

Dharma Talk

Teacher: Samu Sunim

Date: June 28, 2009

Location: Toronto

Event: Sunday Meditation Service

Transcriber: Zack, Toronto

Date of Transcription: June 26, 2024

Opens with three strikes and chanting

Good morning.

Please sit comfortably.

[poem in Korean]

To clarify the mind of Nirvana is easy.

Here, the word Nirvana, in typically Mahayanist sense, is enlightenment or peace. That's extinction of anxiety. And delivery or emancipation from the cycle of birth and death. That's main anxiety, root anxiety.

So to clarify the mind of Nirvana, the wisdom of enlightenment, is easy. But to enter the wisdom of discrimination is hard. To enter the world of impermanence, the world of discrimination, or the world of injustice, is hard. You know that.

It's, for instance, it's easy to be here sitting on mat and cushion. Your legs may suffer for a while, but anyway, it's easy compared to what would happen, what you might experience, once you step outside the temple, you see. And I experience that all the time entering the world of discrimination, the wisdom of discrimination, as it is said in this verse. The world of impermanence and change. The world of, well the world of paranoia and, what's the word, they say paranoia and schizophrenia.

Now, if you are, say Monday through Friday, if you take an account of your loss and gain on your activities in the world of discrimination then often you would find out, your account would tell you, you are more on the low side than gain. Not just in terms of material terms but you lose peace of mind. You get upset. Then also, eventually, you have to learn to be content with the role of underdog, which I experience all the time.

But then you realize, you know, losing is not so bad. You lose your feelings, you lose your perception, you lose your impulse, you lose your five skandhas. That's what the Heart Sutra says.

So now, here, speaking of five skandhas and losing its three qualities of your mind. You know, mind is what is, what becomes aware of, and also what experiences being good, being bad, or being sour and painful. This is all mind activities. But the three qualities of your mind are, number one is empty. Whatever happens, it's still empty. And second one is luminous or transparent. And the third, third quality is unfettered or, more practically, boundless.

These are three qualities which remain the same in spite of all your melodrama and vicissitudes you undergo with your mind. So you get upset and you are happy and excitable and all that. And, but your original mind still remains empty. And you may be confused and fanatical and all that. Still your mind remains transparent and luminous. And finally, your mind, in spite of your aging or Samsara, whether in this lifetime or next lifetime or in the previous lifetime, it's boundless. Unfettered.

Now, how do you grasp this mind? That's **task**, in your meditation practice. It's grasping your mind. Applying this mind.

The difficulty is, there are four difficulties you have to know to grasp your mind. The number one is it's just too close to recognize. That's number one, to even notice it. Too close to recognize and notice it. And second difficulty is it's too easy to believe. And third difficulty is too excellent to appreciate it, to accommodate it. And the fourth quality is it's too profound to fathom it.

So never mind about the third and fourth quality, you just stay with the first quality. You know it's, we say it's always dark under the lamp light. It's shade. So your mind would go all around, you know, even in meditation. We are soon going to begin retreat starting this evening. Mainly you struggle with two things. One is daydreaming, it's crazed daydreaming. That's one extreme. The other extreme is lethargy, sleeping. So there you really learn to help yourself. That's, you have to be the true person. True person with an awakened heart, to make retreat. If you lack being true and sincere, and also if you cannot develop an awakened heart to sustain, to support, your practice, you would, like a pendulum, you would go to, you know, daydream from daydream and then, the other way, lethargic and then sleepy and all that.

And also, not just mind, it's physically demanding. But here, well I said okay you, probably chairs, you come from chair culture so you can always sit in chair. That's comforting, right? And, you know it's, even though you are laypeople doing the retreat you have to stay here, unless you can prove that, you know, that you are, you cannot just run away. Some people run away (laughs). But it's, the vow is, you know, if you feel sick then you go into your room quietly and

lie down but continue to practice. You lie down and continue to practice. When you get sick, actually your concentration can improve. Because you lose interest in all other things. It's going to party and all these things. So your mind can be more, you know, focused on your practice.

So you learn to take care of yourself and in the process, eventually, you learn to take care of the world. So it's, but it's all, it's here, **as you can see here**. So keeping mind here. So here, the mind is awareness. As I said, it's root is awareness. So it's, your mind is still **overthinking** for all these things.

Now, meditation, as you know, is ineffable and inscrutable. Ineffable means, simply, words fail. When it comes to meditation, you have to, you have to just sit. There's nothing, you know, to verbalize about it. That's why it's called ineffable, you have to experience it with your whole body-mind. Just silence, non-verbal **culture**. You stop talking. So silence creates space. So in silence and in awareness, you come in contact, contact, with what is true, what is pure, and what is noble, and what is infinite.

So now, inscrutable. Because you cannot elaborate or analyze. You have to just sit and choose your practice. It's almost like cows. Sometimes cows, they do regurgitating. Sometimes you sit there regurgitating your past or something like that, that's not fun (laughter). It's ineffable, inscrutable.

It's, whatever it is you pursue, it's right there. That's what Buddhism is all about. Waking up. There's no alternative. Because you can always go and pray. You can go to church or mosque or synagogue or any other place. But also, the main thing about Buddhist practice is, you know, Buddha did it himself. You can help yourself. And if you can help yourself, you can help your family, your community, and your world.

So it's Bodhisattvas' work. So in a sense, the peace of the world and justice of the world depends upon your practice. One person, when this person because a true, ordinary person with an awakened heart, that makes difference. So we are here doing this in order to make a difference. Wherever you are, wherever you work.

Three strikes and chanting to close

Dharma Talk

Teacher: Samu Sunim

Date: August 30, 2009

Location: Toronto

Event: Sunday Service

Transcriber: Zack, Toronto

Date of Transcription: June 24, 2024

Opens with three strikes and chanting

Good morning.

Please sit comfortably.

Last couple of weeks I was away. Actually I went to south of border in search of summer. You know, summer has been missing for some time. I think the fall is upon us now. And actually I went to as deep south as Arkansas and Tennessee. Arkansas is the state of the largest watermelons. That's how Bill initially steals the, Hilary. Impressing her with, you know, that he comes from the state of the largest watermelon. Do you know the story? That's when they, at the admission office at Yale University or something like that, he charmed her with all these stories. Actually I, this is this place called Hot Spring National Park. That's his hometown, that's his, as I said, boyhood home. It's a humble origin actually.

Now but then, you know, as some of you may know, I go through a little ritual from time to time when I cross the border. And actually this time, the US customs officer said, "Do you sometimes have difficulty crossing the border?" "Yes, I have." "Why?" "Because of my past karma." And then usually the question is, "Is there anyone else in the car, the van?" But, "No." But, "What are you bringing?" I said, "Three Buddha statues." And then he looked a little perplexed. You know, three Buddha statues? And he said, "Are they alive?" I said, "One live and two dead ones." (laughter) "Where's the live one?" I said, "Here." (laughter). And he didn't seem to be very impressed by that (laughter) and sent me to the office (laughter). Anyway...

[poem in Korean]

When body is born, mountains and rivers and the great Earth come into being. When mind is born, myriad things become manifest.

So when body, it could be our body, it's here because body means rūpa. It's, Buddha statue is also rūpa too. It's form, you know, form, body. So mountains and rivers and great Earth, so form

or body. So when body is born, mountains and rivers and great Earth, all insentient beings, come into being. And when mind is born, when thoughts and feelings are born, myriad things become manifest. This is, kind of, Buddhist creationism. Which takes place all the time.

Now there's this Mahayana Buddhist scripture, Buddhist sutra, called Śūraṅgama Sūtra. It's Śūraṅgama Samādhi Sūtra. It's, Samādhi is, you know, the English translation is concentration. Śūraṅgama is sometimes called heroic process. So when you are in concentration, concentration does not end, you know, in your meditation. Because you take concentration, power of concentration, back to the world, back to the marketplace. When there is great concentration, a heroic practice, heroic process, apparently it's Śūraṅ. That means hero. So hero or heroic process means you can conduct yourself, you can live your life without meeting any obstacles, any resistance.

And then this sutra expounds on these things. One of the things, of course, if the area where you become active is something like Buddhahood, where Buddhas and Bodhisattvas frequented previously, then of course, you know, it's Buddhahood. You have no trouble, no resistance, no obstacles. But otherwise there would be obstacles. So then, you know, overcome obstacles, then you go through this heroic process.

Now, in the sutra, it's one of the earliest Mahayana sutras. The Sanskrit original is lost, apparently now it's only **extant** in Chinese and Tibetan version. And there are English translations, very good translations. Very important sutra. There's dialogue between Buddha and Ananda, and also Paśānadi, the king of Kosala.

And here, as you know, Ananda is one of the ten great disciples. And Buddha says, addressing to Ananda, "You and I are close relatives." They're actually cousins, you see. But Ananda is 25 years younger than the Buddha, and four years older than Rahula. Rahula is the Buddha's son. And then Ananda says, "Yes, venerable sir. I am your youngest cousin."

But if you, **[unclear]**, if you read these great disciples, you know, **[unclear]**, there's some misinformation there. It says Ananda and the Buddha, they were of the same age. So that could not be true. Buddha renounced the world, his palace, at the age of 29 and he attained enlightenment at the age of 35 sitting under Bodhi tree. And he was active spreading Dharma for 45 years and he passed away at the age of 80. You know, this much is clear. And Ananda was, you know, Ananda stayed alive many, many years after Buddha passed away. And when he joined his order, the Buddha was already 50 years old. So that means that he was 25 when he joined the order.

Well, Ananda's father and Buddha's father, they were brothers. And when Ananda joined the order, his brother, blood brother, Anuruddha, and also Devadatta, they all, they joined together. They joined the Buddha's order together.

And so the first five years after he entered the order, he was more like in the novice state. So he was not, he was close to him but he was not really personal attendant to the Buddha. So that means that when he became the personal attendant to the Buddha, Buddha was 55 years old and he was 30. And so he was his personal attendant for the 25 years until Buddha passed away. So that's, I thought it's important to mention that.

Anyway, in this sutra it says there's, the Ganges river. The Ganges river which flowed between Kosala and Magadha, so Buddha and his disciples being active in Kosala and Magadha, these two kingdoms and the other city states, they frequently crossed the river to visit the other cities and all that. So they were, anyway, as you know the Ganges is a very holy river in India, particularly in Northeast India. And it's something like 1400 kilometers in length. It's a little shorter than Mississippi. Mississippi apparently originates somewhere in Canada and it's something like 2400 miles in length.

And so actually when I went to, when I visited Memphis, I wanted to have this riverboat ride. But I just missed that. It's in Arkansas and Memphis and St. Louis. It was a really, the recession or Great Recession, is still very, very visible. The two hotels where I stayed had no guests at all. And it's a three star hotel so you can stay there for 65 dollars. And, Memphis was better because there was some tourists. The [tourists of], you know, the blues and Elvis Presley and all that. Anyways so due to lack of tourists they had only one riverboat. And then, so we missed that.

It was, you know ... anyway, back to this sutra. At this time, the Pasenadi, the king, he was getting old so he was complaining. He's getting, you know, his health or his strength was not like 20 years ago or so. So then the Buddha says, "Have you been to the river Ganges?" He says, "Yes, yes sir." "And have you, how was it? How was the river?" "So there was abundant, you know, water, abundance of water, and the flow was always abundant and the water was always fresh." "And have you recently visited the river?" "Yes, and I visited many times, and also recently I visited the Ganges river." "But was it, did you notice any difference between the first time you visited the river and the most recent time?" "Most, I didn't notice any difference. There were, the water supply was always abundant and the flow was constant and was always fresh." "Now would you say other people would notice the difference, or they would say the same thing like you said?" "I'm sure they would agree with me in what I said."

Then after a couple more dialogues he says, "Then, you're now complaining that you're getting old and your health and strength is not like 20 years or 30 years ago. Then how come the Ganges river stays the same?" "It's, well I can see the three qualities. Abundance, and constant, and fresh." "And your physical body you may notice getting weak or strength reduced. But your

original body-mind should be like the Ganges river. It's abundant, and constant, and always fresh." And then there's a long dialogue, and then eventually says, "Birth and death, this birth and death, is no birth, no death."

Now, if I digress a little bit, people who devote their lives for the cause of principles. Well we have admiration, you know, Kennedy recently passed away. He had some misfortunes in his political career but he always, you know, stayed with his principles. So many people admired him and respect him for that. But, of course, principles are very important, we have to adhere to them. But also there's this thing called virtues. If you lack virtues and if you simply stay with principles, like fundamentals, they can be very difficult. So principles and virtues.

Now, this abundance and constance. Being constant, you know. And then, fresh. So here, abundance doesn't actually mean material abundance. Our resources, including spiritual resources, are always abundant if you can only change your mind. And constant. Many of us, leading stressful and complex lives, we have, you know, we have become very impatient.

We have these Six Paramitas. One of them is Kṣānti Paramita, patience and endurance. May I be patient. Well, sitting is the same thing. The Buddhist spirituality is, traditionally, sink into your true nature. We have this Gata. "Every evening I go to bed holding, embracing, my Buddhahood. Every morning I wake up with my Buddhahood." So unless you can go to bed every evening embracing your Buddhahood, you cannot wake up with your Buddhahood every morning.

And Buddhist religious experience, it's usually, it aches all over. That's, when people take introductory meditation course, partly because you are not used to sitting on mat and cushion so the first experience you have, it hurts, you know. Your knees ache. That's your first Buddhist religious experience (laughter). Experiencing discomfort. Then, of course, you run away, you can always run away. But that's first-hand experience. Then, you see, you learn patience. You have to learn to be patient instead of just get up and run away. You stay with the pain and experience pain, experience discomfort. Then you learn a little discipline, a little discipline. First you give yourself one more minute, or two more minutes, before you get up. So that's discipline, that's patience. A little patience in your life.

So that's the first step you take toward the virtue of being constant. And then gain perspective and learn to see things with a fresh eye. You see with a Wisdom Eye.

Three strikes and chanting to close

Dharma Talk

Teacher: Samu Sunim

Date: September 06, 2009

Location: Toronto

Event: Sunday Service

Transcriber: Zack, Toronto

Date of Transcription: July 8, 2024

Opens with three strikes and chanting

Good morning.

Please sit comfortably.

[poem in Korean]

Your everyday mind is the way, is the way of Buddha. The cat pisses on the roof.

Now, once, this layman, he visited, he was visiting a Zen teacher in the mountain. So he thought he heard so much about this guy and if you visit him, you always get something good for your life. So that's why he was visiting. So, and then, well, before he started climbing up the mountain to visit him, you know, he was a little bit **cautious**, I mean, what should I say when I see him? Well you ask him a question, but what question? Well you just ask what Buddhism is all about, you know. **[unclear...]** what is the way of the Buddha.

That's the, Buddhism is still a new word coined by Western scholars starting Buddhism at the turn of the 19th century or something like that. So it's the way of Buddha, like the way of Jesus, the way of Confucius.

So ask him what is the way of Buddha. Oh, that's easy. So when he arrived and, you know, he, you know, paid obeisance by doing three prostrations and then actually came very close to him, "What is the way of Buddha?" And then he said, "Your ordinary everyday mind is the way." "Oh, that's easy. So is that all?" "That's all." (laughter)

So he came down the mountain and then, you know, everyday, my ordinary, everyday mind is the way of Buddha. It's the way, you know. And then soon he realized that he has to work on it, you know. So like a mantra, "What is my ordinary, everyday mind? What is my ordinary, everyday mind?"

And then, before too long he found out not losing peace of mind could be the way of Buddha. You know, that's, my ordinary, everyday mind is peace of mind. So not losing peace of mind could be the way of Buddha. So he worked on that for a couple of years, so he was very good about that. So maintaining peace of mind everyday is the way of Buddha.

But in the process also he learned, sometimes when he wakes up in the morning he would forget about it. So then, okay, so not to forget when I wake up in the morning. Then he figured out he has to go to bed with this thought, you know. Not losing my peace of mind, you know. Everyday mind. So he, and eventually he learned there's actually, you know, Dharma verse. "Every night you go to bed with your Buddha-mind, and every morning you wake up with your Buddha-mind." So in order to wake up with your Buddha-mind you have to go to bed with this [guide?], and then when you wake up it's right there. So he would make sure that when he retires every night he would go to bed with **this guidance**. So his wife was getting jealous, you know (laughter). So he wouldn't say a lot, you know, but he would make sure, you know.

So then, so not losing peace of mind, so took him two years, you know, to work on that. And then eventually the way of Buddha, so your ordinary, everyday mind is the way of Buddha. So that's awakened heart. So that habit, to maintain the presence of awakened heart, there's awakened heart, he, you know, he figured out, you know, helping people, you know. When they are in need, helping people. So in other words, maintaining his Buddha-mind with helping hand ready to extend.

So took him another three years. So in the meantime, somehow the word got out, you see, that this guy is practicing, "My ordinary, everyday mind is the way of Buddha or is the way." So people got to know about that, and one guy hears that. "That's really good, you know. Your ordinary, everyday mind is the way of Buddha. That's all, that's pretty simple." So, and, you know, he thought that was really great. So with that in mind, he opened a Dharma variety store, you see (laughter). So, you know, I mean he would sell sundries, and each time he says like, "God bless you," he says, "Your ordinary, everyday mind is the way of Buddha." So he would say that, you see. So then he, more people got that thing. Your ordinary, everyday mind is the way of Buddha.

So another Zen teacher, he learned about that. So, and then people were very proud of this, you know. I mean, just, Buddhism is nothing special, you know. It's just finding out your ordinary, everyday mind. But not realizing it, you have to work on it, you see. This guy actually worked on it not losing, not losing his balance of mind or peace of mind. That took him more than two years. And then also, eventually, you know, now, after not, you know, not losing peace of mind and then, you know, feeling the presence of awakened heart, the way of Buddha, that took him another three years. And that's of course including, you know, make sure every night you go to

bed with your Buddha-mind and waking up every morning with your Buddha-mind. So but the other guy said, “Oh that’s easy.” So like hot cake, so it’s spreading around, you see.

So when this Zen teacher found that out he said, “Well, my ordinary, everyday mind is the way of Buddha! That’s it!” And then he said, “The cat pisses on the roof.” So then that got spread. “Cat pisses on the roof, what’s that?” And then that became the talk of town, you see. Many people were puzzled, and then eventually they tried to, “Well let’s see how the cat pisses on the roof.” And then eventually, you know, one guy found out, you know, on a warm day or on a warm day either in spring or in fall or even on a winter day, the cat secretly goes up on the roof and lies down enjoying sun bathing, you know. And stretching out. And then sometimes people, he becomes aware, you know, he pisses, you see. So that sounds very innocent, spontaneous, and authentic. And very natural.

So maybe that’s it, you know. I mean, there’s another thing. First they figure out what, if you just say your, even without much practicing, even your ordinary, everyday mind is the way of Buddha can stink, you see (laughter). So that’s not good. So your ordinary, everyday mind should be, you know, as natural, as innocent, you know, as spontaneous, and authentic. Which is sometimes called no-mind, practice of no-mind.

Now, in Buddhism and Zen there is called the four ways of playing host and guest, you know. First you learn to play the host. Then you learn to play the guest. Then you learn to play both the host and the guest at the same time. Then you learn to play neither host nor guest.

So now here, of course it’s, first when you seriously undertake your practice it’s, well there is this Dharma verse – [chanting and reciting in Korean] “No cares, no cares, that’s noble. The beggar is worrying about his old debts.”

Now no cares, that’s noble. But that would just sound like self-indulgence. You can get stuck with your self-indulgence, you know, enjoying no cares. You know, I don’t care, who cares. And now this beggar, or the poor, or the destitute, or the unemployed, worrying about his old debts. There’s something wrong with this too.

Now back to the four ways of playing host, guest, both guest, both the host and the guest, and neither host nor guest. It’s, so when you undertake practice, whether meditation or prostration and so on, reciting sutras or chanting, so usually you end up to help yourself. So self-help, self-cultivation. It can be self-indulgence too. So that’s, you know, you like to play the host. And then the Buddha, way of Buddha way, is benefiting yourself and benefiting others. And, of course, even helping yourself and then helping others. When while helping yourself you should always also include others.

Now while playing guest, while helping others you should also include yourself, not exclude. If you exclude yourself while helping others you foresee trouble. So as I say when we take Four Great Vows, "All beings one body, I vow to liberate." So if you apply your ordinary, everyday mind is the way of Buddha here, like for instance, temple staff, whatever they do, like moving chairs, or preparing Ullambana Day memorial, or fixing mat and cushions after people left, or lighting candles, they do these to fulfill this vow. "All beings one body, I vow to liberate." Even while ringing the bell.

So even, you know, like, being staff they do it all the time, so they can lose sight of that. So even, you know, ringing the bell, you do in like, this guy, [retiring?], you know, embracing Buddha-mind. You learn to ring the bell with Buddha-mind. That's, so sometimes, you know, if you come to temple often, when you hear the bell, well there's the bell gata. It's, "Listening to the sound of the bell my defilements are eliminated." So depending on who rings the bell, with what attitude, it can be inspiring. It can inspire you or otherwise. So it's playing host and playing guest is like that.

So and then, if you get good you learn to play both the host and the guest. And then more advanced is eventually you learn it's neither host nor guest. Then that's emancipation level.

Now it's, there's, in Buddhism there is always this big debate. The other day this guy came, he said, you know, he got Kensho, you know, he got awakened, he had this wonderful experience. But since then he said he lost it and he'd like to regain it, you see (laughter). Sometimes you hear that story. That's, sometimes it's called Zen Stink, you know. So it's a sudden awakening.

Well you hear this one guy, when he, when people heard he got Kensho, he attained enlightenment, all his disciples came to congratulate him. "How was it?" they said. "I'm miserable as before." (laughter).

And so it's, that's why the debate, you know, it's like, the academics call it subitism. You know, all of a sudden, you know, something happened. And then, well that's actually the practice of the beginning of your career, not the end of your career. There's real work there, you see. You become very humbled when you realize that.

So there is this Korean monk, actually of my age, you see. And he was married before he became monk, but his wife died young of cancer. So he grieved and then eventually decided to become a monk. And he was a very exemplary monk, but also he had this kind of eccentric streak in him, you know. We see, sometimes surprised people or startled them. For instance he, well he was, when he sees something terribly wrong, something is neglected, causing, you know, unhappiness or causing misery to a lot of people, he would not sit idle.

So for instance, while this happened he was also socially very active even before he became monk. So the monks, they go into their three months retreat. So while in retreat, towards the end of the retreat, somehow his friend, while he was still in the world, got hold of him and this is, there was some kind of a protest against, you know it's like, the city government, they had to evict the people in the poor district. They had to raze down so that the developer would build new buildings, you see. So in the process, a couple of people were seriously injured. So they needed, and there were, you know, the NGO groups were helping the people getting evicted so they needed some help.

So he thought about it. So eventually he left the retreat, which is actually a serious offence, you know, as a Zen monk. Well, you know, they make vow. And so he joined the protest, and he was right in, you know, in the forefront of the protest. So when he said, well when he was accused he said, "Why I thought, what would the Buddha do?" If, you know, say Buddha was doing like 1000 day, you know, retreat and it was 999 days, it's just one day left, and when he heard something, you know, terribly wrong happening, I would say he would break and come out of the retreat to help people. So he did.

Then, well he did many retreats. And eventually he was offered, he was invited, to serve as Abbott of this very, very important temple in Seoul district, in Seoul, which is capitol of South Korea. And then, so that was a risky job. The Zen monks, they would not involve themselves in such nitty gritty administrations dealing with, you know, lay people. But anyway I'll, this is also my Korea.

So, but while doing that career he decided to do 1000 day Kido practice. 1000 days he would not leave the temple ground, and every day he would do 3000 prostrations. You know there's some monks, they do so many prostrations, and then, well there was this monk in the olden times who was doing like 10,000 prostrations every day for 10 years. That's, of course like anything else, if you, you know, do it every day for so long, you know, you get used to it.

So, and once journalist was interviewing him, "Why do you do so many prostrations every day for so long?" And his answer was, "Just to do one true prostration." So in order to do one true prostration, sometimes you have to do so many prostrations. Anyway he did, and then, and it also happened he, recently the ex-South Korean president, he was known for his frankness and all that, he committed suicide and his wife used to be a member of that temple when she resided in Seoul when her husband was president.

So there was national mourning, nation-wide mourning, and his wife called him to, this was an inter-religious memorial service. So his wife called him to represent Buddhism to conduct Buddhist service for her late husband. So he refused a couple of times so, and then eventually he decides to come out and do the service. And then the kind of Dharma talk he gave became very, very famous.

And then there was, many people accused him, you know, this and that for having done that. And then finally he completed a 1000 day practice. And then his faithfuls learned that, you know, it's Ullambana Day, which is a few days ago, and we always, you know, observe Ullambana Day memorial on weekend because here Ullambana Day is not national holiday. And he, his faithfuls asked him, you know he, you know, Ullambana Day is honouring the dead and also the missing but, you know, they knew he was very much in love with his late wife because she died so young. You know, they were together maybe something, couple of years or something like that. And they never saw him putting, you know, her memory or tablet or doing mourning or anything, so how come? And he remained silent.

Then, well if you really want me to honour my late wife, I would also, you know, I would be happy to do that. And then, then right away, you know, he started singing the pop song which they used to sing together. And then got up, and then he played this, you know, the song she used to like and then started dancing. That's the song, "Bee-bop-a-loo-la," you know, "she's my baby!" (laughter) and started dancing that. And everybody was so shocked. And he was dancing very well, you know, swinging his hip (laughter).

And so the word got spread, I mean it's, you know, and, I mean, people got upset. I mean, what he did was spontaneous, authentic, and people got upset authentic too (laughter). That's, they don't understand that...

So it's, again, it's my time is again playing the host, playing the guest, playing both the guest and the host, whether the dead or the missing, for them, and then eventually playing neither host and neither guest.

Three strikes and chanting to close

Dharma Talk

Teacher: Samu Sunim

Date: December 13, 2009

Location: Toronto

Event: Sunday Service

Transcriber: Zack, Toronto

Date of Transcription: July 17, 2024

Opens with three strikes and chanting

Good morning.

Please sit comfortably.

[poem in Korean]

Emptiness lowers its head, emptiness bows its head, while lost head indulges in reflections.

Here, lost head is a deluded head indulging in reflections.

One true practice, one true awakening.

Awhile back, on a couple of occasions, I mentioned, I told you this story about Korean monk spending 8-10 years performing, doing, 10,000 prostration, 1,000 prostrations, every day. That's quite a practice, you know. 10 years bowing practice, doing prostrations, every, 1,000 prostrations every day.

So when a journalist, when he learned that, he was curious. Why this monk had to do so many prostrations. So he came to visit him and posed the question, "Why do you have to do so many prostrations?" And he had a very short answer for that. "To do one true prostration." In other words, in order to do one true prostration he had to do so many prostrations over so many years.

Now here, one true practice, one true awakening. So when your body-mind sit in silence and in meditation, in contact with your true nature, in contact with that which is true, sincere and infinite, and you do the true practice with true sincere heart so many times. And also you wake up, and so many times. To do one true practice and one true awakening.

Practice does not make any concession. Of course, when you rise from meditation, since you are not monastic, you practice love and then compassion.

Now, you often hear that in Buddhist practice we don't seek external help. Whatever you seek, whatever you need, it's already there. You've got all the ingredients for your own salvation. So we say enlightenment is inherent. And everyone is already endowed with Buddha-nature. Sometimes I remind you, no matter how bad you are, you are still 5% Buddha. So you start out as a 5% Buddha or 10% Buddha. That means everybody has that Buddha within. Buddha in me.

And to uncover that Buddha, the power to do that, that power is also within. You have the power. Now what is this power? It's, we say, "In death, come alive." In death, come alive. See, when you did something wrong, yes I did it myself. I got it myself. That's the Buddhist attitude. That's the power I'm talking about. Yes, I did it myself. Don't blame others. So I got it myself. So I have to heal myself. I have to wake up. True awakening. That's called in death. Only in death, you come alive. No excuses allowed.

And still, what kind of power I'm talking about? That's the gata I recited. [reciting in Korean]. Emptiness, emptiness lowers its head. Emptiness bows its head.

Now what is this emptiness? That's your awakening.

People, true people with awakened heart, knows how to lower their head. Humility. While deluded head, still indulging in reflections. That's the kind of power I'm talking about. That's the true power within, which you can use to invent yourself, to re-invent yourself, to uncover your true Buddha. Buddhist practice, Buddhist discipline, has such power.

Of course when you fail that, of course, then you have to seek external help. There are lots of external help available. You know that, all kinds of therapies, specialists you can go to.

Once I had a student, it's a long time ago. This was 1979 or 78 or 79. I used to live in the basement apartment on Markham Street right here. And then we got this rundown flat house in Parkdale. And now Parkdale I think has changed, it was a great area in those days. So we moved to Parkdale. And then I had this student. And he, he was a dropout from law school at U of T. And his father was a very wealthy person. And, so he was the eldest son in the family and obviously his parents adored him. They all sent him to the best school and, like medical school and law school and all that.

So he was a very big person, but with a very kind heart, very kind heart. And, but he really hated studying law. But, you know, there's, in this family tradition, you have to obey your parents. So he, with great reluctance, he entered law school but after one year he ran away to Montreal. He

really hated it. But when he came back, and he came, he started coming to our temple. At Gwynne, 46 Gwynne. And he became a member and also he was visiting our temple in Ann Arbor, we just established temple in Ann Arbor, Michigan. And his parents could not tolerate that.

So quoting this, well, he was, at one point his father would not even come inside the temple. That's, you know, I mean, it's below his dignity. It's a simple place, you know, that, I could see that he would agonize over his son going to such a, you know, small, poor Buddhist temple. He couldn't stomach that, you see. So he would go out and greet him and I heard him arguing, "Well father, this is what I like to do. Could you just allow me to do what I like to do?"

But anyway, so and then he actually, his grandmother was alive so he would always go and visit her. And then, in the process he developed some kind of mental illness. And then so, according to his father's request he would go and see them. And actually I think at one point he moved into temple. He was staying temple for a few days as a refugee because he just, just all he need is just peace and simplicity and, you know, in a clean, quiet environment. And then he would go and visit.

So one midnight, the doorbell rang and he and his father showed up and said, well just in front of me said, "I would go to the end of the earth to obtain, to acquire, the best psychiatrist to heal my son, but not at this place." But anyway, I don't like to make a long story short but he was going down in his mind, his mind was slipping at this point. So of course there was, he was deeply caught in the conflict there.

But it's, this, in Buddhism there's a lot of talk, they call it self-help and other-help. Self-help means you discover your own Buddha within. If you fail that, of course you need help. But Zen and Buddhist meditation is not prayer, you don't pray to somebody to help yourself. Here you come here to help yourself, to cultivate yourself. So it's, you become a cultivated person. So that the society and your family and your friends could benefit from the presence of your being. You don't have to do great work. Even your, if you are a wholesome being, then people who come in contact with you get the benefit right there.

So it's, take this gata with you. Here [reciting in Korean] emptiness lowers its head. Here, emptiness is awakening, or your awakened heart, the presence of your awakened heart. It's simple, humble, and authentic. And lowers its head, bows its head. There's no trace, no pretension.

But the deluded head, still indulging in reflections. And, if you are a practicing member we recite, we began to recite this song of meditation. It says, you know, each time you sit in silence and meditation you are a new beginner. And there's, the awakened heart, it's already present in the pure and sincere beginners mind. That's the quality.