

Dharma Talk

Teacher: Samu Sunim

Date: January 31, 2010

Location: Toronto

Event: Sunday Meditation Service

Transcriber: Zack, Toronto

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Note: Recording starts and ends without chanting or poem

Buddhists who are practicing meditation, sooner or later they learn to, what do you call it, empowerment practice. When I first entered the monastery, we were taught, actually it was in the beginner's text, the Buddha was a person, a human being. And you are a person and human being too. So if the Buddha did it, you can do it. And he had troubles, and you may have troubles. And he overcame his troubles, and you can overcome your troubles, and become Buddha.

So that was my first experience of empowerment practice, so you get the message. But that was for the consumption of monastics, you know. I mean, Buddha, he renounced the world. And so the monks, they renounced the world. But that is not your situation. You cannot renounce the world, and you are a lay person and you cannot leave your family behind.

And anyways, [who in the West?] says you cannot become "crackpots in drag." You know what that means, right? Crackpots in drag. That was way back, you know. The hippie coward and crackpots in drag. That was the authoritative lens they used to [unclear], you know, like monks in Tibet and monk's dress or the Theravada monk's dress, like wearing women's dress. That's drag. Crackpots in drag (laughter). But anyway, when I give the meditation formula it says, "Your ordinary, everyday life." So, without renouncing the world. Your ordinary, everyday life *is* the way of Buddha. That's the way I put it, so that you could get the message. In other words, apart from the way you lead your ordinary, everyday life, whatever you would be doing in everyday life, there is no other way, there is no other way of the way of Buddha. So that's your empowerment practice.

Now, in winter you see the stillness of naked trees standing on the hillside of the highway. You know, rows of them. Then somewhere you hear the murmur of a stream running below the coat of ice. And they are trying to help themselves going through the winter. Then, human beings are too, are trying to help themselves, but with machines. Actually I saw a driver working on his car, parked on the shoulder, you know, at wind-chill temperature of minus 20 degrees. But anyway, he was trying to help his clunker, you know? Then I recalled a man who gave me a boost with such a characteristic calm and nonchalance in the face of all these honks from impatient drivers when my clunker stalled in heavy snow in Montreal. Anyway, this must have been almost 40 years ago. And I was so grateful, and so I thanked him deeply and asked for his name and address. He ran away, saying, "You will see me again among the living." I would never forget

that, you know. That was a true Bodhisattva in disguise. “You will see me again among the living.” So among us, there are always Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in disguise. You never doubt that. They are always helping, one way or another. And we owe them. And it’s not a debate, helping yourself and helping others. Helping yourself becomes, one way or another, becomes identical with helping others. So in other words, when you even help yourself, you help yourself with a helping hand for the world. So that’s why the monastics, when they sit in meditation practice, they practice meditation with the Bodhisattva vow. “All beings, one body; I vow to liberate.” So their meditation practice is fulfilling this, their Bodhisattva vow. “All beings, one body; I vow to liberate.”

I was, I spent a month teaching and taking time off in Mexico, and we had a Yongmaeng Jeongjin in Mexico around the same time. Our temples in Canada and US had a Yongmaeng Jeongjin that’s December 26th through 31st. And they rented a country **place**. It’s, they are allowed to say this sometimes. It’s, in a single day, they go through the four seasons. You see that at night, the temperature drops. So it’s chilly, it’s very chilly, and it’s like winter. Then as soon as the sun comes, sun rises, then it’s spring. You see the flowers blooming all the time there. And then during the daytime it’s summer, then in the evening it’s fall and you see the leaves falling. So in one day you go through the four seasons. So if you’re not careful you can easily catch a cold, actually. So you have to change - they keep changing clothing, you know.

And we had about, close to 60 people. And one of them, her name is **Palomina**. And she suffered this, I don’t know if it’s called, some kind of a cerebral paralysis before her birth. Anyway, it’s a birth defect. So she cannot walk like a normal person so she has to exert herself 10 times, 20 times, more than an ordinary person in good health just to take steps to walk. And also her body is so paralyzed, and she has difficulty with expressing herself to form words and say it, you know. It’s very difficult to say. But she has done remarkably well. I think she is in her late 30’s or in early 40’s. She’s an artist and she gives workshops as an artist. And she made an art calendar, she gave me a copy. Also during the work practice she made a kind of a special **deed**, 108. I was actually rooting for it this morning if I had it, I couldn’t find it. And she always liked to be treated as equal. And she, I saw her in practice, her practice is “Kwan Seum Bosal.” It’s just, with her whole body-mind, just to say one Seum Bosal takes so much effort. Mobilizing every part of her, like literally, sinus, muscles, and blood. But she’s doing it, “Kwan Seum Bosal, Kwan Seum Bosal.” It’s so touching. And how she was trying so hard to help herself. So I was wondering whether, she does artwork, she does that. Throw herself, you know, everything into the work.

So it’s, this debate that has been, you know, Zen is, as you know, is just one of the many schools of Mahayana Buddhism. And there are other Buddhist schools, and these Buddhist schools are for people who, for some reason or another, just they cannot help themselves. You know, many people, they just cannot help themselves. Or there are, of course, people who are unwilling to help themselves, or even who don’t like to help themselves. Well I think people who have been living under culture of consumerism, they have been so conditioned, and sometimes they just

don't know how to help themselves. So it's, for that we have Pure Land Buddhism. It's, if you cannot help yourself, then you have to rely on other help from other power. It's, well actually it was interesting. When I crossed the Canadian border, this Canadian immigration and customs official, when he learned that I'm a Buddhist monk, "I'm Catholic, so according to my tradition I'll give you **Santo Santo Santo** sticker." The US immigration officer would never do that. He would get fired for that. But Canadians are very (laughs), they can be informal. So that was nice. But then if you go to Mexico, and it's still 95% they have been losing their Catholic population but it used to be 100% Catholic. But now it's something like 95%, and many don't even go to church. But they are **non denominational**, or whatever, or **lapsed**, they are Catholic. So people who come to, like in Morelia, Morelia is the capital of Michoacán state. And you may read in the news, they are, this state or province has been struck with the most violence rising from, arising from, this drug gang violence, you see. So, gruesome.

And there were eight people attending workshop. And at workshop, just according to Catholic custom, they were lining up to get what they call "bendición." That's Spanish word "benediction," you see. So I had to, you know, perform that, improvise that (laughter), so I didn't know what, but something I learned giving blessing to children on Buddha's birthday, so I hold my hands. I'm more used to giving **[unclear]** to wake up (laughter). But that would not work, so I hold my hands. Then everyone, you know, lining up, there were about twelve of them. And coming like just, you know, coming to the priest, you know, at the church. So I would hold my hands. That's, you know, Buddhist-Catholic practice (laughter). Like, enjoy good health, and enjoy happy life, and then sometimes I say, "Wake up!" (laughter). Or sometimes I say, "Go and help yourself! And help others!" So, well, my small effort to try to facilitate Buddhism, you know, under different circumstances. But that's, sometimes when they come in too they sometimes cry and get quite upset, you know. "Sunim, I don't like to betray my God." Oh you don't have to betray, you can go to church. It's no problem, you see.

So it's, it's called border crossing. Well even Catholics, they are trying to learn it. To help themselves, you see. Like, I read this in the paper during this, well it's still going on, in Haiti. You know, the presidential palace, also the cathedral collapsed, you see. Here the archbishop died too, in the debris. But there was one woman, I think she may be deacon, it's something like that, deacons of the cathedral. She was rescued at six days or seven days. Then according to her testimony, that when the building collapsed on top of them, well she was alive in the debris, but she was talking to another fellow from the same church. They worked together. So about the first three days, just to support themselves, you know, talking back and forth. But after three days he fell silent, and she shouted, "Don't give up, don't give up!" but silence, he was dead. But she was, constantly she was praying to God and when she got rescued said, "I was talking all the time to my boss, that was God," you see. So she was helping herself to stay alive, to stay awake, with the will to live. So she was helping herself. So that was, I was impressed with that. So you can **keep** up. If you give up helping yourself you can die.

And the, well actually in the workshop, the current president of the country comes from this state, Morelia. And her family is there. Someone told me her, his sister was in the workshop. And

then they put Toan and me up in the best hotel. We were spoiled. Not the best hotel but it was very culturally, you know, the owner was the former minister of tourism and culture. So she is running these two hotels, you see. Very glamorous hotels. And then I learned that, this heartbreaking story, that the [unclear] is our, the leader of our group in Morelia. And they are friends. That's why, you know, they put us up in this hotel. And about a couple of weeks before my visit, these drug gang pins, they approached a number of times for a contribution. She was also tied with the presidential family. So anyway, she skillfully refused.

Then one day, overnight they came and kidnapped all her staff, you know. Like administration, all that. About 70 of them for ransom. So eventually she had to pay ransom to rescue them, to return them to family. But she knew that was not, that would not be the end of it, you see. So she was very afraid and fearful, next time they would come for her, you see. So she made a special trip to Mexico City to talk to the president, but she was not successful. And so all this stress, and also, she collapsed and she was so, [unclear] told me, "Sunim, could you go and visit him?" So my schedule was very, very tight but I agreed to that, and then she contacted me that she couldn't, eventually I learned that she had to be rushed to hospital. So, and then I, through Toan, I gave her verbal instructions how she can help herself. So she is obviously very upset, they are doing this to her, and then she has become somehow a target. So, and how she can get out of this. So, well, she can lose money or her wealth or her property or whatever, but if she loses her health, body, you know health, you know her health, body-mind, then that would be worse, you see. So, basically my instruction was how you can, well, don't worry about your wealth, that you can afford to lose. But if you lose your health, your body-mind, then you would lose everything. But if you maintain your health of body-mind you can always, you know, hold wealth before later on. So don't worry about it, just you have to concentrate. You know, people dwell on what happened to you, why they are doing this. But now it's time for you to concentrate on your life. To put your life together, and look forward. Not looking back and dwelling on what happened.

So, this chanting, it's called power chanting. It's a form of empowerment. Sure you can cry and shout if you can, and curse them, that's true. Express it. If you cannot abandon your anger, you have to express it. And that's healing. But chant, they would chant. So recently I got a letter, but so it's like, it's something like they also believe in a higher power but [unclear], at the same time you have to learn to help yourself. It's like, heaven helps those who help themselves. So it has to go both ways. Of course, they are not – there are helping hands around. We have Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in disguise. But also you too, you have to learn to help yourself. Empower yourself. And regain your confidence. "Yes, I can." So that's - and fix your ordinary, everyday life. So your ordinary, everyday life is the way of Buddha. There is no other alternative.

Dharma Talk

Teacher: Samu Sunim

Date: February 14, 2010

Location: Toronto

Event: Sunday Meditation Service

Transcriber: Zack, Toronto

Date of Transcription: April 12, 2024

Opens with three strikes and chanting

Good morning.

[poem in Korean]

There was a monk. His name was [unclear]. He spent his whole lifetime with a single instruction. That's [mong mong sa?]. So don't fantasize, or, stop daydreaming. So he had this single teaching for himself and for all others. And so he spent his whole lifetime with a single teaching. There was another monk, his name was [Sra?]. And this monk, he kept calling [Jungo?], which is Master, Old Master, for himself and for the world. Now through them, this first instruction, "Stop daydreaming, or don't fantasize," became famous instruction throughout meditation teaching schools. If you visit some monasteries in Asia you would see these three characters [Mong mong sa?]. And if the monks, training monks, if they don't still get it, then the Master would get upset and they would say something like, "Stop barking your head." (laughter) Then they get it, you know, they get it. With their bones and flesh. And, but then of course, when people come out of public school, they are not happy with one instruction, you know. So things can get complicated. The other thing is [Jungo?]. But the more gentle instruction which I have been using is when you sit in meditation, outwardly it's simple, pure, and authentic. You know, it's all what you do with your body-mind for your own salvation. But that's just outwardly. Inwardly you need true, sincere, and earnest. It has to be a true person with a sincere heart, sitting in meditation in pursuit of happiness and liberation for himself and for the world. It has to be this true person. And it says earnest. That's the thing. I, myself, I heard the word earnest hundreds of times, you know. They use it in a number of different ways, just, sometimes they say, just even saying once is not, be earnest, be earnest, be earnest. And earnest and steadfast. And also come out with earnest feelings. So in other words, lacking, lacking true sincere and earnest qualities, you just sit there like a cactus, you see. And one of three things happens. It's either your mind wandering all over the place, daydreaming, fantasizing. And then when your mind gets tired of that, this time you are drowsy. And then another thing that could happen is you feel left out, like [unclear]. Anyone who really practices meditation with a true and sincere heart, with the right meditation, the concentration method, you know this is quite a work. It's a very dynamic, energetic practice. You may be just sitting still, doing nothing, but it's a great work. So that's why, sometimes there was a joke, [unclear] Korean member [unclear] Sunim, when he delivered Dharma talk. "For you

guys who still come out with enlightened heart after a good meditation, is there something to eat?" (laughter).

Now in early days of Buddhist history, like the Buddha and his disciples, they came out with these Four Noble Truths. There's the truth of suffering, Dukkha, and the truth of the cause or symptom. Well I mean, the truth of suffering is a symptom. And then the cause or formation of the suffering. And then, that's like symptoms. And then, that is a pair. And the second pair is can we treat it? Yes, there is a cure. And the fourth one is by following Eightfold Path. So that's a prescription. So there's symptom and treatment. So it's, and some Buddhist [unclear] like, new medicine. Also like, not necessarily body, but your mind goes deluded. So how do you treat your deluded body-mind? So that's why sometimes the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, they were called physicians. So Buddha was sometimes, one of the epitaphs he was referred to as King or Great King or Good King of Physicians or Good Physician.

And then there's this famous story, Poisoned Arrow. That a guy got stuck with a poisoned arrow, so he is suffering. He is suffering from having been struck with a poisoned arrow. But he's very upset and angry, you know. So, and he finds out, who did this to me? I must find out who did this to me, you know. And now, and then questions follow, you know. The root, examine the arrow, you know. How long is it, you know? How powerful the poison? And all these series of questions. But the predicament is, before he would be able to find out all about this, he would be dead, drop dead, you see. So that's, the Buddha explained, well this guy, well the physical wound is one thing. But his mind was also deluded. He is upset, angry. So he is becoming stupid while dying (laughter). So in other words, he would die with a deluded mind. So the, (what) a good physician will do is to pull out the arrow, which is urgently needed. And then put good medicament, you know, ointment, to heal. So it's cure and healing. Later on it became, when the Sanghas are more organized, it's like awakening and enlightenment.

So basically it's, so Buddhism was, initially it was like a new medicine for the society, for the sick beings. Deluded mind. You will hear deluded mind, deluded from, well actually they are called Three Poisons. Three unwholesome roots. That's greed, well, greed is rampant in our society, greedy, and anger or hatred. But sometimes they use the word arrow, but in Mahayana of course they use delusion or ignorance or stupidity. So how to treat? You know, this greed and anger and delusion or ignorance? So it's, even monastic training was considered as a treatment, as a medicine, to cure people from suffering from delusion or ignorance or anger.

So it's, well the best thing is, you know, you check the state of your mind when you come and sit. It's got to be true person doing this, you know. And also it has to be clear, well why I am doing this? Otherwise you sit there and just, you know, waste your time daydreaming. That's not meditation. Of course there is some merit to that. People say, you know, medical doctors who are desperate to help their patients. So, you know, go and meditate. Go, you know, and relax. At least, you know, just sit. Learn to sit still, and breathe properly, and then, doing nothing, you see.

So there is some merit, you know, like relaxation and stress reduction. But that's not the original purpose of doing meditation. To make the whole body-mind, to turn them wholesome, body-mind. So that they would function properly for the society, in the society. So check that out, you see.

So what this guy is, like, these two monks, they had, one had this, you know, like stop daydreaming. And, well there's a lot to be said about stopping daydreaming, you know. And it's [Jungo?], because you are, you have to be the Master of your own life. So what is this Master doing, you have to check on that. So that's true, sincere, and earnest. You know, so it has to be true guy, true person, with a sincere heart. And in the pursuit of truth, Dharma, or peace and awakening, with earnest feelings. So it's earnest pursuit. This concentration. And cultivating Wisdom Eye.

Three strikes to close and chanting

Dharma Talk

Teacher: Samu Sunim

Date: February 21, 2010

Location: Toronto

Event: Sunday Meditation Service

Transcriber: Zack, Toronto

Date of Transcription: April 15, 2024

Opens with three strikes and chanting

Good morning.

It's a beautiful morning. There will be many happy days ahead, right? So stay on sunny side.
(laughter) Bright and strong.

[poem in Korean]

Coming and going. Coming and going, what are you doing? The falling flowers and the flowing waters are vast and infinite.

Now, coming and going and coming and going is birth and death and rebirth. Transmigrating or going through many lifetimes, going through many different forms of life. That's called Samsara. Now, falling flowers and flowing waters. Now this line, the falling flowers, or the fallen flowers,

drift away, float away, on the flowing waters with a lingering feeling while the flowing waters carry the fallen flowers away without care. That's a little poetic, yeah?

Now, coming and going, coming and going, what are you doing? It's called, there's this famous Mahayana Buddhist statement, "Samsara is Nirvana and Nirvana Samsara." That's like saying, your very ignorance is enlightenment or your delusion is no other than enlightenment. Enlightenment is no other than delusion. It's a paradox, eh? But Buddhists, they are not afraid of paradox.

Now, there are these three chief delusions. The first delusion is whatever we seek for peace of mind or spiritual awakening, whether they be salvation, enlightenment, or liberation, emancipation, they are not far away. So we always, we tend to think that they are somewhere else. So this is the chief delusion. They are always available, right where we are. It is never apart from right where we are. Indeed, the true salvation or enlightenment is inherent! So while failing to see this, we seek far away. We seek in vain on the outside. That's chief delusion. Buddhist teachings mention this in many, in a number of different ways. They say no need, no need to seek saintliness. Just stop deluding yourself. Just stop defiling, defiling yourself. So if you fail to grasp this, then all your endeavours, all your efforts in Buddhist practice, will come to naught.

The second chief delusion is we somehow believe in something like "I, my, me." Now there is something called a self or selfhood, as a substantial entity. So that's why the famous Buddhist doctrine, "Non-self." Sometimes Buddhists use the word, we call it negative teaching. The positive teaching is your "True Self." Your True Self is your universal self. In other words, they say your non-self *is* your True Self. So, if you, if you realize your non-self is your True Self, and so what is the True Self? Your True Self is and your self is everywhere. That's called "Boundless Love." If you realize that, you'll be free from hatred forever. How can you hate someone who is none other than yourself? So hating other people would be like hating yourself. Harming yourself. Hurting yourself. So enlightenment, awakening, means you begin to see yourself everywhere, in others. We're in kinship with all beings. That's Buddhist awakening. So ignorance of this is chief delusion.

So attachment, attachment to yourself. Basically, since there is no such thing as your self, attachment to things you believe you are in possession of, you know, like your bank account and your relationship, whatever you're attached to inevitably brings suffering. So that's why the famous saying, "Suffering is optional." We sell t-shirts (laughter). So that would make a good gift for your partner. We had a one day retreat yesterday and a couple of people, three people, bought one each.

So now the third chief delusion is we, we, you know, we take refuge in the Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, three jewels, you know. So we call it Buddha awakening, Dharma awakening, and

Sangha awakening. That means the third chief delusion is our failure to see each other as Buddhas and Bodhisattvas or even as a great friend, good friend. It's a famous word is, "Kalyāṇamitta." Kalyāṇamitta. It's a Sanskrit word. Mitta means friend, Kalyāṇa is good or wholesome. Wholesome friend. That means that's a teacher. So if you have a good friend, and such a good friend, **you should know** your teacher. So teacher as a good friend. Wholesome friend. Who helps you. Who inspires you. Who leads you by his or her example. So that's Kalyāṇamitta. It's **[unclear]**.

So it's even more **[unclear]**. It's, we say if there are three people traveling together on the road, one of them must be your teacher. So obviously everybody has weakness, everybody has their strength. We are, each of us, we are combination of enlightened side and unenlightened side. So enlightened side is their Buddha side, their Buddhahood or Bodhisattvahood. So that's your teacher. That part is your teacher. But we tend to dwell on negativities, so we end up relating to unwholesome side of the guy. That's why we get into trouble with people, with each other. So Nirvana is Samsara and Samsara is Nirvana. So going back to the first delusion, so it's, whatever you do in your everyday life, and that's, you go to work and whatever you do at your work. Familiar things, you see. Answering phone calls or greeting people. And depending upon the situation of your workplace or your line of work, you do familiar things which you repeat over and over again. We create monthly and year, for years. Aside from this, you know, ignoring that, there is no other way to attain enlightenment. That's a big message. You don't have to renounce that. You don't have to become a monk. You don't have to climb up the mountain. Right where you are, with your family members, what you do at home, with your family or with your friends, relatives. So salvation and emancipation is right over there. So that's the hope. That's the light of the way. That's like candles. For candles to be useful, you have to light the candle. So those are all the ingredients you have for awakening. So use whatever ingredients they are already there. And kindle your candle, which is inherent.

So if you are aware of this, then you know the real practice is putting yourself to **task**, to realize that in your everyday life. So that's why I say your ordinary, everyday life *is* the way of Buddha, and the way of Buddha is the practice of waking up. So there are plenty of opportunities for you to wake up. Doing the things that are most intimate, immediate, which you do spontaneously. And they become obvious. No one has to teach you the path. It's already there. So that's why they say, "Coming and going, coming and going, what are you doing?" Are you still deluding yourself? Are you being deluded? Or are you awake?

Of course, sometimes you have to cultivate Wisdom Eye to see yourself, to see those things, away from yourself. Being away from yourself is for, you know, to gain another perspective. Gain insight. Away from self-centred patterns of behaviour. Well, is that clear? So that's, you know, if you practice Buddhism that's how you learn to put Buddhism to **task**.

Sometimes, you know, this way is helping yourself from where you are. This can be odd, people say you are more used to, you know, seeking other help or professional help. Because we are spoiled. That's like, the end result of culture of consumerism. Some people are so helpless they just don't know what to do. What do you think?

"I think that's created for us here and, like, being brainwashed. And you can find the right way and then, then you kind of go on and say, 'Just do one thing a day.' And meanwhile you're going, 'How many times have I been taken?' And it's really nice to let go of that thought and actually be and do something you think is next to impossible like climb 144 flights, which is the CN tower, which actually anybody can do."

Can anyone else make a comment about that? Well actually, many of you must be aware that we, you know, our Spring Wind Sangha came up with these Six Right Livelihood Guidelines to combat the culture of consumerism. I mean, to which we all, you know, everyday we are falling victim to.

"I think it's very difficult for a fish to realize it's living in water until you remove it from the water. So..."

Say that again?

"I think it's very difficult for a fish to, to realize that it lives in water unless it's removed from the water in some, in some way."

Mhm. Mhm. What would you do? It's, my usual advice is this, "Take a small important step in the right direction." What could that be? I mean, from where you are. But if you just, throughout history, it's a small group of people, well right now a small group, there is, I think in Canada and in US it's, what do you call, the small group movement is, in other words, many people who are disillusioned and disappointed in organized religions and they stop going to churches or temples and some of them they get together in someone's living room. It's called a small group movement. Apparently there are so many. Of course these small groups, they have their own weaknesses too. Because, either lack of leadership or lack of organization, and lack of resources, and lack of discipline, that sometimes they meet a few times and they **filter out**. But other groups, they survive.

But there are, I think, hundreds and thousands of them. And they take matters in their own hands. And they take teachings, you know, from many spiritual paths or organized religions and, then, combine them with their own awakened thoughts about environmentalism or consumerism, you see. It's grass-roots movement. But you can take a look at, if you have not, the Six Right Livelihood Guidelines, and if you still feel powerless, helpless, and keep despairing there is something called Empowerment Practice. And Buddhism is very strong about that. They say we have to learn to help yourself with a helping hand for the world. If you do something right and you have power to influence people you associate with, do you believe that?

Three strikes to close and chanting

Dharma Talk

Teacher: Samu Sunim

Date: February 28, 2010

Location: Toronto

Event: Sunday Meditation Service

Transcriber: Zack, Toronto

Date of Transcription: April 15, 2024

Opens with three strikes and chanting

Good morning.

[poem in Korean]

On the road without food, laughing and singing, I enter all-embracing nothingness – or, I enter all-embracing oneness – at midnight under the moon.

Our religion has no words, neither words nor transmission. Actually this comes from one of the Zen records, “My religion has neither words nor transmission.” That means Buddhism does not have scriptures or bibles. And no propagation. But then, indeed, there are lots, lots of scriptures in Buddhism. But it’s not like a bible or Koran. They’re all wisdom literature. Accumulation of wisdom traditions over centuries.

This expression, “On the road without food, laughing and singing, I enter all-embracing nothingness at midnight under the moon.” So this, the reason, your reason, has been spent. Your words have given out. Even your path, even your Buddhist path, has come to an end. “Mountains are mountains, rivers are rivers.” This is one of the famous Zen sayings. “Mountains are mountains, rivers are rivers.” Or, “Males are males, male is male, female is female.” Or, “Trees are trees, grasses are grasses.” Then, what is Buddha, and what is Dharma, and what is Sangha? We took refuge in the Buddha, Dharma, Sangha. Buddha is one who is awake. So anyone who is awake can be Buddha. Well, actually, the 5% Buddha. That’s your birthright. You start out as 5% Buddha. 5% Buddha is very important, and 95% of your being, sentient being, is unimportant. So Buddhist training begins when you realize you have to go for what is important and not for, not dwelling on what is unimportant. But our old habit persists, so we tend to dwell on what is not important a lot.

Seems like when you sit in meditation, sit and spend 20 minutes or half an hour sitting in meditation, most of the time your mind is wandering. It happens all the time. But your mind wandering is unimportant. Your ability to concentrate your mind, for one minute, two minutes, or

three minutes, that's very important. That's light – your light. So if you can concentrate your mind for one or two minutes out of 20 minutes or half an hour, that's good meditation. That's what it means. That you go for what is important. You go for light. Your mind wandering is like darkness. You know what darkness means? Darkness means lack of light. It's a lack of enlightenment. Lack of wisdom. That's unimportant. So darkness is not real, it's simply lack of light.

Now, so then, when you enter – here, “on the road” means when you are in cultivation. When you are in training, that means “on the road.” So when you cultivate then mountains are not mountains, and rivers are not rivers, males are not males anymore, and females are not females. Because what we – when we see it's [projections?], you recognize natural phenomena. So mountains are mountains, rivers are rivers, males are males, females are females. That's, you recognize external objects. But when you are in training, that kind of separation or alienation or discrimination will not be tolerated. So when you are “on the road,” when you are in training, males are not males anymore, females are not females, mountains are not mountains. The discrimination is gone. Alienation is gone. Then, it's like, it's something like, Great Unknowing Mind prevails. Even they use the word, you know, in death you are awake. So it's like, you kind of check out. Then, when the grasses grow green, then you come back. Then once again mountains are mountains, rivers are rivers, and males are males, but not the same as when you recognize thoughts through your faculty of perceiving. This time you see yourself everywhere, in everything.

Recently I read about, someone told me, someone actually called in the middle of the night around 10pm and said, “Sunim, Sunim! Dalai Lama is being interviewed on CNN by Larry King Show.” But I don't have the channel (laughter). I thanked him anyways. He made a long distance call (laughter). But anyway, a day or two later I read in the news – I mean in his interview article, something like that – and his, usually that kind of interview turns to, you know, the Tibetan situation and the Chinese military occupation. And he said, well he tried to, distinguish if you turn communist regime and Chinese people, which [is of course, not wise?]. And, but he said, “I feel, I feel love for them.” Then he said, interesting was, “Sometimes I feel love, sometimes not.” That was the implication. “But we have to practice love.” That's a hard thing given his situation and the persecution of Tibetans under Chinese rule. And, you know, it's all this, terrorism or not, it's hatred, you know. Hatred, we are all poisoned. You know, our heart can be poisoned by hatred. But that, even with his people having undergone such persecution, terrible, and then still, you know, lack of hatred or absence of hatred, that's pretty remarkable.

I mean, you know in your own experience, you know. Like, it's, many of us, we have a terrible time forgiving somebody, right? Not hating somebody who you may think have done harm, you know. Who hurt you. Right? But it's, well, if we commit transgressions or defilements or violence by way of speech, and by way of speech, [unclear], like physical violence, and speech is verbal violence, and thoughts. Of course, if you commit serious violence physically, I mean, you get locked up, you know. I mean, so [unclear], so you would not do that unless you are desperate.

But then of course that's speech too sometimes, you know. But when it comes to thoughts and feelings, it's just, that's a private area. No one knows, you know, what the hell is going on in your mind, in your heart, you see. So the best thing to combat hatred, you know, or resentment, or ill feelings, is bringing out somehow good will, good heart, good [feeling?]. Everybody has good will. Wish them well. So everybody's Buddha. So that's, it takes a little empowerment to learn to relate to that person's Buddhanature with good heart, with Buddhist heart. Send good will.

It's, sometimes it happens, you know when there are a lot of earthquakes going on right now. It's, particularly you know it's, country like Haiti was so unprepared. So so many people died. Sometimes, you know, you learn about your own good will out of broken-hearted compassion, you know. So overwhelming.

Three strikes to close and chanting.

Dharma Talk

Teacher: Samu Sunim

Date: March 14, 2010

Location: Toronto

Event: Sunday Meditation Service

Transcriber: Zack, Toronto

Date of Transcription: April 16, 2024

Opens with three strikes and chanting

Good morning.

Please sit comfortably.

It's quite a season, eh? It's, but we are lucky here because we at least get snow (laughter). This is a population centre, you know? There are a lot of small [unclear]. Anyway, when in the air, they keep snows away.

[poem in Korean]

It helps you cross the water when the bridge is broken. It serves you as your companion when you return home to your village without moonlight.

Of course, these words were composed maybe a thousand years ago when there was no electricity. And bridge, or even stepping stones, were important means to cross the water. So sometimes to journey back to your home village, you have to walk all night and all day, even for several days, sometimes without moonlight. So what it means is, when things break down, when you lose hope, or when you lose business, who can help you? What is it that can give you hope? Guide your way out of your mess or out of despair?

The Buddhist answer is no one. None, except yourself. In [formal?] Buddhism, of course there's a lot of skillful means. Lot of Bodhisattvas and Buddhas, you know, they rely on their spiritual power or Dharma practice. But when you come out of high school, somehow you don't believe in superstition. You believe in science, right? That means you have to rely on your own resources. So how do you help yourself when things break down?

Traditionally there are two ways to help yourself. One is sound, the other is silence. Silence is meditation. Sound is chanting. So, well this, so you have sound, you have a voice, so you can make sound. And also you can be, you can use the power of silence.

There was a monk who was chanting all the time when he was at work or go on a journey. So one of his Dharma friends asked him, "Oh, you are chanting again?"

Then he became silent, meditative. And he said, "What's that?"

"At home with Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and all beings," was his reply. So being at home with Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and with all beings. Well, the other way of saying is that the world belongs to you. You don't have to struggle to belong to the world. The world already belongs to you.

Now, it's, meditation requires practice, cultivation, and training. It's a discipline. But many people who grew up in the culture of consumerism, they don't like discipline. In other words, they are spoiled. It's, the other day, someone called and, she used to be a member for a while when we were over at 86 Vaughan Road. So apparently, he, she came to visit us last winter. I was not here, I was in New York City. And so, she said on the phone, "Wow, the place was so big and so cold and so empty." That means it's not nice, you know. And she said, "The 86 Vaughan Road was much better, I liked that," you know. She thinks, connected to that kind of, you know, **intimate** or whatever.

Sometimes it's hard to please people, you all know that. You know, long time ago when I started out in a basement apartment, not, you know it's still there, 378 Markham Street. And that was one of the cheapest apartments I could find, it's basement. And it got, in the summer when there was a lot of rain or in April, it got flooded. So it's all this mess and of course many times I had a hard time drying them out. And then one day, actually, garden snake came in. You know, there was a mouse hole and I like nuts so, you know, mice they come in and out carrying my, my nuts. And that attracted snake, you know. So garden snake went through mouse hole and ended up in

my basement. It was kind of dark, so I almost stepped on it, you know. So full, you know, so it was lying down there taking good rest (laughter).

Anyway, and then in those days people say, you know, “Well, Sunim, well are you going to move to a bigger place?” (laughter). So eventually we got, you know actually, I was still in a basement apartment. In those days, you know, there were a lot of people who liked to become a monk overnight, you see. And also, they liked back-to-land, you know, movement and also community livings. So there were three people who wanted to live together, you see, and practice. So we got, we rented a, the first house at Clarence. And then also someone offered us some land, you know. First Markham, but Markham how it gets so, on weekend we used to go there to grocery. And in those days I had lots of time. I didn’t have to travel. But anyway, then we moved to 46 Queen in Parkdale. That was a great area. Then they said, “Why, Sunim, you should not go there, you know. There’s great areas in the cities.” But anyway, so it’s hard to please. Now I thought this was a very convenient place. But, well it’s true. You know, well they said 86 Vaughan Road was cold. And, but bigger place and colder. Well this morning, actually, I was thinking, “Should I turn the heat on or not?” (laughter). And, I didn’t want to upset the newcomers and I decided to turn the heat on. But then what happens is when warm, you doze, you know? You don’t let it [unclear], you doze. So it has to be a little, you know, cold enough, you know, so that you will be alert. So in the monastery, you have this, this, actually, saying going around, “When you are cold and hungry, you can practice much better.” You know, you don’t believe that but if you live for two or three years in the monastery, you come to believe that.

Anyway, so it’s now chanting. So you time to come to meditation, like formal meditation like Sunday morning, it’s just once a week or something like that. But most of the time you live out in the world dealing with a lot of stress. You know, stressful work. But you can chant. Now there are many different chants, but you always pick one and stay with one and not change it. If you keep changing you lose your practice, so just pick one. Also use a, you have to, you know, if you have a teacher, teacher gives you chanting. The short one is often called a mantra, the long one is called a Dharani, but there is a Zen chant. It’s because, it’s simple words, you know. Three syllable, four syllable, maybe five syllable word repeated over and over again. First, it has a very calming effect upon your mind, you see. The same words repeated over and over again, with a little melody, helps. And it’s like, you know, when you’re stressed or when you’re in distress or when you’re upset, you go and visit botanical garden. Then when you’re surrounded by flowering trees and a waterfall, it has a very calming effect. It’s something like that. So it helps you recover peace of mind, recover your peace of mind, and helps you maintain stability, which is very important. Many, you know that, many people suffer from emotional instability. And also it gives you, remarkably, it gives you energy. It helps you be energetic. And also it gives you focus. You know how easily your mind goes idle. And then you become anxious, worry about things, and even become fearful, you see. And get depressed. So chanting really helps. Now the first thing you do, you know, we call it either power chant, there are power chant, also there’s blind chant. Blind chant means you just chant. That means it’s with unknowing mind. When you practice here, particularly in Buddhist and Zen way, it’s, you practice meditation the

same thing, with unknowing mind. Not with knowing mind. You have to give a break to your knowing mind. You use knowing mind all the time. But when it comes to peace of mind, the unselfish look at things, it requires your unknowing mind. And when you deal with, you know, birth and death matter or self and others, it requires unknowing mind. Unknowing mind is transcending mind. Your knowing mind cannot transcend these things. Your knowing mind cannot deal with birth and death, all that, or self and others. It just conflicts. So unknowing mind. So it's called blind chant, and you just chant. With unknowing mind.

So I said in chanting, I often say you use the power of your own, the power of the sound of your own voice as a tool, as a liberative tool, to set your mind free from defilements or distress and delusion. In meditation, you use the power of silence as your tool to set your mind free from defilements and delusion. So chanting does help. But when you come out of high school or college or, and then when you reach, you know, become 30 years or 40 years and 50 years with a lot of social experience, then sometimes you become self-conscious, you know. It becomes extremely difficult to open your mouth and say something which you think unintelligible (laughter). Or inscrutable, you know. It's just extremely difficult.

I would think that, you know it's like, over the years I've met with quite a number of Dharma students involved in Maitreya Buddhist Seminary. And they, you know, it's a requirement that they have to learn to recite Great Compassion Dharani. They have to learn to recite it out loud. Of course when you get used to it, you can learn to recite it in all different fashions. Because chanting you can do anywhere, anytime, under almost any circumstances. You just move lips. While driving, while out on the street. While, you know, looking at birds fly, you know, or flowers bloom. Or when you're looking at the small insects crawling on the ground. It gives you joy. Joy of life. And while working, at work, even while vacuum cleaning. Of course, you can chant. Of course, when you get used to, because it's then also, you know, your body-mind takes a lot of stress. Some amount of stress is, if it is, you know, if it's a lot then your body-mind cannot handle it. But if you chant in such a way, in other words, you allow your body-mind, you allow your body-mind to listen to the sound of your own voice chanting while chanting. So sometimes your body-mind aches to listen to the sound of your own voice doing something, you know. I usually put it that way, you know. So it's, that requires awareness, you see. So it's much more like, you know, you can connect to that. So say, "Kwan seum bosal," so you become aware, your body-mind becomes aware of your voice, the sound of your voice, while chanting. "Kwan seum bosal, kwan seum bosal..."

So you can, you know like, of course you can meditate too. So that way it's, and you can combine those two things. Because, like if you do Hwadu practice, Hwadu meditation practice then, you know, if your mind is in a state of agitation, you see, then chanting is really, it's also emotionally much more healing and satisfactory, you see, chanting. So you chant, then when your mind acquires peace of mind and balance then you can meditate, walking meditations. In other words, you can work on your Hwadu, here and there. So, like, no matter how busy you are, you always have a moment, you see. Or have a coffee break or going to bathroom or, you know,

something. Or going outside or even while holding telephone, you have a moment, you practice. And it's, that you use. Sometimes it takes just a couple of seconds or even 30 seconds to do your practice, one practice. And then if you can do that, I mean you are lay people, you have no other choice (but) to do that. Because, you know, the monks, you know, they can goof off [unclear], you know, because they've got lots of time, you see. So then you realize this is a timeless practice. So just even a few seconds, you know. You know, you drop everything and you just get into the practice, then you get into that space, that timeless space. That eternal moment. That's a powerful experience, you see. And you can all do that. It just requires, you know, it's good practice. Means, in other words, you have to, you know, acquire that habit, you see. But often, you see, it's thinking, you know, "Oh I'll do that, I'll do that," but you just do it, you see. So first it helps to set, you know, okay, in the morning, you know, you see Monday through Friday, depending upon your work, you get into a routine. So while driving or while riding TTC, you can practice. And coffee break or, you know, I mean through the day you go through routines. So always here and there you will find moments when you can practice, instead of letting your mind go idle, you see. So you have to, consciously you have to acquire those habits. Until you get used to it.

Sometimes it's, "Kwan seum bosal." It's a five syllable chant. And sometimes you can chant fast or slow and in all different fashions. Like when you chant fast, sometimes, you know, when you feel anxious, you know, you have to chant fast. Then five syllable chant contracts into four syllables like, "Kwan seum bo-sal, kwan seum bo-sal, kwan seum bo-sal." See last, you know, well a year ago, you know, we had this kind of a condo. Like with [Kohei?] and [Kumun?] and I, we three people lived together so we wanted to have a little bigger, well we needed a bigger living room and three bedrooms. So we got that in Chinatown. In Chinatown, it's very crowded. I mean, they are used to (laughs) living in crowded, nobody complains over there. But anyway, it was a wrong place. It was a nice condo, but as Kohei finally put it, people go to Chinatown to eat not to meditate (laughter). But they had a lot of these street vendors, you know, these old ladies, you know. And one old lady, she was peeling these Gingko nuts. This is, when you, I don't know if you know Gingko nuts, it's stinky smelling, actually. But she was steady **doing the** chanting, you know. Was very impressive chanting, constant chanting. And it's very humble work but she just didn't feel it that way, you know. Does not matter if the, the street is very noisy, but she is chanting there. No one can disturb her, you see. You know, steady work, peeling and pulling.

So just try that. First, you know, as I said, blind chant. Just, you do it with unknowing mind. Also it's, unknowing mind, since you're so trained, like, looking for meaning, you know. I mean, let's say you have this attitude, unless you know, you have to tell me, if you read it somewhere, in the life of Buddha there's this very famous thing. This man, he was struck with a poisoned arrow. So he's dying. But he's demanding, instead of having the arrow pulled out from his body and the treatment he thinks, "Who shot this arrow?" So he has to find out who did it. And how long is this series of questions. But the most urgent thing is you have to get that poison pulled out of

your body before it spreads further out, you see. So, just you know, you live and you're alive right here and right now. So all your past, all your future is right here, in this moment, you know. It's, I have this, I look at this, you know, internet, and I see this thing says, "Hi Samu, what are you doing now?" (laughs). We have that too right?

"Yahoo mail?" (laughter)

So are you awake? Or are you daydreaming, you know? Are you helping? Or are you, you know...

So chant. That's how you learn to help yourself. No matter what happens, you can always help yourself. No authority, nothing can prevent you from helping yourself.

Three strikes to close and chanting.

Dharma Talk

Teacher: Samu Sunim

Date: March 21, 2010

Location: Toronto

Event: Sunday Meditation Service

Transcriber: Zack, Toronto

Date of Transcription: April 17, 2024

Opens with three strikes and chanting

Good morning.

Spring has formally arrived, because we celebrated the spring equinox yesterday.

[poem in Korean]

On the road without any food or wine, laughing and singing. Midnight under the moon, I enter nothingness or I enter vast emptiness.

This is a monastic expression of Zen training or realization of one's Buddhahood. Now listen to this. "All my life, I've enjoyed no power of concentrations." Sounds familiar? (laughter) "Bobbing in and out of melodrama and obstacles, blown by the wind of Karma." That sounds very familiar, right? That's layman's, layman's experience of Zen training in the marketplace. So, I repeat. "Here, on the road." In the Zen expression, "On the road," means in the midst of cultivation. That's their reference, "On the road." On the road of the way of Buddha. "On the road without any food or wine, laughing and singing. Midnight under the moon." This guy must

have been practicing deep into the night, so, “midnight under the moon, I enter vast emptiness.” He or she becomes completely at one, at home in the universe. Nothing less, nothing more. Now this layman’s experience is, he said, “I laugh. All my life, I’ve enjoyed no power of concentration. No power of concentrations. Bobbing in and out of my obstacles and melodrama, blown by the wind of my Karma.” You get that (laughs), you can even recite that. Of course, this is understatement. Typical, coming from a layman. Understatement. You like understatement, coming from underdogs, right?

Now, whatever you do with your Buddhist practice, in other words, whatever you do with Buddhism, it is practice and cultivation. It’s, you know, whether you do **hapjang** practice, joining your hands together, bringing together your enlightened side and unenlightened side or liberated side, unliberated side together, or doing prostrations. Actually, I highly recommend, even members don’t do that, when you come to temple. You usually do three prostrations with a true and sincere heart. Or you can do a little bit more, even more. Better still, performing seven prostrations. It’s surrendering your body-mind everything, everything. Your likings and dislikings, and angers and upsets, attachments. You just surrender everything, so that your body-mind becomes free for cultivation, for meditation practice. Unburden yourself. So it’s, it’s a devotional exercise or a little practice of dismantling of your ego, which is a very important practice. Seven prostrations are better. But if you’re usually with the Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, so three prostrations, seven prostrations, and 15 prostrations, and 36 prostrations. If you do seven prostrations, you can easily go to 15 and then from 15 to 36. No big deal, does not take too much time. You can do it, you know, in 5 minutes. Or 6 or 7 minutes. But not too fast, not too slow. And then, after prostrations your body-mind is centred more easily for meditation practice. It’s a devotional exercise, which you need.

And even, you are leaving your apartment, leaving your home early Sunday morning on a day like this to go to temple for practice, that becomes practice. You’re waking up early enough on Sunday morning to prepare yourself to come to temple. That’s also practice. That’s cultivation. To prepare your mind. For something noble, for something liberating. For something higher than yourself. Your desires. Your attachments. And also meditation, and chanting, and singing. And everything becomes practice. Practice and cultivation.

There’s three kinds of this practice. First one is to discover your Buddha within. That’s the practice of waking up. So Buddha, the Buddha within, Buddha inherent in each of you, it’s waking up. Buddha speech, Buddha acts, Buddha thoughts. It’s all about waking up. Waking up from your defilements, waking up from your delusions, waking up from your laziness, waking up from your procrastinating habits or excuses. So, waking up in enlightenment.

And number two is honouring the tradition. This Buddhist tradition. The Buddhist tradition is wisdom and compassion. Honouring the tradition of wisdom and compassion, love and wisdom, peace and happiness. So honouring practice is, you become living embodiments, living

embodiments of the tradition in your generation, in our generation. So living embodiment of wisdom and compassion, and peace and happiness, for the sake of the world. For happiness of all beings.

And finally, the third thing is, we call it Bodhisattva practice. Which is, we usually read this, “The Way of the Bodhisattva.” That’s, in your everyday life, you become, you serve as a vehicle for all that comes with the Bodhisattva journey. That’s like, to become the raft for those that are desiring light, says that. And to serve as a boat for those who wish to cross the water. That’s in the olden times, you see. And actually they, it was, you know, people get stranded when there’s a lot of downpour or heavy rains, you see. Then you build some strong, like a stone bridge. And some monks, some laypeople, they undertake such a public project. I mean, these days governments do that but, you know, it’s a pretty big undertaking. It takes, sometimes they devote years to build a bridge for the sake of people. And another thing is to plant tree, you know. So that the travellers in the summer, they would (be) able to take rest, to take break, under shade of the tree branches. So that’s like social work, you know. And that’s, and then become a good medicine for those who are sick. So it’s, but I mean, given your situation, you do your best. Sharing. Even sharing your simple things, sharing your love, sharing what you have, not clinging to your belongings so much.

And also, you know, like, when you join your Dharma brothers and sisters to sit together in silence to develop message, you know, social message for enlightenment, for peace and happiness. To develop good wish for our **city**, you know. So that’s what some people call solidarity.

And also when you sit, but as I say in Zen, in this meditation, you never close your eyes, unless you have some good reason. But usually we never close our eyes. Because if you are, I know some people sit with their eyes closed, but then you become subject to daydreaming. Daydreaming is not meditation. That’s not cultivation. And some people, some people do that, you know. Some people who are stressed out, you see. They just like to come and relax. That’s okay. But, well, first if it is more **pressing**, you know, to help yourself, to feel yourself, that I am **understand**, you can come and help yourself. But also remember, even while helping yourself, you do so with a helping hand for the world, you see. So that you become a better person. And so that people whom you come in contact with, they could benefit from your presence. Like, you are, this person is sincere in helping. You know how it is if you, you know, dealing with people who are insincere and unhelpful, you know. If you run a business you may have such experience, right?

So now, again, this poem, you know. “Bobbing in and out of your melodrama and obstacles, blown by the wind of your Karma.” But here, you know, out in the world, in the world of Secular Buddhism, things change all the time. So, you know, the six Right Livelihood guidelines, which our Spring Wind Sangha came up with, you can get a copy if you want, downstairs, the last one,

the sixth one, is simply accept change. Accept change. You know, change is opportunity. So then, accept your opportunity. That means you can take advantage, not just accept, you can take advantage of the change, of the opportunity. So in that regard, you know, you people deeply involved in worldly life, it's very fortunate that way. Because there are opportunities all around to better yourself. So you become even an agent for change, for the better and more stable world. The Buddhist practice is very strong about that. That means you can always, no matter what happens in your life, you can always help yourself. Only if you stop complaining. Even like, in other words, it's accept change is, you know, the favourable opportunities and unfavourable opportunities. So you can take advantage of unfavourable opportunities, you see. You have to turn it around. Turn it around to your advantage. That's your, like, most counter-clockwise strategies. When you get used to seeing things in a certain way. But in changing times, in troubled times, that does not work. Some people, you must have experienced it, going through this recession period. You have to come **out and test** new ways of thinking, new ways of seeing things.

If you read some Zen books, it has pretty good indications. It's that, something like, well these days a lot of people, they are very disillusioned with so-called "World Religions" in more than one way. Of course, molesting minors is a crime, you know. It's very ignoble. But then, look at those violence. Most of the violence, a lot of violence, actually originates from, you know, religious people. Or could be originated from their, you know, Koran or bible, you know. But I don't know how they misinterpret, how they interpret it, you know. They can do it this way and that way, you see. Stretch, farfetched it, to justify, you know, their aim.

So it's, well sometimes I jokingly say, you know, well in the US our temple directors, for them there's, all of a sudden, you know, more interest in Buddhism. And why is this so? Then I've read some comments about these religious scandals. Buddhism is, in terms of numbers, there aren't many Buddhists around. So we have not had, we have not had any major scandals yet (laughter). Maybe that's why. And another thing is, well they think, you know, if you read these comments, some readers, no hesitation, they say all religions are evil. But maybe they think Buddhism is the less evil (laughter). So they go for less evil. So certainly, also, well we don't have an almighty God to blame, or you know, all that. Whatever it is, you have to be accountable, you have to take responsibility, and learn to help yourself. So, you know, which is in a sense good. For other religions too. It's, waking up is mutual, you know. So we have to share waking up, and taking advantage of all these situations in the right direction.

Three strikes to close and chanting.

Teacher: Samu Sunim

Date: April 11, 2010

Location: Toronto

Event: UNKNOWN

Transcriber: Sunim Tr Kusa

Date of transcription:

[Korean chant]

Good Morning. Please sit comfortably

[Korean]

Mountains, rivers, and the great earth completely reveal the true body, the dharma body, of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

That is, in spring, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas put on spring colour to reveal their true body of Dharma. In summertime, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, they put on the summer colour, green and verdieux(?), in order to reveal their true body of Dharma. In fall, they put autumnal colour to reveal their true body of Dharma. And in winter, they put on the winter colour, naked or snowy landscape, in order to reveal their true body of Dharma.

Now if you want to know the path on the mountain, you must be the one who comes and goes on it. That is pretty self evident. All Buddhist practice follows this example. So you have to do it yourself, with a helping hand for the world. That is what meditation practice is about. That is what concentration ... That is what prostrations and chanting or even breathing or reciting the sutras are all about. To help yourself with a helping hand for the world.

There is this teaching in the Mahayana tradition. "Precious is human life, being in the human body. Precious is your encounter with the way of Buddha. Precious is your undertaking the Buddhist journey as a Bodhisattva." More that you all know. The preciousness of your own birth in the human body, that is human being.

You all celebrate your birthday, right? Every year. But we say you don't really know how precious your human life is until you realize, until you fully grasp the importance of your encounter with the Way of a Buddha. Then having encountered the Way of a Buddha, it is just aspiration, intention to become a Bodhisattva or to follow the Buddhist path. So it would just end up as an intention. And still you can squander your life. So we say, you don't really fully grasp or appreciate the importance, the significance, of your encounter with the Way of a Buddha until you realize the importance of your undertaking the Buddhist journey as a Bodhisattva.

Now, speaking of your celebration of your own birthday, which you do every year. I have lived more than a year! (Laughs) Partly because I missed celebrating my birthday while studying so many years up in the mountains. That is, you know, time becomes different over there. So I am just sometimes trying to catch up! But in Theravada Buddhist countries in Southeast Asia, for instance in Sri Lanka, the way Buddhists there celebrate their birthday is, when their birthday approaches, the person who is celebrating his or her own birthday visits a temple and consults with a priest there. Then they send out invitations to their friends and relatives to show up, to come to temple on his birthday, to celebrate his birthday. So when his friends and relatives show up to celebrate his or her birthday, then they sit around, in front of the altar, and then they pass around a long string. Each of them, they hold a part of the string that means we are an interrelated whole. We are in kinship with each other.

So this is a big Buddhist teaching. Sometimes I say, Life is One in which we all participate. Life after life. Over long period of time. That is Buddhist journey. So it means how we are interrelated, how we are in kinship with each other. It is like being aboard an express train. You cannot just get out. We are all together here. Good or bad.

Then the priest comes and gives Dharma talk. So such is the extent over there which the person celebrating his or her own birthday tries to provide an opportunity of encountering the Dharma, encountering the Way of a Buddha, with friends and relatives. And after that of course he can invite his friends to some restaurant and partake in banquet or meal and have a little or couple of glasses of wine. That is OK, too.

A lot of time when we have membership meeting, twice a year. I organize and hold membership meetings to find out how they are doing with Buddhist teachings, how they have been successful or miserably failing, or whether they are “closet” Buddhists, or you know. Have you heard of the word “nightside” Buddhists? There is such a thing as nightside Buddhists. Nightside Buddhists is these Buddhists they would not come to temple or belong to an organized Buddhist group, but they have a strong sympathy for Buddhism. Sometimes I hear if I have to choose, I choose Buddhism, but sometimes I don’t end up choosing one. And then when they at night, they read their favourite Buddhist books, bedside books, to sleep. That is called bedside, nightside Buddhists. So there are different kind of Buddhists, you see. And since we don’t have many “cradle” Buddhists, but cradle Buddhists are coming along too. They are called “Dharma brats.” So scholars and these people they use different languages to, you know, find out how different Buddhists are shaping and relating to the larger Buddhist movement which is very much still in its making. So you can figure that out yourself. Some of you come and you show up once a year for Buddha’s Birthday celebration, so I like to share this with you, so you are also included.

So then, speaking of membership meeting, there are a couple of people, you see, we don’t actually ask when people, some people take precepts, we don’t ask them to completely abstain from alcoholic drinks. A couple of glasses is alright, but if you drink too much you become a nuisance and could do harm to your health and implications become growing and growing. So in moderation.

Now, then finally, it's still, there's this thing called Bodhicitta. You know trying to take the Buddha's journey is a Bodhicitta ... Bodhicitta means, a thought of enlightenment. A thought of enlightenment or the presence of a thought of enlightenment is called Bodhicitta. We just recited, "I go for refuge to Buddha and resolve with all beings I will cultivate a heart of enlightenment." That is Bodhicitta. This is, in Buddhist practice, this is very important.

There is this thing called relative Bodhicitta and absolute Bodhicitta. Relative has two aspects. One is like aspiration. You have an aspiration, so you arouse a thought of enlightenment to become a Bodhisattva in order to save all beings, going life after life, with intention.

But then, after that it should be followed by Bodhicitta of application. You actually engage going beyond your intention. You see, intention or aspiration is good, but you have to apply, you have to practice. That is called Bodhicitta of application. You actually engage in the path, either coming to temple, practicing meditation, and doing Dharma. All with intention to provide active help for beings, all beings, first beings close to you.

And then, but still, Bodhisattvas, a Bodhisattva, would combine their personal practice and cultivation with helping all beings with their striving for their own enlightenment. They wouldn't see any difference between those two. So they devote, actually they give their life to helping beings. Not go right away you see. Whether you could be householder or husband or wife or parent or in your professions, you know.

And then the final realization is, well this is still the world of knowing mind. It is, someone put it, some teacher put it this way a long time ago. Still people it is hard to grasp arousing a thought of enlightenment is something like ... There is this story taught. A teacher and disciple, they would be traveling together. This was way back, 500 or 600 years ago. They all relied upon [???] you know when they traveled in those days. So they usually carry heavy loads for their supplies or whatever. So they trudge along hills and passes and mountains. So they agreed to teach, you know. When you are Bodhicitta, a heart of enlightenment prevails, you go ahead of me. Never mind who is teacher and who is disciple. So when you have exalted thoughts, then you are the teacher, so you go ahead. But when you come up with selfish thoughts, like, "Oh this is too much, helping is serious," then when you come up with selfish thoughts, then you come, you walk behind me. You change place. So that is the way they decide. Well you teach yourself, putting yourself in there. It is summer time, it is hot and muggy, carrying all this big load uphill, along the path, and you get tired, and you like to take a break. And, "I really hate it!" Then you know that is selfish thoughts. You just a couple of thoughts of helping yourself, saving yourself. But then when you come up with exalted thoughts, "Well if I feel this way, then how about the other people, in even worse situations?!" And when you seize upon this thought, then you come up with great compassion.

So exalted thoughts, that is Bodhisattva. Simply put it. Sometimes you become Bodhisattva and sometimes you become just a selfish human being. So that is why they say, "Awakened, sentient

beings become Buddhas. And deluded, Buddhas become sentient beings.” So you are stumbling along, but the main thing is that you are stumbling along. You don’t retrogress. Don’t go back to your old bad habits. You struggle, but you stumble, but you go forth.

So then, eventually you come up with unknowing mind. There is no self, no others, no birth, no death, no sentient beings, no Buddhas! Your knowing mind, your rational mind, your intelligence, cannot penetrate that. It takes your unknowing mind, transcending mind to penetrate that. No birth, no death, no self, no others. The barrier comes down. And then no sentient beings, no Buddhas.

That is you know, we have this Song of Meditation. Full enlightenment is always available in the beginner’s mind, in the beginner’s mind, the mind of a pure heart.

Then, sometimes when you come to temple, when you hear that, “Oh, that makes sense.” And then when you go home, then you are back with your sentient being’s desires and all that grief, you see.

Beginner’s mind, maintaining this beginner’s mind with unknowing mind, but even though, since you are not monastics, you know ... The monastics they practice renunciation as value, but you cannot renounce the world. You would be in trouble right away. So you practice non-renunciation as value, so you are non-renunciate. That is called “Earthly” Bodhisattva. So you become Earthly Bodhisattva. So when you go home and struggle with all these familiar things, but still you don’t lose your faith in yourself, in your Buddha within, Buddha in you. You are still 5% Buddha. So then you work with your 5% Buddha. You go forward! And then sometimes it takes, speaking of exalted thoughts, sometimes it takes seconds, and you lose it in a second, too. And then if you don’t retrogress, if you learn to go forward through constant practice, then you become 25% Buddha. That is very good, you know, if you become 25%. That is invincible situation. Then you don’t worry about it. You go straight forward. And then eventually you become 50% Buddha. Then you are really invincible. You don’t have to worry, you don’t have to become 100% Buddha, 50% Buddha is good enough.

That is called, if you wish, if you want to know the path on the mountain, you should be the one who comes and goes on it, you see. So you are not troubled by coming and going because you know the path, through constant practice. And that is called Earthly Bodhisattva.

One Strike and chanting to close.

[Chanting]

Dharma Talk

Teacher: Samu Sunim

Date: April 18, 2010

Location: Toronto

Event: Sunday Meditation Service

Transcriber: Zack, Toronto

Date of Transcription: September 09, 2024

Opens with three strikes and chanting

Good morning.

Please sit comfortably.

[poem in Korean]

The great way has no gate. Therefore, the thousand byways are the path.

So the great way, having no particular gate, that means the great way is always open. To everyone, to all. So you can enter the great way right from where you are. So that means where you are you have your own path to enter the great way.

Now, when the spring wind enters the gate, the thousand or the ten thousand flowers put out their shoots.

When the spring wind enters the gate, or the great way, then the ten thousand flowers, in other words, all the potential Buddhas, they blossom. They realize their Buddhahood.

In Mahayana Buddhism and in Zen, everything, now here everything is also dharma. It's with a small "d". Spelling is the same. But when you use the capital D-h-a-m-m-a, that means, that's usually the teachings of the Buddha or the discipline, the practice, and cultivation. But with a small "d", the same spelling means things, all things. So in the Heart Sutra, both words are used, you see. You say, "je-bob-gong-sang," [Korean]. They say, all dharmas, like all things, are empty.

And everything is reduced to mind. They say mind is Buddha. And also everything originates from mind. So, it's like mind is creative, so to speak. Mind is originator of all things.

Now, there are these five skandhas, these five, like things, five things. The word skandha means, I'm sure some of you know about this, it translates to aggregates or heaps. Sometimes I use the word group of five. So these five aggregates or five components of what make up your, there are, these five components or five aggregates, they make up the human individual. Your personalities.

So the five are, the first one is called rūpa, form. That's body composition. So it's called, that's called Buddharūpa. It's form, constitution. So all forms are rūpa. And then the rest of four is feelings, vedanā, and then perception, saṃjñā, and then volitional factors, like impulse, volitional factors called saṃskāra, and then finally vijñāna, consciousness. So these feelings, perception, and volitional factors, and consciousness, they're called mind. So it's basically, the five skandhas is body-mind. So often we say mind, that includes body too. Short for body-mind.

So now, well you know in the Heart Sutra, form is emptiness. And then the same is true of the rest. So feelings are emptiness, and perceptions are emptiness, and volitional factors are emptiness, and so forth. So now, interesting thing, so that's what make up, you know, a human individual. And now there's this thing called, this is called actually upādānakkhandhā. Then there's something called, you know, desire and craving that attaches itself to one of the skandhas, you see. Particularly the, you know, feelings, perceptions, and volitional factors, and consciousness.

So in other words, they become means to your pleasurable pursuits or experiences, so that you could have fun, you know. So that everybody's seeking fun, you know. More fun the better. Then soon you realize they don't last very long, you know. You like to have it last, you know. But short-lived is also fun, you know. So people get adapted.

Now, so that's called aggregates of attachments. So in other words, you know, your craving and your desire turn these things as objects of your desire, of your selfish craving. Then what happens is, now, like all compounded phenomena, they have what the Buddhists call, have three marks. Three lakṣaṇa or trilakṣaṇa. These three marks are, they are impermanent. And they don't have any abiding self or no-self. Or in Buddhism, you know like, in five skandha section, there is no reference to, like eternal soul or something like that. But it's, in Buddhism, you know, Buddhists think that's, it's common but mistaken identity, you see.

So it's like, feelings, perceptions, and volitional factors, and consciousness, so they subject, they become subject to these three marks of all beings. They're impermanent, they don't have any permanent abiding self, and then if you don't realize that then as a result you suffer, you know. And that's your curse after having fun, you know. And then, but if you realize that, then, oh, they are empty, they don't last forever, you see. Then you enjoy Nirvana. So that means you have peace of mind, because they're empty, you see.

So, it's this thing that emptiness and consciousness. Here consciousness, if I say awareness, you become aware these things are empty. There, you know, it's a seed of Bodhi is born, you know. It's something like when you realize that, then awakened heart is born. So in other words you awaken to your true nature. To the true nature of your being. In other words, your Buddhahood, your Buddha-nature. Then, if you can do that then you become five percent Buddha. I mean, five percent Buddha is there all along, you see. Like, but they were there potentially. And we say all beings are originally Buddhas, but they are there as potential, you see. You have to discover it and realize it, you know.

Then, when you discover it, oh, they are empty, you know. Even suffering is empty, you see. Then, you have finally you have peace of mind. You know, after so much fun and so much curse, I'm alright, right? Relief, great relief. Then that's peace of mind. And then, then you have, you know, cultivate love and compassion, you know. Not only for yourself, but for others as well. Then right away you become 25% Buddha, you know. You like that, right? So, that's big jump, right? You were just having your 5% not good enough, you know, right? It's love and compassion is born, right?

So it's like, that means these five skandhas empty, you know. The reason why they are called empty is, well I mean, structurally they are not found. They don't last, you see. So, I mean they, in other words, another realization they are, they seem to be there, but they keep changing, you see. They intermingle, they intermingle with each other, and made and remade, and born and reborn, then go on through there. So that's called emptiness. But then awareness, you see, where interrelated is whole, is, that's another awakening, you know. So emptiness, you see. That's, the Buddhist philosophy uses that emptiness in this context, you see. Because there's no lasting permanent entity. You constantly go through change.

But now, there's a sentient mind, but there's something called Buddha-mind. So Buddha-mind, mind, and sentient mind, taking care of your sentient mind, you see. So in that process, love and compassion is born, you see. So you become 25% Buddha. And then you set out on your journey, called the Buddhist journey. That's like, taking precepts is one thing. Like I'll be having, this morning, the information and orientation meeting. So you go on Buddhist journey called Bodhicitta, awakened heart. That's important. And sometimes I say with helping hand, with love and compassion. That includes yourself, you see. You don't hate yourself. You know, hating yourself you cannot love and have compassion for others, that's for sure.

So it means that we are all interrelated, so you are there in this interrelated whole. You don't disappear. So non-self means you are empty, but just that delusion there is something empty, you know. What would happen to me when I die, when I check out, you see. But as an interrelated whole you survive, you know. So you have to include it in this interrelated whole instead of excluding, you see. Right? Like, so it's all in one, one in all situation, you see. That's much more

interesting. That's much more, you know, all embracing thing, right? Instead of segregating and then say, oh, my body decomposes and dies and, you know, all that.

So then, through cultivation, through cultivation and then, it's, you trust yourself, your Buddha-mind, awakened heart, you see. And then you finally reach what we call non-sliding state, you know. You don't go back to, you know, to catch the fun you missed, you see. But there are different funs. I mean this is also fun too, you see. Like cultivating yourself, and loving others, and volunteering yourself, right? With extended helping hand, you know.

So, then when you reach that stage it's called, like, Bodhisattva. You become one of these many Bodhisattvas specializing in your special qualities that you make easily available for peace of the world and happiness of all beings. Then you become 50% Buddha. And the rest 50% you don't have to worry about it. So 50% Buddha is just good enough.

So, what do you think? And, you know, after 50% Buddha is, people anxious, I have to be perfect Buddha. And that's when you started deluded, another delusion. So just, 50% Buddha is just good enough.

Then, you know, from then on it's called no-mind stage, you know. No-mind stage. You know, things, you're just around, things or the nature take its course. Okay.

Three strikes and chanting to close.

Dharma Talk

Teacher: Samu Sunim

Date: April 25, 2010

Location: Toronto

Event: Sunday Meditation Service

Transcriber: Zack, Toronto

Date of Transcription: September 10, 2024

Opens with three strikes and chanting

Good morning.

Please get comfortable.

[poem in Korean]

From under your heels, a great light shines. To see what is right and not do it is a lack of courage.

Now the first verse, “From under your heels.” We have a sign on the landing on the way downstairs to the basement. It’s watch under your step. Watch where you take your step.

If you visit some monasteries in Asia, in Korea, in Japan, or China, you would see this plate saying that. The message is, watch under your step or watch where you take your step, is what are you doing right now. Are you still daydreaming or licking your past wounds? Or neglecting your principles and duties? So what are you doing? Are you awake?

So, “From under your heels.” So right here, right now, doing just this. If you are peasant, if you are farmer, then you just pick the hoe and learn to till the land. And if you’re artist, then you know what to do. So whatever you are seeking, it’s always available with you. In other words, nothing is lacking with your being at this moment.

So, in other words, you always look far away for truth. For emancipation. For enlightenment. While whatever you are seeking is always available there. Right near you, right with you, right inside you. It’s always within, not without. So you look far away, for truth or emancipation, in vain.

There is this story. So finally, spring has arrived. On days like this we say spring is here, but it is still unspring-like. So we are somewhere between winter and spring. So usually you go through

that transitional rituals, right? So this fellow, he was tired. He was getting tired of waiting for spring to come. So impatient, he set out to find spring himself instead of waiting. So he went all around. In the mountains, and in deep snow, and everywhere. So, unable to find spring, he finally came home tired. Having wasted so many pairs of sandals. Straw sandals. So when he sat down on his porch, there the palm tree in his garden, in his yard, on the piece of palm branches, there he saw the blossoms coming out. So spring was right there, at home.

So, from under your heels, so right where you are. Everything begins from where you are. You know, things don't begin from where you're not. So if you look far away, or if you keep daydreaming, or if you expect something, something will happen, anticipating, that's like you are looking for things where you are not.

So right from where you are, you take charge of things. Then right there, doing whatever you are doing in your ordinary, everyday life, great light shines. There you discover and that's, always the truth prevails from where you are when you take charge of things.

Here, taking charge of things means you become your own master. Not looking for saviour, you see. You become your own saviour. That's what the Buddhist message is all about. Right?

Well you look at, you say now the second verse. Now, to see what is right, you can see what is right, and you can see it, you know, what is wrong or where you go wrong.

You sit up. You're still young, right? Sit up, sit up. Don't stretch your legs out. When you stretch your dirty legs out in front of your teacher, that's great insult. (Laughs) Well, I know, it's okay. But sometimes you like to stretch, eh? When sitting becomes difficult. But you learn to be patient. Use a little discipline.

And, so to see what is right and not do it is lack of courage. Here, lack of courage could be lack of willpower, or lack of determination, or lack of perseverance. You know that, you know. You say to yourself, you know, you like to take care of yourself. Not necessarily physically or materially, well that you know already, right? But you like to relate to some larger picture that would make your life more meaningful. That make your life more happy, you know. I mean, happy means not only you become happy, but people you associate with, people, you know, who are close to you. And, you know, when you are happy, you also learn to make them happy, you see. That's, we, you know, we are interrelated whole. So that means when you become a little less selfish, or you become more generous and sharing, then you spread happiness. And justice. And that's where you seek peace and happiness, for all of us. And you learn to do it locally, at first at home, in your neighbourhood, or where you work. Right?

So, to see what is right but not do it, that often happens, you see. Either due to lack of willpower, you know. You say, you know, okay I'll do these things. But you don't carry it out. Due to lack of willpower, due to lack of determination and perseverance. Well you know that. You know the situation, right? When you look at yourself. When you look within.

Like, coming to temple on Sunday morning is one thing. When you come to temple for meditation, say Sunday morning for public meditation service, you don't just do it for yourself. Initially you did, you know, I just come for yourself. But what happens is, you know, we are doing it together, you know. You may not know this person sitting next to you, but together we develop a social message. It's a social awakening. You know, first you come for purification and, or stress reduction, or peace of mind, or ethical awakening. But the end result, we do it together. Why are you doing together? There's social significance there. So we develop message. So like, something like non-violent social change or something like that.

So in other words, you are doing something beneficial to yourself personally, but also beneficial to everybody. Particularly, you know, people who are close to you. People you come in contact with regularly. Do you see that? That's the social message we're developing here. To become a true person.

So it's, so that's, a little discipline helps. You know, like patience or perseverance. You see, a little discipline is, as I often say, you know, when you sit, whether in chair or, you know, if you cannot sit on mat and cushion you can sit in chair. And this is learning to help yourself. It's different, like, praying to somebody for help. So learning to help yourself with a helping hand for the world always involves some kind of a little self discipline. It's like acquiring good habits, you know. So good habit well established becomes not only beneficial to you, but it becomes beneficial to others you associate with.

So you learn to, you know it's, this thing is, you take it up, take it up, you know, like discipline or self help with helping hand for the world. You take it upon yourself and you promise yourself, so I'll do this to help myself and to help your family, to help your friends, to help your coworkers. So whether it's recycling. There are lots of things. But you do something locally. You cannot do everything, but something which you can handle. Which you could be capable, you know. And then you promise to yourself, I'll do this.

And then, you know, try to carry out. Apply it, you know. Personally, at home, and also socially. Then it takes a little, you know, perseverance. And patience. And willpower. And courage, to do it. And then, it's not promising to yourself and then coming up with willpower to do it. It's a process you learn to grow up and become mature. We say become Buddha, Bodhisattva.

And then also, sometimes you stumble, you know. Sometimes you, on a, on a day like this, you know. You don't like to get up. You like to stay in bed, you know. Until 11:00 or something, until noon. Why do you think that, you know, at our temple in Chicago we have this person. Actually, he learned a little discipline, you know. Well he was altar boy when he was young for big Catholic church. Well there, they, you know, but then after he left that, apparently, he didn't have a great experience of that, but anyway. And then he came the other way, you see.

So when he first came to take introductory meditation course and become a member, he made a point. Sunim, you know, I have to stay in bed. Particularly on weekends, sometimes during the weekdays, too. You know, he had, he was a chartered accountant, so he has his own time for his work, you see. So he cannot, you know, he does not get up until 11:00 am.

So one day when I called him, I didn't know. Also, he may have told me, but I didn't take it very seriously. I called him at 10:00 and woke him up. He was so upset. But anyway, he gradually disciplined himself and now he always shows up. He never misses a Sunday morning service. He would always show up 9:30 or 9:20.

And now I'm trying to do, he has been a member more than 10 years very seriously. But he has not been around for membership sitting, like Wednesday evening. So I'm trying to get him to come to Wednesday evening sitting, but he comes and he said that's my dance hour. He's learning tango, you know, Wednesday evenings. And then, since I said it, he takes it a little more seriously now. So I said, well, okay well, you can change, you know, your, you know, tango lesson out or something like that. So while I was there, he showed up actually, you know, Wednesday evening. That's for the first time in his ten years of membership. But then after he left, I was told he stopped coming for Wednesday evening sitting.

So anyway, so you can, you know, it's, to see what is right and not do it, it's lack of courage. That's why I said, when you promise to yourself, of course you can break your promise. But then you, you know, you amend yourself. You make amend and then learn to go forward with your promise. That's how you learn to live, right? Instead of betraying yourself, you say, well I betrayed. Okay betray, but then you repent. You repent, and stumbling, and then learn to move forward. Right?

So that's important, you see. Like this guy, he did that, actually, at the Sunday morning service. So, but that's like, anything. That's, you know, when you have some kind of, establish some kind of principles, you see. Well the Buddhist vow or something like that. So I'll do this. Then you stay with it. That's like, what you call a marginal light, you see. And then you stumble, but learn to go, move forward. Slowly, but steady, you know.

So you promise to yourself and not to betray yourself. You can betray everybody, but if you betray yourself then, perhaps, no salvation. So while stumbling, sometimes you fall and then you go, you know, by and then regret and all that, but then you have to learn to pick up yourself and go forward, right? Children do that, right?

Children sometimes, I don't know, these days they are carried in the, like, English pram carriage. But in the old times, you know, that's when I was growing up, you know, in the Korean countryside, the mom carrying baby on her back, you know, and then carrying this big bundle on head and then go to market. And then five year old and six year old and seven year old, they have to, you know, follow her mom to the market carrying something. And it's hard, and they don't like to do that. And then they sit down, and then, you know, and then cry out, you see. But then, they don't like to lose their mom. Mom is going far away, mom does not look back. So then cry, and then pick up, and then try to catch up with mom, you see. Right? So they learn that.

And then, you, you go through that stage, right? Sometimes you don't like to then, no! No I won't do it! Standing in the corner. But then, you talk to the, well, you know, like, oh, I should not betray myself. I can betray the whole world, but not myself. The truth is here. My Buddhahood is here. So I have to learn to take care of my Buddhahood, you see.

So there, how you start out as 5% Buddha and then 25% Buddha, and eventually you reach that valley of, say, non-retrogression. You don't retrogress anymore. No sliding back.

Three strikes and chanting to close.

Teacher: Samu Sunim

Date: June 27, 2010

Location: Toronto

Event: UNKNOWN

Transcriber: Kusa

Date of transcription:

[Korean chant]

Good morning.

[Korean]

Inside, nothing to attain.

Outside, nothing to seek.

[Korean]

Above, no Buddhas.

Below, no sentient beings

The first gatha, the first verse, “Inside, nothing to attain. Outside, nothing to seek.” This sums up Zen practice or Zen culture.

There are three sanskrit and pali words meaning enlightenment or emancipation or release. One you know well. It’s Nirvana, which literally means extinction. In the scripture it says the end of suffering, the end of suffering or the end of pain. That is in the four noble truths, the first truth of suffering or, basically, unsatisfactoriness. Some scholars argue that the English word unsatisfactoriness comes closer to the original Sanskrit word Duhkha. But usually it is known, Duhkha, you know, pain or suffering. So, the end of pain or the end of suffering or the end of unsatisfactoriness. That is Nirvana.

The other one is, also you know, Bodhi. For instance in the Heart Sutra, “Anuttara samyak sambodhi.” Bodhi is usually enlightenment or sometimes translated as wisdom, but here, if you add sam, ‘s’ ‘a’ ‘m’, sambodhi means complete enlightenment. So that means ordinary bodhi is incomplete enlightenment, if there is such a thing as incomplete enlightenment. So sambodhi, to emphasize complete enlightenment.

Then another word is called Moksha. Hindus also use the same word, Moksha. It is emancipation or release. Here release means release from Samsara. Release from repeated rebirth or, anyways, the suffering one undergoes through transmigration.

So there are, of course, when Buddhism moved to China, Japan, and Korea, they kind of over the centuries, they built what I might call culture of enlightenment, culture of Buddhism. And in the Buddhist sub-culture in the west, actually, there is, you can see that there are so many books on Buddhism or interpreting Buddhism in the light of modern predicament or psychology and all that. So if you read these, clearly there are many authors, they try to apply Buddhist teachings or Buddhist wisdom to today's life, to the current situation. So in that process they are creating new Buddhist culture or culture of enlightenment. It comes out in a number of ways. Some of them, you know, like in pop songs, you have Nirvana band. There are a number of Samsara and Nirvana. These words are used quite freely. In several US cities you see a Karma Cafe. You go to Karma Cafe and, you know, sipping ice, you know, coffee and cooling yourself, and they feel cool, and this kind of culture at Karma Cafe. It depends upon you whether you go there and build your own bad karma or good karma.

So but here, and then of course is the other thing is, the other Enlightenment, specifically in the context of Zen training, is always called [nosa nosajin??] is no birth, no death. That appears many times. Sometimes it is short, like no birth, which means neither birth nor death. Also in the verse it is no Buddhas, no sentient beings. It is frequently used.

I arrived back here on Thursday, and that evening was the last class of five consecutive Thursday evening introductory meditation course. Usually in the last class, at the end of the last class, I ask people, first I like them to introduce, well you know sometimes people they really don't know who, to help them make short acquaintance we ask them to introduce themselves, give their name in full and their line of work and how they found out about the temple. Often of course many people find out about meditation class on the internet, but also equally many people they find out just passing through. We are so visible you see. So either they are on foot or live in neighbourhood or they commute, riding street car, or just they drop by. So they notice. Sometimes it takes quite a few years to make up their mind and come for a visit. But it helps sometimes, it takes time for them to sit in and then which you may call integration period. And then showed up and then I tell them to complain, because it is better to complain in front of me instead of complaining when they get home. And also how was it, how hard, or, you know, how difficult is it? And one thinks training like this comes down to finding out all about yourself, actually. How impatient you are, how easily your mind wanders around, and how difficult it is to focus and concentrate your mind? It is pretty common. And then in the process, if you stay through and bear it, you gain insight, too. What this is all about.

And then one person, who is a psychologist, well he knows a lot about meditation already, he said. His remark is, "You know, a lot of people relate to the nowness of Buddhist teachings. It's this present moment and how to concentrate, you see." There is a lot about that. There are a lot of books about that, too. Some authors make big bucks by writing skillfully, you know, and their books sell pretty good. But now one misunderstanding is, of course you know, there are so many people, particularly many people what sometimes they like it or not or, for one reason or another, they do multitasking. They have to train themselves to not just one thing at a time, you know, many things at one time. The society demands that. And also many people they suffer from

attention deficiency syndrome. It is widely known. Even in middle school and high school, kids they cannot concentrate their mind. They are very poor focusing and concentrating. And another thing is, it is typical of this society we are going through, many people they dig up their past. Somehow they cannot break free from their past, you see. Either it could be related to their parents growing up or their spouses or from divorce or from separation. It is just very painful, and there are a lot of people they spend a lot of bucks seeking professional help about this just to break free from their past. From pain and regrets and all these things. It is almost like [??? 13:54 past pain]?

So in this regard, either you have poor concentration and you like to improve your concentration or lack of attention or it is the past related pain. And they think, they come as kind of an alternative to professional healing. I mean they come to meditation. Sometimes medical doctors recommend that. That is their understanding. But that is not what I teach. That is not the goal here. Of course they can benefit from that, definitely.

But the thing what I teach is, if you can, it's concentrate, whether you sit for twenty minutes or five minutes, so quality is better, but then having said that you know since you take so much living in the marketplace, there is a lot of stress there. So even though you stumble into this place and sit, your mind and body is already highly agitated, in an agitated space. They don't calm down right away. So it takes something. Either you do some exercise or do prostrations or chanting to settle your body-mind. But at whole, what it is, you sit, and even if it takes you a few seconds to get into, to discover this is a timeless experience. It could be few minutes or few seconds, you know. What the others say is, uh, like an eternal now. The way they express it is "neither yesterday, nor today, not tomorrow." Right here now. That is the eternal now. It is not this moment, space, you step into that. Well this eventually relates to no birth, no death.

That's what is in the Diamond Sutra, "without abiding anywhere." You know you can say you keep abiding, like attachment. That is why where the pain comes. You get attached to your regrets and all that. So, without abiding anywhere, let your original mind come forth. Well that is meditation. Meditation not really attached to sitting on mat and cushion, but in your everyday life. That is almost like post-enlightenment activity.

Now in early 7th century, around 620, I think it was 620, this Chinese pilgrim, he is well known. I am sure some of you may have heard of his name, Xuanzang. In those days, starting actually at probably almost the 1st century, Indian monks, they would travel with a caravan along what is known as the Silk Road. That is the highway linking East to West. So that is always, even like east side is Japanese, the city Kyoto. Kyoto was the ancient capital in those days and in Korea, Gyeongju or [??? 18:20]. And then in China, Chang'an, now it is called Xian. That was capital of Chinese Empire. And the western edge, the western end of the Chinese empire was a kind of oasis serving the travellers along the Silk Road, it's called Dunhuang. That plays, that's an outpost at the western edge of the Chinese Empire. And then if you get successful crossing the Silk Road, then of course one goes to India, the other goes to the mediterranean. So that is the east-west link. That is the famous highway.

And of course it is the highway, but the most treacherous one, too. So there are Indian monks and then, inspired by these Indian monks who came to China bringing Dharma to China and to Korea, inspired by their teachings and, these Chinese monks and some Korean monks, they risked their lives. Many of them actually they perished. You know the only ones who returned, who survived the round trip, they were only few. So they would travel along with a caravan. The caravans they were successful. You know these camels have three eye lids. That is why they use camels to cross the desert, so they could survive the desert sand storms.

So if you, that is Dunhuang, if you just pass Dunhuang, then it is a big desert. And Dunhuang is also, there is a desert called Gobi, and this one is much bigger. It's called Taklamakan Desert. There is a northern route and a southern route. And this is the first test if you have to cross this desert alive. That is the first test. And then finally you arrive in present day Pakistan and Afghanistan, and then across the Hindu Kush, forbidding mountains, and then you land in India. So you remember that about three years ago, the Taliban Islamic extremists, there was in Afghanistan, there was a huge, the largest Buddha statues which can be seen from miles and miles away with the physical eye. And there was when pilgrims arrived and when they could see way on the horizon these guideposts, these huge Buddha statues, they sighed relief. They were already almost arrived in India. In those days Indian empire included part of Afghanistan. Gandhara was over there. So they destroyed that Buddha statue.

And anyway, so he set out with his disciple and he lost actually most of his disciples and he was alone who made it back after sixteen years of study in India. And there the only thing you can see is sand dunes. It is just wind carved sand dunes. That is all you can see. And the only sign of the path is human skeletons. Of course that means death. So you have to risk death. So at least you can see that is where you have to go, because there are these bleached out bones as a kind of signposts. And then if you have enough joy, because your heart sinks when you see these bleached out bones piled up, and then these sand storms, these swirling sand storms can change the monotonous landscape right away. So you can get easily disoriented. You don't know where you are. So you get lost and if you get lost that means you die. So another thing is sword wielding bandits. So you have to survive all this to make it out.

But of course there is this kind of proverb. If you cross the desert, you don't know where you are, how far you came, and how far away is the end, there is no idea. So you can get really panicked. And then you come back to go back, and that is another way to die, too. So if you think you made it half, so when you set out, you should always think you made it half so you have to keep going, dead or alive. So that is a kind of proverb, which was later picked up by Zen teachers who used it. Like in this context of Zen training you never know where the goal is, so you stop thinking about it, but you never go back, you have to proceed dead or alive.

So, anyways, such was the ... and then Xuanzang made it. Then also the forbidding cliffs and high mountains. Not only that, the rising temperature in the desert can play tricks on your eyes. There you can go through a psychology and if you fail to overcome then you die from there, too.

So there are many dangers there. But anyway, and you know, Xuanzang, he was not with a caravan. He was just with a team of his disciples. And of course he got counselled before he set out. He visited different Indian monks who made it, he got tips. But even then you know, but then he made it back.

Anyway my talk is about Mogao Cave. You may have heard of it. It is about 12 miles, northwest, not too far from Dunhuang, the oasis. Over here, this mile long of cliffs, and it drops about 100 feet down to the river bed. Of course, I have never visited there. Being Buddhist monk I often see all these Buddhas and the artwork. I am sure if you go to the Royal Ontario museum you can see one or two of the Gandhara art or some from this Dunhuang. It is called Dunhuang cave, but more accurately Dunhuang is just the name of oasis. It is called Mogao, which is a Chinese word. Mogao means, in Buddhism it means peerless or unequaled. You see the highest form of Bodhi is Anuttara samyak sambodhi. So anuttara means unequaled or the highest or peerless. It is, this word is also, also this namo tassa bhagavato, namo tassa bhagavato arahato samma sambuddhassa. So it a superlative that they use.

There starting anywhere from 4th century going all the way to the 17th century, so that would be like, sometime like almost a period of 1500 years, the artists they carved more then 800 grottos, sandstone, working from one generation after another generation, with such devotion. And it is marvellous. It is a gallery of grottos and, all scholars, they marvel it. And there they created, not just a ... Well Buddhism was the predominant religion along the Silk Road, that's called Central Asia. All these small kingdoms, they simply perished over the years, buried under sandstone and they were excavated recently. And there is this music called the Silk Road, composed by a famous Japanese composer who visited and spent many years, so inspired by this silk road. He composed some music and he also put out, well, now it is DVD, some videos. You can watch the videos. It is very inspiring, how they, you know, were there and then just perished and were rediscovered through excavation. And there, there was also a cosmopolitan culture prevailed there. Of course, Indian, Chinese, and many Central Asian, and Persian, and all that. East and West. These were like from anywhere from 4th century through 17th century. So it is like if you go to Toronto or New York it is like a cosmopolitan culture, but even way, way back then, this east-west culture exchange was taking place. There was Christianity there, Manichaeism, Zoroastrianism, and, later on, was Islamism. Of course Islam invaded. They were all there. So if you look at these artworks, it is all exchangeable ideas and they were all expressed there, portrayed there in visual art.

And so from there the culture, was like, they say, 1,000 Buddhas. That means 1,000 Buddhas, of course all beings are Buddhas, whether you are yellow, black, or red, or caucasian. All beings are Buddhas. That is the cosmopolitan Buddhist ideal, plurality. And so while, if you visit Buddhist temple in Korean, there is a shrine enshrining 3,000 Buddhas. 1,000 Buddhas in the past, 1,000 Buddhas in the present, 1,000 Buddhas in the future. So it is all embracing. While it is in a sense Buddhism is well fitted for multi-cultural or cosmopolitan culture. But having said that, as you know, of the last three years I have been trying to take a foothold or toehold in Manhattan, and there I was going around looking for properties. There was one property in which I was

interested. This was West 54th Street, between 10th and 9th avenue. I visited a place about eight or nine times, in the morning, in the evening, at night, during the daytime, to check out. But if you go there you can approach it from different directions depending upon on where you get off of the subway, because it is served by a number of subways. You can get off at Columbus circle and walk three long blocks this way, and one short block. And of course it is in Manhattan and it is such densely populated, you know. Even one space is like [laughs], but there are a lot of different shops. Of course there are all kinds of restaurants, all kinds of eateries, and drinking places, and nails, and all kinds. It is almost like Xuanzang crossing the desert, the rising heat. It is all tempting you, you see.

So there, you need a really, you know, courage. Finally, you know, going through all these temptations and not falling victim to one of them. And then finally reaching the Buddhist temple. I mean it is one thing to say your advice, but find out if pause is not good enough. Or find out if drinking a big glass of water is not good enough for your stomach. Or just pause and think if taking a deep breath is not good enough. So it is quite a thing, to arrive at a Buddhist temple for meditation safely. Every corner, everywhere you turn there are temptations. They are all there, all competing with each other to gain your attention, to draw you in. Not only that, but there are hawkers. They can pull you in.

Anyways, “Inside, nothing to gain. Outside, nothing to seek. Above, no Buddhas. Below, no Sentient Beings.” With that you sit. In other words, you see that enlightened or awakened sentient beings become Buddhas. Unawakened or deluded Buddhas become sentient beings. You don’t just sit and meditate in Zen meditation. But, of course, if you have higher standard or higher aspiration, then you have to sit in meditation with an awakened heart. So meditation practice with or without awakened heart makes a big difference. So, awakened heart is that “Inside, nothing to gain. Outside, nothing to seek. Above, no Buddhas. Below, no Sentient Beings.” Without abiding anywhere, let my original mind come forth. And there you sit, even for one minute or two minutes or three minutes.

One strike to close and chanting.

Teacher: Samu Sunim

Date: August 22, 2010

Location: Toronto

Event: UNKNOWN

Transcriber: Kusa

Date of transcription:

[Korean chant]

Opens with three strikes and chanting
Good Morning. Please sit comfortably

[Korean]

*Though a Buddha eye looks, it does not see it.
One sound, and he forgot all he knew.*

Now a Buddha eye looks, but it does not see it. That means even though a Buddha eye looks, it does not pass any judgment. It sees no discrimination.

One sound, and he forgot all he knew. This comes from a story of this monk. He was training, he was in training for many years, and he thought he was not making any progress in his training, so he was very disappointed in himself. So he became quite hopeless. So then he took advice. He sought advice from a senior monk, and this senior monk told him, "Stop worrying about it." So he took this advice seriously and traveled, and then ended up with a very humble task, work assignment given to him. Sweeping the temple stairs and yard. So he would do that everyday, with no mind. In other words, finally he parted with his seeking mind, that making progress or not making progress. So in other words, he attained the very remarkable stage of hopelessness.

So one day while sweeping the stairs, a pebble stone struck the bamboo and it made a POP sound. There, he forgot all he knew. In other words, just at the single stroke of the sound of a striking the bamboo, at the sound of a stone striking the bamboo, he unlearned all he had learned. All he had learned.

Right now, I just came from New York City. There is a lot of debate going on, locally and nationally, in that country. Tolerance or lack of tolerance, or everybody has a, should enjoy basic rights and, all that. So it is, we say, all beings are Buddhas. That means everyone was born and endowed with Buddha-nature. Which I call everyone is a five percent Buddha. Five percent Buddha is Buddha. So that's like everyone should enjoy basic human rights. But certain societies still struggle with tolerance issue when it comes to certain things. So a Buddha eye looks but does not see, does not discriminate. And so right now we are, different factors of American

society is trying to unlearn what they have picked up, possibly wrongfully, after all these years of civil rights movement.

Now, it often happens, what is sometimes most familiar with us, always, it seems, eludes us in everyday life. That is why in Buddhism, and in Zen in particular, it points out, look and watch what's available right in front of your nose. Watch where you take a step. Watch under your feet. I even give you these guidelines, the four qualities of everyday Seon experience, of everyday Zen experience. Intimate, Immediate. Everyday, you are very familiar with your daily routines, things you do everyday, things that are intimate and immediate, which you do spontaneously. You don't think about it. It's very familiar. So it's part and parcel of your being or your style of life. And it's obvious. It's a self-knowledge. No one has to tell you that. So it is intimate, immediate, which you do spontaneously, and it becomes obvious. In Zen literature it is put this way, "Adjusting your pillow in the middle of the night." That's nice. But more graphically, sometimes I say, "You go and have a good bowel movement. If you still don't get it, you better seek a good outhouse to do your bowel movement. It's intimate, immediate, spontaneous, obvious. You would know it right away with your bones and blood vessels."

Now there was this monk. His name was Yong-un. It means clouds on the high pass. There is this line, "When clouds, even clouds stop at high pass while passing through it." But I have been visiting Mexico. Mexico, the country, is filled with high passes. Like seven thousand feet. Even Mexico City, the capital of the country, is on a high plateau, right? What is it? Like five thousand feet? (Toan: I don't remember.) Over sea level or altitude. So anyways, this Monk, he was just called Cloud. So this Cloud, one day, all of a sudden, to everybody's surprise, he declared, "I gained my deepest experience, I gained my deepest insight, when I saw the peach blossoms bloom." And some people didn't believe that. Or, you know, when spring comes, peach blossoms bloom, of itself, and we see it many times.

So they raised a questions about this monk's, you know, declaration. And he said, with a Buddhist smile, ... You know, a Buddhist smile does not show teeth. That is a Buddhist smile. So with a Buddhist smile, he says, "This power, free from selfish craving," so in other words, this power, that's his Dharma power that is completely free from selfish craving, "brought," or as he saw it, bringing peach blossoms, "peaches blooming." So what is this power free from selfish craving?

Here, as I often say, Buddhism is here to stay in the West, in Canada, and in Toronto. And that means Buddhism has to be put to the task in your ever day life. So apply Buddhism. So whatever you learn, coming here, from practicing meditation and Buddhism and also through silent meditation, whatever you absorb, you don't just learn values. In meditation you don't learn and study Buddhism with a rational mind. It's just like overnight, a lot of rain fell down and wetting ground. Then all these plants, weeds, they get soaked with rain water. And they grow flowers. It's something like that. In silence, through meditation and concentration, all your pores open up, absorbing the values, which you take home and put them to task. That is applied Buddhism. Now, what do you think?

The most important thing in Buddhism is prajna, wisdom. Conventional wisdom is also good, practically, but this one is transcendent wisdom that comes from your unknowing mind, undiscriminating mind. So something you see and experience, it's simple, clear, and wise.

Three strikes to close and chanting.

Teacher: Samu Sunim

Date: August 29, 2010

Location: Toronto

Event: UNKNOWN

Transcriber: Sunim Kusa

Date of transcription:

[Korean chant]

Morning. Please sit comfortably

[Korean]

*The streams flow swiftly, but do not carry away the moon.
Where there are no Buddhas, you try to make Buddhas.*

Now the first dharma verse, "The streams flow swiftly, but they do not carry away the moon." Here the moon refers to your Buddha within, your Buddha-nature, inherent. So everybody has Buddha-nature, the first proof of that is that everyone has a true and sincere heart.

So in your everyday life, you go through vicissitudes of life, ups and downs, dealing with distractions, your wandering mind, and all these stressful events. In spite of all that, your Dharma moon, your Buddha-nature remains intact. Buddhism says a lot about this, using different analogies, metaphorical or otherwise. One is, "Jewel in the mud." Everyone has a jewel which is your Buddha-nature, but it is covered with mud. Even though it is covered with mud, with your delusions and defilements, the quality remains the same. Like in the Heart Sutra, it is not defiled nor immaculate, does not increase nor decrease, it is not born nor annihilated, it is always there.

What happens is we miss, we always miss, what is most familiar, what is most close by. Somehow, it keeps eluding us. Why?

It's something like, what's available right in front of your nose, you see the last. Over and over again, Buddhism points this out, using a number of references. Just watch under your feet. Never look far away for truth or for emancipation. But in spite of numerous admonitions, we keep

missing what is most obvious, what is most apparent, and what is most real. That is in Buddhism why we don't pray to somebody. We meditate to find out what is available with us, what is already here. Our jewel never comes from outside our gate.

The second Dharma verse, "Where there are no Buddhas, you try to make Buddhas." Some people find it hard to understand, because they are usually making Buddhas where there are no Buddhas. That's a mission field. Go to far away lands, to teach your religion to, to feed your religion on barbarians. But here, where there are no Buddhas, you are trying to make Buddhas. Even Buddhas can become obstacle. It is just like a finger pointing to the moon, no more or no less. You have to discover your own Buddha.

So the ultimate goal of Buddhist teachings is, the Buddhaland, is where neither Buddhas nor sentient beings. There are sentient beings, so you have Buddhas. When there are no sentient beings, you don't need Buddhas. So the ultimate goal is called Prajnaparamita, perfection of wisdom or nirvana or perfect peace or emancipation and enlightenment. It's called, realizing your unborn nature. The famous Buddhist teachings about no birth, no death. You may struggle with your indeterminate self, but it is nothing permanent.

The thing is, what I am trying, what Buddhist teachers are doing, is like hauling water to sell by the river.

Or, the teaching is live your life happily, peacefully, quietly, without leaving a trace. Without making a mess of it. So your everyday life, your ordinary everyday life, is the Way of a Buddha. So then what is the Way of a Buddha in your everyday life? There is the practice of waking up in your everyday life. The practice is waking up from being wasteful, from being angry, from always looking for things, seeking, from ceasing from seeking mind. Not leaving trace.

Something like some people, you have to work very hard when you come for the retreat. You have to work very hard to accomplish nothing, to accomplish peace, to realize peace within and without. We say, even the birds flying in the sky, they know how to fly and journey without leaving trace, without polluting. And fishes swimming in the ocean, they know how to swim without leaving any trace. But we end up leaving a lot of trace. That is why we end up with constantly arguing, fighting, getting upset and angry. It's very pitiable. You cannot live quietly and happily with a helping hand for each other. Why? You have to look within deep, and listen to others deep, too.

These days I spend much time in New York City, in Manhattan. And I live in a small apartment. This place is like a palace. It is so spacious. In Manhattan even a small space is how, you know, how crowded the place is. But also the city, the mayor has been working very hard to green the city. So there is they call the High Line. It is a park. There is this railroad tracks that once served bringing the freight. There are these different piers, and they dock and unload and these freight trains carry them to inner city. And now they have been there for, I don't know how many years, but they very skillfully, they wonderfully turned it into a park, all the railroad tracks. It is

amazing. And it covers something like thirty more blocks. So it is quite a, it must have been quite an undertaking. Some genius, architects and gardeners, and they somehow recreated, you know a green park, also with the arts for New Yorkers. It is kind of amazing. So you can destroy nature and then recreate it so skillfully.

Well, when I first came to North America, that is where I came. I spent six months in the summer of 1967. Actually, I arrived in August in 1967, and in those days it is right in the midst of anti-Vietnamese war, and counterculture, and flower generation, and all that, and civil rights movement. I learned to panhandle there. And that's in front of Columbia university. Somehow I thought academics or liberals would be more sympathetic to someone like me, doing a kind of mendicant trip. So we have a member, she was a member of our Chicago temple. It is Carol Becker. She used to be the head of the Art Institute of Chicago. And a number of years ago, maybe three years ago or so, she moved to Columbia, and now she is Dean or the head of the School of Art at Columbia. So she said, "Well Sunim, you started out your life in the United States at Columbia University, so now you should come and visit us."

But now over there, I also get my brunch. The place where I stay, right next to the apartment building, is a church, Episcopalian. That's an Anglican Church. And Monday through Saturday they serve meals to the homeless, and brunch from 10:30-12:30, so there we go and get our meals. It's pretty good. And we don't have many members, so the rent is expensive. So we try hard to reduce our expenses. So, I walk a lot. It is a good city to walk, because one thing they did, most of the streets are one way. So I think that reduces accidents, you see. You just go one way. And also for pedestrians, you don't have to always look both ways. So you can tell on red light, when there is no traffic, then you stay close to the street on red light. But there once was a waiting, not crossing, non New Yorker. So that way you can just keep walking, because it is pretty safe when there is no traffic, you just cross. It is a one way. So you can walk. The subway is expensive. It is \$2.50 for one ride. So I walk a lot. Sometimes I start out at 7:30, if I have thirty blocks to walk. Avenues are a little long. So you really, while on foot, not even riding TTC, you learn a lot, neighbourhoods and all that.

Even in that city, where people say either you hate it or love it, you learn to appreciate how people are trying to make a living and pursue their happiness, enjoy, and even have fun.

Well there is this line, "On my way, I didn't notice. But on my way out, I now notice the flowers." It is actually part of a koan's poem, "On my way to the temple, I didn't notice. But on my way out, I now notice the flowers blooming."

In Avatamsaka sutra they teach we are all flowers trying to bloom in many different colours, according to different seasons.

1 Strike, chant

Dharma Talk

Teacher: Samu Sunim

Date: October 24, 2010

Location: Toronto

Event: Sunday Meditation Service

Transcriber: Kusa

Date of Transcription:

Opens with three strikes and chanting

Morning. Please sit comfortably

[Korean]

*Sitting in the ground or in the environment of water and moon,
Sitting in the practice ground or the environment of water and moon,
Cultivating, practicing, or engaging in myriad activities
Like flowers in the sky.*

There are three types of practitioners. The first one is called Śrāvaka or Śrāvakayana, hearers, one who hears, one who keeps the hearing, other people's teachings or sermons. The second type is called Pratyeka Buddha, is usually translated into English as Solitary Buddha. The best description would be like closet buddhists. You keep your Buddhism to yourself and not sharing it widely, even with your friends or family members sometimes. And the last type is Bodhisattva. You know Bodhisattva. Bodhisattva makes specialized in helping others. So Bodhisattvas they help themselves by helping others. In other words, helping others make them cultivate themselves or perfect their cultivation.

So the first type, Śrāvakas, hearers, and traditionally they hear the four noble truths and the eightfold path, and they go around shopping, gathering more information about the four noble truths and the eightfold paths, different interpretations from different teachers, different traditions. So some of us we do that, we just go around, like spiritual shopping, spiritual marketplace, and they really enjoy doing that. Maybe for a while you can do that, to land with a path which you can develop affinity with. That's important. But you cannot go around shopping forever. That would be pretty miserable still.

And the second type is obvious. This tradition says, they wake up, relying on the twelve links of dependent origination, but they keep it to themselves, and they are just content with the teaching and remain in seclusion.

And the Bodhisattvas, they make vow and they keep the vow, and they follow the six paramitas, the six perfections. I am sure some of you know the six perfections. The first one is Dana paramita, may I be generous and helpful. And the second one is may I be pure and virtuous, Sila paramita.

OK, now, back to the gatha which I recited. Sitting, it could be standing or walking, sitting or standing or walking, in the environment, in the ground, or in the temple. It could be in Toronto or in Canada or in the universe. We travel a lot. Even in this global village you don't have to travel. If you go on the internet it is without borders, so you surf endlessly, from east and west, north and south.

So this ground of water and moon. What is this water and moon? In Mahayana Buddhism, in Zen in particular, this water and moon is often used as teaching device. And the Kwanseum Bosal is called the Water and Moon Kwanseum Bosal. Kwanseum Bosal sitting one leg with the posture of royal ease by the riverside.

Now water, as you know, water is engaged in constant movement of flowing. It has to flow, that is the nature of water. If the water stops flowing, what happens? It stinks. So constantly flowing, flowing constantly, water constantly purifies itself, you know that. Even when it gets flooded, when there is a lot of heavy rain, when it is inundated, flooded, big body of muddy water flows swiftly, and thereby, it is still purification process. By simply flowing it drops the impurities, and then it slows down and water clears up.

And it is not just flowing and purifying itself, but while flowing it benefits others. It provides water for irrigation, for the farmers, and children can swim, and the cattle they can drink, and a host of other things, just by flowing makes itself available with a helping hand, helping others. And eventually it empties itself into the ocean, into the sea, in order to become the ocean, to be completely at home in the universe. That is called emancipation.

So while practicing you are sitting or standing or walking, in the [jayeon Korean], in the environment of water and moon. Moon too, it's while journeying in the vast empty sky, it illuminates. It provides light and illumination for night travellers. There is this well known line in a Zen poem, "It helps you get home at night and it helps you get home to cross the water when there is no bridge."

Now the second line is almost self-evident. So you practice while walking or sitting or standing in this environment of water and moon. You perform myriad acts, myriad acts like flowers in the sky. Now flowers in the sky that is something that is non-existent. So what it means is that you do all these things, even answering phone calls, taking your children to school, or greeting your neighbours, while doing all these things, small things and bigger things, without trace, with invisible hand, while engaging yourself in this myriad activities, you still do it invisibly, without trace. That means without evil involved. Selflessly. That means wholeheartedly.

This line comes from one of the scriptures. “Good in the beginning, good in the middle, and good at the end.” So whatever you do in your life, it is simple, but it’s a, we say, “Make one thought into an eternity.” One thought of enlightenment, turn it into eternity.

So, good in the beginning, good in the middle, good at the end. It requires great practice. It means integrity, stability. Someone like that you can relate to, you can benefit from such a person. Mahatma Gandhi made a big thing about that. It means, what kind of means are you going to use to achieve your end, to accomplish your purpose. In order to achieve good ends, the means you employ must be good ones. If you engage wrongful means, then there could not be good ends. The very good example is people or politicians who employ violent means to achieve peace. But we know that we are still paying for that in Iraq and in Afghanistan. Pre-emptive strikes, a new word coined. You cannot use violent means to achieve peace, even though you can achieve peace, that is not the right kind of peace. It is not right. It is deeply flawed peace. So we pay for that. The whole world pays for that. It’s got to be non-violent means. It’s got to be rightful means.

So in your life, the same thing, in the lives of individuals. So watch yourself. Look within. Talk to your Buddha in yourself.

This line comes from Zen master Chao Chou. “If the wrong person follows the right path, the right path becomes wrong by the wrong person pursuing it. If the right person follows wrong path, the wrong path becomes right by the right person following it.”

Meditation practice is like that. Even just come and practice you could be daydreaming. We do that a lot. And relaxation. There is definitely a benefit with relaxation and stress reduction. There are medical benefits. But we have a higher purpose. We don’t just practice meditation. I mean there are side benefits, relaxation and stress reduction. But higher purpose is to wake up.

This Buddhism is all about wisdom and a culture of enlightenment. So, there is usually this thing, Sila, Samadhi, and Prajna. Meditation practice is based upon this threefold training. The sila, the first one, I call it ethical awakening. It is integrity. It’s got to be true person sitting in meditation. So you have to become, you have to be a true and sincere person. So that is why I sometimes say your meditation practice on Sunday mornings, if you set out for the temple to do your meditation practice, in a group, not alone, because we share and develop methods for our community, for our society. Why are we doing this, together? So to practice, your cultivation begins at the moment you start out, the moment you leave your home, to go to temple for meditation practice. That is called awakened heart. So you bring awakened heart. The first sign of awakened heart is earnest and sincere heart. Everybody has that. You can always come up with a true and sincere heart. That is the first sign you are endowed, each and everyone is endowed with Buddha nature.

So I often say you start out as a five percent Buddha. We say all beings are Buddhas. Means everyone is endowed with this five percent Buddha-hood.

So, it is a true person with a presence of awakened heart, practicing meditation, even for one minute, you can concentrate, plus awareness, pure awareness. That is why we never close our eyes in Zen meditation. It is called meditation mind, even for one minute, and two minutes, of your concentration with pure awareness, that is good meditation. The rest of your mind will be always wandering. That is understandable. You never see the sky completely free from clouds. So you cannot get rid of your stray thoughts and daydreaming until you drop dead. You are a living being, but you need sunlight in your life. The sunlight, sunlight is always there. Your Buddha nature is always there. Even if covered with cloudy skies, mind. Your Buddha nature is there, right there, in the midst of your daydreaming, in the midst of your craziness. It breaks out. The sunlight breaking through the clouds over and over again to shine. So to begin with you need a little bit of sunlight, a little bit of awareness, a little bit of enlightenment, for your life, for your everyday life, to show up, to change, to control things in the right direction.

So again, it is the right person, the true person, the right person, following the right path, wrong path, doesn't matter. That person has power to straighten up things. Such a person can see things. We call it open wisdom eye.

By the way, tomorrow each of you will be exercising your right to vote, to elect the mayor, right? Well, it is important, to exercise such a right and elect the right person to govern our great city here. And of course politicians integrity has to be good in the beginning, good in the middle, good at the end. It's quite a task. Well actually the right guy, the right guy, and also the mayor of this mega city has to learn to work with his council and with the citizens groups. Such a person must have a vision for this great city. So it is very important. If we end up with the wrong guy for four years, that will create a lot of misery.

Three strikes to close and chanting.

Teacher: Samu Sunim
Date: October 31, 2010
Location: Toronto
Event: Sunday Meditation Service
Transcriber: Kusa
Date of Transcription:

Opens with three strikes and chanting.

Morning. Please sit comfortably.

[Korean]

Your dharma practice, your cultivation, is best maintained by your earnest sincerity, by your zeal in the heart, in your heart,

[Poem continues]

Now letting go, now taking in.

There was this 8th century Zen master Mazu. He was the teacher of Baizhang, who devised the pure rules for Zen monasteries, and he is known for his famous statement, “One day of no work, one day of no meal.” Work ethic for Zen practitioners.

And then his disciple was Huangbo, who in turn was the teacher of Linji or Rinzai (Imje). So these four great masters over four generations, so under their guidance the Zen practice and Zen Buddhism flowered. So it originated from this Mazu who lived in the 8th century.

One day a monk came to visit him. So Mazu asked, “What is the purpose of your visit?” I came to seek the highest Dharma. That means I came to seek the highest truth, said the monk. Right away, Mazu shouted, “Are you crazy!? What happened to your own treasure house?!” And this poor monk, he was completely confused. “My own treasure house? I have none.” Then Mazu asked, “If you are not, if you don’t have your own treasure house, then what are you?” Actually, the original says, “What is it? What is it?”

And it is said it took this monk quite a while to realize that he already has his own treasure house. That means he doesn’t have to go around seeking one. Actually, Mazu shouted when he shouted, “What happened to your own treasure house?! Now you come to steal someone else’s treasure!”

Sometimes you do that. Now even having heard that, you know, whatever you seek is already here. Nothing lacking here with my body-mind. And this time you go around looking for the key to your own treasure house. “Do you have the keys to my treasure house?” People do that. “Where’s my key?”

On another occasion, Mazu saw a monk approaching his residence. And then he said to his attendants, “What a wonderful Buddha hall approaching our Songgwang-sa. But there’s no Buddha in it.” So when this monk came, he posed the question, “I heard you teach ‘Mind is Buddha.’ What does that mean?” Here is Mazu’s reply. “Your own mind, that has no idea what it is, is your own Buddha.”

If you are still confused, there is this beautiful line in the *Diamond Sutra*. In other words, if you are still looking for your key to the treasure house, if you still don’t get it that your own mind, your own honourable mind is Buddha, the *Diamond Sutra* says, “Without abiding anywhere, without abiding anywhere, let your Buddha mind come forth.” That’s much more straightforward, and intimate, too. What would be more intimate than this? “Without abiding anywhere, let your honourable mind, let your Buddha mind come forth.”

Buddhism is all about wisdom. Buddhism is wisdom based religion, not faith based religion. So you have to really understand, you have to get what wisdom is all about. Sometimes it is called transcendent wisdom. In the *Heart Sutra*, there is this very famous statement, “Form is emptiness.” You all must have heard about this. “Form is emptiness, and emptiness is form.” Now this form is one of the first of the five skandhas, five aggregates that make up collectively, that make up collectively the human individual. That’s each of us. These five aggregates are form, the first one is form, called *rupa*. Form, and feelings, and perceptions, and volitional factors [or...???...part?], and consciousness. These are five. Sometimes I call it group of five that make up body-mind, more specifically body-mind. But when we say form, we present the rest of the five skandhas, five aggregates. So form is empty, emptiness. That means feelings, perceptions, volitional factors, consciousness, they are emptiness, and emptiness is feelings, emptiness is perceptions, and so forth.

So form is emptiness. And your eyes see sights, your ears hear sounds, your mind makes up thoughts, so sights, sounds you hear and see, thoughts you entertain or do things with in and out, they are emptiness. But if you don’t get it, then you get stuck. That is why it is called upādāna-skandha. It’s attachment. You know you get attached. You get attached to sights, sounds, and thoughts. So when you get attached and get stuck, then you suffer.

It is something like this made more broadly. This is westerners, they understand good and evil or good and bad, because that’s your condition. Early on, in your life, you know that. What is good and what is bad. So there was this person, he told me he struggled with this, with being good, with being bad, with being evil, with being guilty, and all these things. And then he said when he came to Buddhism, he realized there is a third option, that is called [? Mujigung]. This muji, the sanskrit word is [tirana], in English is something like unmanifest or latent. So you see when

everybody pursue being good. There are a lot of teachings how to be good, not to be bad. But you try to be good, that also turn out to be bad. You can be very egotistical, you can, when you get attached to being good, I'm good, you see. Do you see that? A lot of bad things that can come out of that. And also you see, one has had a very good reputation, very righteous, against abortion, against gays, and anything, and then next thing it turns out he was gay too, secretly. So you go around, you see, so it's something wrong with trying to be good and being proud of that. And then also something is bad, what is, try to be bad, and then you end up being, feeling guilty, sometimes a life long.

So the thing is, that is why this famous statement, "Think not of being good, think not of being bad or evil. What are you right now?" This is called muji, it is emptiness. It is very close to emptiness.

So you see in your everyday life, you go, of course you get attached. That's understandable. Sometimes when something happens to people whom you really care, close, attached, you experience sorrow. And you go through grief. Completely understandable. But you cannot get stuck with, you know, being sorrowful all the time. At some point you have to let go. Grieving is OK. It's a process of healing, but you cannot be grieving forever, right? So you have to get out of it. In other words, there is emptiness. Then of course from emptiness, you cannot get stuck in emptiness, too. So you have to move on then to another form. So it has to flow. You have to circulate. You have to facilitate this ventilation system, you know, in your life, otherwise you get stuck. It could be very stifling.

So that is what Buddhist wisdom is all about. You know, people love feeling good. They get very attached to feeling good and having fun, you see. There is nothing wrong with feeling good and having fun. But if you get attached, if you get stuck with that, suffering ensues. Obviously you know that. So that is why now letting go, now taking in. That is what emptiness is about, at least on the basic level. Then finally you open your wisdom eye and see what emancipation is all about.

Back to this Zen master Mazu. Well he was getting old, like me. And then, so, he was sick. And close to death and dying. So one of his attendants came to inquire after his health and then they asked, "How are your four great elements are doing?" That's typically in our tradition. Our body is made up of four great elements. There is water element. Much of our body is made up of water. Fire element, air element, and earth element. So when they stay together, you maintain health.

It's that...so the master said, "Moon-faced Buddha, Sun-faced Buddha."

It's a poetic description. Sun-faced Buddha is daytime. Moon-faced Buddha is nighttime. So that means the passage of time. So you know night changes into daytime, daybreak. And daytime changes into nighttime. So you go through that, like seasons. So the five elements settle, and you

go through winter like a period, then spring returns, which is rebirth. So it's, it means I go through moon-faced Buddha, and sun-faced Buddha

3 Strikes, chant