

## NO EXPLANATION

Very few things in life frustrate us more than when there is no explanation for something. We like having things explained to us; we enjoy having things explained to us. When we were children, having things explained to us was a form of entertainment as well as education. We hung on every word, every phrase, because it was through these explanations that our view of the world was being shaped. Everything was fresh, new and exciting, and we reveled in our newly found treasures. There was an explanation for everything, even the things we thought we understood but really didn't.

But as we grew older, an interesting thing happened: we came to depend more and more on explanations, to the point that if something didn't have an explanation we tended to become anxious, puzzled, even fearful. "The Unexplained" has a somewhat sinister connotation to our adult minds because it puts us on shaky ground. Our reason has nothing to hang on to. When circumstances are not to our liking, we are likely to use phrases like, "I demand an explanation" or "You've got some explaining to do!" Of course this has not so much to do with shedding some light on the situation as it has to do with making ourselves feel safer, more secure in the midst of something which has inconvenienced us. We can even become suspicious, paranoid, fearful and neurotic if our dependence on explanations is too strong.

The unrest caused by our mind's consistently demanding nature may eventually lead us to a practice such as Ch'an, and, true to form, we think to ourselves, "Wow, now I can get the ultimate explanation!" But as soon as we begin, Teacher gives us a practice to do, and when we ask why we have to do this particular practice Teacher just says, "Don't worry about 'why,' just keep going."

"Oh, no...not again!" we think. "Shouldn't Teacher be telling me why I have to do this? If Teacher doesn't tell me why, I might mess up or miss the point entirely." But Teacher just tells us to keep going, so we tighten our jaws and keep going. However, eventually there comes a point where we think that we're doing all of this for nothing because the ultimate explanation that we're still looking for has not come. At that point we begin to get frustrated with Teacher; our questions to Teacher begin to have an edginess to them because lurking in the background is none other than our old friends, "I demand an explanation" and "You've got some explaining to do!"

It's at a point such as this that Teacher will probably say something to us like, "Oh, didn't you know? This practice is the practice of No Explanation." What?!? Aren't you supposed to be teaching us and explaining things to us so we'll know what to do? And Teacher will look at us and say, "Nope, not at all. This practice is beyond both teachings and explanations. If I explain it to you, all you'll do is to become more confused than you already are. Better to give up hoping for explanations and just see what's right in front of your face. Then all will be explained to you."

If this sounds strange, that's because it is; strange in that it's not the kind of thinking or perception we've become used to over the years. It isn't necessary to have things explained to us because things are explaining themselves to us all the time. Just think about that: everything is explaining itself, which we call manifesting,

every single moment.

Our difficulty is in not being able to see the explanations that are constantly before us. This kind of seeing doesn't develop through the practice of cramming notions into our heads; it develops through the cultivation of awareness, which means allowing everything to explain itself to us without our own notions getting in the way. Once we drop the habit of hanging on to views and having expectations, the mind settles and awareness begins to dawn just like a curtain opening. Then we don't need to demand an explanation for anything; we just observe and live, simple as that.

Isn't it ironic? All the explanations that are ever needed are sitting there chattering away right in front of us, but because we have to have an explanation that satisfies us, we never see it. It's this sense of "satisfaction" that trips us up. When we're satisfied, it's the equivalent of what people call "fat and happy." We're stuffed (in this case, stuffed full of opinions and views) like someone who has eaten a very large meal, and so we sit around burping and being glad that we can just sit in front of the TV and laze away. Meanwhile, our arteries are clogging up, our blood pressure is rising, and nothing is getting done around the house; worse, we continue with our bad habits until we die of a coronary or perhaps we get divorced because we've become a very lazy person who's more concerned with creature comforts than anything else.

The practice of Ch'an is the practice of No Explanation. Seeing things as they are is sufficient, but we must see them as they are *in their entirety!* This means there can be no hanging on to views and opinions whatsoever. They must be dropped immediately. A sunrise? As it is, No Explanation. Driving to work? As it is, No Explanation. A family crisis? As it is, No Explanation. Seeing angels, devas and Buddhas while you are sitting in meditation? As it is, No Explanation. If we can truly perceive phenomena just as they are, with no interference from our dualistic sense of self-and-other and its attendant sense of temporary satisfaction, then no explanations will be forthcoming. None will be needed.