

*This is not a matter of intelligence, but of attitude.* This is an important issue for us, and yet we find it surprisingly difficult to keep from choosing the easy way of avoiding any and all momentary problems in our path, find it difficult to keep from deciding in favor of any interruption at all that diverts us from the work of breaking through our own limitations and constricting patterns. (This may be called spiritual laziness.)

But the teachings of those who saw have been passed down to counteract this laziness. We may recall here from the earlier chapter on crazy wisdom (Chapter XI) the seventh-century Chinese Zen enlightened lunatic 拾得 Shíh-té, who spent long years on Cold Mountain with his dharma-buddy 寒山 Hán Shān<sup>20</sup> (who was named for this mountain<sup>21</sup>), an odd pair classically pictured as a twosome joyfully sweeping the dust off of rocks, indiscriminately. Relative to the present context (of this issue of spiritual laziness and teachings to help us overcome it), Shíh-té pointed out in a poem,

Buddhas leave behind sutras  
 because people are hard to change  
 not just fools and scholars  
 everyone's mind is framed  
 their karma high as a mountain  
 they don't know enough to fear  
 much less to reconsider  
 the deceits they harbor night and day<sup>22</sup>

Shall we, then, become willing to take the time to ponder a while? When we are experiencing such an unending droning, experiencing, that is, this thinking as impediment, as detour, as diversion (perhaps amusing, of course), we often, frequently, feel that there can be for us no peace of mind, no tranquility. We long for the end to such spinning, this droning, this thinking that does not see its own limitations and blindness. We may begin to hum to ourselves, or to stare into a candle, or to begin rocking back and forth rhythmically. All of these are intuitively-taken steps to bring on a mental concentration and calmness that we sense lacking. *What can we do about this?*

One guiding image for us when we feel this yearning to have more calmness and concentration when our thinking feels too scattered, and to have more attentiveness, alertness, or mental clarity when our concentration has brought on drowsiness of the spirit, is the following metaphor of the grass and the fire, proposed long ago by the Buddha.<sup>23</sup> So we may ask, rhetorically, When a fire is burning away too strongly,