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Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammasambuddhasa

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May You Be Well And Happy

Summary

A short introduction to Chan Mind, Zen Mind or beginners mind as a practice and experience to help us on the path to awakening.

Doing Things in Chan Mind

Doing things in Chan means relying on your mindfulness as the main method or tool for what you are intending to do.

Normally as we approach a task our minds have many views and opinions of how we will go about it, what we will do, when we will do it, how long it will take, how much it will cost – we seem to know all about it before we have even started. For many projects this is appropriate and for some projects absolutely necessary however for Chan, this will not work.

Chan is about emptying the mind of all this stuff so we can just be and just do. Start things with a fresh mind, which is sometimes referred to as having a beginners mind. A beginner often starts with an open and clear mind in the sense that they know they don't know! They have stopped producing all the answers for a while. They have to pay attention, they have to focus so they can learn what is needed. Chan mind is like that. It doesn't know what is going to happen, it is awake to the present to find out.

Making a cup of tea, it is awake to the sound of the water as it is poured into the cup. Our normal mind already "knows" what that sound is, so it doesn't listen any more. It doesn't pay attention any more because it already knows about making cups of tea. Aha ! The Chan mind is fresh in the present and has never made a cup of tea before. Every moment is unique. Make the tea like a beginner, be interested in what is happening to you, to your arm, to the tea pot, to the sound.

That is why the Chan mind can make something beautiful, it is in tune with what is in its environment. Every moment is new. Every experience fresh. When it acts it can harmonise the things near at hand to produce an elegant solution. Some may say it is like lateral thinking, but it's not lateral thinking; it's seeing fresh in the present possibilities that duller minds just don't see. It sees possibilities where our conventional minds see more of the same.

So how do you do it? When you are about to do something, stop your minds chatter. Get your mind calm and have awareness of your own body, your posture, *your energy*. Move with this awareness as your main focus. Move like it is meditation. Then it is meditation. Next comes all the views and opinions. They seem to flood into the space you have created in your mind. That is our lack of merit and lack of morality. We can't keep our mind quiet for long, even though we are following the instructions perfectly.

Take the five precepts in your mind, then add to them the precepts of no idle chatter, no slander, no harsh speech, no divisive speech, no flattery. Start again. Then when the thoughts come let them pass. Don't follow the views and opinions. They are not you. You have already had countless billions of thoughts in your life. Just for once, give them up - just keep your focus in your body and be a beginner.

As your merit from your Buddhist practice develops and your morality improves and you build stronger mindfulness it becomes easier and easier to go into Chan mind. It is the way these good qualities would naturally manifest, if we would let them.

However, often we don't let them, because we keep our old habits of living. We could have all the ingredients to get to Chan practice but because we keep our habitual minds and way of doing things we don't let our mind blossom with its new qualities.

This is how Chan can liberate us.

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