes in alcohol, you must comply." This means that you must do whatever the teacher tells you, and this is really difficult! There's an ancient Chinese saying that states, "Upon entering a temple, you should offer your actions, speech and thoughts to the Dragon God Dharma Guards," which means total surrender. When you're totally free of your own ideas, ego and human prejudices and thoughts, you've reached the state of total renunciation. However, it's very difficult; from my observation, very few people have passed this test.

✿ **Your Heart Has to Be as Pure as a Child's** ✿

When I was in India, I once met a world-renowned master. I was coughing very severely, perhaps because I was allergic to dust. When I was there, I swept the floor every day. I observed that no one else was willing to do the job, and the staircase was filthy and heavily covered with dust. Even the screens on the windows were very dusty, so I cleaned them thoroughly. Perhaps I didn't take good care of myself when sweeping the dust so it went into my lungs and made me cough for several months. I coughed until I felt like my lungs were going to explode and I couldn't stand it anymore, as if I would die very soon. Day and night I coughed and could neither sleep nor meditate. Then, the master there summoned me. I believed in him very much then; I believed in



every master. (Master laughs.) Strangely, I had extraordinary faith. Whenever people said that someone was an Enlightened Master, I would believe it without testing him. That was how I treated all the masters I met.

At that time, I happened to believe in this master. He summoned me when he noticed that I was coughing very severely. I thought he would give me a secret remedy to stop my coughing, perhaps by using some miraculous power. When I went in, he asked me to drink a cup of liquid. After I drank it, they checked the bottle. Then, both he and his attendant turned green. They were shocked. Oh, no! It was massage oil! I drank a large cupful of it. It was good enough that I didn't die from it. I must have had very strong life power. Both of them were pale and frightened, but they didn't let me know it; I found out later.

After that, they came every day to ask me: "Are you feeling OK?" I said, "Why? I'm all right." (Master laughs.) However, I felt really awful when I drank that medicine; I felt so bad that I wanted to vomit, but I didn't dare. How could I throw up the medicine given by a master? I regurgitated and swallowed it again several times until I swallowed it all. Phew! It was really terrible! It was sticky, spicy, bitter and oily. Good grief! I had never drunk any medicine that tasted so bad. Only later did I find out that they had given me the wrong thing. Yet I still didn't doubt him and stayed on for quite a while. Other ordinary people might have said, "He can't be an Enlightened Master! If he is, why did he give you the wrong medicine and almost kill you?" But no suspicion was aroused in me!



Most probably because I was so simple at heart and so dumb, God became more merciful toward me and let me realize the Truth sooner. I have very few secret ways. All I have are these very simple, easy ways, and I've told you all of them. Should you want to attain the Truth, your heart has to be as pure as a child's; be pure and simple in doing everything then you'll soon attain the Truth. If you're complicated, dispute too much, debate too much, think too much about right and wrong, and take victory and defeat too seriously, don't blame me if you're very slow in attaining the Truth; your frustrations are self-created.

✿ **A Temporary Paradise** ✿

There's nothing really serious about the world. Sooner or later we'll all die, and our graves will be covered by plants in no time. So, before we enter our graves, we should try our best to live more happily, do what we love to do, and do it wholeheartedly; serve the world, take care of ourselves, take care of the family; enjoy all the beautiful things that the world provides for us. Sometimes ugly things are also a kind of lesson and have their beautiful aspects. When we observe things through more enlightened eyes, we discern beauty in everything. Have you noticed how pretty frogs are? They're very cute, aren't they? We can see the lovely side in everything. Sometimes ugly things also have their lovely aspects and are educational.



Therefore, let's do our best to treat this world as a temporary paradise, and treat all the people around us as Gods and enlightened beings. Although they don't recognize themselves as such, we should still respect them and treat them as we would ourselves; be strict but also forgiving; be loving but also detached. Then we'll be more relaxed in our actions, speech and thoughts and we'll naturally attain the Truth by practicing in this way.

Don't rush, don't be nervous, and don't force yourselves. It doesn't matter what level we've arrived at as it differs among individuals. By and by, everyone will understand. I can only promise you that you won't have to come back to suffer in this world, won't go to hell, won't become animals, and will definitely ascend. However, the level that you reach depends on your confidence and sincerity in your quest for the Truth. You can't



hold me responsible; I can only guide and teach you. It's up to you to go slower or faster, and keep yourself going in the right direction or the wrong one.¹

¹ Spoken by Supreme Master Ching Hai, Hsihu Group Meditation, Formosa, April 9, 1991 (Originally in Chinese)

Total Faith in the Master



When we meditate we should be sincere, so sincere that it's as if we're meditating for the last time, or as if we're to die the next day, or in five minutes. If we have this attitude in our heart when meditating we'll have achievement.

I completely placed myself –
my thoughts, words and actions –
and my life –
past, present and future –
in the hands of my Master.
So I felt safe, like a baby.



✿ **My Only Secret Is My Naivety!** ✿

I can't speak about the secret of my spiritual practice. The fact is that I have no secret. Perhaps the only secret is my naivety! God looks after naive people. Because they're as helpless as a baby, everyone wants to protect them. When we see an abandoned and helpless baby, we quickly pick him up even if we're not his parents. Seeing him cry, we pat him. Seeing that he's hungry, we quickly feed him. This is because a baby is too innocent and clumsy. Therefore, everyone wants to look after him.

Perhaps my secret is just "naivety." When we're very naive, God takes care of us. Then we're always by His side, because He will not leave us. We're just too naive. We'll die if He leaves us.

We look after a baby who is too little, innocent and unable to do anything, and are constantly by his side, protecting him twenty-four hours a day. If we're like babies, then we're together with God always, and everything is done by the "grown-up."

I rely on God's power to transmit the Truth to you. Everything I do is done by God, not by this layperson. It's safer, because the layperson may make mistakes, but God will not. As the saying goes, "The wise person looks like a fool." If we're foolish to that degree, God can't ignore us. He will do everything, and we won't err.



✿ My Master Knows All ✿

When I was a disciple and was misunderstood or framed by fellow practitioners, I would just ignore them. I thought, “My Master knows all. He’ll handle it.” I had great faith and didn’t complain or try to explain myself. I completely placed myself - my thoughts, words and actions - and my life - past, present and future - in the hands of my Master. So I felt safe, like a baby, without having to do anything on my own initiative. Perhaps this is my secret. At that time I felt very safe without having to take responsibility. Therefore, I was very relaxed, with no sorrow or worries, “because my Master knows all. He’s the greatest.” I felt like that in my heart.



I’ve never felt sorrow until now. Previously things were perfect when, as a student, I left everything to my Master’s arrangements. There



was nothing to complain about because I knew in my heart that He would take care of me. This is the only secret I have: total faith. If you don't have faith in me, then have faith in the highest God, the highest Buddha. He can see all the actions of us sentient beings and will take care of everything. He really will! ²

² Spoken by Supreme Master Ching Hai, Six-day Retreat, Hsiu, Formosa, February 13-18, 1989 (Originally in Chinese)



When the Enlightened Master sees us, She immediately knows where we need reparation, and how to do it, in a stern or gentle way. Therefore, if we follow a Master for spiritual practice, we should respect Her instructions and completely offer our actions, speech and thoughts to Her. If our commitment is half-given, then don't blame the Master when we fail to achieve something. The Master gives us half when we ask for half, and gives us all when we ask for all.



Through your thinking of the Master, you become one with the Master and realize that the Master is you. The Master is your own real Self. But because now you don't realize it, you can't help it: You just have to think of the Master, which is yourself. Gradually through this thinking, all the qualities of the Master will be transmitted to you, and you will find yourself through the Master. And later you'll realize, "Oh! The Master is me. It was me all the time." That's why since ancient times, people have worshiped sages and Enlightened Masters - for themselves, not for the sake of the Master.

Remain Focused and Detached during Retreats

Because if you're not dead to the world,
you can't be alive with God.
So we have to be one-pointed.
Whatever I did during this retreat was
to guard you or herd you into
this one-pointedness.



✿ **Remain Focused and Detached** **during Retreats** ✿

To the ones who have progressed: congratulations. You've done your best. You've put down many things. That's how you've progressed. For the ones who have not progressed: You have progressed, but too little.

In order to progress quickly, the way you always want and the way you always ask me, "Master, how do I progress quickly?" I tell you, "Put down, put down, put down everything," but you don't. You come here with a lot of friends, relatives, sons and daughters (in mind). I tell you, you have them all day long, all life long and you have only five days here for God! But no, that Guy comes second. That's why you don't progress.

The only secret is to put it down. God takes care of everything. We can't do anything! If God's Grace isn't there, we can't do anything. Of course, you come here and ask me to intervene in your destiny. Sometimes I could ask God to do it. But it's not my problem. I could intervene; I could do anything for you. But it's your problem. Because if you come here with that intention, that's all you get. Maybe your son gets better or your daughter has a good marriage, but that's all you get. The whole treasure, you leave behind. And that's a pity for you.





That's why I'm not bothered if you ask me any questions, even mundane or petty questions; I can answer them for you. I can help you with anything. But I just feel bad for you. You came here for only five days, and you can't even remember God.

Just for once, you should come here just for Hirm, just for God! But no, you always come here and try to make excuses, asking for all kinds of favors. All these kinds of favors you could ask for at home. I tell you truly: Anytime you pray to God or the Master Power, it's heard. We're not deaf! I hope you don't think so. (Audience applauds.)

And I hope you don't think that "I" am here (Master indicates the physical body) - that I am

sick, I am ill, I am weak, I am small, I am big, I am this and that. No, no, no! It's not me; it's not this person. We're not deaf, we're not dumb, we're not blind and we're not stupid. So there's no need to come here whining about your family and friends or your problems and misfortunes. You can; you can talk to me about anything you want. Of course, if you want to take me as a mother, as a friend, as a shoulder to cry on, that's fine also. But remember, these are only secondary.

And whenever a retreat comes, you should take advantage of the time, of no disturbances, no demands from family and friends, no business, no work, no boss, no colleagues, no husband or wife - we separate for you - no quarrels, no kids. You should concentrate. Treasure this time as if, after this, you'll die. You'd have no more chance then to even worry about your family, who would be left



behind! Will you have a chance to worry about them when you die? No! And you don't know if I'll be alive again the next day, much less after five days if I'll still be here to conduct another retreat. So you're really silly.

The ones who don't progress are really silly. Every time you come to a retreat, we remind you to concentrate on one Guy only: one Husband, one Wife. That's true faithfulness. It's not about you being loyal to your spouse on this planet. But you have to be loyal to the Spouse in Heaven; this is most important because the spouse here can leave you at any time. If you become ugly, sick, old, or he meets someone better, like the karma loosens and he meets someone from a past life he feels better with, then you're doomed. But the Spouse in Heaven will never, ever leave us. And we're very unfaithful; that's bad news.

Nevertheless, I hope you learned your lesson this time, those of you who haven't progressed. Whenever or if we have a next time again, take your chance then, OK? (Audience applauds.)

I'm not angry with you; I'm not frustrated with you; I'm nothing. I just do whatever I have to do, at that moment only. So whatever poison you feel, give it back to me now. You can go home and you're free. You're good, you're perfect again, and you're the person you are. When you're here, I have to correct you, I have to cleanse you, and the process is sometimes very painful for both of us. But it's OK. It's done, and you're free. After the five days, whatever's bad here or good here, it's gone. (Audience applauds.)

So you're perfect, you're loved and you're wanted, as usual, and during the retreat, too. But



other kinds of treatment might make you feel that you're unwanted or unloved. It's not true. It's just that administering medicine was necessary at that time. So whatever you don't need, give it back; put it back right here and go home free. You're perfect as usual, even if you haven't progressed. You've just learned another lesson, at your own expense. I mean, money-wise, also. (Master and everyone laugh.) You spend a lot of money, coming here and going back for nothing.

It's not my fault; I sell everything! Everyone has the same sale. I don't reserve anything for anyone special; everyone can have the same merchandise. If you want to buy it, everyone has a chance.

Now, for the ones who have progressed, you should be happy and proud of yourselves. I

don't have any reward or certificate to give you, but you know you're rewarded. You have your own certificate. You should be happy. (Applause) And for the ones who have not progressed at all or maybe just a little bit, since you can't help but progress a little - I hope there will be a next time for you, so that you can undo your mistakes. Next time, if we have any time, if you have any more chances to come ever again for such a retreat, please be one-pointed as if you're dead. If you're dead, no one can do anything to you. Put the word "Dead" on your forehead before you go out the door. Take it off and say, "I'm alive again!" when you get out of this retreat. That's really what it is. (Audience applauds.)

Because if you're not dead to the world, you can't be alive with God. It says the same thing in the Bible: "You can't worship both God



and mammon.” So we have to be one-pointed. Whatever I did during this retreat was to guard you or herd you into this one-pointedness. Be it loving, be it petting, hugging or scolding, it’s all to help you during these five days only. So don’t think that you’re more special if I give you more tenderness, and don’t think that you’re terrible if I give you a scolding. You’re all equal, equal, equally loved in my heart. (With tears in Her eyes) I love you so much! (Extended applause)

Because even though sometimes you do things I don’t like you to do because I know they’re not good for your practice, or you have something in your heart that’s not good for your practice, I know it’s not your fault. It’s just the circumstances that made you this way. It’s this terrible world that pushes you into these situations.

I have nothing but love for you. I don’t want

to give you any harsh words or anything, but I have to. It’s for your own good, but I just want you to know that I love you through all that. It’s just like sometimes you scold your children, but you never stop loving them. And maybe if some of your children aren’t well, you put them in the hospital. It’s a terrible treatment for them, but you want them to be well. So you put them in the mental ward, because you want their mind to be sharper, you hope, in the future. That’s all there is to this treatment, but treatment is never pleasant. Just try to meditate more so you don’t have to have this kind of treatment anymore.

Some of you were more enlightened in Heaven before you came here, but you wanted to be even more enlightened than that. For example, when you were 80% enlightened in Heaven, it means you were in the Fourth World or something. But you came down looking for



me because you knew I'd be here. And when you came down, your enlightenment became less than when you were in Heaven. And you suffered and suffered here, and forgot everything that was on the path and in Heaven for you. You've suffered more here because you've forgotten.

So I'm trying in every way to make you remember, to reach back there and above it, above the level you were on before you came down. So anything that's possible, I'll do for you. But you also have to try to remember your real Self. Otherwise, the less we remember, the more we suffer. Anyway, I just want you to know that you're very much loved and very much respected because you're good. It's not because you were bad that you're good. It's because the situation makes you so bad, yet you're still trying to be good. That's why you're good. (Audience applauds.)

You have so much pressure from home, society, friends, colleagues, jobs, boss, husband, wife and so on. And you still try your best to meditate at home, go to group meditation and also come here on retreat. Even if you come on an airplane, it's easy and all that, but it's not all that easy. So for that, I really love you. I know you try your best, and God will know. So anything you want, you should just pray for at home. The next time you go to a retreat, just desire to know God: For just five days, be dead to the world. (Audience applauds.)³

³ Spoken by Supreme Master Ching Hai, Christmas Five-day Retreat, Florida, USA, December 28, 2002 (Originally in English)



✿ Renounce Everything and Be Free ✿

When we're in the higher dimensions, we see everything in the innumerable worlds emerge and disappear in a fraction of a moment, just like bubbles! We can't even say it takes place in a moment. Things disappear almost as soon as they emerge. It's the same with all the illusory worlds we see in the higher dimensions.

We seem to go through long periods of suffering because of our ignorance. We're trapped in the cage of time and space; that's why it seems to be a long time. In reality, it's not that long. To God, it's even shorter than a second or a fraction of a moment. It can't be considered time. It passes really quickly! But since you're trapped



in a corner, you can't see the whole and you think that you're just there. This isn't true; you're omnipresent. You're just stuck there and can't fly out. Then you consider yourself to be there, and you're just that one or this one.



Sometimes little birds or insects get stuck on our windows. Since the windowpane is transparent and the room is lighted, they don't realize that there's a window and they crash into the pane. Their heads become swollen and their eyes blinded, and in a short while they unconsciously fall on the floor. They don't enter through an open space, but fly right into the windowpane.

We do the same! We should renounce everything, even our happiness, and then we'll be fine. We shouldn't even ask for peace, health, success, reputation, riches or family. We should ask for nothing at all. Then we won't suffer. It's just that we ask for too much so we get stuck here and there, with our nose caught in there, too. And then we cry out for help.⁴

⁴ Spoken by Supreme Master Ching Hai, Seven-day Retreat, Hsihu, Formosa September 28 - October 3, 1990 (Originally in Chinese)

The Benefit of Being Near Spiritual Mentors

Sometimes just being near them makes us feel very comfortable and gives us the desire to meditate so that we no longer want to think about mundane matters again.



✿ See Your Master Every Day If Possible ✿

Sometimes we need someone to remind us of the benefits of spiritual practice in order for us to remember to practice. Otherwise, we come in daily contact with many mundane beings or beings who aren't at such a high level, and their non-practicing aura drags our level down a little so we become like them, busily engaged in worldly and mundane matters and then we forget our most important goal.

That's why it's really useful to be with spiritual mentors and Saints. That means it's useful to be in the company of fellow practitioners and an Enlightened Master. It's useful not because we see them or listen to them talk. Sometimes, even when we don't hear them speak, the aura of their



spirituality serves as a reminder and gives us spiritual encouragement. Then we naturally think of spiritual practice. Sometimes just being near them makes us feel very comfortable and gives us the desire to meditate so that we no longer want to think about mundane matters again.



That's why in India they say to see your Master every day if possible; if not daily, then at least every two to three days. If that's not possible, then see your Master at least once a week, and if that's not possible, then at least once every two weeks; if not, then monthly. If that too isn't possible, then see Him once every few months; if not, then once a year. If that's still not possible, then at least once in a lifetime! If even this isn't possible, then you'll see the Master at the time of death. At that time He'll surely come to take you. Therefore, in the end you'll still see Him. However, we must have affinity with the Master for Him to come.

That's why the saying goes, "It's not easy to meet the Buddha." We don't necessarily see a Master even if we live with Him in the same world, or hear His words if we live with Him in

the same era. If we're the same age as the Master, or live in the same country or same village, it doesn't necessarily mean we can receive His blessings, because sometimes we lock ourselves up. Our heart is very important!

That's why some people, like many fellow practitioners in China and Au Lac who can't see the Master and have never seen the physical Master, can see the Master's Inner Light manifestation form. It's because their hearts are with the Master. This is also considered spiritual cultivation. The heart is very important!⁵

⁵ Spoken by Supreme Master Ching Hai, Group Meditation, Hsihu, Formosa, October 10, 1992 (Originally in Chinese)



✻ The Effortless Meditation ✻

Q: How long must one meditate to reach enlightenment?

M: Enlightenment comes immediately. As soon as you sit down with the Master and sincerely want it, it comes immediately. Sometimes even before initiation, or sometimes I haven't finished the instruction and people already get enlightenment. Some people are in a hurry; they have no time to wait. (Audience laughs.)

But the meditation takes place daily because we always want to be in the enlightened state, and we always want to renew our acknowledgment of enlightenment. Or also we want to strengthen it, to expand until infinity. Otherwise, even if you

meditate for one hundred years, you don't get any enlightenment.

Meditation doesn't bring enlightenment, the Master power does, because during initiation or during the so-called meditation in our method, you don't meditate because meditation means effort. But with our way, it's effortless. You might sit there sometimes even sleepy and then enlightenment comes, even then. Or you will be enlightened during sleep because the Master power will wake you; it will awaken your soul during your sleep. While your mind is asleep and your body is at rest, your soul will be awakened into the world of Light and wisdom.

Therefore, meditation is not a means to enlightenment. But for lack of vocabulary in this world, we have to call it meditation. Actually,



you're just sitting there, receiving the grace of God and acknowledging your own supreme power. There's actually no meditation involved because anything that is earned or is the result of some

kind of action is still the worldly production or within the material framework. Therefore, our meditation is a non-meditational meditation; it's an effortless meditation. (Audience applauds.)⁶

⁶ Spoken by Supreme Master Ching Hai, Group Meditation, Seattle, USA, April 7, 1993 (Originally in English)



It's important for us to have virtuous friends, those who are kind and good, and can talk with us about something good every day, persuading us to go in the right direction. Then we'll walk on the right path and become better and better. Our good qualities will emerge and grow, and become more apparent. We'll know better which direction is the right one.

Humility Is Close to the Truth

The humble are very close
to God and the Saints.

The pure-hearted are closer to the Truth.

The more arrogant we are,
the further we are from the Truth.



✿ Practice in Silence ✿

There are many levels in spiritual practice and the road of cultivation is very long. So as a new practitioner, one shouldn't boast and exaggerate. I tell you not to reveal your experiences to others for your own good, not for me. You can tell the whole country if you like, I won't be affected. You only hurt yourself by divulging your own treasures.

So, practice in silence; because we have to protect our level, and climb slowly to become Buddhas, Mahasattvas and superior Bodhisattvas (enlightened beings). If a new practitioner has some magical power, and goes out to advertise himself because he's not stable within, you

should know this kind of person is unreliable. Upon seeing such a person, an attained spiritual practitioner can tell that he or she is experiencing obstacles -- suffering from the "Zen Symptom" we often mention. People not suffering from the Zen Symptom don't go out bragging.

Spiritual practitioners should be humble. The higher their level, the more humble they are and the more they fear that people may detect their level and power. Some people are still OK in the initial stages of their practice. However, after attaining a trivial level and having some experiences, they brag everywhere. They talk so much that they run into many evil obstacles. The higher their level, the more evil obstacles there will be.

Therefore, the most terrible mistake in spiritual



practice is talking about one's experiences. If one talks too much, the experiences become distorted in nature or they simply don't come anymore, leaving only illusions; because the concentrated power is wasted, and the spiritual ambience is damaged. Originally, the spiritual ambience is a protective wall. However, as one leaks out too much, the devil digs a hole in it and enters. In spiritual practice, we dread boasting and arrogant attitudes. The prouder one is, the greater his trouble.⁷

⁷ Spoken by Supreme Master Ching Hai, Taipei, Formosa, December 17, 1986
(Originally in Chinese)

✿ **Boasting of One's Achievements Ruins One's Life** ✿

As I told you during the time of initiation, the King of Maya, the King of Illusion or the devil himself can manifest at any time exactly like the Buddha, a devil, an angel, God or any past, present or future Saint in order to mislead the sincere, careless or less vigilant, less careful practitioner. In a Buddhist sutra it mentions the fifty kinds of traps that the devil often uses to waylay the practitioner, to lead him astray. Well, there's no need to even know many things about the devil. Just remain pure, sincere and honest with yourself; and then you'll never fall into any traps, be in any trouble, and no one can ever trick you, not even the king of devils himself.



Should we desire fame and profit, or a high position, even in the spiritual hierarchy, we'll often fall into the trap of the negative force because that's just what they wait for; they wait for us to be caught off guard and then they brainwash us into believing that we've already become Buddha, that we're great, that we have a mission, that we're this, that and the other. Then we become proud. We become trapped in the field of false pride, of arrogance and we're finished. Yes, maybe we can come back again to humility and to continuing the practice as before, but it might be very difficult then. We might be led too far away, and then coming back, takes a long time. We waste a lot of our effort and time. So, as practitioners we can't afford to be careless, to be proud of our practice or to want a quick spiritual position in the spiritual world.

Many people meditate just a little bit, don't even keep the precepts very well, their vegan diet is so-so, they just have a few misleading visions and they believe that they've become masters and Buddhas. You can become what you wish to become. You can boast of your achievements but the fruits speak for themselves. Sometimes it ruins our life. We ruin ourselves and then it's too late to be able to get back to where we were before. So, humility is very important in spiritual practice. We must be humble within ourselves, not that we only act humble. Sometimes people don't act very humbly, but inside they're humble. Some people play humble; but, in fact, inside they're very, very arrogant. Sometimes the outward appearance misleads people.⁸

⁸ Spoken by Supreme Master Ching Hai, International Four-day Retreat, Hsihu, Formosa, February 20, 1996 (Originally in English)



🌿 Story about Master Lin Chi 🌿

There is also another story about Master Lin Chi, of China. When Master Lin Chi was still a student, he always slept. He slept everywhere. One day he was sleeping in the meditation hall in one corner, and he saw his Master come in. Pretending to be afraid, he took his cushion and sleeping bag and went to the other corner to hide, and slept again. The Master knew Lin Chi; they knew each other very well. So the Master went straight to the meditation hall and saw a monk who was sitting there meditating, and the Master kicked him, saying, “You, sleeping monk! What are you pretending to do? You should learn how to meditate like Lin Chi over there!” (Audience laughs.)

The monk couldn’t believe it. And you know how the monk sat? With all the robes, and dignified,

and in front of a Buddha statue, and still he got kicked in the bottom. (Audience laughs.) Burning one incense stick in front, he never moved until the incense was all burned. But he was moving inside. Therefore Lin Chi was covered with his sleeping bag, but the Master said that Lin Chi was meditating and that the sitting monk was sleeping. You understand? It’s different levels.

Yes, Lin Chi slept, but he never slept. He only slept with the body. His mind was always illuminated. Whatever he did, he was always centered in the Self. He never deviated from the center. But that monk who sat there like a wooden block, his mind was going in all directions, and he couldn’t do anything. So try to be centered, and do not criticize other peoples’ appearances. The fellow practitioners, some of them are not the way they look. ⁹

⁹ Spoken by Supreme Master Ching Hai, Group Meditation, Costa Rica, June 2, 1991 (Originally in English)



✧ The More Arrogant We Are, the Further We Are from the Truth ✧

The humble are very close to God and the Saints. The pure-hearted are closer to the Truth. The more arrogant we are, the further we are from the Truth. Why are we so far away from the Truth? Because we rely on the world! If we did not rely on the world, we would not be proud. If we rely on money, power, intellect or social status, we're relying on the world and the ephemeral. The Truth is not of this world, nor is it ephemeral. Therefore, the more we rely on this side, the farther we are from the other side. That's a logical explanation and shouldn't be difficult to understand.

Those who have no money or power, those who are advanced in years and uncared for, are more humble. Therefore, you often find me being very good to those people and the prison inmates. I'm not very nice to you sometimes. I'm sorry about that, but that's the way it is. I don't treat them well intentionally, or treat you less kindly deliberately. I'm just a mirror that reflects how you are. Don't blame the way I treat you, or compare: "Why is Master so nice to that person but not so nice to me?" If I'm good to someone, you just need to take a look at him and you'll know why. He's not necessarily more handsome than you are. No! Maybe all his teeth have fallen out and he doesn't have a single relative or friend. Maybe he doesn't have a penny and I even give him money. But I'm good to him because he's pure and humble at heart. He's not tainted.



He doesn't have obstructions before him, nor an attachment or something to rely on. His heart is infinitely vast. He's almost one with the universe.

If we have something to rely on, that's limiting ourselves - we become the official, the virtuous person or the one with the Truth. We still have a boundary with one corner unopened. The humble and the pure don't have anything to rely on. To have nothing is to have everything.¹⁰

¹⁰ Spoken by Supreme Master Ching Hai, Group Meditation, Hsihu, Formosa, August 13, 1989 (Originally in Chinese)

✿ **Become More Humble** **and Dare Not to Criticize Others** ✿

Just look at your spiritual diary each day and see if the things you've done are good. If the good deeds are few and the bad ones are many, and if we're full of greed, anger and hatred, then we know that we should be ashamed of ourselves. Then, gradually, we'll become more humble and not dare to criticize others because we can see that we're charcoal black. If our own feet are soaked in mud, how can we dare to use a torch to shine on others' feet. So our ego is lessened.

Otherwise, you can stay here. I'll give you a few scoldings each day and your ego will be fine because you have nowhere to hide in here. I'll pick out your shortcomings every day and elaborate on them over and over again. Then, you'll not dare



to be egotistical anymore. But humility and self-inferiority are two different things. The so-called inferiority complex is different. It means that one feels he's very lowly and useless. I yell and scold at you, but within that there's love, support and blessing.

But, in the outside world, people oppress you because of fame or wealth. For their own interests, they make our lives very miserable, break our hearts into pieces and totally crush our self-confidence.

So the two kinds of reprimands are different. One is in competition with us and the other is to help us eliminate our egos. In scoldings of the latter type, there's hidden love. So sometimes we feel that there's a kind of soothing fragrance, a soothing, compassionate atmosphere. And, even though you've been scolded, you always seem to miss that person. You can't forget him, nor can



you hate him. But in the outside world, even though people might use sweet talk, we may still fear them. We fear that they might conjure up a plan to cheat us. We feel that they're frightening as if they have a knife in hiding ready to use on us.¹¹

¹¹ Spoken by Supreme Master Ching Hai, Group Meditation, Hsihu, Formosa, October 10, 1990 (Originally in Aulacese)

Those with a Pure Heart Progress More Quickly



Lowly people are very humble, pure and simple. They have nothing to lean on. They have nothing to grab or hang onto. They know they have nothing; therefore, their hearts are very pure and simple. Great blessing power can more easily enter an empty heart that is pure and simple.

They might not look distinguished on the outside,
but they truly like me, have the strongest faith in me,
and care about me the most.

Whatever I say, they listen to.

They have no doubts about me on the inside,
neither are they against me on the outside.

When you see these people,
you can tell they progress very quickly.



✿ **Those with a Pure Heart Progress More Quickly** ✿

Why is it that people with a pure heart and a simple mind progress so quickly in spiritual practice? It's because the “dumb” people don't know how to argue. They're like children; they believe in me completely without any doubts. We have many such people here. This is why they progress so quickly. They might not look distinguished on the outside, but they truly like me, have the strongest faith in me, and care about me the most. Whatever I say, they listen to. They have no doubts about me on the inside, neither are they against me on the outside. When you see these people, you can tell they progress very quickly.

There are other people who seem very obedient and respectful to me, but after talking to them for a while, you will realize that they have a big ego, and they don't completely believe in me. Sometimes, they will even say it. When you meet more people, you'll learn how to tell apart those who truly understand my teachings and have complete faith in me. But you can't tell from their appearance.

Whether you progress quickly or slowly in your spiritual practice doesn't depend on Master alone. How much you progress also depends on how much you believe in Master and how you react to Master. Let me tell you a secret tip on how to make progress in spiritual practice, but don't tell anyone else. (Audience laughs and applauds.)



✿ Hindered by a Wall of Coldness ✿

Whether we progress quickly or slowly depends on the purity of our hearts. Sometimes we would very much like to be pure, but we can't. This is because we sowed a cold heart through our past karma, and now we're hindered by this wall of coldness. We simply can't believe in the Master completely, and we can't devote our body, speech and mind completely to the Master.

Some people practice very diligently. They meditate four or five hours every day. But their heart is still attached to the world. They still want fame and fortune. As a result, they can't make any progress. They might need to be reincarnated

one more time because they still want to stay in this world. For those people, I have to make them come back one more time and let them learn with another Master so that they can progress. Some of our fellow initiates here had already learned the Quan Yin Method in their previous lives. However, they only went halfway because they were still attached to this world. Or perhaps they weren't sincere enough; they still doubted the Master so they had to come back again.

This is just like the story I told you before. There's a person who wrote a letter to me, telling me that after initiation he prayed to me. He truly believed in me. He made a lot of progress in only two months. He could go to the brightest realm during meditation. But later he started to doubt me. He recalled that his previous master had told



him if his spirit left his body during meditation he would be possessed by demons. So he started to doubt my teachings and the method I taught. As a result, his level fell right away. Until now, he still can't move back up. So you can see how big an obstacle Maya can create for us.¹²

¹² Spoken by Supreme Master Ching Hai, Group Meditation, Hsihu, Formosa, October 29, 1988 (Originally in Chinese)

✿ People Who Are Pure in Their Hearts Get to God Quickly ✿

The people who are pure in their hearts are more simple. They get to God quickly because they don't have too much thinking and too many comparisons or too many studies to overcome. The more intellectual people, or sometimes the more accomplished people are more complicated because they have to be in a certain kind of field to succeed. So they become habitual in thinking, analyzing the pros and cons and successes and failures: "If I sit in meditation, what do I get from God? Do I get anything at all? Is that worth it? You know, time is money!" (Audience laughs.) It's like that sometimes. And



then subconsciously, we obstruct ourselves from the way to Heaven. That's what we call ego but actually, there is none.¹³

✿ Always Keep the Heart Innocent Like a Child ✿

The simple people will all attain the Truth. The most important thing is a pure heart, a heart that does not discriminate, a heart that does not differentiate between pain and happiness.

Do you know what the Zen Master Seng Tsan (3rd patriarch of Zen) said? “It is very difficult for those people with hearts that discriminate to find the Great Path.” What he meant is that those people with equality, simplicity and contentment in their hearts are able to find the Truth more easily.

¹³ Spoken by Supreme Master Ching Hai, Group Meditation, Hawaii, USA, September 6, 1994 (Originally in English)

Lao Tzu also said that one can only reach the Tao when one becomes like a child. And Jesus Christ said that unless you become innocent like a child, you cannot enter the Kingdom of God. So Buddhism and Taoism say the same thing, and the Bible says similar things.

Islamism also says the same. Islamism teaches its followers not to criticize others. No matter how that person is, it is God's will for him to be so. The meaning is that we should be like children and not criticize others. Then, it is right!¹⁴

¹⁴ Spoken by Supreme Master Ching Hai, Lecture, Pingtung, Formosa, December 1, 1988 (Originally in Chinese)



The best and purest motive will attract all the goodness in the universe, all the purest things, even more than we can ask for.



If our heart is kind, we can easily be one with all things and can easily be in touch with God. If our heart is separated, then it's like we have a wall built around us. That's why it's not just because we are nearby a Master that our heart is very near to Him. If our heart wants to be near, even if we're one million miles away, there doesn't seem to be any distance at all. If we're at His side but our heart is not with Him, then we will be very far away indeed.

Relax

If you're as relaxed in your meditation
as when you see me,
that's real meditation.



✿ Real Meditation ✿

All of you are attached to visions in meditation, considering them to be real spiritual experiences, and visions that you see when you're not meditating just don't count. But actually, at that moment you're really meditating, because "Zen prevails in everything." Meditation doesn't mean that we sit tight and regulate ourselves. That's the incorrect way because at that time, we meditate with our ego, and that's why we have no experiences. We should do it in a natural way in order to attain enlightenment.

If you're as relaxed in your meditation as when you see me, that's real meditation. We've heard the

story about someone becoming enlightened while chopping logs, and another case about someone else getting enlightened upon hearing a few words from an Enlightened Master. That's it. Why don't you have an experience after hours of sitting vexed in meditation? It's because you do it with your ego, your mind. You focus your attention too hard; you push yourselves too much, so you become attached and nervous. That's why you have no experiences. That's not real meditation. It's just a kind of drill.

Real meditation takes place at any time. That's why some of you have good experiences when you're asleep or when you look at me attentively. That's meditation, for your attention is focused at that time. You concentrate because you're delighted to see me or listen to me, and



you put aside your prejudices at that time. That's when you meditate, isn't it? That's when you have a normal experience.

Suppose you sit there with your brows knit, thinking, "I want to meditate. Oh! How come I have no experience? Why hasn't it come yet? Oh! When will it come?" (Audience laughs.) You're rushing yourself, rushing the enlightenment experience. But these experiences never hurry. They come as they may, and go as they want. They don't attach to anything; as the Diamond Sutra says, enlightenment comes when we don't attach to anything. We should follow this paragon of spirituality in order to attain enlightenment.

✿ The Pure Land Is Right in Front of Us ✿

When you gaze at me in a very pure state of mind without the slightest disturbance, you have all the experiences that you should have. Some of you, while attending my lectures, have seen the lecture hall turn into a world of extremely brilliant light. That's the Pure Land. That's what's meant by the saying, "The Pure Land is right in front of us." Our world is a physical one, but when we concentrate spiritually, it becomes the Pure Land at once, and devils can become Saints in our eyes.

Some of you complain to me that you don't have such good experiences after you join group meditation. Actually, that's because your



ego has come out and your love has diminished. The fellow initiates are not affecting you. You shouldn't blame others; instead, you should introspect on yourselves. That's why I don't like those who complain; it's just that I don't say so. These people expect me to blame others, but I won't be biased.

Some of you have many things on your minds when you look at me. You look at me as if you aren't really looking. Then you'd better not look! Even as you look at me, many things are going on in your minds. You're wondering whether you should recite the Holy Names, as if you want to drive me away. (Audience laughs.) If you should remember to do that while looking at me, it means you want to drive me away quickly and that makes me feel uncomfortable. You should

look at me like a child who hasn't seen his parents for a long time, and then you'll have inner experiences, which will be the best that you can have.



We shouldn't think that we only meditate when we close our eyes and sit there vexed with our brows knit. No, no! That's just a kind of practice. We sit quietly to express our sincerity. Although we can't sit peacefully sometimes, we continue. We wait for God in our meditation. Sometimes we have experiences when



we're sincere, but sometimes we can't concentrate and say to ourselves: "Well, whether I'm sincere or not, that's all I can do for now. Please help me, God."

Therefore, we should meditate every day and consider it a duty, just like we eat even when we don't want to. We should make it a habit to think of God as soon as we wake up in the morning and think of God again after we get off work and return home in the evening. Because we're too busy every day, we can't think of God sincerely; therefore, we should do it early in the morning after we get up, and again in the evening after we return home. But this doesn't mean that we can think of God completely; we just do our best. We should do it when we're working as well.

✿ Experiencing Enlightenment during Master's Lectures ✿

So it's our greatest blessing and merit to listen to a lecture by an Enlightened Master. Because we can see the Master continuously for two or three hours, we can be elevated by Her vibration, or our bad karma can be cleansed to some degree by Her Light, and then we'll have inner experiences. When you come here, you can't see me continuously for two or three hours so you don't get as much blessing as you would at a lecture. It's such a great blessing to be able to see an Enlightened Master for two or three hours at a stretch! Not everyone has this chance. One glance in eons is good enough, not to mention two to three hours! Beings on some other planets have never seen or heard an Enlightened Master



before. They've had no contact with a Master. Therefore, you should seize the opportunity to see a real Master for a couple of hours. Many people, initiates or non-initiates, have experienced enlightenment during my lectures.

So meditation doesn't mean only sitting. It's meditation when we wholeheartedly concentrate. That's why you have experiences when you're working. Sometimes we have no experience in meditation and we feel frustrated because we meditate with our ego. That's not the natural way to meditate. But it's OK. You still get merit. Just meditate sincerely. The result doesn't matter.

Let me tell you why you don't have inner experiences when you meditate. It's because you're not completely free of attachment at that time, and you're not really concentrating. We think we

are, and we frown and wonder, "Why hasn't the manifestation form of Master come?" Sincerity and longing are different from attachment. However, it's difficult for beginners to distinguish between them. It doesn't matter. Just do your best. It counts as long as you intentionally meditate and think of the Master, no matter whether you meditate well or not, or are distracted or not. Your efforts will be recorded and you'll be elevated on any excuse. (Audience applauds.)

For example, you work for someone who sells clothes. Sometimes there are no customers, and you sit there and fall asleep. But the boss still pays you for the time you stay. At other times you're busy the whole day long, and the boss pays you the same. As long as you come to the store, you get your monthly salary. It's the same with meditation. You should meditate, regardless of the



experience. Your efforts will be recorded and I'll "pay" you someday so that you can pay your "fare" to Heaven. (Audience applauds.)¹⁵



Most of you find trouble and hinder yourself. You don't allow yourself to develop and relax. Not being relaxed, your thoughts are blocked; thus your deeds are not perfect.

¹⁵ Spoken by Supreme Master Ching Hai, Seven-day Retreat, Ilan, Formosa August 12-18, 1988 (Originally in Chinese)



✿ Living a Balanced Life Is the Tao ✿

You should pursue spiritual practice in a moderate way. It's OK to become a Saint tomorrow so why must you rush to make it today? You've waited for many lifetimes so what is the big deal in waiting just a few more days? The more anxious you are, the more you obstruct yourself.

In ancient times, there was a person who followed an Enlightened Master to practice. One day, he asked his Master, "Master, how many sincere persons like me can you find in this world?" His Master replied, "The universe is full of disciples like you." (Master and everyone laugh.) Still skeptical, the disciple asked again,

"Master, I'm truly sincere. If I were to renounce everything, including my parents, wife, children, relatives, and friends, then how many years of practice would I take to reach Sainthood?" His Master told him, "If you're diligent, you can achieve it in five to fifteen years." The disciple asked further, "That's too slow. If I refrain from eating and drinking, and even skip sleeping, and only meditate with my legs crossed twenty-four hours a day, when do you think I can become a Saint?" His Master said, "In this way, perhaps it will take you thirty to fifty years to become a Saint." (Master and everyone laugh.) Do you know why? He was being too anxious. Who did he think he was? Who cares whether he becomes a Saint or not? Who would need a person like him?



✿ The Best Way Is the Middle Way ✿

Shakyamuni Buddha used to have a disciple who didn't sleep even at night. It seemed that he meditated in the day and chanted the sutras at night, until later his eyes almost became blind. Shakyamuni Buddha told him, "The way you practice will soon make you Maya instead of a Saint. When you play the zither, and the strings are stretched too tightly, can they produce any sound?" The disciple answered, "No!" "And if the strings are too loose, will any sound come out?" He said, "No, none." Then Shakyamuni Buddha said, "The best way is the middle way."

Therefore, a balanced life is the Truth; an ordinary mind is the Truth. We should not crave anything. Craving to become a Saint quickly is also a kind of greediness. We ought to be moderate in whatever we do. How can you demand a newborn baby to ride a bicycle? You may be anxious to see him grow up and become a capable person, but you must not rush him. He can't even walk steadily, so how can you ask him to run? Even if he forces himself to run, he'll soon fall down. When a toddler learning to walk tries to run, won't he fall down in just a few steps? As a result, he'll break his nose and injure his body, all because he's too anxious.



✿ **First Take Good Care of Our Mind** ✿

We should first take good care of our mind. Check whether or not we have a pure and noble ideal, that we have reined in our greed, wrath and infatuation, that we're loving and patient enough to others, that we're magnanimous, understanding and generous enough to tolerate others' mistakes. When we've achieved all these things, it is still not too late to become an Enlightened Master or Saint. Before we've reached perfection, who can benefit from our becoming an Enlightened Master? We have not yet erased our guilty feelings, or cleared up our preconceptions and ignorance. Being still very narrow-minded, we can't tolerate many people. Our love is still too insignificant to love a lot of

people. Then what's the benefit of rushing to become an Enlightened Master? Even if all the Saints and Masters pour all of Their power into such a narrow-minded, agitated and ignorant person, what's the use?

Endowed with power but not love, one will become Maya. There's no significant difference between Maya and a Saint. Both have similar power, but the Saint has love, which Maya lacks. Maya is very selfish, demands everything and takes all. He only criticizes and never forgives. The Saint not only criticizes, but He also forgives. He criticizes when it's the right time to do so, in order to help people progress, and let them realize their own shortcomings. When it's time to forgive, He will, giving people due encouragement to live on, without being burdened by heavy feelings of guilt.



✿ One Must Be Balanced in Yin and Yang to Become a Saint ✿

To really become a Saint, we have to be perfect in every aspect, not just a particular aspect. If we're only magnanimous, but never criticize, then it's also no good! For instance, if at times when you should criticize and educate people, you praise them instead, you only spoil them and ruin their judgment ability in spiritual practice. That's why I say, "One must be balanced in Yin (Negative) and Yang (Positive) to become a Saint." We should penetrate all aspects of this world. Living in the world, we still need to eat, sleep and interact with people; therefore, we ought to be normal. As to our inner level or spiritual progress, we should just keep it to ourselves, and refrain from revealing it through our outer deportment.¹⁶

¹⁶ Spoken by Supreme Master Ching Hai, Group Meditation, Hsihu, Formosa, October 19, 1990 (originally in Chinese)

✿ Don't Be Attached to Results ✿

We can't reach Heaven in one step. It's the same for our spiritual practitioners. As long as we practice diligently every day, when the time comes, we'll get results naturally. It's just like raising our children: As long as we take good care of them every day, they'll grow up themselves. When we look back, we say, "Wow, they've grown so tall!" Some are even taller than the parents. Then all of a sudden, our hair has started to turn white, and we don't remember since when. Even I have grown a few pieces of white hair! (Audience laughs.) I've counted - There are three. (Master and audience laugh.) So don't worry if you don't see any results. Just continue practicing diligently and don't be attached to the results.



Some fellow initiates told me that they had not seen any visions in their meditation. I said there was no use in seeing visions. If our mind is getting more stable, if we feel more secure, if we have faith and happiness, and if we feel the protection of God's power, then we've already had the most precious experiences. Seeing Light and having visions are nothing. There are some people who have visions in meditation, but their mind is still not stable, and they lack faith. And then they drop out of our group. Some people have very strong faith in me. They know that following me is the right way. They focus their minds on this method, and they don't go astray. Such people have the most superior experiences. (Audience applauds.) Therefore, when you listen to other initiates talking about their visions, don't get upset. (Audience laughs and applauds.) When we feel peaceful and secure, we're having the best



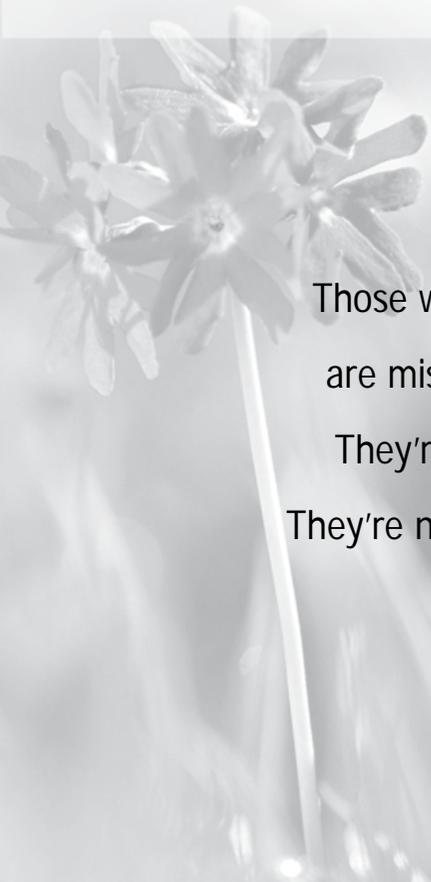
experience. However, if you haven't heard the inner Sound, it's not easy for you to feel peaceful and secure. It's not easy.¹⁷

¹⁷ Spoken by Supreme Master Ching Hai, Seven-day Retreat, Hsihu, Formosa, July 29 - August 6, 1989 (Originally in Chinese)



In this world, we can't be too impatient. When we want something, we should try not to want it, and then it will become ours. This is very strange. The more we want something, the further it will be from our reach. The same is true for enlightenment and attainment of the Truth. By no means should we push God anxiously and nervously to let us become Saints. Instead, we should remain calm and cool, and just fulfill our daily obligations.

Be Happy

A close-up photograph of a dandelion flower in bloom, with its stem and leaves visible. The background is a soft, out-of-focus field of grass and other flowers.

Those who can't laugh
are miserable Saints.
They're too serious.
They're not open enough.



✿ The “Religion of Laughter” ✿

I’ve heard that laughter is good medicine that can cure any disease. There’s a Chinese saying, “One should laugh heartily three times a day.” So, how many times have we laughed today? (Audience laughs.) Too many times to count? No wonder some people accuse me of not being serious enough. (Master and audience laugh.) They say instead of expounding on holy scriptures, I tell jokes all the time. This is because we’re a sect specializing in jokes. (Audience laughs.) So, if anyone asks you what sect you are from, just tell them that we belong to the “Religion of Laughter!” (Master and audience laugh; audience applauds.) If a Buddha is miserable, then he’s a miserable Buddha. He’s

useless. What good is it to become a Buddha if he can’t even laugh?

In the West, there’s also a saying, “A Saint who is miserable, is a miserable Saint.”





✿ We Can Measure Our Level by Our Laughter ✿

Therefore, we can tell how high our level is by looking at how much we laugh every day. (Master and audience laugh.) We can measure our level by our laughter, and we don't have to wait to find out after we start practicing the Quan Yin Method with a Master. Those who can't laugh are miserable Saints. They're too serious. They're not open enough.

Sometimes you ask me, "Why can't the monks and nuns from other temples laugh? They all look so serious and so miserable." It's because they're "miserable Saints." They have nothing to laugh at because their hearts are not open.

The more we do our spiritual practice, the more light-hearted we become. We become very open-minded. We feel there is nothing worth picking on, and we don't care about whether things are good or bad. That's why being a Master is so difficult: She has to fix people's shortcomings even though these things don't matter to Her. She doesn't mind anything anymore so how can She still do this job? It is so troublesome and so tiring. She has to force Herself to do things She doesn't like to do.

In the past when I lived alone, I was very happy. I wanted nothing and needed nothing. Now I have a lot of disciples and my trouble has increased as well. (Audience laughs.) It's true! You all bring your troubles to me and tell me about them. Each one of you tells me a different kind of problem. (Master and audience laugh.) When I



see you being so miserable, I worry about you and try to reduce your pain. As a result, I'm dragged down by you. I can only recover after I've solved all your problems because I'm one with you.

For those who are parents, don't you suffer when your child is sick? (Audience answers, "Yes.") Right. You can't sleep. You sit beside your child, comforting him, fanning him, and taking care of him. You can't sleep or eat and you look very pale. You blame yourself for not being able to take over your child's sickness or to share his suffering. It's not that you get sick yourself. It's just that you feel the same pain as the child even though you're healthy yourself. You feel sad because your child feels so small and so weak, and he continually cries because he can't tell you where his pain is. Isn't it so? (Audience answers, "Yes.")

Even worldly parents are like this, let alone the spiritual parent of practitioners. She truly cries for us. But if the situation is already very painful, and you allow yourself to become miserable, how can you continue to live? So we should always look at the bright side of things. I always tell jokes to make you laugh because by nature I like to laugh. We have to laugh whenever we can because it's not easy to laugh in this world! (Master and audience laugh; audience applauds.) If you come here to spend time with me and still can't laugh, then you're hopeless. You're beyond cure. You'll never be able to find happiness anywhere.

Therefore, if you want to become a Buddha, you should remember when you come here, you're going to be a "Laughing Buddha." Even if you can't become a Buddha, at least you can



become a deity - a “Laughing Deity.” (Master and audience laugh.) If we don’t have an open heart and a tolerant attitude, what good is it to become a Buddha?

**✿ We Become Very Expansive,
like the Air, like the Ocean ✿**

The more we practice, the more relaxed we are. We don’t have any guilty feelings. Nothing can bind us, and no preconceived concepts can oppress us. We become very expansive, like the air, like the ocean. We’re not limited by any biases or bound by any traditions

or customs. Our hearts become wide open. That’s why it’s easy for us to laugh. We can laugh even if there’s no reason to laugh because we’re so happy inside.¹⁷

¹⁷ Spoken by Supreme Master Ching Hai, Seven-day Retreat, Hsiuhu, Formosa, July 29 - August 6, 1989 (Originally in Chinese)



✿ The Land of Laughter ✿

After some times of more effort and sincerity, God will take us to the Land of Laughter. That's where we have a lot of jokes and everything is funny to us. There are no more miserable Buddhas, there are no serious Saints that walk around trying to show people that they've worked hard, that they're devoted to Master, that they love Master so much that they have to jump in front of everyone just to see the Master, etc. That's why you've often heard that most Masters have a lot of humor; they can laugh at everyone, even God and themselves. That's the landmark of an enlightened person. They've arrived at the Land of Laughter because they know everything is really just a game. ¹⁸

¹⁸ Spoken by Supreme Master Ching Hai, International Seven-day Retreat, Phnom Penh, Cambodia, May 14, 1996 (Originally in English)

✿ We Practice Hard Only to Reach the Point of Relaxation ✿

If I die, I will die laughing; that's the truth. When we understand the truth, we can have fun from all sides; that's why we shouldn't stop laughing under any circumstances.



Actually, we practice hard only to reach the point of relaxation so that we can enjoy what we are and what we have in any circumstance. Then we can open our hearts and tolerate anything, and we can feel the God Nature in all beings so



we don't look down upon anyone. We might look down upon their habits or their accumulated bad manners, but we don't look down upon them. Even if we don't like their habits, we like the person all the time.¹⁹

¹⁹ Spoken by Supreme Master Ching Hai, International Seven-day Retreat, Santimen, Pingtung, Formosa, December 24, 1992 (Originally in English)



We have to look at the bright side of the sun, in the bright side of the corner. OK, now, that's one of my secret teachings imparted to you. You know, that's how we keep happy and contented, and develop our creative talent and our positive, happy nature. We can't always expect things to come out the way we want. But we should accept things as God arranged them. That's always fun and surprising and tasty, you know? It makes life more interesting.

Love Your Family



When you smile, your whole being smiles too; and your level of consciousness automatically rises up to some extent. So, smile a lot. Smile during times of both happiness and sorrow. Cry when you must, but smile when you cry as well. Let the tears fall but then smile in your heart. Try to smile whenever you can.

Due to this love, we will feel very lively and happy. It will be easy for us to accept people from outside, and to love others. Try it when you return home. This is the path to being happy.



✿ Protect Your Emotions ✿

When I talk to you about marriage and love, please don't think that I'm going beyond my responsibility. No! I do it because you cannot go into samadhi in your meditation if you don't have a happy marriage or good relations with your spouse. You feel inner anguish and emotional turmoil. Your mind is filled with all those things. You can't even recite the Holy Names, not to mention entering samadhi! At that time your partner is more important than the Master. But I don't blame you because such things are unavoidable. At that moment, you don't even want to go into Nirvana. Even if you do, you can't because you're unhappy. I've gone through all this before so I can be your teacher now. Such situations are difficult to avoid and control.

Of course, when we progress spiritually, we know how to deal with our loving marital relationships. However, there are some fellow practitioners who feel emotionally depressed and miserable inside. Therefore, I have to talk to you about worldly affairs because they're related to spiritual practice. When you're happy, you're in Nirvana. No matter who comes to you, you feel happy, and you can love anyone or forgive anyone or give anything to anyone. But when you're not happy, you don't want to do anything or take any responsibility. You can't even do so if you want to because you don't have the inspiration to do so. At that time, you are tired of everything and want to forget the whole world. That's why there's a saying that goes, "The Dharma exists in worldly affairs." Am I right? (Audience answers, "Yes.") That's it. You have all experienced it.



Therefore, I often say that if you want to proceed smoothly along the spiritual path, you have to protect your emotions and your marriage. Those of you who are still single should protect your relationships with your loved ones as well if you truly love each other. It will be too late if you try to make amends once you break up. Beautiful times don't last forever. You don't always meet someone you really love and want to share your life with. So take care once you find him or her.

Don't think that this is a trivial or worldly affair. No, no! People often feel lonely without a companion. Some can bear it, but most can't. So take care to protect it if you still need it.

Even small pearls are protected and cherished as treasures, let alone love! It could be very helpful to you. Though you should not be attached to

it, you cannot ignore it, either. A car may not be a person like you are, or a part of you, but you still need it to come to Hsihu. It would be too inconvenient and time-consuming to come on foot. You can't say, "I come to Hsihu to practice spiritually and get enlightenment. Why do I need a car? It's only a physical vehicle. Just abandon it by the roadside!" You can't do that. It takes you here in much less time and brings you to me more quickly. You can save much time for meditation. Of course, you can come on foot, but that would take you several months, and I would have probably left by the time you arrived.²⁰

²⁰ Spoken by Supreme Master Ching Hai, Seven-day Retreat, Hsihu, Formosa
May 5-12, 1991 (Originally in Chinese)



✿ Turn Your Family Environment into a Heaven ✿

Some spiritual practitioners are very contented, lively and at ease because nothing is stuck in their minds. They're more ingenuous, and don't feel any restrictions or pressure. Therefore, they don't need much sleep, and still remain very relaxed and energetic. It truly is so.

If you recall, when we're happy, cheerful, no matter for what reasons, no matter if we're with friends, husband, wife or children, we can chat happily all through the night. Even though we've only slept for one or two hours, we still feel that we're full of energy. But when we're miserable, carrying a guilty conscience, or when karma comes, we feel very, very tired, no matter

how much we've slept. That's why I told you this morning to relax, relax and relax!

Love your family, truly love them, and they will love you, too. Then, due to this love, we will feel very lively and happy. It will be easy for us to accept people from outside, and to love others. Try it when you return home. This is the path to being happy. (Audience applauds.)

Most people owe their success in their career to having a secure family. Members of their families have more affection for each other. They are more united and cooperative, and not complicated. Both the husband and wife create a harmonious atmosphere so they are not easily affected by trials outside. They're also not easily troubled. When we're happy, we don't mind about others' mistakes as much. We're not concerned or troubled.



If we refuse the love from our families, refuse the love from people close to us, then we won't be successful in whatever we do. We will feel so miserable that we can't bear even ourselves; and of course, we can't bear other people.

The disorders and troubles in society all come from dissonance at home. It's because we don't have good friends who are willing to make sacrifices, to offer sympathy to each other, accept each other, and respect each other. We don't have anyone who truly knows us well and can be a friend for life. Understand? (Audience, Yes!)

That was why I said not to turn your home into a hell. Because we live in it, we need to look after it, organize it, repair it, make it look beautiful and turn it into a Heaven. It's not out of compassion or brotherly love that we love others. We love others because we want to be comfortable



and happy. The more we offer our love to others, the more others will love us. When all the people love each other, how comfortable that will be!²¹

²¹ Spoken by Supreme Master Ching Hai, Seven-day Retreat, Hsiu, Formosa, July 29 - August 6, 1989 (Originally in Chinese)



There is good in both marriage and friendship in this world. The greatest advantage is that we can provide mutual help and remind each other of the Self Nature within and of the importance of spiritual practice. If there is any situation or relationship that can always remind us of spiritual practice and the Self Nature inside, it's a good relationship, with good affection and emotion.





God is not so narrow-minded as to forbid us to love our husband or wife the way we used to. God is not so cruel as to separate loving couples in order to attain Hirm. We must enlarge our hearts to love God and also to include other beings, including our own family members. If we can love other beings who are distant from us and strangers to us, why can we not love our family members, our immediate loved ones?

The Ego and Sound Meditation

How do we avoid the ego?

I advise you to do more Sound meditation.

If you're aware, endeavor to check
and control yourself.

Don't add more to or repeat the habit.

If you can avoid it, then stop.



✿ The Ego and Sound Meditation ✿

Where does the ego come from? We can say the ego is a kind of personality, a personal mental attitude. Where does the personality come from? The personality is nothing great; it's not our original Self; nor is it our enlightened God Nature. It's just our personality, born from habits that are continuously accumulated. Each time we're born, whether as a human, a wild animal, a Heavenly being, a hell being, a domestic animal or a demon, we possess certain habits. Each kind of being has its own particular habits and they're all learned.

In the past we collected many habits. As we transmigrate, we collect and record far too many

vicious actions, just as on a recording tape. When the button is pressed, it plays back. And what's this button? It's the opportunities or occasions we encounter that turn the recordings on automatically.

So sometimes we're very fierce to people, but we don't know why. It's because the button has been pressed. A particular person happens to say something that we'd heard in the past when those words upset us. Now when we hear something similar, we immediately get upset. Or perhaps in previous lives when we were humans or animals, someone set traps for us. Now, whenever we see something that resembles such traps, just in appearance, we become afraid. We have no idea why a particular kind of box terrifies us. Some boxes look similar to the traps that we encountered in our past lives so we dread



and abhor them. That's why some people prefer round furniture, or hate square furniture or like triangular furniture. This is all related to past life impressions.

The conditions that we like, dislike, abhor or love constitute what's called the ego. "I" only like it this way; this suits "my" taste — this is called "ego." The "ego" means the personality. Such and such is "my" habit; this is what "I" think; "I" can't change; "I" don't want to change, or this is what "I" am and "I" can't change! This is called the ego, but in fact, the ego is the personality; it's nothing mysterious or incomprehensible.

Each time we perform an action or learn a new idea, a new channel is created in our brains for storing the new material. This is for storing

animosity, that's for love, this is for jealousy, and that's for fame and profit. Each spot is taken up by a different quality. The more habits we have, the more boxes or channels fill our brains.

Originally, these boxes or channels can disintegrate by themselves. It's very simple. If there's nothing inside, they'll fuse together and be reduced to nothing. However, there's a substance called "gray matter" in our brains that fills these channels or boxes. All new ideas and actions are registered in the gray matter, which fills up the empty channels in the brain, much like a computer that maintains records exclusively.



✿ Only the Vibration of Sound Meditation Can Cleanse Karma ✿

We can never erase the things or qualities that we've newly learned. So we have to practice the Quan Yin Method to flush away the bad habits inside. There's no other way to cleanse them! You've often heard about brainwashing a person, but brainwashing with words is not thorough enough. Our brains are very small, yet they can record everything, in infinite volumes. That's the trouble. Having recorded too much, they can't be erased quickly enough. We have distracting thoughts every day, all because we record too many things.

The Quan Yin Method isn't words; it's the vibrations, the electric current, the God-power

that cleanses our distracting thoughts and wrong ideas. It doesn't add any channels or boxes inside us. That's because, if we want to use a certain thought to eliminate another thought, there will be resistance. It doesn't mean the old thought is cleansed! No, we're simply adding another one. Consequently, it becomes more crowded and we become more agitated. Therefore, all great spiritual Masters say, "The more learned and knowledgeable one is, the more difficult it is for one to attain the Truth." We simply heap things up within us, squeezing them together until nothing can develop. Good and bad things mingle together. The good things can't develop, and the bad things can't be cleansed; it becomes heavily congested. Now you understand why the more learned one is, the more difficult it is to become enlightened!



So only the Quan Yin Method is logical. For it's not Zen riddles or some kind of chant, which will only add more to our brains. Instead, we cleanse it. That's why I tell you that although I've instructed you to recite the Holy Names and meditate on the Light, it's not effective if you don't practice Sound meditation. This is so because chanting the Holy Names and meditating on the Light also add extra things, although these additives can control other things and make us forget worldly vexations. Suppose we're angry with someone and want to get even or scold him. Now when we recite the Holy Names, we forget the hostility. It means that we can use these benevolent Holy Names to control our distracting thoughts and stop them from troubling us. It doesn't mean that they've vanished, or been cleansed by chanting the Holy Names or Amitabha Buddha. No! We add tens of thousands of repetitions of the Holy

Names every day, to control the distracting thoughts. After that, we should use the Sound meditation to erase them, including the Holy Names! (Audience applauds.) I'm very glad that you understand.

Now you know what the ego is and how to eliminate it. Don't allow your ego to grow stronger and confine you like a wall. As such, you'll believe that you're this person and this is what you are. That's the ego. You'll just carry on and do the same wrong things, and subsequently, you'll become even worse. If no one stops it for you, you'll become worse. You'll think that it's fine and feel happy about it. Finally, it will become a habit, just like smoking and drinking. Though you know that it's bad for your body, you'll still become heavily addicted to the habit as you drink more and smoke more.



This is why we must learn to be humble. We shouldn't add more to the habits that we've accumulated through many lifetimes, and we shouldn't let them grow stronger until they become irreparable later. We already have a great many bad habits. If we don't minimize them but add more, how can we handle them? There's no way to minimize them even if we want to. When can we finish reducing them? We've collected so much. It's already difficult enough for us to avoid getting more, not to mention that we need to erase those firm habits, and even traditions, that we've gathered through many lifetimes! That's why we have to use this supra-worldly power, the vibrations of the Sound meditation, to cleanse them quickly. Ordinary brainwashing is useless. Only practicing the Sound meditation is the true "brainwashing."

You ask me how to avoid the ego. I advise you to do more Sound meditation. If you're aware, endeavor to check and control yourself. Don't add more to or repeat the habit. If you can avoid it, then stop. If we're not aware of our ego, there's nothing we can do. That's even worse. We must do more Sound meditation! Do more Sound meditation! Do more Sound meditation! It cleanses us automatically; there's no other way. (Audience applauds.) Now you realize that the Quan Yin Method is truly great! Without it, we can never cleanse our myriad habits!²²

²² Spoken by Supreme Master Ching Hai, Group Meditation, Hsihu, Formosa, April 29, 1989 (Originally in Chinese)



✧ The Method That Can Cleanse Generations of Genetic Traces ✧

Human beings have continued to do many bad things since time immemorial. So it's very difficult to erase bad references from within the DNA, and sometimes we're born into a body that's imprinted by much good and bad information, which we've helplessly inherited. We can't do anything about it except that if we meditate, we can cleanse it and erase it so that it leaves no trace. If we erase something every day, no trace of this negativity will be left within our cells. Then we can do good things.

That's why even though you have the God Nature and you have God within you, you still

have to fight with these imprints of the DNA in your cells. That's why you work slowly; that's why you're bad and that's why you do negative things sometimes even against your own will. So even if we want to do good, without meditation or without God's power to cleanse these imprints of the cells' DNA, we can't do much.

That's why the world is like this. That's why many people want to do good but can't struggle against these negative traces, which are already born before we even come into this body. They're already there. Now you understand why you must meditate and be vegan so that you don't have more of the negative traces adding to your own already bad DNA. You have enough of the bad; there's no need for extra.



Even if you can't meditate for very long, that's also DNA. You probably got a body that never meditated in the last life. Maybe from your great, great, great grandparents down, no one ever meditated in your family. Also, sometimes you can't be born into the proper family because they always take pills nowadays, and have abortions and so on. So you have to jump into any family, and then you get bad DNA. It's too bad. That's the bad news, but the good news is that we can erase it by meditating on the Light and Sound.

So that's why we're here. Believe me, I don't tell you anything that's superstitious, and I don't tell you to worship me, to give me money, or anything. This is solely for your own good and for the good of the world.

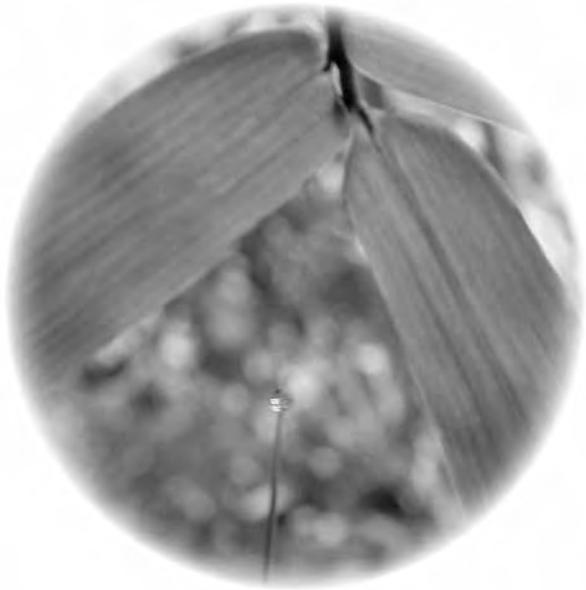
✿ **Forgive Yourself and Try Again** ✿

The Buddha was already a Buddha before He came into the world, but He had to meditate for six years. And Jesus was the son of God, but when He came here, He had to run around for a dozen years to learn with different teachers and meditate in the desert before He could come out and be a perfect Master. That's because of the DNA problem! It's not because we're good or bad. It's just that the tool we've inherited is sometimes not what we wanted. So forgive yourself, but try again all the time.²³

²³ Spoken by Supreme Master Ching Hai, Group Meditation, Bangkok, Thailand, September 14, 1994 (Originally in English)



Some
small
Secrets
to
Share



Sometimes you might feel you haven't made any progress in your spiritual practice and that it seems like a waste of time. Do you know why? Spiritual practice includes our body, speech and mind. For example, you've developed your mind very well in your spiritual practice and cleansed it of evil ideas and impure thoughts. Every day you only think about the living Master, the noble teachings and the practicing assembly. You only think about Quan Yin spiritual practice, etc.



In this case, your mind has become very advanced and “civilized” but your body may still lag behind in development and not be in line with your advanced mind. At that time, you may feel that your spiritual progress has come to a standstill. In some other cases, you may have a pure body and mind, but your speech hasn’t yet been cleansed of its karma. There’s another case, in which you’ve kept silence for some time, not speaking as much as you normally do. However, your body hasn’t been cleansed of its karma so you can’t make any progress.

This is like when parents are walking with their child. The parents walk very fast, but the child, distracted by the flowers, stones and streams along the road, forgets to move along. So the parents have to stop and wait for him until he catches up. It’s the same with your body,



speech and mind. If any of them lag behind, the other two can’t move along. All three have to be balanced and coordinated in order for you to make progress in your spiritual practice.²⁴

²⁴ Spoken by Supreme Master Ching Hai, Hsintien, Formosa, August 22, 1986
(Originally in Chinese)



Anger Will Hinder Our Practice

Why do you sometimes hear the Sound but not see the Light when you practice the Quan Yin Method? Because of breakdowns -- television breakdowns. Therefore, we need to repair them very diligently every day. How? We have to be pure in thought, speech and action. We should not hate anyone; we should endure everything. No matter how others treat us, we have to use endurance and love. That is the way to repair our breakdowns.

Why do we have breakdowns? Because our angry atmosphere becomes a very hard substance. It stands in front of us and keeps us from the Truth. So we ourselves create all our breakdowns. When we're angry, we generate a very dense and unpleasant magnetic field. This thick, dark and

unpleasant magnetic field covers us like a barrier and keeps us from our goodness. It surrounds us very closely, just as though it were our clothes, very dirty ones which makes it impossible for us to connect with the good magnetic field. That's why we cannot see the bright Buddha's Land; we only see the painful karma.

That's why we have to purify our thoughts, speech and actions, and keep the precepts in order to repair our broken-down television and be able to watch it every day. The outer TV takes money, cables and programs, but the inner TV doesn't need any of those. A little repairing is enough. We have to watch this TV every day; then we will develop the habit and be able to use it whenever we want to.²⁵

²⁵ Spoken by Supreme Master Ching Hai, Group Meditation, Tainan, Formosa, May 21, 1989 (Originally in Chinese)



Always Keep Pure and Positive

We have to be very careful how we live our lives because everything we think generates something. If it's negative, it generates a negative atmosphere. It attracts bad luck to us and to the people around us; then everywhere we go we bring it with us. For example, if you carry a bag of poison and it's leaking, anywhere you go it will poison you and will poison anyone who comes near you. Poisonous thoughts are more poisonous than poisonous films or any other substance. Be careful what you think. If it's really no good, discard it right away, recite the Holy Names, keep yourself centered, purify yourself and enjoy the blessings that God gives you every moment that you are living. Be thankful that you're

healthy, you're alive, you have a good place to come and relax, you have good friends like these and you have a good friend like me. (Audience applauds.)

I have never asked you to do anything for me personally. Everything I do for you is freely, willingly and lovingly. You always ask me, "How can we repay You, Master?" Don't. You don't have to repay me anything. Just clean yourself, mind your own business, and let me do mine. That's very simple. Because if you keep looking at my garbage, you cannot improve. If you're looking at the neighbor's garbage, you're doing yourself a disservice, that's all. I don't forbid you to look into the neighbor's garbage or to do anything you like. But you have to think whether or not it's good for you.



Every time you think negatively about someone, is that comfortable for you? No. Already it's no good. But there's no need to believe my words; you examine it. Every time you are angry with someone or think badly about them, whether it's true or not, who is the one who's most uncomfortable? The first, number 1, is ourselves. So it's very simple.

But it's very easy to keep ourselves in control. Just look straight inside, recite the Holy Names and pray every time that the Master will help you and will help give you loving thoughts right away or replace the bad ones with loving ones. That doesn't mean sometimes you don't get angry if you rightfully believe that. If you really believe it, just express yourself. For example, if you're angry with someone, tell him the reason. But you have to first examine whether it's true, whether it's

logical and whether it's worth it. If you're angry because he made you angry, tell him. At least give him a chance to clarify it or clear the air with you. Don't just think and judge that person by your own personal experience, low or high level of consciousness, fix him there and then go to talk to someone else about him without him even knowing what you're talking about. And the third person is even more helpless. He just sits there listening to all the garbage. He doesn't even know anything about it. Then maybe that third person talks to the fourth person. Then the whole Center is full of garbage.

Sometimes you don't talk about it but you think about it; that's also no good. You had better pray to God at that moment and say, "Take away this poison from me!" Or else you'll poison everyone around you; because thoughts, deeds



and speech are all the same. They are powerful, especially when we have concentration. It's very tiring when sometimes the karma comes and you have to clash with someone. In the morning you look at yourself, and your face looks black. Something poisonous is inside you; released is some poison that makes you feel very tired, like you're getting old quickly and you don't look so fresh and young anymore. So keep yourself pure and positive. It's best for you.

Sometimes you can't help it; for example, if you have to live together with someone and that person causes trouble and both of you misunderstand, then you have to clear it with each other. But that's not like thinking negatively about someone who doesn't know anything about you, who doesn't even know that you think negatively about him. Maybe the thing you think is not true.

Even if it is true, you don't know how the karma works. You don't know what God has arranged for that or this person or for what purpose. You know nothing! So you'd better just shut up. Shut the mind, recite the Holy Names and think positive because you don't lose anything if you think positive. Every time you think negatively, you lose. That's all. This is for yourself. It's not that I forbid you or God will punish you. Your life will be much better if you always try to think positive about everyone.²⁶

²⁶ Spoken by Supreme Master Ching Hai, Group Meditation, Los Angeles, USA, July 5, 1997 (Originally in English)



Take Care to Eat Pure Foods

Be careful about what you eat so that you don't contaminate yourself and make the cells and brain become confused, as these things will consequently hinder your spiritual progress. It's not that God cares about what we eat. But if we poison our systems with intoxicating things or impure food such as meat or animal products, then our cells - the cells of the body and brain - will also become contaminated and confused. Thus we won't be able to think clearly and we won't be able to sit calmly in order to find the source of our happiness and wisdom.

If we confuse our cells, brain and blood, the "sentimental department" will also become confused. Then we won't be able to think straight

anymore and when we sit in meditation, we'll become very restless and agitated. Even if we can sit well in meditation, our vision will become clouded with negative influences from the poisonous things that we've taken into our bodies. So it's not that God cares about what we eat, I care about what you eat, or that when you eat a little meat you go straight to hell. It's not true. It's just that if we want to be God-like, we must care about everything we do, that everything we eat is pure so that we also become pure — in body, speech and mind.

I don't care what you eat, but whatever you eat will affect your meditation practice, your mood, your temperament, your personality, your character, your value of life. Everything hangs on that. As long as we're in the material world, every material thing affects us. That's why we must take



care to eat pure foods, foods that have less karmic burden, that have less suffering for our own sake.

Animals suffer a lot. They fear death; they cling to life; and if they're forced to die prematurely for us, of course their fear and hatred are retained in the flesh we eat. That's why we become aggressive, agitated, discontented and sometimes violent, like the feelings of the animals before they died.²⁷

²⁷ Spoken by Supreme Master Ching Hai, Group Meditation, Los Angeles, CA., USA, July 6, 1997 (Originally in English)



Certain kinds of things in the material kingdom will affect us more or less. Therefore, the food we take also affects us mentally, bodily and also spiritually, and this has been proven since time immemorial.



The Result of Coveting Offerings

Now one master in India, he had five hundred disciples. He was an ordinary teacher really, not a very high Master, but he could see the future. Probably he was a Second Level teacher. Now normally when he went to a party, if someone invited him to make offerings, he never took his disciples along. So one day the disciples couldn't stand it anymore. They said, "Master, whenever you go to a party, you go alone. We only work and work, but you never give us the same pleasure. If this time you don't take us along, we will leave you." So the master took them that time, and then he always took them along.

After that life the master reincarnated again as a pure monk, of a higher and more famous

order. Wherever he went, there were five hundred flamingos always flying behind him. These were the five hundred students from his previous life who could not digest the offering merits from the people because they didn't have enough blessings, enough purity or enough practicing merit to enjoy this.

There are differences between people, not only between Masters and disciples. Therefore, I've taught you to be frugal, not to be greedy and exceed your share. Do not spend more than you have. When it's necessary, you can take and use. When it's not, try not to. Otherwise we might get in trouble. Sometimes we might get sick, or get an incurable disease.

I knew one person who practiced and he always tried to live on someone else's earnings, and he always had diarrhea from the impure



offerings! Sometimes when we take presents from other people who are impure it also affects us. We may not even know that it affects us, but it's as if we owe that person or these persons something. We just feel like we're bound to them, and we don't know why we can't get away. It's sometimes like that, just because we take their presents. (Someone asked: What about the other people who are not monks and who exchange gifts all the time in their lives?) I have taught you to try not to receive things when not necessary, and when someone gives you something, try to give something else back, even if it's your relative. ⁹

⁹ Spoken by Supreme Master Ching Hai, Group Meditation, Costa Rica, June 2, 1991 (Originally in English)

Create a Positive Halo of Energy

Anywhere you meditate, the energy stays in that place. That's why you should do good things all the time, to surround yourself with good energy. Even talking about meditation, talking about God, talking about the Master power and talking about positive and good things also creates good energy. So when you meditate, of course that creates good energy, which stays there. And the more you meditate in that place, the thicker the energy becomes. The more you talk about positive things, the thicker the wall of energy you surround yourself with. And then like attracts like, and you extract more good energy from different directions. So wherever you go, you carry this so-called "pocket" of energy, a halo of good energy.

And the more good energy you carry, the better you feel. The better you feel, the more you talk



about positive, good things. The more positive, good things you talk about and the more positive things you do, the more good energy you create. The more good energy you create, the better you feel. And you do better things, and it never ends.

So never, ever sink into a negative cycle. Just stay positive. I know it's hard. Because sometimes people drag you down. But be aware. Just be aware. Always try to stay positive. Say positive things and do positive things as much as you can. Protect yourself, and then you create a wonderful house, a movable house, so that everywhere you go, you take Light, good energy, good vibrations. And the more of that you take with you, the more you attract, and the more you attract, the more powerful and more positive you are.²⁸

²⁸ Spoken by Supreme Master Ching Hai, International Three-day Retreat, Los Angeles, USA, December 16-18, 1998 (Originally in English)

The Way to Minimize Sexual Desire

Q: Master, can You please advise me as to how I should control my monstrous sexual appetite? I need God's grace.

M: This I don't have experience of. You know what? There are many remedies. But most people when they ate too much meat and drink the wine and all that, it will excite more of their passion. We already have enough so-called animal passion within us, so we do many things like the animals do. This we cannot control. Because we inherit the animal quality while we live in this kingdom, part of it, because of this body.

So now, if we want to control that, we must minimize the intake of intoxicants and exciting



food, things like that. There are foods for sexual empowerment. People look for that. Some people like that. So the old kings, they always ate special kinds of foods because they had so many wives.

There are many foods to control the sexual drive. The first stage is a pure vegetarian diet - no eggs, no fish, and no liquor, alcohol, no intoxicating things. Many things we, the ordinary people, pay high prices for, are poison. And I am always wondering why people spend a lot of their money to poison themselves. But that's their private choice and free will.

So if you ask me how to minimize your sexual energy, there are many things to do. You switch to a vegetarian diet, eat kind of simply, with not too much oil and excitement spice and things like that. And then drink plenty of cool water.

No champagne! Champagne is the worst thing, reserved only for wedding days. You know, yes? I don't know. I heard about that. I don't know. People have said it's like that.

But the most simple is to be busy, doing something meaningful, helping other people; and then you forget your own problems. I don't know how you have time to think about this drive even. You know, if you stay up all night long, reading like me, I think your sex drive will drive itself away (Audience laughs and applauds) because sex drives are scared, scared of the work.

Do something. There is so much suffering in this world; do some volunteer work in your spare time. Feel the suffering of your fellow beings. Merge yourself in the sacrifice and the joy, the pure joy of serving all of them. Bring happiness,



bring noble happiness to other people. That will bring noble happiness to you, too.

You have read so much that's bad, maybe pornographic information. Now don't read it any more. Switch to holy books. Read the Bible, read the Buddhist sutras, read the Koran, read whatever information you have on the holy life, OK? Hinduism books, anything you want, yoga exercise, holy Saints' teachings; there's so much to read.²⁹

²⁹ Spoken by Supreme Master Ching Hai, Lecture, Singapore, Jan.10, 1995
(Originally in English)



Marriage is OK, as long as it doesn't hinder your practice. Sex is OK, too, as long as it doesn't bother you or obstruct your progress. But most of the time it does because the mind cannot get over it. The sexual experience is very strong for people to handle. That's why most Masters tell their disciples to stay away from it. It's just like alcohol. It's really a poison, but if you drink a little, it doesn't kill you and it doesn't take you to hell. It's just that if you drink a little now, tomorrow you'll drink more and more, and then you'll damage your body, your mind and your spirit. So the Master says, "Stay away from it." It's not that the Master is dictatorial or controlling people. He just knows what's good and what's not good. But we still make the choice.



**MASTER'S BOOKS AND VIDEOTAPES ARE
THE BEST SPIRITUAL TONIC**

Reading Master's books every day is similar to attending Master's real time lectures. It will bring you blessings and open your wisdom. You should also listen to Master's tapes as often as possible. For example, if you can't sleep, or if you're troubled by problems, you can play Master's audio tapes. If you listen to Master's tapes or read Master's books before going to bed, you'll feel different when you wake up. You can also use Master's books as pillows. (Someone asked: "Are we allowed to do that?")



Yes, it will open your wisdom more and more. (Audience laughs. “Will we be beaten by the Dragon God guardian?”) No. (“But in the Buddhist’s sutras it says that we can’t use the scriptures as pillows.”) If I say you can, then you can. I’m a modern Master. (Audience laughs.)

People in the modern days have very little free time. Using my books as pillows will help you learn better. Often times you don’t remember much after reading my books. But if you use them as pillows, you’ll remember better because Master will teach you. Also it’s easier to teach you while you sleep because your brain isn’t so stubborn. (Audience laughs.) I can dig holes in your brain and break in faster. Of course, you still need to read the books. It’s no use if you use them only as pillows. You should read a small section every day. There’s no need to read too much at a time. If

you like, you can also finish reading a whole book at one time. But, still, you should at least read a portion every day. Our body needs food every day, and in the same way, our spirit needs to be fed. You can also listen to Master’s tapes, which will help you progress faster in your spiritual practice. You’re too slow in your progress.³⁰

³⁰ Spoken by Supreme Master Ching Hai, Hsintien, Formosa, September 6, 1987
(Originally in Chinese)



The Real Meaning of “Ba Guan Zhai Jie” -- The Eight Areas of Fasting

If you have no time all day and all night, then you can play Master’s tapes when you’re asleep. Let Master talk while you sleep. This will also have an effect on you. We have to make use of any available means to help us practice. We modern people don’t have time, plus we’re influenced by Maya’s power on the outside. Maya doesn’t look like demons, as we think. Maya’s power is the atmosphere we’ve created - like the atmosphere of nuclear bombs or the atmosphere of radiation. These atmospheres have a very strong influence on us.

If you can, let your stomach stay empty for one day a week. This is what we should do. If

you can’t, then empty your brain for a day. This is what “Ba Guan Zhai Jie” (fasting in eight areas) in the Buddhists’ terminology means. Do you know what “Ba Guan Zhai Jie” refers to? It’s not enough just to empty your stomach and read scriptures. When you practice the Quan Yin Method, you’re carrying out “Ba Guan Zhai Jie” in the real sense. We have to use the Sound current to cleanse our karma and outside influences. Then we can practice by making use of any opportunities we have. We should practice at any time, at all times. When you sleep, you can practice by playing Master’s tapes. On the bus, you can play Master’s tapes, meditate or read Master’s books. This will help you improve faster in your spiritual practice.³⁰

³⁰ Spoken by Supreme Master Ching Hai, Hsintien, Formosa, September 6, 1987,
(Originally in Chinese)



The Eight Buddhist Precepts, Ba Guan Zai Jie

1. Do not kill.
2. Do not steal.
3. Do not commit adultery.
4. Do not tell lies.
5. Do not drink alcohol.
6. Refrain from dancing, singing, playing music, going out for entertainment, wearing gaudy clothes or using make-up or fragrance.
7. Refrain from sleeping in a bed of excessive height and comfort.
8. Do not eat after noon time.



Watching videos calms your mind and answers many of your questions before you meditate. It helps you a great deal. Don't think it's useless and then just run around or do something else. Listening to holy chanting or videotape lectures will help you a lot even if you don't truly pay too much attention to it sometimes. But sometimes you will because some of the sentences will shock you awake or calm your nerves. If you are paying attention to the talk on the screen, it will surely help you in your meditation.



A Tonic Is Sometimes Necessary during the Winter of Spiritual Practice

Sometimes we encounter difficulties in spiritual cultivation, just as we feel uncomfortable when the cold, wet winter sets in. We seem to waver in keeping our precepts and our faith is not very strong. We seem to have regressed or come to a standstill in our spiritual progress, and we feel very sad. That's the "winter of spiritual practice." When we practice smoothly, we can call it "spring" or "summer." There are seasonal differences as in spring, summer, autumn and winter, and so there are similar differences in our spiritual practice. We can't be the same every day. That's why there are times when we err, want

to quit, are reluctant to practice or find no fun in practicing. We may feel depressed, but don't know why. This is the character of the "winter of spiritual practice." At this time we should quickly have tonics to nourish ourselves.

For instance, if we don't feel well or strong in the winter when it's wet and cold, we can see a doctor of Chinese medicine and take some tonics. Or we can eat more nourishing food or an extra meal every day to build up enough physical power to last until spring. In the spring we don't eat that much, and in the summer we eat very little, but we feel very comfortable, and aren't as tired or depressed as we are in the winter.



When our spirituality doesn't progress smoothly, it's like the wintertime. But we'll get over it after a while. When we're in the "winter of spiritual cultivation," we're likely to get confused, quit, or be cheated. We may feel dull, make no progress or be reluctant to practice; or unsatisfying, obstructive situations may arise. However, we should know that everything will be all right after a while. At that time even if we make mistakes, regress in our practice, or lose faith, we should just forgive ourselves. If possible, we should quickly get some "tonics"! For example, we can attend retreats, go to see Master and meet initiates more often, go to group meditation more, read more of Master's books or listen to Her tapes and so on. All these are our "spiritual tonics." We'll feel much better after taking them.

And then we'll be able to continue practicing until "spring" comes. During the springtime we'll feel much better and won't need that much tonic.³¹

³¹ Spoken by Supreme Master Ching Hai, Seven-day Retreat, Hsihu, Formosa, February 13-18, 1989 (Originally in Chinese)



I think it's best to meditate in the morning; it's very easy then to have inner experiences and see the Light because at that time we have a relatively clear mind after having had enough sleep. After the right amount of sleep but still with a little bit of sleepiness left is the best time for meditation. Of course, it's most difficult to get up, just as when we've had some food but aren't completely full and still want a little bit more. This is the best time for meditation.



After a night of rest, many difficulties, obstacles and karmic hindrances are washed away. These impressions and negative influences from the previous day are all washed away and forgotten! All of our causes and effects are paid off in our dreams. So, we're very fresh when we wake up in the morning. Therefore, it's very easy to see the Light when meditating, easy to communicate with the highest qualities within us.

Some people work at night and sleep during the day. Depending on your situation, you should meditate after waking up. If you can't get up at seven o'clock, then get up at nine, but you should still meditate, at least for a little while. Otherwise, our minds won't be stable, and we'll view good as bad and vice versa. We'll be easily contaminated by other people's karma and be pulled down. Our level will drop quickly, or it will be hard to

progress, even if it doesn't drop. We won't be able to have a cheerful mood, and anything we do will not go very smoothly. If someone offends us, we won't be able to forgive him, and we won't be able to think about anything clearly. So, meditation is very important.³²

³² Spoken by Supreme Master Ching Hai, Group Meditation, Hsihu, Formosa, April 12, 1992 (Originally in Chinese)



Every day we must meditate, both in the morning and in the evening, whether we are monastic or lay practitioners. We meditate in the morning so that we can face the day's polluted gifts. We meditate in the evening so that we're protected and in peace at night and so that we can cleanse the contaminated atmosphere of the day.

How to Get into the Habit of Early Morning Meditation

Q: What can I do to maintain a daily meditation schedule when there aren't enough waking hours in the day?

M: You can't wake up? Me, either. No one likes to wake up when we're snug in bed, but we have to try. Suppose you have a job and you have to get up to go to work, then you must. For something like two thousand dollars a month, you wake up every morning at five o'clock. But for God, you don't wake up! So what am I to do? You make your own priorities. We can wake up a little earlier than usual and then get used to it.



For example, say it's too early to get up at three o'clock; then don't wake up three o'clock. If you normally wake up for work at five o'clock, then wake up at twenty to five the first day, or ten to five or even five to five, and the next day or next week, at ten to five. Get yourself used to the idea and reward yourself abundantly. Tell yourself, "If you wake up early today, I'm going to give you a double bagel or one more cup of cafe latte." Whatever your mind loves to have, reward yourself with it.

You must also love yourself because let's face it, we have only this one physical body, and sometimes we're very tired. We work hard for eight or ten hours a day, just to keep this machine running. And then we sometimes have to attend to other work such as family: a wife, children, parents,

friends, neighbors, relatives and so on. We really make very great demands on this physical body.

So of course, if you can't wake up in the morning for meditation, forgive yourself. Don't be too hard on yourself, but train yourself slowly. Watch less TV and go to sleep a little earlier so you can get up better. Whatever activities you used to do too much before to pass the time when you were bored, use that time to know God. It's a matter of organization.

I'm also pretty busy. You don't believe it; I sit here and look pretty, but I'm very busy, too. And it's also hard for me to get up early sometimes. But you have to put on the alarm clock. Sometimes it's like that.



In the old Indian tradition, there was a Saint who could stay up all night, but he slept sitting up instead of lying down so it was just the same. (Audience laughs.) Our people are the same. When they go to our retreats, they sit there and look very good, but they sit in any fashion. (Master humorously drops Her head to one side to show someone ‘nodding off.’) So never mind. Try your best; that’s what counts. The Saint in India had long hair like me, and he tied his hair to the ceiling. I’m not kidding! And then he became a Master, because he tried so hard. He tied his hair to the ceiling so whenever he nodded off: “Oh! OK! Ow!” (Audience laughs.)

I’m not saying that you should grow your hair long and do that. But find your own way. Like you can wake up early; for example, in the beginning I had to put a flask of ice water next to

me. And then when the alarm rang, I would reach for the ice and throw it on my face: Oh! The ice comes through your clothes and everything, and you just have to jump out of bed.

You don’t have to do that; you’ll have your own way. But when you want to do something, you can. Believe that you can because you’re God. There’s nothing impossible with God. Just remember that you have God inside you and no one else there. Don’t listen to the mind and brain; it’s just a computer. The mind tells us, “Oh, sleep. Sleep is good for you.” But that’s not God’s voice. God’s is behind that. ³³

³³ Spoken by Supreme Master Ching Hai, Lecture, Auckland, New Zealand, April 27, 2000 (Originally in English)



And in the morning it's still quiet. Like from three to six, most people are still sleeping: no traffic, no noise, no children and no telephone ringing. And your mind, after a night's rest, is calm. And your body is also still not fully active. So you can sit better and you can attain samadhi, meaning Heaven, more and more quickly.

Turning Two and a Half Hours into Timelessness

That two and a half hours that you invest every day will work for a long time, for thousands of years; because at the time you enter eternity during your meditation, time stops. It's not only two and a half hours. It's thousands of years, eons of evolution, of development. You enter a different time and space zone. Like this, you're recharged and you come back renewed so that you don't have to keep coming back another lifetime to be renewed or to be yourself; because for each one of us to be born, the purpose is to learn to know yourself again. That's all. If we don't do it in this lifetime we have to do it in the next lifetime and the next and the next. So if we have time now, two and a



half hours, we should do it every day. That already means we're doing it for millions of years. Each two and a half hours you put in, don't think it's only two and a half hours and don't think it's too much. Each minute you put in represents a lifetime. Because in eternity there's no such thing as two and a half hours or one minute. It's always eternity. We're only counting time because when we're trapped in time we know it's time. Once we're out of time, there's no time.

The time for meditation is very precious. It's your hundreds of eons of evolution squeezed together just like a concentrated chip for a computer. Just a little chip like this contains thousands, sometimes even millions of bits of information. So, it's not the size. It's not the time and it's not the number that we're accustomed to. The time of meditation is a completely different

time, a different space. So, the more you enter into this timeless, spaceless space (Master laughs) the better it is for you, the more you know yourself, the more you're free.³⁴

³⁴ Spoken by Supreme Master Ching Hai, International Five-day Retreat, Youngdong Center, Korea, May 9, 1998 (Originally in English)



If we meditate more and more, finally we know that we don't need anything. Every day is a miracle for us, and we're happier and more loving everyday. That is the best gift from God.

How to Meditate a Lot and Not Feel Tired

What should we do if we want to meditate a lot and not feel tired? The secrets are: Talk less, don't look around, don't think of others' goodness or badness and just recite the Holy Names twenty-four hours a day. If you feel unstable in doing the Sound meditation, then recite the Holy Names for several minutes before doing the Sound meditation again. Should you feel any part of your body ache or become numb, just take no heed of it! When you're in samadhi later, you won't sense that the whole body exists. Therefore, don't scratch around. When you get tired of doing Sound meditation, change your posture and do Light meditation. Your legs will then be very grateful to you for that. For



they ache a lot and the head is taut from the previous posture. If you change your posture and do Light meditation at this moment, it will feel much better. So you should do the Light and Sound meditations alternately, and they'll be helpful to each other and you can meditate longer without tiredness.

Some of our fellow practitioners can meditate for the whole night because they do the Light and Sound meditations alternately. But don't do that too frequently and change your posture in five minutes, for this is useless. For the longer time you remain in the same posture, the better. The Light and Sound meditations are helpful to each other. Sometimes when you've sat for too long in Light meditation and you feel tired and achy, you can change your posture and do the Sound meditation in this way. You'll then feel much

better for there is seemingly something to rely on. This secret in practicing meditation is quite unknown to many.³⁵

³⁵ Spoken by Supreme Master Ching Hai, Seven-day Retreat, Hsihu, Formosa, February 13-18, 1989 (Originally in Chinese)





If you should have any obstructions at home, like you feel that some invisible being is disturbing you and that you can't meditate very well, or if you feel restless or agitated, you have two kinds of solutions. You can put on my chanting, music or teaching tapes in the background - not at the back of your "ground," but at a low volume in front of you. Never put anything behind you because your attention will be pulled backward and it will be more difficult for you to concentrate in the front. It's not that



you can't do it; it's just not favorable for you. Put the tape, TV, music, anything in front - whatever you want to hear at any time, even the telephone, fax machine, anything. If you have to sit in an office, face the machine. In case it rings, it will ring in front of you, and won't pull your attention backward. That makes it very difficult to pull it back to the front again. And when you listen on the phone, listen with the right ear. Make it a habit; don't listen with the left ear. Everything that pulls your attention to the left or behind you is not advantageous to you. Remember. That's one thing. Another thing is that you can recite the Holy Names loudly for as long as necessary, or an hour every day, until the situation improves.

This is another preventive method for you; if you're fearful, sometimes you feel invisible beings around you or behind you, or if you were

possessed before you came to me and you're still fearful, you can put my pictures around you like a circle. You have plenty of pictures; they don't have to be big, just small. It's not the size that counts, it's the person. Even with small pictures, just make a circle around you. The Tibetan tradition of the mandala is a leftover from this kind of practice. They always drew a circle. That was the beginning of it when the teacher taught them to sit in a circle with some of the artifacts that the Master had blessed and given to them for souvenirs. Full of the Master's love and blessing, they just surrounded themselves. Later they got more fanciful. They added all kinds of things - flowers, incense, sand, color and so forth.

You can do anything else you want as long as you feel good - as long as you feel safe, secure, and protected. Put my pictures around, put flowers as



well if you want, incense or whatever, candles also. But don't make too much smoke because then you'll cough all the time. (Audience laughs.) The incense or smoke from candles, even though it's romantic and it looks spiritual, many times can cause irritation. Then you'll have a sore throat or some congestion in your chest later. It's a long-term side effect and no good. But if you can tolerate it, it's OK. I don't forbid anything in our practice as long as it makes you feel good.

You can even do the beads or recite a rosary, whatever; but then you become too attached to those beads and that habit and you forget to concentrate here. (Master points to Her wisdom eye.) It's difficult to call back again. Every day we're already attached too much to the outside world. In the morning, we get up, we have to wash our face, brush our teeth and

put on makeup or put on a tie. That's already too materially conscious. On the job, we put our consciousness on money and even when we go home, we still think of money. So, every day we're already meditating on women, men, ties, jewelry, makeup or money. That's why when we have time for ourselves to meditate we should turn our attention inward.³⁶

³⁶ Spoken by Supreme Master Ching Hai, International Four-day Retreat, Washington DC, USA, December 26, 1997 (Originally in English)



Concentrating Inside on the Wisdom Center

It's not that any master or I, myself, forbid you to do this or do that because we're fanatical, because we're authoritative; it's not true. We should just forget everything else; just concentrate inside on the wisdom center. But when you concentrate, you should look right in the front. When you look right to the front, that's physically speaking; actually, when you look with the wisdom eye, it's inside. Besides, we're not inside, we're not outside; we're not anywhere. It's just a manner of speaking so you know how to do it physically. Otherwise, when you close your eyes and shut your ears, everything else is inside. Then you have no contact with the physical world that much. You will be inside and alone with yourself, and then know yourself, realize yourself again - that you're the spirit, that you're God, that you're

the Saint. That's why all the rosaries, beads, and so on at that time will be more detrimental, more obstructing to our concentration.

It's not that they're no good. Everything that reminds you of God is good - a picture, a rosary, a cross, a Buddha statue, anything is welcome. Except when you meditate, it's better to put down everything absolutely because you're the Saint, you're the cross, you're God. There's no need for any other reminders. But the mandala is just meant to protect you when sometimes some people, some rare individuals, fear the invisible beings that disturbed them before and the haunted memories that still disturb them, or they fear the darkness. That's why in the old times, they lit a candle to meditate so that a person didn't feel fearful. So, sometimes I advise some of you that you can leave the light on, and that's all right. However, it doesn't mean that we have to do it all



the time or everyone has to do it. But then, one learns from another and says, “Oh, I feel good when a candle is lit,” and all that, and everyone does it. It just becomes a habit. It shouldn’t be that way.

You can also massage your wisdom eye with a little oil or alone. If it’s too dry, then with the oil, it goes smoother. It also helps with the wrinkles in some old people like me. (Audience laughs.) I don’t do it often; I just do it when I put on makeup. If you have difficulty concentrating, you could massage a little with your thumb or with your fingers up to the wisdom eye, and then stop right there. (Master points to the area just above and between the eyebrows in the middle of the forehead.) Stop like this, or just massage it and then stop afterwards.³⁶

³⁶ Spoken by Supreme Master Ching Hai, International Four-day Retreat, Washington DC, USA, December 26, 1997 (Originally in English)



We have to study again and again. Make a firm start again, saying, “Today I failed. I didn’t meditate very well. Tomorrow, the next day, I’ll make more effort.” Always try to strive for better will so that you can progress in spirit. And you’ll become a stronger and wiser person in Heaven.



How to Handle the Problem of Trembling during Meditation

Q: Sometimes when I'm meditating on the Light, I get like an energy surge; and it just sort of rocks me one way and the other, various different ways. What is this?

M: It's OK. Sometimes the negative and the positive are trying to battle with each other. As we're not yet so completely stable and a hundred percent pure, it's like that. Later it will become stable. Don't worry. You don't have to go with the feeling, or just let it go. That's why we have to keep ourselves pure with precepts and all kinds of things so that we can receive this kind of pure and tremendously strong energy. Try to take care that your food, speech, actions and thoughts are pure. Then the problem will become better or disappear altogether.

Sometimes, if you're trembling too much, sit on the floor. Don't sit too high, in case you fall down. (Audience laughs.) I'm not kidding. Or, try to sit on a wooden board or wooden floor; it'll absorb some of the energy for you. Then you won't feel so badly shaken. Sometimes when you do the Quan Yin, you get a burning sensation. It feels like you can't bear it anymore. Then you can sit in another place. Don't sit on a cushion. Find a cool wooden floor to sit on. Put your feet on a wooden board or maybe on the earth. It will neutralize some of the strong effect of the vibration while you're not able to withstand it. Only in that case, but continue to meditate on the Sound. The Sound is particularly strong.

If you're not pure sometimes - you've had contact with people - it's not necessarily your own karma. So, don't blame yourself all the time for whatever happens. Sometimes we have contact



with people, and their impurity and karma also affect us. Sometimes we eat food that we don't know is impure; this also happens. So whatever leads you to this, meditate more.

If you sit on a cushion and you don't feel comfortable, it could be that it's too heated for you; sit on a wooden floor or on the naked earth, the soil instead. Put your feet up and meditate or sit on the floor; with a tatami (straw) mat is all right. It'll be airier, cooler for you; because sometimes the cushion we sit on is not made to do the Quan Yin. Try to change your position, maybe change the place, or change your sitting cushion and then it will be better for you.³⁷

³⁷ Spoken by Supreme Master Ching Hai, International Seven-day Retreat, Hsiuhu, Formosa, October 31, 1995 (Originally in English)

Building Courage and Rising above Obstacles

Q: Every time after I meditate for a while, I want to stand up. I can't continue to meditate because I feel a power pulling me up.

M: What power? (Audience laughs.) You don't blame your own laziness, but you blame an outside power. You always blame ghosts, Maya, foxes, rats or cats. You don't think about whether it's your own problem. If we practice diligently, we'll eventually have inner experiences, but we must truly be diligent and not blame negative powers for disturbing or pulling us away. Actually, there's no power pulling us away except our own weakness. Even if Maya bothers us, it's all because we're afraid of it.



There's an Aulacese saying: "When Maya wants to trouble you, it will look at your face first." This means that it will see whether you're fierce and courageous or not. If not, Maya will bother you. If it sees that you're fiercer than it is, it won't dare to bother you. In *The Journey to the West* (a Chinese spiritual classic), when the king of hell wanted to take the Monkey King to hell, he arrogantly said to the Monkey King, "Ha! Ha! I'm the king of hell!" However, when he was defeated, he kowtowed to the Monkey King, saying, "Oh! Your Greatness! Please spare my life! Please spare my life!" (Audience laughs.) We should be like the Monkey King. If we're too weak, we'll be intimidated by Maya. If we're always afraid of Maya's power, it will come to us because we're actually expecting it to come. Otherwise, what power in the world comes to you only but not to others?

Therefore, when we encounter obstacles, we shouldn't be bothered. Even when we feel a negative power, we should continue with our meditation. If we can't meditate, we should get up and walk around for a while and then try again to meditate. While reciting the Holy Names and praying to the inner Master for help, we should continue to meditate and see what the negative power can do to us. (Audience applauds.) We should be positive, optimistic and courageous and then this will become our habit because everything is created by the mind. If we lack self-confidence and courage, we'll feel scared even when a rat moves; we'll imagine that it's a horrible thing or that Maya or some power has come. But it may actually be just a rat. So don't be afraid of anything.³⁸

³⁸ Spoken by Supreme Master Ching Hai, Group Meditation, Tainan, Formosa, January 12, 1989 (Originally in Chinese)



Do not be afraid of your fearful feelings because the more we're afraid, the stronger will these fearful feelings become. The more we think about something, the more powerful the thing will become. So, let's just think about "love." At all times, we should simply think about "love," the "love power," and always maintain positive thinking, then the Master Power will naturally take care of everything. Gradually, we'll get used to it and then there will be no more obstacles, and all our fears will vanish.

Taming the Human Brain

Q: I just get very, very tense and struggle, and struggle and struggle.

M: Struggle with what?

Q: Just with meditating.

M: OK. Don't make meditation a kind of work; it's just a relaxation time. Tell your mind that it has nothing to do and just sit there relaxing. And if you can't sit too long, you can lie down and rest. Make it pleasant.

You can put a flower in front of you, and wear some nice clothes. Make it like a ceremony if it feels good. That's why some people put out



incense, flowers and all of that, just to please the mind. Whatever it takes to make your meditation pleasant, you can do it. Have fun! Or maybe lie down and rest. Meanwhile, concentrate here (at the wisdom eye.)

Make it pleasant at first. Don't make it too hard for the mind because he doesn't like it. He doesn't like working. And if you're too serious, the mind will rebel, thinking, "I don't like that. I'd like to have fun; I'd like to go out; I'd like to have music or coffee with friends. I don't want to sit here."

So just make it nice. Invite some good friends, initiates, to come to your house. Or come to their house, have coffee, chat first, or do something together. And then sit together, as if

it's a part of the game, part of the fun. That's in the beginning. Later, you get used to it and you don't need that game anymore. You can just sit anywhere and feel good.

First relax the mind. Most often, all of us are very hurried to become a Saint, and that's why we have problems. We struggle between the soul and the brain. The soul wants to meditate; the brain wants to play. So we can reward it somehow, like after you have a good meditation, give yourself some of your favorite food. Take yourself out or see your girlfriend; do something nice afterwards. So the brain will know, "OK, that's good." Train the brain just like you train a dog. (Audience laughs.) You know how to train a dog. When the dog does something good you give him a reward. That's how he becomes better and better.



Our mind is sometimes a troublesome thing! If you really don't feel like meditating, then just leave it. Don't force yourself too much. Just do something else: Run or do some exercise. And when you're tired, then you'll like to sit down. And the mind won't make trouble. Actually, that's a problem when we're alone: Sometimes the mind tricks us a lot. And if we don't have someone to encourage us or hold hands with, we can't continue very quickly. That's why we need a teacher and friends, fellow initiates. Then we can talk out the problem with them, and sometimes they help.

So try to go to group meditation as often as you can. You can talk over problems with your fellow practitioners. Befriend them; invite them for coffee or tea to your house, and vice versa. Make it fun. And sometimes go out together; have

fun. Go to the cinema and do something together so that meditation will become part of friendship and fun. At first, for some people it's necessary. You have to find out what your mind likes. And then give him a little; don't be too harsh on him.

Some people don't need it. They love to meditate so it's easy. But even then, when we enter some stages of meditation, we sometimes get stuck there. We suddenly feel that we don't want to meditate anymore. We don't want anything like that. We've had enough with Buddhas (enlightened beings) and things like that. But it's just temporary. Then later, when we have friends, read some spiritual books and listen to some spiritual tapes or even read some Buddhist scriptures - maybe that's going too far - but some contemporary books about life and death, about meditation and about the experience of



Heaven by other people, we'll somehow be more stimulated to want to have the same experience. And so we'll make a greater effort.

We have to find a way to do things that suit our pace of life, our style, our thinking and also our habits. Habits are hard to change. We should do it slowly, if we can't do it quickly.³⁹

³⁹ Spoken by Supreme Master Ching Hai, International Three-day Retreat, Norfolk, England, June 11, 1999 (Originally in English)

Unexpected Grace Can Come Anytime!

Q: What does one do if one cannot just sit down and meditate?

M: Then stand up, walk around for a while, wash your face or take a shower. Take a walk and come back and try again. Don't give up. When you meditate every day, it doesn't mean that every day you get good refreshment and results; but you must do it every day. You must do it whenever you can because God's grace doesn't make a rendezvous with us; He doesn't make an appointment with us, saying, "Tomorrow I will come to give you peace, tomorrow I will give you a vision, tomorrow I will take you to the third Heaven." No, no, no! It comes anytime, any second, even when you least expect it. So you just have to persevere with

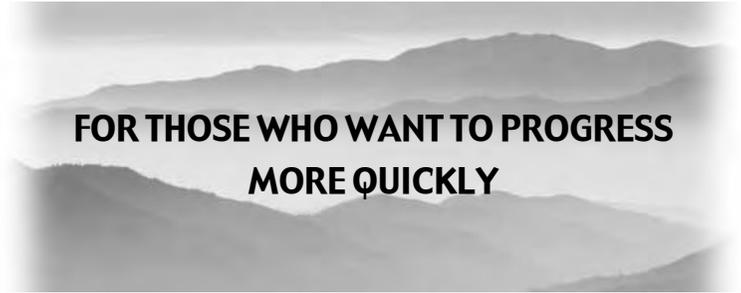


whatever technique you use to meditate, and pray to the Godhead within us, the most High within us to guide, to help, to sustain, to bless us. Every day we must meditate, with or without success. And anytime, maybe tomorrow, maybe the next minute, you'll get it. Just don't give up. It's just like when you open a shop to sell things, you never know when the customers will drop in. You have to stay open all day long and wait. With or without customers, you have to stay open. Sometimes the last customer will come and buy the whole shop, or half of the shop.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Spoken by Supreme Master Ching Hai, Lecture, Berkeley University, USA, October 13, 1989 (Originally in English)



If our level of practice is not so bright but we have repentance, sincerity and pray daily, God's grace will still be bestowed upon us.



Q: If you want to progress more quickly, and doing more meditation will help that, how much more do you really have to do to progress?

M: You should feel how much you can take, or how much you want to do. Also, it's not only the meditation; it's the heart, the commitment. It's the devotion inside that says, "Oh! I really only want this." You long for it inside yourself, and that's a form of meditation. It's not just the sitting.



Q: In daily life, can the way that you deal with things and how you feel help as well?

M: Yes, yes, yes: how you look at things and how you let them go. We can talk forever, but each one of us has his or her own way of going to God. Faster or slower; it's our own choice. You can't dictate to your heart what to do; neither can I. You just have it or don't have it. One day you're tired, weary of the world, of the fakeness and the illusion. Then you just commit inside. And it doesn't matter how long you sit, you're committed. You're with God all the time in your heart. That's true meditation. And that becomes very comfortable for you. Then you know it; you know that you're devoted. Otherwise, before you tried very hard to be devoted, but you were just trying. That's the difference!⁴¹

⁴¹ Spoken by Supreme Master Ching Hai, Group Meditation, London, England, March 10, 1998 (Originally in English)

Asceticism Doesn't Erase Karmic Hindrances

Q: Master, although we can't attain Buddhahood through ascetic practice, can it help to eliminate some of our karmic hindrances or erase some of our karma?

M: No, it can't! Ascetic practice is useless! Why should you abuse your own Buddha? God is within us. If you abuse Him, you're abusing the Buddha. You offend Him. You see, Shakyamuni Buddha had to give up asceticism after practicing it for some time! Eventually, He abandoned ascetic practice to practice the true and correct method. That was how He eliminated His karmic hindrances, not through ascetic practice.



When you practice the correct method, it doesn't matter if you practice a bit of asceticism, or indulge in luxury, if you wish. Since you're on the right track, it doesn't matter if you travel in a cab, a Mercedes-Benz or a Rolls Royce. It's the right path that matters, not the automobile. Just now I took a cab and arrived at the venue just the same. You might have come by bus, in a Rolls Royce or in your own car and you too have arrived. It's because we're traveling on the right road. It isn't whether asceticism is good or bad; the path must be correct. Practice the Quan Yin Method and you'll attain liberation and eliminate your karmic hindrances!⁴²

⁴² Spoken by Supreme Master Ching Hai, Lecture, Hong Kong, May 2, 2000
(Originally in Chinese)

Practicing with the Right Method

It's very relaxing to practice in our way. Once we have the correct method, then we can eat and drink as much as we wish. Where would we find a Buddha who would ask us to starve to death and suffer before we could receive His grace? That would be meaningless. Why would we be forbidden to take care of ourselves at the same time we were practicing? That's simply illogical. For instance, if our parents are very rich and they love us very much, they might tell us to study and acquire some knowledge. Then after we grow up and have certain abilities, they will entrust their properties to us. It's just that they're afraid we wouldn't know how to manage them before that.



Of course we must study and learn, but while we're studying we can still eat, drink, enjoy and wear beautiful clothes. Why? Because our parents are rich; it's just that simple. Similarly, we practice because we want to attain Buddhahood and to become one with God. Then Buddha or God is the wealthiest. Have you ever seen a Buddha in poverty? (Audience laughs.) This is impossible. The whole world is His. Heaven and Earth belong to Him. So how can He be poor? He possesses the greatest authority; He owns everything. Then why should we behave like a beggar intentionally? We practice in order to reach His wealth, to reach His level of attainment, to become one with Him. But before we are united and have His property, at least we should get enough to drink, to eat, to play and to enjoy. Why should we pretend to be suffering?

So the most important thing in spiritual practice is to attain a correct concept and a proper method. After that, it's good enough for us to live a perfectly ordinary life. Incorrect concepts and improper methods bring about troubles.⁴³

⁴³ Spoken by Supreme Master Ching Hai, Group Meditation, Hsihu, Formosa, July 5, 1992 (Originally in Chinese)



The Way to Sainthood

Without a sacrificing spirit, we cannot grow up. In this way, it is useless even if we practice for several hundred years. To be devoted only to ourselves and not to others is not the way of the Bodhisattvas (enlightened Saints). We should then realize that we are still far from being qualified as such. Whenever we do not consider others, we should know that we are associating with Maya, the negative power. This is the only difference between a Buddha (an enlightened being) and Maya. Once we are selfless in our thinking toward others, we have become a Buddha. Minding only ourselves and forgetting others, we become evil. We can clearly weigh ourselves by this scale. Don't ask

me what level you are at or if you have reached Buddhahood!

You believe I am a Buddha. It is because I only consider others all the time, to the point that I forget my own benefit, disadvantage, future, body, comfort, reputation and need. I no longer care for anything. I would sacrifice my life for others regardless of whether I am successful or not. We cannot measure this by success or failure. It is not necessary to be successful each time we do good. Not so! It depends rather on our vow to save the dying, on our sincerity to sacrifice and devote ourselves for the sake of other beings.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Spoken by Supreme Master Ching Hai, International Three-day Retreat, Phnom Penh, Cambodia, March 28, 1996 (Originally in Chinese)



Serving Selflessly

So we have to serve selflessly and everything else will come. It's difficult to tell you all this because you always hear "Seek you first the Kingdom of God, then all the things shall be added onto you." But what is the Kingdom of God? The Kingdom of God is not for yourself alone. If I have a Kingdom of God, everyone must fit in. Otherwise, I won't go there; I'll wait for everyone. What's the good of me sitting there alone, or with you, or with a few disciples enjoying the Kingdom of God and the whole of humankind is crawling, groveling on the earth suffering and all that? So the Kingdom of God comes after everyone else is enlightened, if it comes to that.

I believe in working for everyone else's happiness rather than working for my own. If you continue on that path, you have more satisfaction than any vision can give you. So don't get strayed from that; you are doing OK. Just do that. Just serve people, and you'll have more satisfaction than any vision, than any Light or any Buddha's appearance can give you. I tell you the truth.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Spoken by Supreme Master Ching Hai, Group Meditation, Texas, USA, November 12, 1993 (Originally in English)



The job of serving others of course does not earn any interest or salary. But we have the honor of serving sentient beings. The job itself is the highest reward and honor.

The More We Work The More Enlightened We Become

We work for ourselves because only when we work frequently will our minds react quickly, and when we encounter problems, we'll manage to overcome them. This becomes a habit, and later when we encounter difficulties or problems, we can deal with them promptly and solve them quickly. People who don't work very often respond slowly. They may have good intentions, but they can't work quickly because they lack common sense regarding work. They're not used to reacting promptly, and are thus not very careful when doing their jobs.



We need to work more often in order to become more mindful. The more we work, the more careful we become through experience. Knowledge and intelligence come from experience, not just from studying. It's the same when we do any kind of work. The more we work, the faster we react naturally and the more capable we become. We can train ourselves to cultivate this habit.

My quick reactions and ability to perform all types of jobs didn't come only after I was enlightened. I've been this way since childhood because I like to do things. When I was about eight or nine and still studying in primary school, we had three or four servants at home. However, I fetched water for myself, and collected and chopped firewood. Occasionally, I cooked for my parents, brewed tea for my father and heated bath

water for him. I washed my own clothes, ironed them, took care of myself, and refused to have the servants wait on me. That was in primary school. I took care of myself starting from grade two. That was how I trained myself to react quickly. I didn't descend from Heaven to become a Saint and tell you to do this and that. You can see that I can do anything, like cement work and carpentry. I can do everything myself, and do it better than professionals.

Every job is only a means for us to learn and grow. Actually, we don't do any work. You shouldn't complain and think that you're working too hard. It's only a means for us to learn. God uses this method to educate us, let us become enlightened and give us a chance to develop our talents, cultivate our personality, beautify our



demeanor and develop our mindfulness. Every job is the same because we can only learn other things through this method.

If we're truly mindful in our work, we can learn something from doing any task. It's like following an example that will lead us to realize other things. Therefore, sometimes when we work we suddenly realize many truths. Work is a way to temper ourselves, helping us to measure our personality, stamina, talents and level of enlightenment. So, you shouldn't be afraid to work. Fear of work is also a kind of phobia. The more we work, the more enlightened we will become.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Spoken by Supreme Master Ching Hai, Group Meditation, Hsihu, Formosa, April 25, 1992 (Originally in Chinese)



When you're working not for reward, but only from love, then everything will go very smoothly. We need not worry that this work will bring benefit for us or for someone else. We only do it because things need to be done at that moment. This way, we'll feel that our spiritual life is improving day by day. We'll have more endurance; the more we work, the more we offer, and the faster we will improve. We don't need praise from anyone. We know it ourselves.



The Essence of Mastership – Master Yourself and Become Perfect

A Master isn't a perfect person — never is, never will be. You must know that. But a Master is one who can master His or Her mistakes. We can learn from them and vow to make ourselves better each day. Just like being a genius is continuous hard work to maintain, so is Mastership, which is all about mastering yourself and nothing else. If anyone else follows you, it's just by the way, just because of your aura. Your true sincerity attracts them from inside. That's why you don't need to talk. You don't even need to tell them anything and they believe you. Mastership is like that.

Don't believe that I was born perfect, I'm perfect at the moment or I'll ever be perfect. No! I'm learning like you. But I've mastered myself. I don't let my mind dictate to me what to do because I know the mind. I make friends with it; we make a deal, saying, "You do this and I'll do that and we won't bother each other. If you do it well, I'll reward you. I feed you well, don't I?" I tell it, "I give you anything when you want it." It's just that now it doesn't want much because it knows it can't get much with me, so it forgets it. Even when it wants to sleep, I say, "No, get up and work." Then it has to do it. So it's gotten used to it after ten years. It says, "It's no good talking to this girl. She's very stubborn. She just does what she wants, and it's no good arguing."

That's all there is to being a Master, continuous striving for perfection, for a better,



nobler personality — a better ideal, not really a personality because when you talk about personality you mean you still want fame and all that. You know you still have ego, wanting to be proud of yourself; it's not true. It's just that you think that whatever you want to do, whatever you think is noble, is highly idealistic, benefits others, is good, then you must try to do it. It doesn't matter what the cost is, you just do it and don't talk. That's the only difference. Otherwise, what's the difference?

If we were to be operated on right now, none of our brains would be much better than the others. Maybe I'm of a little bit higher IQ or you're higher, but that doesn't mean that we're much different. Our brains are the same. Our willpower is the same, except that if you exercise to make it grow stronger or not; it's your free will.

Most of us abuse our free will in a harmful way, in a retarding way, slowing our progress to higher consciousness. Don't ask me why we have to strive higher. It's more comfortable to be a noble being, to be a wiser being, than just always being ignorant, sluggish, slow, lazy and a "couch potato," just lying there and waiting for things to happen.

It's better not to worship me, better not to follow me; just follow my example. Worship the result that comes out of my efforts and then do it. Do the same, and then you'll become a Master in no time.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Spoken by Supreme Master Ching Hai, Group Meditation, Los Angeles, CA., USA, March 13, 1996 (Originally in English)



Train the Mind and Cultivate Self-Confidence

We have to be happy and then be confident, be positive. Every time you think that you are at a lower level, throw that idea away. Every time you feel you are depressed or beaten up, throw that idea away! It's tough, but that's how you beat the blues. That's how you become higher. You cannot want to be at the Fifth Level and be thinking at the same time that you are lowly, beaten up by karma and being negative. I can't help you then. You are the one who decides at which level you want to be, not me. I can't bless you; you bless yourself.

Suppose I say, "OK, go to the Fifth Level; I bless you." But your mind is still used to thinking negatively and being depressed and pessimistic.

You have to train your mind. Tell it that you are the master; tell it what to think, what to do, what to feel, and which level you command. When you can do that, you know you are the master. You are already a master; it's just that you have a hard time convincing yourself. You have to work with yourself.²⁸

²⁸ Spoken by Supreme Master Ching Hai, International Three-day Retreat, Los Angeles, USA, December 16-18, 1998 (Originally in English)



Acquire a Faster Vibration

When your vibration is very low and very slow and you think slowly, you work slowly, and you speak slowly, what can you do? What kind of work can you do? What kind of service can you offer? Your level is so low and your vibration is so slow. The lower the vibration, the lower the level of life. So you see that the stones are solid; they cannot move. The trees can move a little bit, but only with external help. Then we come to the insects that can move, and then the fish and other animals, but they still think slowly. But now we're human beings; we must be faster. We must have a higher frequency, a faster vibration; otherwise, we can't catch up, we can't go, we can't grow up, we can't develop, we can't improve, and we can't progress. We can't



stay slow like that all the time, like when we were animals, like when we were stones, trees or insects. We're different now. We can't cling to the older vibrations anymore. We must move fast.

Because we've been animals in our last lives, or stones and trees in our past history, that



doesn't mean we need to be there all the time, that we need to stay at that level. We must know now that we're at a different level. We must move. We must improve. We must make use of this opportunity to think fast, to do things fast, and the energy must run faster. Then we can run faster, faster, faster, until we have vibrations as fast as the Buddhas and God so that we can become one with them, be as intelligent as they are; then we become God.

We can't stay there and make excuses for ourselves and blame the Master for pushing us. I have to push you. Otherwise, you'll stay there forever. I have to stir you up to life, make you work fast, think fast, speak fast. You have to raise your vibration up to a much faster level: faster, faster, faster, still. Intelligent people react very fast. They think very fast. And the Buddhas and

the Saints, their vibrations are very fast; therefore, they work very fast. They can work a hundred thousand jobs at the same time because their vibrations are so fast. So fast that they just look like they're not working at all, but they're working all the time, twenty-four hours, and at every kind of job at the same time. Because they move so fast, it looks like they don't move. That's why they say "doing but not doing" — because of that.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Spoken by Supreme Master Ching Hai, Group Meditation, Costa Rica, February 2, 1991 (Originally in English)



Public Service Is the Fastest Way to Cleanse Karma

I feel the grand difference when I'm at the Center. That's why I said to you that when you work in this kind of service, your karma is cleaned quickly. For example, if you pay one dollar, one dollar, one by one, it takes a long time. But if you pay all at once, it's fast, immediately gone. Now, doing this kind of job is just like paying all at once because many people will use this so your debt is gone.

If we do it only for one person or only for one employer, for the self-serving motive of earning money to take care of our body and our life, then of course, the benefit is only like that. But when



we do this kind of job, not for ourselves to gain any benefit, to get any money from it, but for the benefit of many, many people, then of course our job is on a grander scale. The merit is greater and therefore our karma is cleansed very quickly. We owe the world so much and now we also pay



back so much. Only in this way can we pay back quickly. Otherwise, how?

We owe so many people; we owe the whole of humanity many things. If we don't pay the whole of humanity back again, but instead pay one person, two persons, three persons, oh, it takes ages! We live in this world; we owe the whole world. Some we owe some grass, some we owe the road, some we owe clothes, some we owe rice. Only by paying the whole world back can we be cleansed. We owe many people so we have to pay back many people. And this kind of job allows us to pay back many people at once because many people will use this Center. That's how we pay the whole total. That's why our karma is cleansed so quickly.

We're born into this world and we owe many people: this one for rice, this one for clothes, this one for..... Everyone is our benefactor, and some we can pay back by direct contact, like our father, mother, children or teacher. We give them money, we give them love; some of these people we can pay back. Others who are too far away, maybe we pay back through taxes or by benefiting them in something, maybe a little bit further over there. But we can't pay back another country. If it's in our country maybe we can pay taxes and make it somewhat equal. Medical techniques, chemical discoveries and everything from different countries, imports, exports, et cetera, how do we thank them all or pay them all back, directly or indirectly?



So now, we have a Center here in Costa Rica. You come here and make toilets, dig for water, plant trees and build a meditation hall. You cut the grass, make the road, make the yard for people to sit in, and all the international people come here and enjoy it. So, you pay the whole thing back all in one go.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Spoken by Supreme Master Ching Hai, Group Meditation, Costa Rica, February 2, 1991 (Originally in English)



When we serve the multitude,
God also serves us.
Such is the law
on which the universe functions.



If we still demand something, or our heart is still attached to a certain place, we'll be used by the King of Maya. When we have no more fear or demands, we're content with anything we have, even if we have nothing, then there won't be any more traps. And we won't be afraid of any turmoil.

Be a Shining Example of Sacrifice and True Love

As long as we live, we must dedicate our whole lives to the goodness, to the progress of humankind, of the whole world, of the whole universe. Our vision must be so large, larger than life; it must be so noble that we have nothing else to lose. We fear nothing in such greatness of vision. Every obstacle becomes very small, every personal inconvenience becomes meaningless in such a vision. I don't feel that we're talking like a dream or just making a vision, but I feel that it will come true some day. It might have already begun to take root, but it will have to branch forth in all directions and make new buds, new flowers, new branches. It has to grow larger, greater, faster and envelop the whole world with the spirit of love and service, unconditional service.



What else do we need from this world except a few pairs of clothes and enough food to sustain our physical needs? Why do we need to worry about wealth, property, position, power and recognition in the world? If we know that we can't take more than two or three meals a day, if we know we need only a few pairs of clothes to warm our body, we have no fear if we understand our needs are very few.

Should we shed this physical clothing, it's all right. We'll be given another if we need it. If we don't need it then it's fine, too. If we don't come back, it's also fine. As long as we live in this world, we must make our life meaningful. What else do we live for? We'll die sooner or later. And if we look back from the other world, to the past, to the many decades of our life, and we see nothing meaningful, nothing glorious about our

actions, speech and thoughts, then we'll feel very burdened. That's how people have to come back again to this world.

There's no one to sit in judgment of us except our own conscience. That's the only one from whom we can never run away. God might forgive us, the whole world might not know about our actions, but we know. We're the only ones that we can't cheat, we can't tell lies to, and can't run away from. So whatever we do, we should make sure that it's beneficial to us. When we benefit other people, we benefit ourselves. We see clearly with our eyes what we do and how people benefit from it, how the world progresses through our effort. We know clearly. Our goal must be noble, must be high, must be mighty. Otherwise, what's the use of living a life kind of like an animal, feeding ourselves, working, raising children and nothing



more, no higher ideal, no lofty motive. Why should we just be a very lowly, ordinary person when we possess such a mighty power, such a lofty spirit?

We've inherited so many noble doctrines from different Masters, Who have graced our planet with Their presence, with Their wisdom, with Their everlasting blessing. Why should we just be an ordinary animated being instead of being a broader, larger, greater soul to benefit many other people and our own conscience -- when we see, when we feel, when we know what we've done in life. As long as we breathe this air we've learned all, everything to benefit others. That's the way to benefit ourselves. That's the way to ennoble our soul and to grow, to become a Saint.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Spoken by Supreme Master Ching Hai, Group Meditation, Hsihu, Formosa, April 10, 1992 (Originally in English)

WHY ARE INCREDIBLE BENEFITS GAINED FROM GROUP MEDITATION?

The merit derived from group meditation is many times greater than that of one person meditating at home for days, months or even years, depending on the number of participants in the group meditation. Therefore, the more the participants, and the longer we meditate in a group, the more difference it makes to our spirit. Many people I can tell just by their looks whether they go to group meditation or not. Fellow practitioners are aware of this too. There are obvious disparities. If you attend group



meditations often, don't attend for a period of time, and then attend group meditation again afterwards, you'll feel different, feel that you aren't so pure.

We gain more blessings for our country when more people attend group meditation. You don't need to wonder: How can our nation derive blessings just because a few of us are meditating together? It's true! Just like if several people are living in a big house, it's enough if one of them is rich and willing to contribute. He'll repair any of the leaking areas in the house and thus benefit the whole family. Even if dozens of people stay in that house, it's no problem. This benefits himself, and all the residents feel secure. Such is the case with one family. In the same way, other people definitely benefit from the spiritual practice of just a few of us.

Just one light by the roadside, wow! It's useful to so many people, thousands and thousands of passers-by. The lamp loses nothing, but becomes even more functional when more people use it. Therefore, though many people in our world might not be practicing spiritually, it's sufficient if we do. Otherwise, it would be even worse if no one was practicing at all. Just like when the entire village has no light, there will be total darkness. If we can have one or two lights, it's better than none! The highway is very dark, yet we can see a long distance if there are several lights. So, practice more diligently, thus benefiting yourselves and everyone. This is what I love most.⁵¹

⁵¹ Spoken by Supreme Master Ching Hai, Group Meditation, Japan, March 12, 1992 (Originally in Chinese)



During group meditation, the power is enormous. Even if our spiritual level is very low, it will be raised to a much higher level after we've joined in group meditation for some time. On the other hand, even if our level is high, not going to group meditation will push us down to a very low level. This is because in this world, we're reliant on and related to others; no one can accomplish anything alone. It's the same with spiritual practice. It's wrong for us to think that we can be successful in spiritual cultivation by practicing alone; it only shows our ignorance and low level.

How to Concentrate and Meditate Better

Q: Master, when I meditate, I can't keep my mind concentrated here. It runs all over the place and talks about all kinds of different subjects. How do I concentrate and meditate better?

M: Is that an initiate or not? (**MC:** Are you an initiate?) Because I'll answer differently. Who asked that question? (Someone answers: Yes.) That's why we have to go to group meditation. Because the concentrated power will help us, and we have to take time; some people can concentrate right away and some people take a longer time. I mentioned that previously in the lecture. Also forgive yourself. The situation in this world is not conducive to tranquil meditation and calm thinking, but try again and again. In this world, we have an advantage in that because this world



is so difficult for us to practice in, God's blessing is with us many fold. So we walk one step and the Master Power will walk a hundred steps to help us.

If we're in Heaven and practice, it's not that lucrative. Therefore in Heaven if you want to practice, it takes a longer time. For example, when we practice one day here it's equal to a hundred days in Heaven. That's why many devas, Heavenly beings, like to be incarnated into human bodies in order to practice faster. It's because here we have all kinds of rubbing force, like karma and situations and disasters and wars and suffering and happiness, all these mixing together. It's a kind of strong, useful tool for ourselves and for the world.

While we're practicing here, we also have the opportunity to help our fellow beings and therefore we gain more merit as well. For example, you meditate alone at home so you have only one

personal merit. But if through your effort or your eloquence you offer your place, for example, for a hundred persons to meditate in, then you have a hundred more merits to add to your personal merit. So you move up a hundred times more quickly; do you understand what I mean? Or you get another hundred persons to come in to get initiation, and these merits are also yours. Because after all we are one, and the more we connect with more people, the more expanded we become and the greater we become in terms of merit. Mathematically speaking, it's like that.

So it's better than in Heaven. In Heaven everyone is having a good time and so they take it easy. They don't have the motivation behind them to push them to concentrate. That's why I say when you're in deep sorrow or when you're in despair you pray better, and sometimes you meditate even better. At that time you remember



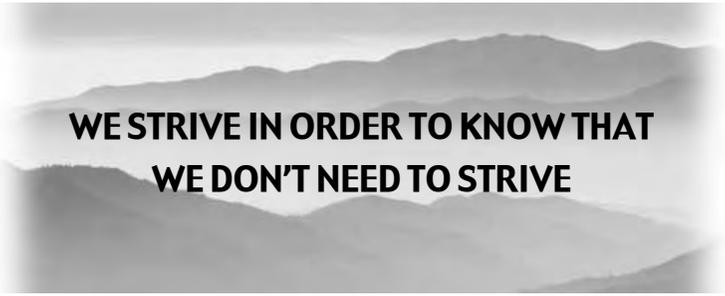
the Master more and say, “Oh, Master, please, please, please ...” (Audience laughs.) And then you get better experiences that day, bigger Light, stronger Sound or you feel more elated, nearer to God. So it’s good to practice in this world even though it’s difficult.

I’m happy that many of our fellow initiates practice very diligently. Some come to the center just to look around, but later... Well, they don’t look around that long because everyone closes their eyes. So they feel embarrassed after some time and they also close their eyes, and then they see something inside instead of looking at pretty girls outside. So there’s a very good advantage to having a temple or having a center, where people come together and do the same thing, concentrate and one-pointedly think of God; that helps very much. So take your time. You can look around for a while, and then when you’re fed up with it,

you can close your eyes and meditate with all the people. OK?

The mind always has trouble being controlled; that’s why we have to practice every day. Otherwise I’d tell you, “Get initiation and you’re a Buddha.” No more work! Right? It’s because our habits are long term. It’s been many thousands of years of time, maybe more! So taking one lifetime to clear up all these things is hard work, but it’s worth it. Or do you want to stay here a thousand more years to continue to do that? Well, it’s fun! So that’s why I tell you that you have to meditate for a longer time, two-and-a-half hours or three hours; because the first twenty minutes is struggling - just going on, going on with it and after about twenty minutes, it begins to settle down. After half an hour, you begin to enjoy and in forty minutes, you’re gone. (Audience laughs.)⁵²

⁵² Spoken by Supreme Master Ching Hai, Lecture, Fremont Hindu Temple, CA., USA, November 25, 1993 (Originally in English)

A black and white photograph of a mountain range, showing several layers of mountains receding into the distance under a hazy sky.

**WE STRIVE IN ORDER TO KNOW THAT
WE DON'T NEED TO STRIVE**

Q: Your mentioning that everything is already arranged for us brings to my mind a question: If it's already arranged, then what's the purpose of striving for enlightenment or for liberation, if our striving is virtually meaningless at that point?

M: You have to strive in order to know that you don't need to strive.

Q: Do You mean that you strive until you give up?



M: No, you strive until you fully, fully understand that every effort is useless. You have to make an effort in order to be effortless later. At the moment, it doesn't matter what I tell you: you'll still strive. So I tell you how to strive. And I say, "Go ahead and strive; strive harder, until you reach the point that you know: 'Why should I strive? I'm here already. I've already arrived.'"

But now if I tell you, you won't understand. So you have to strive to understand that you shouldn't strive. Because now if I tell you, "Don't strive," can you stop? Can you just relax and surrender?

Q: Well, actually I found myself doing that but then feeling a little bit behind schedule and getting back into striving again.

M: Yes, that's it. So you still aren't there. Then try to strive more, and one day you'll stop striving. That's the purpose. Because if we don't strive now, we can't feel at ease. When you stop striving and you still feel at ease, then it's all right. Now, if you don't strive, you're in trouble.

Q: So, if I were to stop striving even though I don't have the total understanding of it, that would also be ineffective. Is that what You're saying?

M: Yes, ineffective.

Q: So you have to really come to that level of understanding?



M: Yes. Not intellectual understanding; truly relaxed, truly at home. Because now, intellectually, you understand what I'm talking about, but realization is different.⁵³

⁵³ Spoken by Supreme Master Ching Hai, International Seven-day Retreat, Santimen, Pingtung, Formosa, December 22, 1992 (Originally in English)

An Era Full of God's Grace

Q: Dear Master, do You think that there will ever be a day when we could all just go back home and not have to deal with these earthly issues and matters?

M: Oh! Definitely, we'll go home.

Q: I mean, will all of us?

M: All of us will! No one will be left behind. No "second coming" for you. (Master and everyone laugh.) Unless you want it so badly for a beautiful woman is left behind or something like that. Because this time is a very bad period for our world, and the Master Power decided that we suffer enough. So, if we just make a little effort,



with just a little sincerity, the Master will embrace us and disregard everything. Because you can't. (Master sighs.) To be honest, you can't meditate in this world. You really can't. So whatever we can do to meditate, or whatever the outcome, truly comes from the grace of the Master, meaning the Master Power, not this person. So anyhow, during the night, the Master will take us to different levels where it's safer and better. In the day, we are too busy. Our mind is running against the spiritual power, so we have to do it quickly at this time. If you keep the precepts and meditate and go to group meditation, you'll see yourself improve so fast that you could not imagine. When you look back at yourself, it's like someone else behind there, really! The people who experience this will tell you. I don't say this because I know it from books, but from experience myself and the living examples of your brothers and sisters. It's nice to

see your family members (fellow initiates) once a week, no? It's good; not many people can keep it up, but it is very beneficial to them, and if you can't go to group meditation or if you don't want to for any reason, please meditate at home. And there's no "must" for anything; it's just that it's beneficial to you. Whatever I tell you is good for you only. No forbidden items! You keep it; it's good for you. Or if you don't keep it, well, you'll experience some setbacks or some obstructions and then you'll know why.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Spoken by Supreme Master Ching Hai, Group Meditation, Hawaii, USA, September 4, 1994 (Originally in English)



Cherish the Opportunity to Practice

Q: In one of your lecture collections, you mention “The Ocean of Love,” a poem by Kabir. Is that right?

M: Yes, I’ve talked about Kabir’s poems many times, but what is it about the Ocean of Love?

Q: It’s about the highest God, they call Sat Purush; He comes through different incarnations in each age (Yuga). And in the Kali Yuga, Sat Purush makes a deal with Kal (Lord of the Three Realms) to take a lot of souls back home.

M: Yes, this is the Kali Yuga, the Dark Age. It needs a strong guy to come down and take everyone up! Big car! Strong! (Master laughs.)

Q: Is that why so many souls can be liberated so easily?

M: Yes, that’s right; you know it already. Of course, it’s like that. It’s the last age of this cycle. So whoever is left behind: Hurry! Hes brings everyone up; that’s why it’s very generous. But it takes a lot of power, just like a hurricane brings a lot of water. It takes a hurricane to bring so much water inland; normal rain doesn’t do that.

So, at this time, it’s like “wholesaling.” Because we have a lot of room and a lot of grace, so everyone can be covered. It’s no problem. You’re lucky! (Audience applauds.) God is generous, but Hes has never been so generous before. In the old times, at most there would be a handful, maybe a thousand people. There could never be so many, and they could never be so openly gathered



together despite everything. You guys are really lucky.

In the old times, if they wanted to have group meditation, they all had to hide and run all over the place, using secret codes, secret handshakes, secret hand signals like mudras (hand gestures) or the salutation that you use -- even this (Master makes a gesture) -- remember the wisdom eye, repeat the Holy Names, do the Quan Yin, and then we're together. That's the secret signal the Christians used to have, for recognition of one brother to another. Because in those times Jesus had to hide; all the disciples also had to hide. They didn't even dare to recognize the Master in public, saying, "I don't know Him." Even the foremost disciple Peter denied Him three times. Such was the negative power -- so oppressive that

even so mighty a person as Jesus, and so devoted a disciple as Peter, could not open their mouths. It was very oppressive then. But in this time, we're very lucky.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Spoken by Supreme Master Ching Hai, Group Meditation, Florida Center, USA, June 9, 2001 (Originally in English)



We Are the Luckiest Yogis

Q: I wanted to ask You how high I have to be in this life spiritually to not have to come back after I die.

M: Be as high as you can. Otherwise, the Master will push; the Master will be there to take you to whatever level and continue guiding you upward. Otherwise, you would have to pass through the three worlds. With any other master, you would have to pass the Third Level in order to not come back. But with this Supreme Method, it's OK; you can.

Because sometimes it's not your fault that you didn't reach a high level. For example, suppose you get initiated today and die tomorrow. It's

the Master's responsibility to take you up from wherever you are before you leave the physical body, or before the Master leaves the physical body. We're OK. This time, we just have a fully open house to help everyone. Whoever is sincere, the Master Power will help this time, very generously. This century, it's very generous.

Q: Why is this century so special as opposed to a thousand years ago?

M: Because every now and again, the Heavens open "wholesale." (Master and everyone laugh.) Like at a garage sale: Everything's one dollar. It depends on which Master came down. You see, we're all Masters. But some Masters are newly remembered again; they just became enlightened again this lifetime. Some Masters have been enlightened all the time. Some Masters never



left Heaven and have just come down this time. Some Masters come and go, come and go all the time, and have affinity with a lot of beings on this planet. And when She or He comes back again, it's to all old friends: "Anything you want, it's OK. We knew each other." (Audience applauds.) Maybe we were old friends; that's why.

If the Master has just newly come, then He doesn't have too much affinity with many beings. So He just takes a few disciples to begin with and then continues again and again the next time. If the Master has just remembered again that He's a Buddha this time, then of course He also has to develop more experience. It's not that the Master doesn't know, but just like everything else, you have to practice. You practice how to deal with the human mind, how to deal with the bureaucracies of this world, how to protect yourself from all

the harassments on this planet and how to keep yourself intact in order to help people quietly without bringing trouble to yourself.

But the new Master doesn't know that. The new Master goes out with all full colors, blasting trumpets and everything. And maybe after three and a half years, or two and a half years or three and a half months, He's gone. The spiritual power is the same; it's from the universe. But the way to handle the disciples, the way to deal with political power in this world: These have to be learned because these are mind things. These are skills and abilities. They have nothing to do with enlightenment and the soul. Of course they have, because the more enlightened you are, the more quickly you learn. But if He or She has already had experiences, life after life, there's no need to learn so much.



Because how can a person learn so much in one lifetime? Even if you're enlightened, you can't learn auto mechanics, airplane piloting, sailing, business accounting, computer software, hardware and every other thing. You could, but your life is too short. These things are not soul things. These things are abilities that you have to use your mind and brain or hands and physical body to understand and master. So, if the Master has already learned all about how to be a Master -- not "how" to be, but meaning that as a Master, you have to encounter and you have to be able to do many different things -- this kind of Master is easier and quicker. It's simpler. It's just the know-how of the world.

The method is the same, the teaching is the same, the power is the same and the Truth is the same. But the Master Himself or Herself

is capable or not capable: concerning the public, concerning how to teach the disciples the best and the quickest way to progress. The Master can teach the same method to the same people. Two different Masters might teach even the same method to two different disciples. But the one from one Master will progress differently or more quickly than the one from the other Master. It's like that. It also depends on how the teachings are imparted to his or her mind. Because if the mind doesn't understand, the mind doesn't accept it; then you cannot progress quickly. You don't feel so good. You don't feel convinced, or you don't feel confident. (Audience applauds.)⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Spoken by Supreme Master Ching Hai, Group Meditation, Florida Center, USA, June 9, 2001 (Originally in English)

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~ The Supreme Master Ching Hai

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