



What did I learn from the Nine-Hour Chanting

Neng Sheng — Toronto Hua Zang Workshop: Sunflower Group

On October 8, 2006, I was one of the practitioners in the 9-hour Chanting Retreat held by the Toronto Chapter of HYBC-NA. This is the second year I participated in the Chanting Retreat. I waited for quite a while before I wrote this article on my experience, because I wanted to take the time to fully appreciate the immediate and prolonged results of the retreat.

During the retreat, I found that time went by quickly; compared to the 7-hour Retreat we did last year, except for the last two hours. These extra two hours were the toughest moments to pass. Pain and discomfort slowly set in as time went by during the retreat, but I believed it was a challenge and I was motivated to go all the way until the end. No pain no gain! If I could not make it for the 9 hours, I believed I would not be able to see any improvements or progress.

I have learned a great deal from this retreat, mainly:

First of all, you do not have to stay in the walking circle throughout the retreat. This retreat is focused on developing one's concentration and on raising one's awareness; and it does not matter whether you are walking, sitting or resting. As some of us had to take turns at the reception post, that was how I became aware of this point. Once you grasp the essence, you feel at ease and you can practice your concentration under any circumstances.

Secondly, I believe I was cleansed and positively charged. I was sick with a cold for a week after the retreat. Someone told me that a retreat like this could bring out all the negative energy (karma) inside oneself (in my case, it came out as sickness). I wanted to confirm

whether this effect applied to me. Usually, whenever I am sick, even with a simple cold, it lasts for a few weeks. But, this time, my cold only lasted for one week. Also, even though I came down with a cold, I did not feel sick at all. My friends could not believe I was ill and told me: "You are sick but you look great and energized". Why? My heart was filled with joy and happiness. Physically I was sick but mentally I felt satisfied and contented.

Thirdly, after the retreat, I had a strong sense that I did make progress with my practice. My inner energy is getting stronger and stronger with my Buddhism practice. That experience is beyond words and it is something that you have to feel for yourself. With this strong inner energy, I am able to face challenges and adversities, have confidence and be optimistic about everything.

Finally, I was not surprised to see how many of last year's practitioners had made so much improvement within the year. They have put in good amount of effort, time and faith. I wish more people could come to understand and appreciate the benefits resulting from this kind of retreat. When and where can you find training like this in only one day? People like to find excuses and always complain that they are too busy. But please, do stop and seriously consider this: Isn't it worthwhile to give one day in a year to cleanse your mind and body, while building up your inner strength? I think the answer depends on what is important to you and what you value most in your life.

Yes, my friend, you do have a choice.

(For more reviews regarding the retreat, please go to [http://www.huayen.org/English/ Forum/ Discussion of HY Buddhism/ 9-hour Chanting](http://www.huayen.org/English/Forum/Discussion%20of%20HY%20Buddhism/9-hour%20Chanting))