Buddha Shakyamuni's Life
Teacher: Samu Sunim
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[Three strikes and chanting to open]

Good evening. This evening I'm going to talk about Buddha's life. The life of the founder of Buddhism.

First, it helps to know that Buddhism is not a revered religion. Buddhism is different from any other religion in that there is absence of any divine intervention. Buddhism was founded by a specific human being, Siddhartha Gautama, the historical Buddha. It is important to remember that Buddhism was introduced into North America at a time when the American youth, dissatisfied with the establishment, was searching for a new meaning in life. Buddhism was introduced into this country when new spiritual movement and, later on, human potential movement were in bloom, that was in the 50s and 60s. Previous to that, of course, Buddhism was introduced at the turn of the century by Japanese and Chinese immigrants. But that type of Buddhism made very little impact on American society.

Now, one of the reasons why I'm going to talk about Buddha's life is there are some parallels, although we live today some 2500 years apart from Buddha's time, there are some striking parallels between the spiritual movement today in North America and the Buddha's time. This is so partly because human predicament has remained basically the same since the Buddha's time.

Buddha was born as a son of a royal monarch. It was a small kingdom in Northern India, just below the foothills of Himalaya. So, he was born as a prince of this king, Suddhodana. So more like son of an aristocrat. So, like, in modern parlance he would be like a son of like, you know, upper middle class or upper class family. So, he was born into a society where there is abundance, affluence, and prestige. In other words, he was born into the fat society.

And in those days, there was a new spiritual movement. In other words, there was some New Age groups around. When the prince, known as Siddhartha when he was growing up, he was born as a prince so he, and he was the only son, and he was due to become an heir to the kingdom, to rule the country. It was like, you know, different clans, they got together and, you know, made a tribal nation. So, his father became very apprehensive about these New Age

groups. You know how it is, like, the kids run away looking for new values. So, he took a lot of precautions. And particularly when, you know, he doted on his son, so he provided him with a lot of toys, amenities, comforts. Like, he didn't have, like, colour television or pinball machine or, you know, whatever, but he had, you know, what was available at his time. And as he grew up, he had three residences. Like summer cottage, and winter ski resort, you know, and he had another residence during the rainy season, things like that. And he was overprotected and very sheltered, and his father made sure he always, you know, plays within the palace compound, not going out. Not coming in contact with these, you know, like, New Age group people, spiritual seekers, or anything distressing.

So, by and by, he enjoyed all these things. And he met a woman, whom he loved, and they got married and eventually they had a son. So that's what happens, you know, the normal course. Then, now no matter what, you know, whether you have all these things or not, you soon grow tired of these things. So, he became bored. Almost every night, I mean, they would stay late at night drinking. And all these entertainments, singing and dancing. So, he got bored. And this over indulgence made him sick.

Then he began to see the realities of life. The scripture describes, so he got bored, he grew tired of the palace life, palace life, so he had this Channa as his, like, in today's like, you know, he was riding in chauffeur driven car but, like, it's like horse, you know. His charioteer. So asked him to take him, you know, outside the palace to go into the villages. So that's what he did, against his father's will. And on his first outing he saw a decrepit old man. For the first time in his life he saw an old man, very decrepit. Bent in half. And he was shocked. He thought life is full of youth.

So, and on his second outing he saw someone who was very sick. Diseased man. That was also very shocking. So, he asked the Channa, "What happened to these people?" So, Channa explains to him, "Well, these are men who are ill and who grew old. In life people get sick, people grow old, and finally people die. This is the lot of all men."

So, he came back to the palace and thought about it. Apparently, there is suffering in life. So, he meditated on the nature of suffering. And he looked around in the palace life and he saw all these dancing girls and singing boys. They were hired by his father to provide pleasure. And he saw certain injustice in all this. So, in other words, he got involved with social issues. And then he learned, now, in a few years he's going to take over his father's job, doing the same thing.

Incidentally, young people in North America, today or few years ago, how they saw the same thing and rebelled against, and left home. Trying to seek new values. So, the same kind of New Age groups existed in those days. The young people who abandoned normal work schedule, normal work, and social status in pursuit of new values.

So, when he reviewed the palace life and his father's expectations, and what he would do when he became the ruler of the kingdom. When he thought about all this, he was pretty distressed. Then he looked at his own marriage. Well, he is married, he has a wife to look after, and son. That's responsibility, he cannot abandon that responsibility. So, he is well-established into household life. But inside he has this growing pain. What can he do about it?

But more than the social issues that plagued him, he was concerned. After the outings he began to realize that all human beings, you know, they, they cannot escape the impermanence. So, the suffering is tied with impermanence, impermanent nature of human life. And his father learned about this, that, his son's concerns with these philosophical issues. He's very concerned, became very apprehensive. So, one day he came over and had a talk with him. "Look here, you are born as a prince to be the ruler of this country. You're like established class, you know, you're the aristocrat, ruling class. Now I understand your concerns, but you can do it later, past middle age, when you grow old. When your son is old enough to succeed you."

Well, there is the, in Hindu view of life there are these four stages of life. First you become a student. Then you lead householder's life, fulfilling your duties as husband. Then the, Siddhartha, he argues. "How does one decide? When one is young? When one is middle aged? When one is in old age? Some die young, and he never knows the middle age. Some die during the middle age, he does not know an old age. So how can you postpone your spiritual pursuit? How can one be sure that you are going to live to be an old age?"

So, he was in such a state of mind, one day the spiritual guide the Sarva Mitra died and he was also Siddhartha's personal teacher, when he died his father was away. So, he had to attend the funeral. And the body was wrapped tightly in a piece of cloth and was carried in a wooden frame. People carried the body to the river, to the riverside. To the river that is considered to be holy. So, they dip the body in the holy water and then take it out and leave it on the bank to dry for a while. Then they pile up these funeral firewood with jigs on top. And then they sprinkle some flammable oil, and then they place the body. Then this Brahman priest comes around, recites some passage from the Veda and, with lighted torch he circumambulates the funeral fire three times, and then he set fire to the pier.

So, he watches the flame. The body burning. It's quite a smell. And he thought about it. This person who just died, he was one of the most respected personalities in the country. But when he died, he's not any different from ordinary human beings. He was just reduced down to the ashes. What happened to him? What happened to his indestructible soul? Did it rise up to the heaven with the rising smoke?

Well, he was sad. Well, he was sad because his teacher died, he was depressed. Because he himself, he couldn't give an answer. To life and death. So, he left the funeral service, he was riding home. On his way home he encountered the most unfortunate incident. There were crowd of people, they were shouting abuse, and they were throwing stones and sticks at a woman who was almost half-naked, almost naked. As she came closer, when the people saw him, they scattered. Some remained. He asked, "What has this woman done to be harassed like this?" Then one of them who remained said, "She's not a woman. She roams the streets, half-naked, babbling out some unintelligible words. So, the young boys and girls, they get scared. So, we're trying to drive her away, in order to keep the streets safe."

"So that's what you are doing. But have you asked her why she became insane? Have you tried to help her? What if she were your relative, or your mother, or your father, your brother, or your sister? Would you treat them the same way you would do to her?" And they all fell silent. So, he asked one man, "Where do you live?"

"I live not far from here."

"Could you go home and get some clothing for this woman, and also could you bring your wife or some women-folk to help her?"

"Yes, sir."

So, he, in few minutes, he brought some clothing, and his wife came along. So, Siddhartha asked his wife, "Could you help this woman to her feet and put on some clothing?"

"Yes, sir."

So, when she was covered appropriately, Siddhartha approached her and asked, "Why do you roam the streets like that? Don't you have a house, don't you have some relatives, or husband or father?"

"No, I have no home, I have nothing to live for."

"What happened? I mean, can you explain to me?"

Then she looked at him, blank-eyed. "I ran away from my parents with the man I loved. I had a son, two years old. I was expecting another. We were far away from my parents. We couldn't support ourselves. So, we're returning, we are going back to my parents. On the way, my husband got bitten up, got bitten by snake, and died. Shortly afterwards it started raining. My son, my little son, started running, calling for his father. Then this cruel vulture swooped down and dragged him away". So, saying, she choked on her words.

Siddhartha, he was not going to ask any further.

Then the woman continued. “When I finally arrived at my parents, the house burned down and my old father and mother died in the fire. And the child inside me came out dead. I just don’t know why I’m alive.”

Siddhartha couldn’t say anything to console her, aside from saying, “Well, death is not something that is not easy to overcome.”

In our Ann Arbor community here, our temple director informed me, one of the members, she’s got crazy husband, wild son, and her mother is gravely ill, and she hurt her back. Misery is around lot of people. Of course, some people are happy, too. Not for long.

So, Siddhartha, he thought, “How can one enjoy his life? How can one become happy when he knows there are so many people suffering?” So, he renounced the world. He joined the spiritual groups.

Now, I’d like to interrupt here. I’m not going through all the details. At the outset I said that it’s important to remember that Buddhism was introduced at a time when new spiritual movement was awakening in North America. Another one, another impact which Buddhism has been making or contributing to North American society, almost insidiously, is Buddhist art, through the works of art. Buddhism is rich in art tradition. Buddhists, they’re always trying to make things beautiful. That’s one thing they do. They believe very strongly in the beauty of life, making things, you know, look beautiful. Bright and clear. That’s what they call happiness.

A lot of people, they have a thing, Buddhist statues. Either in sculptures and paintings. And some are also familiar with the Buddha smile, Buddha’s secret smile. All these statues, they have the air of gentleness and serenity. They reveal the twin ideals of Buddhism, compassion and wisdom. Some statues, they are sitting statues, meditation posture, indicating Buddhism is the religion of meditation practice. You see some statues in teaching mudras, the hand postures. When people come across Buddhist statues, they get very peaceful feeling. Statue, they don’t say anything. Peace, compassion, serenity, gentleness, this is what we lack in the society today.

So going back to the story. So, he renounced the world. And, of course, there were these spiritual communities around. And there are many different communities, a wide variety of teachers, too. And some, you know, escaped from the fat society. Like today, you know, not only spiritual groups but you see, like yoga exercise, tai chi and health spas, and, you know, like trying to reduce weight or lose weight, or whatever. Trying to escape from the fat society, like health has appeared as a major religion. So, there are a lot of these yogic practices, they, you know, they would starve, they try to starve out their impurities, you know. Or even, they try to stop

breathing, you know, like Ujjayi, like that. And they would undergo, like, kind of austerities, you know. Trying to lose their weight, it's kind of, quite a thing, you know. To what extent people would go, to look healthy, to look nice, and all these things. It's secular but, you know, the underlying thing's the same thing. There's some cults, too.

So, the Buddha, the Siddhartha, he sought out contemplatives, they are called. Contemplatives. So, first he started on with them. And he started the meditation. Then, but he was not very satisfied so he left them. Then he joined, he went to Uruvela. And he decided to undergo austerities, ascetic practice. So, you see, he was leading very comfortable life. And he abandoned all that. So, he's now switching to another extreme, ascetic practice. Very severe form of austerities. So, and sometimes you would see these Buddhist statues where, you know, which would depict him just in bones and sinews. You know, beneath tightly, you know, stretched skin. So, he did these ascetic practices for five years. This is self-mortification. He thought he could release himself, he could attain release, emancipation, from suppressing, you know, the mortal body. So, he was near the brink of death.

Then he realized, "Well, body is the only one instrument through which I can attain emancipation. Without body, I mean, body houses all my consciousness, mind." When he realized that, he abandoned the ascetic practices. And he walked into the river, nearby. And then, he bathed. This is important. India is, India has warm climate. Before he went into the river, he regained his health by taking food. Upon which, at which, he was doing this ascetic practice with five ascetics. And they got pretty inspired by Siddhartha who did, you know, who did such great work at ascetic practice. Now he suddenly abandoned that and partook of the, you know, food which ordinary people, who don't do spiritual work, you know, eat. So, they felt disgusted and they left him, so, and Siddhartha, he retrogressed, you know, so we shouldn't associate with him.

So, after regaining his health he went into the river and then, getting himself in the river, he refreshed himself. And then he finds a tree and sat under tree with his back to the trunk. There he sat in meditation, and this tree later on became to be known as bodhi tree, because, as tree of enlightenment. Under this tree, he attained enlightenment.

It's getting a little hot.

[Chanting in Korean]

My intention tonight is to describe Buddha's life from his birth till he attained enlightenment. Because, it's just focusing on a man experiencing a conflict, conflicts. Everyone experiences a conflict, and how he solves it, and what kind of parallels his life presents to people living today. And the, his enlightenment and the teachings after his enlightenment, that I would not dwell on tonight. But two things need to be mentioned here.

The first thing is, the young people, say, rebelling against the society, looking for new values, is nothing new but it's very important in the spiritual development of human history. They are like working Buddhas. They renew our hope. Particularly in the context of today. So, I'd like you to reflect upon that. In a sense, they present us as an alternative, with an alternative to technological society.

Number two, in Buddhism, everyone is viewed as bodhisattvas. The Siddhartha was born as a bodhisattva. Bodhisattva means bodhi beings, like wisdom beings. So, I mentioned about the human potential movement. Everyone is a potential Buddha, in other words, future Buddha, so bodhisattva means future Buddha. So, if he, if Siddhartha, if he did that, we can do it. That's the hope. It is not that we cannot do it, it is just that we do not do it. So, if someone is doing it, we should support him, we should support her. That's also bodhisattva idea. The bodhisattvas, they even voluntarily postpone their own nirvana in order to help others attain emancipation. In order to give aid to any being, to any ailing beings.

Okay, I'll take your questions and then see what we can do. Yes.

([Unclear…])

Spiritual lessons? Well just, I mentioned about the highlights and then, you know, finally, you know, like, when he sat in meditation under bodhi tree he avoided two extremisms. One is, like, earlier he led this very comfortable life, materialism. And he abandoned that, the self-indulgence. And then he did, he led a life of, as an ascetic, and he abandoned that too. So later on, when he, you know, recollects, he says, two things to be avoided. One is, you know…

[End of recording]

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…and then, "What is enlightenment, What are his teachings after his enlightenment?" that would be another big talk but, you know. Like tonight, I'd like to concentrate on, like, the parallel developments. How he approached his conflict and how he tried to solve it.

Yes.

(You said that he felt an obligation to his wife and his child. What about those five years when he was practicing? [Unclear…])

Oh, they were living back in the palace, but he saw, it's called, it's higher Dharma. He saw, like, his obligation to suffering humanity is much bigger than, you know, looking after his own wife and child. So, like, when he attained enlightenment, if he can help all beings, I mean, like, you know, he could well compensate for, you know, neglecting his wife and child. And his wife understood that. And also, like, in Buddhism, like, time and space is endless. We have a different time concept. This life is not the only thing, you know. I mean, if you think that this life is the only thing you've got then, you know, I mean, your attitude changes, you know, you try to make the most out of this life. That's rat race.

You, yes.

([Unclear], I'm familiar with Japanese Zen and the sects Rinzai and Soto, two separate basic entities, and I was curious if there was any division between them and Korean Zen or if there was an indirect relationship.)

I come from Jogye order and, are you familiar with this Tang Dynasty Zen and Tsung Dynasty Zen in China?

([Unclear].)

Yeah. The division into Soto and Rinzai in Japan, that was development in Tsung Dynasty. Now, Jogye order stems from the Tang Dynasty so it's old form, it's directly goes back to Huineng, the sixth patriarch. So it's even before the division took place.

(Are there still similar training techniques)

It's similar to Rinzai, yeah, in training, in training method. Yes.

(Are there still monasteries in the Himalayas?)

There are, yeah. You mean in Nepal, eh? There are. Would you like to go? Well, go. Yes.

(You mentioned that, that it was, say, more divine for one to give up their quest for Nirvana in order to help others. Someone like a teacher, when would they give up the teaching in order to reach their own goal?)

Say that again, could you just repeat the last sentence?

(When would someone like a teacher give up the teaching itself in order to reach his own Nirvana?)

Well here, in Mahayana Buddhism, you know, here again the, it's non-dualism, non-dualistic approach to the Way. They become identical, you know, it's, trying to reach your own goal and trying to help others. They, you know, become identical. So in other words, trying to help, you know, it's like, self and others, that division, you know, vanishes, disappears. So that's what enlightenment is all about, that's the, you know, like, like Buddha's enlightenment, that's a, you know, full realization of universe and himself as one. So that's the whole Mahayana Buddhist philosophy, it's, it's, you know, it's constant flow, constant process. And it's, the world is, the universe is just a system of all this interrelated parts.

(So you're saying that the teaching can be a part of that reaching of Nirvana?)

No, no. It's, after Shak-, after Buddha, he attained enlightenment, he had a choice. For instance, like, he renounced world and when he attained enlightenment, he was in a state far removed from the, like, the earthly life. You know, the ambition and struggles. It happens even today, like, you know, we don't have that tradition here, but in the East, you know, people go to mountains. See that, one of the favourite themes in Buddhist painting is Shakyamuni coming out from the mountain after his enlightenment, you see. And, so some people, you know, they practice in the mountains and when they attain enlightenment, they decide to stay there. They never come out, some never come out, they just place there, you know. And we may, sometimes we may not understand why they do that, but Shakyamuni Buddha, he was in the same state. And then, well, what it say, this, the Buddha's great heart of infinite compassion prevailed. So that's why he

decides to come down and help. So then, when he made that decision, then, you know, that's the, kind of what Buddhists call *upaya*, skillful means, you know. That's what Buddhist wisdom is about. Unless you have really Wisdom Eye or wisdom, you cannot effectively employ the skillful means. So that's why there are so many teachings in Buddhism, in such diversity. If you don't understand that sometimes it, you know, can get very confused. As, you know, some teachings are apparently contradictory. But they are *upayas*, you see. They are, you know, just teaching methods. The whole universe, you know, universal, you know, world of Buddhist teachings.

Yes.

(I was, when they asked, you mentioned the, when you're answering my question, it's more along the lines of the Rinzai. Do you utilize koans technique?)

Mhm. We call it hwadu.

Any other questions? Yes.

(How would you describe the difference between the Tibetan Buddhism and the…)

Zen Buddhism? It's two different traditions. I'm not too familiar with the Tibetan Buddhist tradition so it would be presumptuous of me to say anything about, you know. If you feel affinity with Tibetan Buddhist teachings, that's fine. There are actually not only Tibetan Buddhism and Zen Buddhism, but I consider all religious teachings as like, with, I see them as with great affinity. And, like, my core religion is, you know, for instance, they are, they would be like my close friends or relatives, you see. I mean, occasionally you have, you know, bad brothers and sisters here and there who may be narrow minded, but you know. And also the important thing is people who practice what we call civil religion, you know, not necessarily with organized religion, you know.

Or what, what do you think, yeah. I think I heard, I heard there are a lot of fundamentalist groups in this town. I heard the, one of our members putting up posters. I think their posters were taken down the next day, when he came back when all the posters were taken down, ripped down.

Yes.

(What's like a normal day like that you do, like, in the day?)

At the temple?

(Yes.)

Yeah. In Ann Arbor temple we have summer training going on. So they get up at four o'clock in the morning and they practice meditation until seven. And then they have breakfast, and then some stay at the temple, some go out and do some carpentry works. Well, they do number of works. And then we have lunch at one, and then in the evening we practice seven to ten. It's, Tuesday evening we have chanting, and Wednesday we sit, Wednesday evening we sit, Thursday evening we sit, Friday evening we have a Dharma class, and Sunday afternoon we have Sunday service. So it's a little different, roughly like that.

Yes.

(Are the, the exercises and so forth that you go through considered a discipline or something to bring you closer to enlightenment?)

What exercises?

(All the prostrations, and the sitting and so forth?)

Mhm. It's, some people, they like meditation. They just like to sit quiet. That's okay, too. And, but, you know, although meditation is the focal point of Buddhist practice, but Buddhism is much more than meditation. And it's, in North America today, the Buddhist groups, I mean, some people, like, just a few aspects of Buddhist practice have been singled out and overemphasized. And, and also, people who do practice meditation, you know, unless their practice is nourished or sustained by spiritual devotion, it cannot last very long, you know. So, for a number of years I have been, we, I have been introducing this devotional practice to enrich their meditation. And also, like, when people sit, you know, I mean, sitting is alright, I mean, you feel good sitting down, you know. I mean, you get straight and, you know. But after a while, you know, your passions don't leave you that quickly, you see. The old habits come around, you see. They talk to you, you know. Like, I mean, Buddha himself, he wrestled with his mad monkey mind and running horse mind for many years, you see. I mean, that ascetic practice helped him, you know. So we do prostrations. If you do prostrations and sit down, then your sitting is much more strong. So we do number of these things. And, have you done some prostrations?

(No I haven't, but I heard a little bit about it. What I was curious about was whether those things are done as a discipline to get a person into, to be closer to enlightenment or whether they're actually a process of receiving enlightenment. But it sounds like what you're saying is it's a package deal. If one accepts all the disciplines, that is the road to enlightenment.)

Yeah, but it's still more than that. Well, I mean, they, I can explain, like, for instance, like, human beings are proud, you know. That caused a lot of problem, you know. I mean, we are, today we are so much concerned with peace and ecology. That's partly because human beings have been

proud, you know. They, you know, have been destroying things. Human beings have been very destructive. So, like, see, like, for instance, if Ronald Reagan and, I don't know what the, so the name of the head of Soviet Union, if can, you know, if they can go down on their knees and they touch their forehead on the floor doing prostrations, I think the world would become a lot different. If everybody can do that, you know.

(Are you saying it has something to do with humility?)

Well, obviously. It's, you know, I see more than…but you just do it mindfully. Spontaneously, up and down. It's called ground mind. You become the ground. You become the mother earth that supports all beings. So you touch your head, your forehead to the ground. It feels great, good, you know. And you rise up again. Huineng used the word ground mind. Zen mind, ground mind. If you can become the ground for all beings. And also, it's kind of, lot of these things, you know, meditation is with a little, meditation, I mean prostration is like a very good medicine. If you have a, you know, if you see people very closely they, you know, most people they like to crumble down or falling apart, you know. They're into pieces, you know. Like suffering from, you know, say, insomnia. If you're suffering from insomnia, from constipation, do prostrations, no problem. You would have no trouble going to sleep or, you know, having bowel movement. Or neurosis, no problem. Does, you know, does not cost you any money. I mean, if you go to psychiatrist and the whole trip, you know, swallowing medication, all that, you can get crippled. It's your choice. You have to be willing to do that. But it's, consumers habit is you would rather, you know, swallow medication and go and see a psychiatrist.

(Are there other exercises that are put into the routine that are unique?)

It's not, yeah, it's, you can call it spiritual exercise. It's part of, you know, it's integral part of, you know, meditation practice. Chanting. Chanting is very strong practice. Chanting, that's a spoken tradition while meditation is unspoken tradition. They complement each other.

(I'm curious what kind of work is done in the temple. It says in the introduction that [unclear], meditation, chanting and work, do they do farming and so forth?)

We do manual work, like gardening. Gardening work, we grow food. Well, if you are that curious why don't you bring yourself down to temple and see for yourself?

(That would be interesting.)

Yeah. It's better that way. Yes.

(Like, what is the, the idea behind, like, shave your head, wear certain clothes, stuff like that?)

Nothing much about that. They just, it's, shaving head is convenient instead of growing head, you know. Just tidy up. But it doesn't really matter whether you, you know, wear grey robes or simple work clothes. Yes.

(Could we have a prostration Zen meditation?)

You go down on your knees and touch your forehead on the floor. It's, American Indians, they understand that. They do it beautifully, you know. It's, these guys, they are used to outdoor, you know, life. And they feel very close to the land, you see. So, like, years ago, I think few years ago, I went to a Indian powwow which was held at ArtPark in Lewiston, New York state. And at the end of their powwow they, they, you know, they had this friendship dancing where they invited all the gringos, you know, the spectators to join them. And so, the people, you know, and then they would gather together and then they go back and forth and they [unclear…] on the ground, these gringos, they have never done that. They would not go, they would, I laughed. They were so reluctant to go down on their knees. But it's, well, you know, I mean, you are supported by the ground. [Unclear…] and see the ground. That is [unclear]. [Unclear…]. Yes.

([Unclear…])

Yeah concentration, mindfulness.

([Unclear…])

Oh, sure. That's, like, yeah, it's, meditation in the midst of activities is, you know, more highly placed than meditation in [unclear]. Like, so, when people get enlightened in the mountains they have to come down and test themselves in the marketplace. But as a beginner, I mean, you know, I mean, it's easier said than done, you know. I mean, you know, I mean, you can say it's [unclear…] but as a beginner it's much more difficult to do that and, so…

([Unclear…])

At given [unclear].

([Unclear…])

Right.

([Unclear…])

Mhm.

([Unclear…])

Oh, it's just living fully in the present moment. Because after all, that's the only thing you've got in your life, present moment. If there is any meaning in your life, that's in your present moment. How are you doing it? Are you mending or breaking it, or? We talk about the right livelihood. Make sure what you're doing is correct.

([Unclear…])

What do you have in mind?

([Unclear…])

Mhm.

([Unclear…])

Mhm, yeah.

([Unclear…])

Yeah. But you see, there is this element, you know, like, somewhat Zen has been misused, Zen has been popularized. There is, you know, Zen. Well they say that Zen is concentration mindfulness. Okay that's good, I'll just use that. So it's, there are a lot of books out there. Zen, the Art of Baseball Playing, Zen, you know, the Art of Cooking, all kind of, they using Zen, [unclear], okay…

([Unclear…])

Well, you have to watch out what you are doing, you know. Well, that's not, that's what I consider Zen, you know. They use, they take out just one aspect and technique, you know. That's like Western mind, you know. You can commercialize and market that.

([Unclear…])

Well there is, there is definite value to Zen communities. It's, you know, it serves as an ideal society to the outside world. So at least when you go to community or Zen community, I mean, there's no violence, people don't hate each other, and, you know, there are certain things that go with it, you know. And they support each other. And then, we try to expand that. That's called spiritual networking.

Yeah.

(Is it possible to accept this teaching and still carry on an average American life or does one have to live around the temple and go through the standard disciplines?)

That's, in a sense, large question. You know, like, Buddhism never claims an exclusive truth or, like, or Buddhism never came up with an inflexible dogma. That's very alien to Buddhist teachings. So wherever Buddhism traveled, Buddhism was transformed in order to accommodate, you know, the local culture. So now, I mean, North American culture is very unusual, you know. It's, I mean, say, can Buddhism accommodate nuclear technology? That would be interesting, you know. So it remains to be seen. Can Buddhism accommodate commercialism. There are certain things Buddhism cannot accommodate. Unless it alters its teachings radically. Well, of course, although Buddhism is gentle, the teachings are gentle, there is a radical element. Like, you know, in order to become a peaceful human being, well certain things you have to make a radical departure from, you see.

(A number of things [unclear].)

Mhm. First you have to clarify yourself, you know. Yeah.

(Are Buddhists conscientious objectors when it comes to the military, for instance?)

Well, Buddhist teachings are but, you know, like, the individuals, the individuals who practice Buddhism, you know, it's, you know, I mean, in history, the individuals, they went with war, you know, there is … And Buddhists, they have, I'm talking about the Buddhists in Asia, they have been largely apolitical. They were not very much involved in political. The recent Vietnamese scene is a very, you know, unusual thing. But the, the Buddhist countries are Westernized now and there is large conflict going on. So right now we cannot just pinpoint a type of Buddhism and then, you know, is this right or wrong. So it's, in other words, Buddhism is traveling now. Traveling with me, traveling with some Americans. It's traveling teaching, mendicant character. That has always been with Buddhism. Wander and teach, and see how can you help out people who are suffering from impermanence. In a sense, that's revolutionary, you know.

Yes.

([Unclear…] started practicing?)

Pardon?

(How did you start practicing?)

I was left an orphan. And I was wandering on the streets and one day I saw some, you know, I didn't know it was Buddhist temple. It just, you know, like, you know, Buddhist temple, which looked very peaceful. I thought it would be wonderful to live in a place like that, you know. So I went there and say, well, I would do anything if you allow me to live there, live here, you know. And then the man laughed, well this is Buddhist temple. Unless you become a Buddhist monk

you cannot live here. Well I'll become a Buddhist monk. And he laughed and said, well, if you'd like to become a great monk, well, this is just city temple, you should go to temple in the mountains. So I went to temple mountain and they sent me to other temple, and then there again they sent, so, took me some time, you know, to end up in a temple where I started out. Well that happens. Sometimes, I mean, you pick up career for very insignificant reason, you know. Well that's also the karma and…if there is good seed that is planted, it will always grow in time.

Okay, I'll take one last question if there is one. Yes.

(Do you ever have, like, conflicts, conflicts amongst each other?)

Conference?

(Conflicts.)

With whom?

(People in the temple getting angry?)

Oh, lots of them. I don't know about anger, I guess some, you know, not outburst of anger, I guess some of them on occasion, they get angry, like, and, you know, if they do a few prostrations and they get…

That's big thing, people get angry, you know. Sometimes people get angry long times, like a smouldering fire for years. This, you know, eating up their…

Okay, thank you.

Buddha's Great Renunciation
Teacher: Samu Sunim
Date: Unknown
Location: Toronto
Event: Buddha's Birthday
Transcriber: Zack, Toronto (relistened by Jisik)
Date of Transcription: August 04, 2025

[Three strikes and chanting to open]

Please make yourself comfortable.

Yesterday and today, here at the Zen Buddhist Temple Toronto we have been celebrating Buddha's birthday for two days. It's annual event. One of the kids in the neighbourhood, when she heard about that we are celebrating the birthday for two days said, Buddha has a long birthday. And this year is supposed to be two hundred, twenty-five hundred and twenty-eighth. This is something, a date which Theravada and Mahayana Buddhists agreed upon something recently. And also, the Buddha's birthday date, for instance, in Toronto, the Toronto Buddhist Federation people, they celebrate it on May the 20th, which is still coming.

And anyway, the Buddhists, they don't have a clear idea about time. It's something like some fine day, or full moon day, preferably, in May. So that's very, how they relate to Buddha's birthday. And the date is the same thing. You know, some Mahayana Buddhist countries, they still use the Buddha's, Buddha was born, I'm speaking about the Shakyamuni Buddha, about, some 3000 years ago. But about, a little more than 2500. Anyway, if you go by history that's, Buddhism is the oldest religion.

And now, speaking of time, the way Buddhists understand it is they say everything is impermanent. That would be the first thing you would hear about Buddhism, impermanence. Everything is subject to change. So, there is much lament about that. Suffering and unhappiness. Basically because of your attachments. But now, if you take up some Buddhist training and go a little deeper, then you come across this incredible truth that everything is infinite. Everything is infinite. Our life and universe, everything. Blade of grass and trees, rocks, everything's infinite. Now how is that? Now, planet Earth is undergoing crisis now. Now how about the galaxy?

So anyway, here I'd like to come back to historical time and talk about Buddha's life and Buddha's great renunciation. Now, Shakyamuni Buddha, the founder of Buddha, his name before his attaining Buddha's enlightenment was Gautama Siddhartha. Gautama was a family name or

clan name. So, his father, Suddhodana, and his mother, Maya, Suddhodana was a king of a small nation in Northern India, now in Nepal. So, they didn't have a son until late in their years, so they were greatly concerned with the heir to the throne. So finally, a son was born. So, there was great joy and celebration throughout the nation. So, they named, the king and his subjects named him Siddhartha, which means achievement. It's finally achieved. Goal is finally reached. It's like wish fulfilling, their wish is fulfilled.

Now, later on, we have some parallels here today with Buddha's life. We live in a very achievement-oriented society. So anyways, that's what Siddhartha means, it's very symbolic. Achievement. Now we'll take a look at how he lives his life, this boy who arrived into this world with achievement, so to speak, you know.

But unfortunately, eight days after he was born, his mother died. But it's a newborn baby, he does not know anything. But however, the king was, his father was greatly concerned. Now what if he finds out his mother died shortly after he was born? So, I mean, you know, he has every intention to bring him up as a fine monarch. Not only to rule his small nation but, you know, like Maharaja. Like great king, you know, conquering all the, you know, neighbouring countries. Finally, like, establishing empire. It's great ambition, political ambition.

So. he took great care. So, he provided him, from very early on he provided him with every comfort, every material comfort you can imagine. Now of course, well they didn't have a stereo, or car, or television, but given his situation, every comfort. So, under these circumstances he was brought up.

And he was 15 and 16, great comfort. For instance, like, to give you an idea, say, we complain all the time. Actually, in our age, in our technological innovation, we are born with great comfort. Cars, and stereos, and television, and, you know, these telephone, telecommunication. Such a convenience of life. And you are born with these things, with a kind of achievement. But we still complain and say, what? Wouldn't it be nice if I don't have to go to work, or get up early, or have to study. Because it is a competition, still there is competition. You have to study hard, excel, you know. I used to know the, one of my students comes from this family and his father, "Oh he excelled in this, he excelled in that." So, he went to law school, but the result was he was mentally ill.

So wouldn't it be nice that if you got everything. Don't have to work, don't have to get up, even, so early in the morning, don't have to study. And lots of money, bank deposits. And finally, say, you think it will be nice. But finally, before it said wouldn't it be nice to have a telephone, you know, instead of walking long distance just to see friend. But that was a great joy which we have lost since telephone was introduced. But now, you know, we want more. And finally, if you get

this you grow tired. You, I mean, you can watch television so much you can grow tired. Unless you become part of that machine, you know. Get hooked up, you see.

So, dissatisfaction grows. Discontent and dissatisfaction. That's what happened to Siddhartha. He was achievement-oriented, provided, you know, every, today technology does that but in his time his father was doing that to him. So, he was very bored, and dissatisfied. And, you know, his father is always concerned, and his stepmother is also concerned too, very [unclear] woman. So, they can see, you know. He looks bored, you know, the child. In the midst of all these things. Well, they did their utmost, so they couldn't understand why. Why this child is growing bored and dissatisfied, you see. Couldn't figure out. And then one day they hit upon idea. Of course, sex. Sex is lacking here. So, it's, of course, in those times people even wrote the Kama Sutra, you see. You see that, still people, you know, Westerners, they just discovered the Kama Sutra. So, of course now, you know, when you grow bored of television or this you, of course you have Playboy magazine. So, that's why Alan Watts, he used to write for Playboy and Roman Catholic Church used to advertise in the Playboy. Because you can read Playboy so much and grow tired, you see. And then from one extreme to another you can go, so Roman Catholic Church was trying to be very smart, you know. Recruiting just in time to recruit these people when they get bored. So, Kama Sutra, of course, so, you know, they filled in, you know, all the beauties in the country. So, he was surrounded, he was married now. Not only that, he was surrounded with ladies, beautiful ladies. Attendants and, like, kind of harem. I'm a little bit exaggerating there, I don't think that actually happened. So, but well he tried that for a while but still, and then tired.

So, then the time comes. There are two different traditions. When he was 29, one reliable account says. Now, he has this, he was living in all the worldly enjoyments and then he left. So, so one spring like today, he wanted to go out. You know, get fresh air. Countryside. With all these attendants and retinues. Food, and wine, and all that.

So then, there's, this is called four outings. Because in turn he goes out East gate, and West gate, Northern gate, and Southern gate. So there, for the first time in his life, can you imagine, in 29 years, he encountered this, the ill person, people who are sick. And people who are old. People who are bent and emaciated, with, full of wrinkles. It's ugly, you know. And then finally, he comes across people who are dead. Carried on a stretcher. And also funeral procession. People wailing. Sorrow. And then he realizes, you know, he was so naïve. This is the first time so how, he couldn't know, whether that thing would happen to me, to him. So, upon inquiry, he is also subject to the same fate. He is growing old indeed. He can get sick. Pain. Mourning. And finally, he can also die. He too dies. Actually, he too is dying.

And actually, he saw, like, in India, you throw out the dead person, corpse. You throw out. And they rot and decay, and you can smell it. It's such a smell. Maybe animals rotting you can stand

but human beings rotting, cannot stand it. You think you are wonderful and putting cosmetics and all that. But when you rot, well, you would not even go near to it, even though it is your mother or your father. Or your beloved, or whatever. You would not go near it. Because you cannot stand.

Now what is it, there is one Korean monk, Wonhyo, who got enlightened on this. He was on his journey to China, and then he was journeying, you know, on land. There was, a great stretch of Manchuria was deserted. So, it was dangerous. Well, those days, the people who were in search of truth, they risk their life. Today we don't do that, that's why we don't get enlightened. Or mind you, if you really believe, if you really realize that you are going to die tomorrow, everyone would come and sit down meditation so hard, and … but anyway, it's karma and samsara, no matter how much I tell you, unless you get really motivated. Sometimes people come and ask, how long does it take to get enlightened? It's, in a sense, a very silly question, but it can be serious question. And say how long does it take to become a monk, or to become a Zen master? It can take the very short time of the blinking of an eye or it can take you 200 years or 300 years. Put it that way.

So, so this monk, you know, like, there aren't temples around, it's just, you know, wilderness. So, he had to stay overnight just, you know, in the wilderness. As best as he can. So, in the middle of night, it was a hot summer, so he woke up with a great thirst. It was pitch dark, and so he was fumbling around just, you know, looking for something. Some, you know, some drink to quench his thirst, you know. You know how it is, you know, thirst is like passions, you know, when you are looking for. Very hungry or, you know. So, he came upon something, you know, some kind of water and he drank deeply. It's so cool, like ambrosia, it's so sweet. So, then he fell back asleep. And he woke up only to discover, to find, that what he drank from last night was a human skull. It was just rainwater contained in a human skull. So, upon realizing that he threw up several times, he could not stand it. And then something clicked, something dawned upon him. What is it, like, last night, in such a blissful ignorance, you know, I drank, it's like just honey water. Now I see it, I realize it, makes me sick. So, he got enlightened from that realization.

Now, so that's Gautama Siddhartha, this kind of achieved boy, you know. He, so he now finally realized these all things can happen to him and he cannot escape from them. Now, what's happening today, he's got his own problem but I'm trying to relate his problem to our problems here. Now, like Suddhodana was trying to do him, now we are safely screened from these very realities of life. Illness, and growing old, and dying, you know. I mean, if you grow old you go to old age home. It's safely kept kind of in secret from us.

Like, when I was boy, I lived in a small village. Like, if someone dies, you get to know immediately, because there is wailing. Even in the middle of the night, suddenly you wake up

listening to this wailing sound. It's such a feeling, kind of shock, to the very realities of life. It's very real. So, we all lived very close to growing old, getting sick, and dying, you know. If people see, you see all the people all around. Bent, you know, losing, you know, about toothless and, you know, all crinkled, wrinkled grandmas and grandfathers. But they still have sometimes beautiful smile, so you learn to relate them from early childhood. And you know how it is? People get sick, you know. I mean, there is no hospitals, you have to learn to tend them. Now people go to hospital, you don't get to see them, you see. Even the death, you don't see them because they all, you know, you go to funerals, you know, home, they are all, you know, put on makeup. So, we are kept away from this by technology. Separation. Technology separates people, you know. Old age home [unclear]. And if you are old you cannot mix with society, go to old age home. If you are sick, it's no good staying home, you know, go to hospital. If you are dead, too bad.

So, the thing is, we don't enjoy life, you know. Something's artificial. That's what technology has been doing to us. We are like consumers. We don't even cook or make food or anything. Or making clothes. It's kind of very artificial life. So, these are our problems. No wonder we have, you know, we are threatened with a nuclear holocaust. Maybe you may find it difficult to relate, how come it's … it's all called encrustations. We have built up encrustations. Now we, finally, with this technology and all that, we are choking ourselves to death. By these encrustations which we have, you know, built upon ourselves.

So, well Siddhartha Gautama, Gautama Siddhartha, he had courage. Finally, after encountering getting sick, growing old, and people were dead, and finally sees this monk, mendicant monk. In India in those days they had such a tradition, it's called sramana. So, when, Siddhartha, when he renounced the world, he just joined that ascetic group of, called sramana. It's spiritual seekers. Here, I mean, over there it's a Hindu society.

A Hindu society, in Hindu society there are four periods in one's lifestyle. First you become a student. You learn the morals of a society, you learn, you know. It's a learning period. So, like here you go to school. Or you study under guru or spiritual teacher, so it's student period. And then comes householder period. So, you get married and raise children. And, you know, fulfill your social obligations. So, it's a householder period. Then, you know, householder period fulfilled, then you join spiritual groups, and you put these things behind. I mean, it would be boring to, you know, to stay as householder all the time. I mean, you can, even though you love your husband and wife so much, okay maybe 30 years, 25 years, and then, you know, well then what about the rest of the time we devote something to devote to spiritual pursuit, you know. It's a good idea, it's a healthy idea, you know.

So, and then, you know, they go around, like homeless life. And, I mean, as a student, as householder, you know, you are stuck with, you know, home and, you know, family. Now finally, okay. So, you enter homeless period. As mendicant. So, we, in this society we miss that total, you know, that rich, you know, experience in our life. And then, finally, then, you know, you gain some spiritual experience, wisdom. Then it's time for you to return something to the society. To teach people. So, you go on a pilgrimage and teach people. Embodying, you know, wisdom. To the youth, to young people. So, this is conveniently divided.

So now, so Buddha, so finally he came across [unclear], Gautama Siddhartha. So, monk, one of the mendicant monks, and his head is shaven, that's the custom over there. I mean, you know, I mean, if your head is shaven, I mean, it means something, but it does not mean anything in the West. Either it, sometimes, you know, some of my students, their head are shaven and if they go out all they can hear is, oh Hare Krishna going by. Something like that.

So, and apparently this person, he does not own anything, you know. Just, I mean, we have underrobes but over there, in Theravada Buddhist countries, in India, Sri Lanka, they just have, you know, piece of cloth. That's all they wear. Even the Jains, they go to the extremes, they go naked. No possessions whatsoever. So, and, but he was very peaceful. It was as if, you know, he just goes around with no desire. So quite free, liberated. So, he was very much taken up, impressed with this mendicant monk. And he realized all these encrustations he built, you know. Like all these women and all this, you know, palace, and it's all artificial, you know. And finally, after seeing the monk, he just, when he came home, he got utterly disgusted with all these things. Sometimes you get that feeling, you know, I mean, you fill your house with stereo and all these electrical gadgets and one day you come home and, you know, you can get disgusted with these things. So that's how he renounced the world. Just to lead a free life. To find the truth, the real meaning of life.

Now, back to our modern times. I have been going back and forth. Now, what are, what are our problems today? How Buddhism is relevant to people, you know, who are living this hectic life? Now one thing is, Buddhism is critical of itself. That's what's great about Buddhism. All the other religions, to my knowledge, they lack this. There are no firm dogmas. So, Buddhists, if they are living true Buddhists, they find themselves constantly redefining their own definitions and formulations. It's a living thing, every day. That's why the Buddhists, they emphasize practice of meditation, which is mindfulness and alertness. You don't get fossilized in dogmas and things like that.

Now, coming from Zen tradition, I'm sure you've all heard about it and I'm sure you have one kind of misconception or another about this thing called koan or hwadu. Now, there is no really English equivalent for this. Either you don't, you know, when people ask you about koan, you

know, like, as if dumb who has just swallowed sweet honey, you know, you get that, you know, predicament, you know, you cannot say anything, you know. Or otherwise, you get into this uninteresting, lengthy explanations which would bore people.

So, it's, okay, let me put it this way, it's a riddle. You may object to that, but say it's, you know, there is a nice healthy folk wisdom called riddles. That's the common people, grassroots people. That's how they related for a long time before the, you know, the organized knowledge came around or public school system came around. They would relate to each other and understand things around them in folk wisdom, riddles and proverbs. Very healthy thing. So, they are riddles. But when I say riddles, I don't mean that, it's kind of, it's a spiritual riddle. Which is very urgent, which you must have to solve. Which you must solve. Spiritual riddles.

[Three strikes and chanting]

I have been talking a little bit about Buddha's life in my sincere attempt, effort, to, to inspire you. To urge you – we do have a crisis. And even though everything's infinite, unless you realize it you are still subject, very much so, subject to impermanence and suffering. You experience that all the time. Now, how could we become wise in this nuclear age? How can we gain liberation? So, I'm not saying this just to gain liberation for yourself. If you gain liberation, that liberation belongs to everyone. Liberation belongs to all beings, not only human beings but to rocks and trees. Buddhists, they are always ecologically conscious about this. Buddhists not only talk about life, we even talk about nonlife. Nonlife is a vital part of life system. How can you gain liberation? How can you avoid, say, the destruction? The violence? How can you become compassionate, and friend, how can you become a friend, good friend, kalyanamitra, to all beings? How can you become a true bodhisattva to one another?

I'd like you to join me in reciting the Four Great Vows aloud.

All beings one body, I vow to liberate.
Endless blind passions, I vow to uproot.
Dharma gates without number, I vow to penetrate.
The great way of Buddha, I vow to attain.

Thank you.

Dharma Talk Buddha's Birthday 1993
Teacher: Samu Sunim
Date: 1993 Buddha's Birthday (May 30, 1993?)
Location: Chicago?
Event: Dharma Talk
Transcriber: Zack, Toronto (relistened by Jisik)
Date of Transcription: July 28, 2025

(Our Venerable Samu Sunim will give his Dharma talk on peace, love, and happiness.)

I always ask people to come and sit close to me when I deliver Dharma talk because I feel more comfortable with people sitting close by. You may have seen photographs or pictures, particularly the, originating from Theravada Buddhist countries. First, Shakyamuni Buddha, when he delivered his first sermon, he had five bhikkhus just sitting around on the ground. And so, I used to be like that, I, when I lived in a basement and, so that we would become close together and sit face to face and heart to heart, eliminating any possible distance.

I know Buddhism in the West is in the transition, in transition. This morning, we are celebrating our Lord Buddha's birthday. First, we heard a church bell even before temple bell boomed, and that was nice. And then temple bell boomed, and we offered tea and burned incense. Then we took three refuges in the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. And then we had a musical offering in order to promote peace and happiness. Then [unclear] came and recited Metta sutta, meditation on loving kindness. Was quite a different style, I almost thought I was watching a televangelist preaching. Such, you know, a little cultural shock, I'm not used to that. It's, I was told more than one time that, you know, in this culture you have to perform in order to impress people.

Anyway, then [unclear] recited a short passage from the Light of Asia by Sir Edwin Arnold. That Light of Asia, which was, it's actually came out in a small pocketbook depicting the life of Buddha. It was, it first, first published, I think in 1880, something like that. Since then, I think it had many, many reprinting, you know. 100 reprintings until 1920 or 1930, it was very popular. That book alone contributed significantly to Western understanding of Buddhism, at least Western sympathy with Buddhist teachings. And I read somewhere that Christian missionaries became very jealous and he, they asked Sir Edwin Arnold, it's not fair, you should write Life of Jesus in such a beautiful way, like, poetic way like that. He tried but apparently it was not as successful as the Light of Asia. So I was, I read somewhere.

It's, the reason why we are doing this, this, like offering incense, and musical offering, and taking refuges is, traditionally, Buddhists would say, to create, to recreate the Buddha's times,

specifically the Buddha's assembly on Vulture Peak, you know. So, if you go and visit India there is this place called Vulture Peak and Buddha delivered many wonderful teachings staying at this place called, known as Vulture Peak. Something like, beautiful teachings like, you know, Mount on the Sermon by Jesus. So, the Buddhists wish is to recreate such assembly, such environment, such Buddhaland, in our own time.

So, when the service, when the ceremony is performed, it's almost punctuated with those poems, you know. Like, step by step. The gata, the short Dharma verse which I just recited, means, "When birds sing and flowers bloom, this is a beautiful season of spring," come the month of May, we celebrate Buddha's birthday.

Gautama Siddhartha, the Shakyamuni Buddha, Gautama Siddhartha, he was born of a royal family of a small clan. He was born happily in this beautiful month. And, as a Buddhist, I feel very fortunate that Shakyamuni Buddha, Gautama Siddhartha, was born in the month of May. And he lived a long life. He lived to be 80 years old. And was generally very peaceful. He was a gentle character. He never argued with people who disagreed with him. Nor did he try to convert people to his way. His teaching style was always gentle persuasion and appealed to their good heart, like, good conscience. And always helped them make good common sense of the situation or of the confusion they were in. And he passed away, he died happily, surrounded by his disciples, lay devotees, and animals.

And, during his lifetime, he did not perform any miracles. So, his gentle character, that he was, that he was peacefully, happily born and led a happy and peaceful life, and died happily, I think these facts significantly contributed to the gentle and peaceful character of Buddhism, Buddhist's religion. I think we all benefit from that.

Now, his teachings, his original teaching was simple, relatively simple. He did not believe in personal immortality, like saving souls, you know. It's, rather he taught the way out of a personal self. In other words, way out of bondage or defilements, and attachments. The way out of attachment to personal self. Actually, he taught liberation of non-self. Detachment, release, and liberation. And he taught that we are all interrelated whole. So, we, he urged us to identify with all beings. All beings are timeless beings. The only difference is people who are awake right now, like Buddhas and bodhisattvas, and go through voluntary rebirth in order to help all beings, and sentient beings who are not yet awake. So, the difference is between one who is awake and one who is not yet awake. The one who is not yet awake goes through involuntary rebirth. That's the path of suffering, unhappiness, confusion, and delusion.

And also, he did not do anything like personifying the truth, or highest truth, or whatever truth, the reality, like God. But instead, he pointed out that to discover our true nature and true nature

of all beings, in other words, true nature of our universe, and we have to learn to identify with that. That means we have to develop compassionate heart and identify with all beings, both suffering and bodhisattva beings. Both sentient beings and wisdom beings. And then, instead of seeking the truth, he urged us to see truth, to realize the truth, in everyday contexts. That's called the non-dual path of liberation. In other words, the truth is always, always available in front of our eyes. So right now. So that means the truth is never apart from where you are. Wherever you are, the truth is there.

So, it's delusion, it's ignorance, trying to seek the truth, the liberation, somewhere else. Because it's not there. And over the centuries, the Buddhist teachers, they make this over, and over, and over again clear, using many different words. This is a new message Buddhism brings to the West. The non-dual faith and non-dual path of liberation. You don't seek the truth on the outside. You do not seek the truth. You just have to see it and realize it in your everyday life.

Now, Buddha, he, for a while, he lived in the palace, one of a royal family, and so he led a life of luxury and ease. Then he became deeply aware of the suffering, particularly, you know, he realized, as if for the first time, that people are getting sick, people are getting old, and people die. No one can escape from death. When he realized this, I mean, this hit him, apparently this realization his him with such force that whatever he was enjoying at the time lost all its charm. So that's why he had to set out on a spiritual journey and learn to devote himself to that quest for six years. First, he wore rags, and he learned begging, he became mendicant, you know, carrying begging bowl, and homeless life, detached life, and basically, he learned to be an ascetic. And then he learned to meditate.

So, I'm aware that what we are doing is somehow, I do, still, you know, it's, this is supposed to be rag, it's called a patched robe. It's made of new material. It was not supposed to be made of new material. But it means, it's called a patched robe, you know. Which means that, for instance, I, as monk, I'm supposed to pick up rags, you know, discarded materials. And then clean them, wash them, and clean them, and then piece them together and wear them. That's called the patched robe. But tradition carried, tradition is alive in this patched robe. And I'm relatively warmly dressed and certainly I'm not an ascetic, not in the traditional sense.

Some people, you know, here think we lead a pretty ascetic life, you know. Once I recall someone called and asked what time do you guys get up? Said five, wow, that's really backward. So that's pretty ascetic, you know. But it's good experience to get up early and hear birdsongs and expose yourself in the fresh morning air. There's good benefit you gain from that. And then, now Zen teachers use this, you know. I mean, sometimes I'm afraid to hold this, you know, because I don't like to scare away. It's, now it's, people relate this to, kind of, like spiritual

authority. But this used to be simple, you know, staff, like cane, carried by traveling monks. So, you can see the origin was very simple, very humble, very humble origin.

And as an ascetic, as a meditater, Shakyamuni Buddha, he asked the vital question, fundamental question. So, he wanted to find out the way out of suffering, out of dukkha. Now, dukkha, this suffering has a different connotation in his time. Whereas here, some people, like people in the third world countries, they think only poor people suffer. But here, when you come to North America, you realize both the rich and poor suffer. Rich people suffer. They really suffer. They are stressed out. They suffer from overconsumption. They suffer from what they have. And also, there are all kinds of sufferings, unhappiness. And then this suffering, perpetuated by delusion, that's what means Samsara. I mean, you know, when you die, this suffering does not come to an end. That's, I mean, you know, some people commit suicide, you know, trying to put an end to whole, you know, mess they created. But it does not work like that. Would be nice if you work like that.

So that, you know, that's what actually motivated so many people in ancient India. Apparently, when we think of today's India, I think, like, these, all these slums, and Delhi, and all these things. But one time, during the Buddha's time, India was not like, you know, the way it is in today's India. Apparently, it was a rich and fertile country during the Buddha's time. But they had this tradition. It's actually Hindu tradition, you, once you fulfill your duties to your family then you leave home and devote yourself to spiritual quest. That's always high in their agenda, to find the path out of suffering. In other words, peace, love, and happiness. Lasting peace, lasting happiness.

The words Buddhism is, it's a new word. The Buddhists in Asia, they don't use the word Buddhism to refer to their religion. The word Buddhism was coined by Western scholars starting Buddhism at the turn of the century. So, Buddhists in Asia, for instance, Buddhists in Mahayana Buddhist countries, they call their religion Buddha-Dharma. It's short for Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, the Three Jewels. So, they call it Buddha-Dharma, which literally means the teachings of Buddha, the way of Buddha, the way of enlightened ones.

Now, when Buddhism reached China, that was a big turning point in history of Buddhism. Now, Buddhism, trying to take root under Western soil, that's another big turning point in the long history of Buddhism. Quite comparable to the introduction of Buddhism to China, and actually much more significant than that. So, when Buddhism reached China in the 1st century in the common era, there were a number of traveling monks and merchants, even some lay people, who brought this teaching, this Buddha-Dharma, all the way from India to China. And then there were a group of monks who brought the meditation method. You know, meditation is the heart of Buddhist teachings. Like, Buddha attained enlightenment, you know, sitting in meditation under

bodhi tree. So, you cannot think of Buddhism without meditation practice, just like you cannot think of Christianity without prayer tradition. So, in other words, meditation practice is the path to liberation, to spiritual awakening and enlightenment. That's why we sit, silent.

So, and the Chinese, they called this group of monks Bodhidharma. Now, when you hear Bodhidharma we may just think of this, the 1st Patriarch or the 28th Patriarch of Zen Buddhism who came from India to China and brought this meditation tradition, Zen Buddhism, and then spent 9 years gazing wall. But actually, was name given to a number of monks who were spreading meditation teachings in his time. But the word bodhi means, it's just another way of saying Buddha-Dharma. Bodhi means enlightenment. So they were teaching enlightened method. So the way of enlightenment. Bodhi is short for anuttara-samyak-sambodhi, means unexcelled, full enlightenment, complete enlightenment. It was a new message, so they say, oh, Bodhidharma, you know. It means those guys are just Bodhidharmas, means they are, those guys teaching Bodhidharma. Because, like, myself, I have trouble remembering all these foreign names. So, these Chinese, they don't like the foreign languages. Yeah, you know, now as in the past. So, they say just Bodhidharma, sometimes prejorative sense, you know. Bodhidharma, oh those are Bodhidharma guys.

But one thing they taught is to ask the fundamental question. And in those days, they, you know, like, what is this life is all about? What's the purpose of our life? Why am I doing this thing today? Everyone has to ask this fundamental question. Vital question, it's called a vital question. So, in those days say, why did Bodhidharma come from the West? Means, means, it roughly means these Bodhidharma guys, what are their teachings, what are the gists, what is the highest meaning of this teaching?

So now, Buddhism arriving in the West, Buddhism taking root in the West, Buddhism is here to stay, we have to ask question, we have to, you can pose the fundamental question to Buddhism. That is, is Buddhism relevant in our modern life? Can Buddhism save us? Can Buddhist teachings. Can Buddhism save our planet? We have to find that out. Can Buddhism help us live our life wisely? In Zen tradition that's called hwadu, or koan. So, we have to ask vital questions, everyone has to ask vital question.

Now, Buddhism is, Buddhist tradition in a nutshell made up of these Three Jewels: Buddha, Dharma, Sangha. This morning we took refuges in the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. Buddha means one who is awake. So, we have to find out that, you know. Whether we are awake. One who is awake is called Buddha, or Buddha Consciousness. Dharma is the teaching, the truth, the discipline that can lead to liberation, that can lead to enlightenment. And Sangha is the community. Like, we are community, assembly, Dharma community, or Buddha community. Buddhists, they talk about twofold community, fourfold community like, you know, monks,

nuns, lay brothers, and lay sisters. But they, we also talk about universal community, community in a large context which includes all beings. Not only sentient beings but insentient beings as well, the trees, rocks, rivers, and mountains. In other words, today you say global village. That's Sangha. And planetary consciousness, that's Dharma.

So, Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, they are, you know, these are called Three Jewels. Three Ratna. Being Three Jewels, they reflect each other. The Jewels, they shine and reflect each other. So, it's like three in one and one in three. Buddha reflects Dharma Jewel and Sangha Jewel and embodies Dharma Jewel and Sangha Jewel. And so is with the Dharma Jewel and so is with the Sangha Jewel. So, it's like three-in-one and one-in-three.

Now, Buddha, Buddha means, it can be new interpretation or creation of new values, Buddha means peace. Both inner peace and outer peace. Outer peace is very important, that's why the first precept of Buddhism is non-violence, ahimsa. Life of non-injury. That's very important. First you have to learn to lead a peaceful life. Life of non-injury. Don't do harm. So that's outer peace. Life of non-violence, life of non-aggression. And now, in order to do that you need inner peace. Lot of us, we lack inner peace. Our mind, and body, is agitated, confused, restless, and full of conflicts, emotional conflicts. Inner peace means freedom from conflicts. Freedom from delusion.

Dharma is love. You know, like in the Dhammapada, the famous passage, "Hate never yet dispelled hate. Hate is dispelled only by love." This is ancient and inexhaustible Dharma. As Buddha said, as there is a single taste in the vast ocean, the taste of salt, so there is a single taste in my Dharma, the taste of freedom, the taste of love. So, Dharma is love. Unselfish love, pure love is always liberating act.

And Sangha is happiness, joy, like shared life, community life. When you identify, like bodhisattvas are like, when you identify your life with others, when you share your life, when you go through samsara, when you go through voluntary rebirth, that's, well in Buddhism it's called sympathetic joy but that joy and happiness, they do it out of joy and happiness. They do it out of Dharma, love, and out of Sangha, out of great concern for universal Sangha.

So, peace, love, and happiness, these are the Three Jewels which we must cherish and carry always in our pocket, deep in our pocket. And take care not to lose them.

Now, the significance of the celebration of Buddha's birthday is like birth, human birth. So, on Buddha's birthday celebration we always have a children's service. Children are our future, children are the hope, but again it's human birth. Human birth is very precious. So, have to ask the question, what are you doing with your human birth?

It's, yesterday morning during the children's service I did this first-year service, it's called, this child, she was just one year old and, actually she was born on May 28th, 1992. So Friday was her first birthday. That's very significant. So, we perform first year service. I know everyone has birthday and you celebrate it. Party and, you know, cut and eat piece of cake, and sometimes you get drunk. Now I don't think that's good way to celebrate your birthday, you know. Think about the significance of your human birth. And, in the past there was this Buddhist monk. He came up with a few good advice. First, you know, like Right Livelihood. Try to lead unharmful life, life of nonviolence, in order to promote peace and happiness of all beings. We break peace all the time. You know, Buddha preached the Middle Way, avoiding extremes. That's, in other words, in today's language like balance, balanced life. So, he said, meat eating is widespread, lot of people consume meat, lot of meat.

So, on your birthday, like you think about, like your mother had to go through such pain and labour in order to give birth to you. But once you are born, you know, and she had such great joy, you know. A celebration of life. So, when you think about it, you know, not only human beings but all beings, they rejoice in birth and life, and dread being killed or being harmed. So, when you think about your birthday, and your mother trying to give birth to new baby and having to go through labour and all that, and then was very happy with a new baby, when you think about it could you celebrate your birthday? You know, like eating meat? So, the message of nonviolent life, compassionate life, you know, cultivate, developing loving attitude and cultivating compassionate heart is there. But you can think about, ask the vital question, what can I do with my human life? How am I supposed to conduct my life, conduct myself in this life?

So, we have to ask a vital question. Everyone has to ask vital question. Have to find the meaning of your life. So at least when you celebrate your birthday you think about this human birth and see if you can relate to Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. They are, said peace, love, and happiness but there are a number of other ways of interpreting that.

Sunday Morning Sunim's Dharma Talk
Teacher: Samu Sunim
Date: Buddha's Birthday Sunday Service 1993
Location: Unknown
Event: Sunday Meditation Service
Transcriber: Zack, Toronto (relistened by Jisik)
Date of Transcription: June 23, 2025

[Chanting]

Together.

[Three strikes and chanting]

Good morning.

[Poem in Korean]

Flowers. Even though we want them to stay on, they fall. The flowers fall in spite of our wishes to have them stay on.

The weed. They keep coming up in spite of our wish not to have them around.

That is the meaning of this gatha, Dharma verse. That is also the reality of our life. Because of the weed that keeps coming up in spite our wish against them, helps us appreciate the flowers. Because they keep falling in spite of our wish for them.

There are several messages but the ultimate message, the ultimate Buddhist message in this is they are not against each other. The flowers and the weed, they are not against each other. They complement each other. Not only do they complement each other but they promote each other. This the teaching of non-duality, the teaching of mutual identity. In Buddhism we say samsara is nirvana, passions are enlightenment, form is emptiness.

In this little book called *The Buddha*, put out by Oxford University Press as part of the series of Great Masters of the World, the author of this book, *The Buddha*, Michael Carrithers, describes, conveys, one of his experiences he had while visiting Sri Lanka. He says, among the ruins of Anuradhapura stands alone a statue of Buddha in stone. Above the grass. Just this statue of Buddha in stone above the grass among the ruins of Anuradhapura, the ancient capital of Sri Lanka. The head and back of this statue are disciplined and upright. The legs are folded in meditation and the hands placed one upon the other. The arms are relaxed and the face poised in tranquility.

Standing before this statue, Michael Carrithers goes on to convey, an elderly English socialist makes a reflection, makes a confession. Saying, in the whole mess of human history, this at least, the statue and all it stands for, is something we human beings could be proud of. Something of which we human beings could be proud.

Then he says, all along he has had no use for religion. But he felt that he had unwittingly, unknowingly, been a Buddhist all along.

Now what is this, this Englishman, discovered from this Buddha statue? And from what this statue stood for, stands for? And what is it that Westerners keep discovering about Buddha and Buddhism today more than 2500 years later, in the society which is far removed from the society of the Buddha's time?"

This is quotation from one of the Nikayas. "As the ocean has but one taste, the taste of salt, so does this Dharma and discipline have a single taste, the taste of freedom."

Gautama, The Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama, he was born in the small republic of Shakyan people, that's his tribe, Shakya, Shakyas, in the present day Nepal. And he was born a prince of the chief of this tribe, Shakyan people. And he was the only son and heir to the tribe. So, he lived a pretty comfortable life given his time. And he lived in the palace, sheltered from the stark realities of life, such as getting sick, getting old, and all that. And also, he was married and he led a pretty common, ordinary life.

And before he was born, when his mother was pregnant expecting the child, his father, the king Suddhodana, he was curious. Rather, he was anxious to know, he was already in his 40s and they had no child. So, he was anxious to have a son to inherit his power. So, he was anxious to know the child to be born would be son or daughter. So, he invited the seers, fortune tellers and diviners, to find out what the child would be. So, the seers and the diviners, they told him the child would be son, but the child would eventually become a chakravartin, that's a universal monarch or one of the Buddhas.

Now, chakravartin is, chakra is wheel. So chakravartin means the ruler of the wheels, means his chariot. So, in those days, the main weapon for conquering kingdoms and countries were chariots. That's the main transportation for, for the purpose of attack. So, the ruler of chariots or wheels means, that means the more chariots the ruler has in possession, the more powerful the ruler becomes. So becomes conqueror, can become universal monarch. What it means is, the chariots wheels, they can roll, they can conquer, undisturbed.

So, his father liked that. Of course it's, his kingdom, or his republic, was kind of a protectorate of this mighty kingdom Kosala and his father didn't like that. So, one day, that his ambition is, his

kingdom, Shakyan kingdom, would become a powerful country. So, he wanted his son to be like a great ruler, not Buddha, not the ascetic.

But what it turned out to be is, eventually, instead of becoming the great monarch, the great ruler as his father was expecting, he renounced the world. That's renunciation and cast for enlightenment. That's one of the, this eight screen panel which depicts the eight important events during the Buddha's life. So, he became ascetic.

Now, one thing, there are several things we can learn from the life of Buddha. One is, particularly today, we don't have any standard life cycle, which is actually big problem. The young people, they are very confused because of lack of standard life cycle, guideline about life. And also, we have a lot of senior citizens. So, we have not come up with the kind of life cycle that could provide some life guidelines, life cycles for young people. Also, for people who are in their 70s and 80s, and even in 90s.

But anyway, and he grew up leading sheltered life, and he got married. And then he also pursued spiritual quest and became Buddha. And then he spent 45 years delivering the vital message, which he discovered after his enlightenment. And he passed away at the age of 80. So, Buddhists, whether they are lay people or monastic, they try to imitate this life cycle. It's path of purification and liberation.

Now, when he left the palace in spiritual quest of enlightenment, he joined the sramana movement. So, Buddhism in its origin was the sramana movement. Now, sramana means unattached ones, it was a new spiritual movement. So young people renouncing, rejecting, the Veda system, the establishment, and went forth, went out in search for new liberation, new salvation, new enlightenment. There are a number of groups of them, and they are collectively called sramana movement. Groups of unattached ones. And they shared three things in common. That is rejecting the Vedic tradition. That was the predominant ideology of his time. So, number one was they rejected God or any kind of divine authority as a savior. Number two, they denied, they refused to accept scriptural authority, like Vedas, or whatever. Any kind of holy books. Number three, they denied the efficacy of prayers and sacrifices.

So, it was sramana movement consisting of wandering ascetics, mendicant monks, or unattached ones, they were self-help movement. In USA today, we have a self-help culture and also self-help movement, and Buddhism has been contributing significantly to this movement. Self-help culture and self-help movement. Meditation is one.

Now, that's one message. And the other message which is worth pondering today is, he spent six years as part of sramana movement. He had his own followings eventually. And then he left sramana movement, and then he decided to take food. In other words, avoiding extremes. He

had, when he was living in the palace grounds, he lived in luxury and self-indulgence. So that was not good either. That was not good. So, he left that, that was one extreme. But now he went to the other extreme. Asceticism, all kinds of asceticism, fasting. So then that was not good. So, he abandoned both. Luxury and self-indulgence on the one hand and self-mortification on the other. So, he took food offered by Sujata and then he sat in meditation. Then came to freedom.

So, when he attained enlightenment after his meditation practice, that is when he became Buddha. Now, the word Buddha is, the word Buddha is not a proper name. Many people think it's proper name. But it's a descriptive title. The word Buddha means one who is awake. One who is enlightened. So, anyone who is fully awake, anyone who is fully enlightened, is Buddha. So that means, when we are not awake, that is, when we are not aware, many of us, in ignorance, daydreaming, we live a life in which we are unaware of how, who we really are and how things really stand. In other words, we are ignorant of our true identity. And we are ignorant of the true way of how things stand.

So, when he became Buddha, he realized that all beings, particularly human beings, they are endowed, they are endowed with Buddha nature. In other words, they are, all of them, without discrimination, they are potentially Buddhas. They are in possession of the great potential of being fully enlightened. And he didn't know that. Before he attained enlightenment, he didn't know that. But now he knew.

Now, before his time, the word Buddha was around, he did not invent the word Buddha, and there were Buddhas before his time. For instance, Dipankara, one of the first Buddhas in the Buddhist history. But the way people believed in the Buddha, or the way people understood Buddha, was Buddha was someone like a savior or Christ, messiah. And actually in the word it's great liberator, bringer of light. Or just great being. So, when people suffered from bad government, or from injustices, or oppression, or when, when there is a breakdown of civic society or society, or just natural, when natural disaster struck, or when famine struck the land. When people are left helpless, when people cannot fend for themselves, or people cannot help themselves. Then people would be waiting for Buddha. Like people waiting for God. Or Christ. Or just great being, liberator. So, if they, if we have a Buddha, if Buddha appears, if a Buddha comes, then he will fix all these troubles. He'll bring, he'll restore peace and order. And he'll perform miracles. So that's the way people believed in the Buddha, Buddhas.

But when Shakyamuni Buddha, when Gautama, when he attained enlightenment, he realized that was not true. All beings, all beings are endowed with Buddha nature, Buddha-seed. That means Buddha is not somebody else, Buddha is not somewhere else. We always think, you know, savior is somebody else, somewhere else. The truth, enlightenment, salvation is somewhere else. That means it's not with us, not me. So, well, Shakyamuni Buddha, he pondered about this because

people would not believe his message. But eventually he made up, he decided, well, that he must bring this message to common, ordinary people. So, he spent 45 years delivering this message using skillful means. And using different teachings on different occasions according to different, according to people or different propensities and capacities.

Now, around 1st century BCE, before the common era, Mahayana Buddhism arose. Mahayana, Mahayana means Great Vehicle. And the people, both lay leaders and monastic teachers who were initiators of this great movement, they felt that Shakyamuni Buddha's message was provisional. They felt the need that the teaching should be more readily accessible to wide spectrum of people. To common, ordinary people. Not just for monastics. So, they came up with this message, for instance, "Mind is Buddha." Everybody has mind. And you think, and react, you know, you have thoughts, feelings, and emotions. That's mind. That which is aware. That which gives rise to thoughts, feelings, and emotions. And what experiences all these things? It's mind. And this very mind is Buddha.

So, they spread this message. This very mind, your mind, is Buddha. But then what happened was the opposite happened. Before, before Buddha's time people would look for truths or Buddhas far away, you know, it's somebody else somewhere else. Now it's too close, like mind. It's right here. It's too close to be recognized. It's something like, before we got electricity people used, like, a kerosene lamp, you know. There's always some kind of darkness right under the kerosene lamp. So, it's, it's mind, this truth is too close to be recognized. That happens, you know. And also, the teaching seems to be too easy to be appreciated, to be fully appreciated. It's too obvious.

You see, the thing is, the Zen teaching, for instance, you see, you know, we keep missing the most obvious. If you met it, and if you experience it, it's so obvious. And also, enlightenment or realization is too profound to be comprehended. Now what's that word profound?

So now, and eventually what happened was people get confused about this mind thing. So, then they came up with body. We always say body-mind. It's not separate from each other, body-mind. One word, compound word, the [unclear]. So then, just drop mind, mind-Buddha. Your body is Buddha. It means, mind is so close it's invisible, intangible. People have trouble with that because always, you cannot look at your own face. You have to look at the mirror to see your face. So, it's not tangible enough, not visible enough. It's invisible. So, you, you always look outside, for guidance. So, this is too close to be recognized. And too easy to be fully appreciated. So, we say body. Here, body means in function. So, Dharma, truth, your Buddha shows up in your vital function, like in washing dishes. In having bowel movement. In eating. So that's vital function. So, you're doing it. You discover your Buddha Nature, you discover your Buddhahood

in your doing something. Mobilizing whole your body-mind. So, it says body is Buddha. That means doing it.

So, there is this hwadu. Shakyamuni Buddha, he was sitting in meditation. He was doing his meditation sitting under bodhi tree. At Bodh Gaya. That was 2500 years ago. This is meditation, is timeless experience. If you sit and meditate, and if you get into Samadhi, even for two minutes and one minute, you can see it's timeless experience. But you sit for three months, or three days, or three days, or three seconds, it's Samadhi experience, timeless. So, it's, so that's what he said 2500 years ago, or we see today, you know. Same. So, and then around 4 o'clock in the morning when he saw the morning star in the predawn sky, he attained enlightenment. So, the question is what did he attain? What did you attain? We don't think about, we don't look for, we don't, you know, if you think about Shakyamuni Buddha attaining enlightenment while sitting, and so, try to explain, that's wrong. The message, what are you doing right now? What is your enlightenment? What is your waking up, right now?

So that's the question. Who are you, what are you doing? Are you awake? We have a lot of waking up to do. Waking up from what? You can at least think about three things. Waking up from your indolence. Waking up from your overconsumption. Waking up from, perhaps, gloating over someone's fortunes. Waking up from greed. Waking up from violence. Waking up from sloppiness. There's a lot of waking up to do. That's what Buddhism and meditation practice is all about.

Now, what happens when you wake up? Waking up from even small defilement. That's beginning. It's this, Chris rang the bell 33 times to begin this service. We say when we ring the bell, say, in the morning for morning service or predawn service, we call it waking up the bell, because bell has been in rest, maybe in sleep, overnight. So, we wake up the bell, that's how you strike, striking the bell is called waking up the bell. So, if you wake up the bell, then the bell, that sound, by making sound, by making Dharma sound, it wakes up other people. The Dharma sound, by spreading the Dharma sound.

So, if you wake up, that means in turn you're waking up wakes up others. So, it's, first you wake up, you wake up yourself, and then you awaken others. And we are awake. Wakefulness prevails in our life.

So, when we say body is Buddha, okay, the mind is wisdom part, and say body, compassion or, you know, Prajnaparamita or whatever. It's, it's mind is Buddha. Okay mind, say awareness, or pure consciousness, or whatever, that is aware of something. That's waking up. That wisdom part, it's not we are aware this and this. When you, when you go to the, right to the core thing of that experience, awareness, it's emptiness. It's emptiness, sunyata. That, the core thing of that

pure experience is emptiness. And that's Prajnaparamita. And then body takes up that Prajnaparamita. Six paramitas and ten paramitas. Perfecting your life, with your waking up. And enjoying life, enjoying the vital spirit of your life. One life. Not many lifes, all beings one body. Making your body-mind widely available. With helping hands, with many hands. It's a great, the, like, like Avalokitesvara, Kwan Seum Bosal, with one thousand hands, with ten thousand eyes.

So, it's, what is our waking up this day? That's what Buddhism is about. That's how we appreciate this celebration, by waking up.

It's Three Jewels. Buddha practice, Dharma practice, and Sangha practice. So, it would be good, well if you can wake up and practice waking up from a couple of your defilements. Or at least contemplate on the value of Buddha practice, on the value of Dharma practice, on the value of Sangha practice.

Or, if you see something visible, if you like to do something visible or religious, traditionally what Buddhists do is they dedicate lanterns. It's a lantern of love and wisdom. And offer prayers for your relatives, for your friends, and for the sake of the world. But when you dedicate a lantern, you always think about someone, some people, to whom you wish to dedicate a lantern. Or your friend, your relatives, or your deceased grandparents, or your children. Making your wish. And then include yourself. At the end you include, well you write names, and then you make wish, you offer prayers, you write down. But at the end you include yourself, but I'm sure each of you must have someone, some people, some group of people, that you would like to dedicate something through offering light of wisdom. Light of wisdom and the lantern of love and wisdom.

[Three strikes and chanting to close]

Public Talk on The Way of Buddha, Way of Zen
Teacher: Samu Sunim
Date: August 4, 1984
Location: Gabriel Richard Centre, Michigan
Event: Dharma Talk
Transcriber: Zack, Toronto (re-listened by Jisik)
Date of Transcription: October 06, 2025

[Side A]

Samu is a native Korean and came to North America from 1967. He's been teaching and inspiring North American students since that time. Currently he's the master of a temple in Toronto and Ann Arbor. He'll be speaking tonight on The Way of Zen, The Way of Buddhism. At the end when Sunim completes his talk there will be some announcements about some of our programs. If some of you are interested, you can talk to people dressed in gray robes. Thank you for coming.

[Three strikes and chanting]

When we have breakfast in the morning, the next thing to do is wash our bowl. And The Way of Buddha or Buddhism is no other than this. That's the gata which I just sang. Now, the topic we put up for tonight's talk is The Way of Buddha, The Way of Zen.

Talking of The Way of Buddha, it's inevitable to make conceptual contact initially. All beings are Buddhas. All beings are ultimately Buddhas. That is, our original nature is Buddha-mind. So, our passions are no other than enlightenment. And samsara is nirvana. This land, this world, no matter how bad, it's a pure land. There is no other pure land aside from this very land which we occupy right now. So, this is what The Way of Buddha, or Buddhism, is all about.

Sometimes, over and over again, we have to repeat this. So we always looking on the side, looking on the outside. In the externals. If you go and visit Buddhist monasteries, Buddhist monasteries in Asia, first you have to go through a number of gates. There are usually three different gates you go through before you reach the Buddha Hall. There's the main Buddha Hall, this, like, axis both runs this way. The last gate is called non-dual gate or gate of liberation. So non-dual. The path of liberation means one in the same. Here, you even drop sentient beings and Buddhas together.

So, when you pass the first gate, sometimes you see the warning which comes in the form of two plaques hanging, you know, on the pillars which say, once inside, once inside this gate, no more dusty thoughts, or no discursive thinking, no discursive thinking is allowed. So that, in other words, you have to go through the gate. Once passed that gate, just all you've got is the great unknowing mind. No more knowing mind, no more analytical mind. So, there is warning.

And then a little further on you see these two giant guardians or deva kings, with bulging eyes, with great, you know, angry look, you know. Bulging eyes and, you know, his whole body is manifested with great, you know, anger and resentment. That means, you know, it's a threat to any analytical thinking. Then, finally, once you pass those two guardians, if those two guardians allow you to go through, then you reach that non-dual gate.

Now, so The Way of Buddha, it's, in a sense it is saying whether you are nicely confused or whether you're awake. In essence it's the same thing. It's hard to understand because it is, the thing is so simple, so sometimes it takes you longer to realize it. But Zen is very impatient. Zen is always direct, would not allow any hodgepodge. So, Zen say, every day is a wonderful day. But how do you realize that, how do you realize every day is a wonderful day, every day is a good day? Happy or unhappy, satisfied or dissatisfied, or rainy or fine, it's, every day is a good, fine day. That is, how do you realize this non-dual gate, this path of liberation, in the midst of activities, in your everyday life?

There was this master, this Korean master, whose name was Green [Plant?], Ch'oŭi Ŭisun, Green [Unclear], who lived about 250 years ago. And, he was a Zen monk, meditation monk, still in training, but he would go to a noisy marketplace. So, he would not sit quietly in the Zendo, in the meditation hall, you know. So instead, he chose noisy marketplace for his meditation hall. So there, in those days, these days we have, you know, the markets are open every day. Like, you have supermarket, it's very convenient. But in those days, like, you know, it's, like, isolated villages. So, the markets were had irregularly, say every fifth day or every seventh day or so. Because the peddlers, they travel from one market town to another.

So, he would make things until market is held. In winter he would weave straw sandals. Five days and seven days, he would make 20 pairs or 30 pairs of straw sandals. And then when the market day is held then he would take them. And in fall, he would make charcoals. And in summer, he would make grass dolls, you know. Like this [unclear] is strong grass, you know. It's tall, you see, for children, dolls. So, he would take them and then he would take a seat. Like, kind of a stall. Well, you just sit on the ground. And then you spread your wares, you know. Sandals, or your dolls, or, according to seasons. Then he would put a sign. Take it, take one. Take one. Then he would meditate, sit. And people come and take a look, it said take one, you know. So,

some would come and take one, and some would look whether he is looking, then he would take more.

And then, so if one guy comes and takes everything then there is no wares and, you know, people come and, hey what are you selling, you know. And then, he does not say, just he sits. All he does is he just sits still. Remains unperturbed. All he does is he works on hwadu, on his hwadu. That's all he sees.

So, as the saying goes, if your meditation is good then the whole universe is completely in your command. So, like, all this, you know, bustle, hustle, you know, all these children cry, and, you know, people hawk, you know, their sales, and, it's like, but it's as quiet as, you know, just being in the forest. No disturbance.

So, and then, you know, it's, when market town is held, it's not like supermarkets or [unclear], it's like, everything goes. When market is held, everything goes on. Crack doctors, you know, bring their, you know, wares and, you know, they, you know, they shout aloud and, you know, gives all these, you know, oratories and then even politicians come around, it's all these things. That's why I say the, [unclear] he used to go down to opera, because that's where he can get, you know, like modern day hippies, you know, to teach. So everything takes place there.

So, and then some drunk guys come. Hey you monkey, what are you doing? And he does not say, and then comes, gives him dutch rub. So sometimes he gets a lot of dutch rub, you know. But he still sits still, unperturbed.

So at the end of the day, and everybody goes home, except, you know, a few drunk guys who still, you know, maybe some of them would, like, drunk in the garden, you know, until next morning or something like that, you know. Except for those people, everything quiets down. Then he gets, and then if he, if he, if his stanza study was good then he says good shouting. Good shouting. And if he was a little bit perturbed then he says bad shouting, he would say.

So then, it's a long walk, takes him about four hours. You know it's, the village is very isolated. He lives on top of the mountain, in the temple. So, like, sometimes I see people come to meditation at Ann Arbor temple, you know, from Lansing or from area maybe two hours drive, something like that. Modern days situation changed but, you know, takes him three to four hours, you know, to go to his Zendo, to go to his meditation in the marketplace. And then he goes back home, you know, to temple.

So this goes on for five years. You can imagine. So quite a practice. Then one day, it's always one day, because this kind of thing is timeless thing. Say, to realize your formless self, your timeless being, your spaceless being, the ground of all beings. So one day, it always takes place one day. Then it's the path, the mountain path, you know, he has to go, you know, go over this

mountain path in order to reach the market town. So on his way to market town, on this path he attained his final liberation. And he was so happy. And suddenly there was no obstructions, everything was vast and empty. No obstructions whatsoever. And everything, rocks, trees, and birds, and, you know, pebbles, and, everything, all wonderful dharma world. Everything, everything reveals wonderful dharma world. Blade of grass, everything.

So he started dancing, and laughing, and singing. Just walking back and forth on the mountain path, for three days. Ha ha, ho ho, and then, you know, [unclear], tra la la, tra la la. La la la la la la. Back and forth. So three days.

Then, then he forgot, sure, I have to go to market town. So then could go to market town. And then, no more take [unclear]. The same wares. Straw sandals in winter, in fall charcoals. And with beaming smile, his face is always beaming smile, and then people come and say how much? Seven cents? And then he would say, just take one. And then the other people come and, five cents? Just take one. And still the other people come, three cents? Just take one.

And then people notice a difference in this fellow, you know. I mean, before, formerly he would just sit, you know. Just sit still, no matter what happens, you know, just sit still. And remain unperturbed. Now he's all smiles. Beaming smiles. And he, not only that, he was very quiet, silent, now he suddenly says, take one. Five cents, seven cents, take one.

So people got curious, wondering what happened to this fellow. And, so what happened, I mean, you were all, you know, sitting, you know, silent and all that. Now suddenly, you know, you smile and say fifty cent, five cents, and seven cents. He says, it's all the same, just the same. And people, what do you mean? Just, oh, I was a little bit sick, I was a little bit ill. Now I'm alright, I got cured. And then people, they say, what do you mean? You know, I mean, to that guy you sold it for seven cents, now you say five cents, what's wrong? He said, just the same, take one. It's all the same, take one.

So, he was managing his Zen training. Then, like, soon, you know, all his wares would run out. Nothing left. And, but still, he would sit there, beaming. And then people come, hey what are you selling now? He said, baby Buddhas. And then he would point them, well where are the baby Buddhas? You. So, pointing every, baby Buddhas, I'm just selling baby Buddhas. That's all.

And, and also this happened one day, always one day. Just like right now. And one day he got up and he told a monk, well it has been really good to be with you all this while. Now I must go now, so I'll say goodbye to you for now. And then he went back to his room and then he, he moved his last bowels. And then he painted the, he painted, you know, his walls with his excrement. All that, all his rooms. So the old monks in the temple, they wanted to come and greet

him, you know. That means maybe he's going to pass away. But it's the stinking smell, couldn't stand it. It's all stinking smell.

But that sexton, sexton of the temple, you know, he's always faithful, faithful to the Green Plant. So, he came in and then, so he stayed there for about 15 minutes but he himself, he couldn't stand it, just stinking, all stinking. So he was, he was, you know, politely to take exit and said, no, you must stay here. You must stay and witness the final nirvana of an enlightened person. So, he was waiting. Soon, and then as soon as he passed away, all stinking smell got transformed into beautiful fragrance. Very nice smell. So, so that was, so samsara and nirvana, nirvana, samsara. So, they're going through non-dual gate.

[Chanting in Korean]

There are lots of Buddhist scriptures, lot of books. And one of them is called Diamond Sutra, Diamond Sutra. There is, Buddhism is basically non-book religion. That's the one thing that is quite different, where Buddhism is different from all other religions. All other religions, they have books. Bibles, or Korans, and, they believe everything, they believe everything what the book says. Buddhists, too, they have books but these are called books of non-books because if you read those books, they actually, what they say is don't read this book. So they teach you how to detach yourself from reading books. Anyway it's all, it's liberation. How to attain liberation, including books.

But some, you know how it is with people, you know, some people develop, you know, devotional attitude towards religious things. So, although the book says that some people, you know, worship the Diamond Sutra. Actually, some people, some Koreans, they say, well there is this custom that got developed. If I die, then only thing they like to carry is the Diamond Sutra. So, you know, well, like, when person dies, after all he's going to get cremated, but we cremate a Diamond Sutra with the body. So, Diamond Sutra, it means it's so much valued.

At the very beginning of Diamond Sutra it says, early in the morning the Lord Buddha dressed, put on his robe, and took his bowl, a begging bowl, and entered the great city of Shravasti in ancient India. To collect his alms, it's like mendicant monk going around, you know. Going on a begging round. When he had returned from his round, when he had eaten and returned from his round, then he put away his robe and bowl, begging bowl, and he sat himself on the seat prepared for him, crossing his legs, holding his back upright, and fixing his attention right in front of him. Then, you know, his, you know, his disciples, you know, came forward, you know, to listen to him.

So this is a very ordinary thing. It's like daily life, what he does. Very ordinary thing. That's why every day is a good life. So, Buddhism is, in this, very ordinary thing. Everyday life, nothing special. Maybe your life's, you know, just a little bit different. The kind of routine life you take.

There was this Chinese master Chao Chou who was known for his Lips and Mouth Zen. There is these, there are different kinds of Zen. There's, like, for instance, there is Zen of Thirty Blows. So, he said, Zen master Deshan, he says, all he said to his students, if you say something you receive thirty blows. If you don't say anything then you again receive thirty blows. So he was, he was, you know, promoting Zen of Thirty Blows. No matter what, you will deserve thirty blows.

And then there was Linji, he was known for his shout, great shout. So there was a Shouting Zen. Then there is Gutei, that's One Finger Zen. This master, he would always raise one finger. Whenever people asked he would raise one finger. So this one finger contains the entire universe. It's called One Finger Zen. And the other one is called Single Word Zen. Master Yunmen, Single Word Zen. His Single Word Zen is, what, you know, monk would travel, you know, from long distance and would come and, you know, make three prostrations, ask what is Buddha? Toilet paper. Toilet paper is Buddha. What are you doing right now? And another, then another monk asked, what is right Dharma Eye? What is right Dharma Eye? Revealed. It's a single word. Revealed. Then, what is the sound of Dharma? Ding dong. And another student, another came and he said, what is Buddha? Rice cake. And then Chao Chou, this monk asked, what is the way of Buddha, what is Buddha? What is the way? The way is everyday mind. Everyday mind is the way. Should I then direct myself towards it? Or not? Master said, if you turn, if you try turn towards it you go against it. If I do not turn towards it, how do I know then that it is the way, asked the monk. The way does not belong to knowing or non-knowing. The way does not belong to knowing or non-knowing. It's so clear, but because of our conditionings it can be very, very elusive.

There is Seung Sahn Sunim, and he had this group down in Cambridge. And there was a lady, young lady, who read a lot of books about Zen and she practiced, she really liked it, you know. Collecting, you know, like these, this thing called Zen culture, you know. And then, she collects nice stuff, you know, nice tea cups, and tea pots, and everything neat, like, you know, Zen garden, flower arrangement, you know, all these things, right? Simplicity. So, and then this Zen master Seung Sahn he said, wow, [unclear]. So she was, she got really inspired listening to him. So then and there she said, she asked, could I move in? Sure, sure you can move in. So, and then she moved in and she brought all this nice stuff, you know. All this, you know, very, so and then she volunteered, could I work in the kitchen? Sure. And then, so kitchen was, kitchen became her territory so she's, she's a really meticulous person, really nice, that's how she related to Zen, the way of Zen. So, she cleans, you know, she spends, you know, couple of days cleaning out the kitchen, that's her territory. And then, you know, everything clean, you know. That's like, it's all

[unclear]. This is like, [unclear], and even neat labels and all that, and it's glass and everything fine. It's really like, you know, something like, something resembling, you know, Zen garden. Really nice, orderly, it's fine, and she draws great satisfaction every time she looks at it. Great satisfaction.

Then, then, look here, then what happens is, all these guys, there are a number of people living in the Zen centre community and the other guys, these are sluggy, undisciplined reptiles, you know. They come and, you know. And then, using her glasses and, you know, they use her, you know, crushed, you know, glasses, and drinks water and then just leave it there and there, and soon it becomes messy again. And just, she cannot stand it, you know. And then she yells and, you know, gets, you know, she gets all upset and, you know, and goes on. And then she, finally she gets upset and she goes against the wall and, bah you, you, all these, you know, slugginess, you know, dishwater personality, all these people, you know, trying to practice Zen, you know. So everybody is on each, you know, upset.

So that was, that came to the attention of Zen master, Seung Sahn Sunim, said well, okay well this will not do. Well, I think, you are too much attached to your thing. You think those things are Zen, you think there is something as Zen as a matter of fact. There is no such thing as Zen. Subject is free, object is free. They originated from the same emptiness. So, so and then he had another Zen centre. Okay, so you must go to another Zen centre. And then said, then she started packing all these things very carefully, tears running down like this, and said, no, no, you cannot take these. Well, how much, I'll give you three hundred, we'll give you three hundred dollars. These things are causing you pain.

So then there was great pain, you know. She was, for years she was attaching to these things, you know. So finally, she had to take three hundred dollars, you know, and then go another Zen centre. And then it's all sluggy again. So that's why she trained five years later and she came out fine, liberated. So that thing happens.

That, too, Master Chao Chou. And his Zen was Lips and Mouth Zen, it's called. Lips and Mouth Zen. A student came along. I have just entered your monastery. I beg you, master, give me some instructions on enlightenment. Well Zen is direct so they always, you know, deal with Buddha, or enlightenment, or realization, or whatever. So, okay, sure, sure. And, have you had breakfast yet? Yes, I have, as a matter of fact. Well, then go wash your bowl.

So, upon hearing that he attained realization. And then another monk came along and said, I've been here for three years and, but I haven't received your instructions yet so pray, give me some instructions. Have you had breakfast yet? Yes, I have. Go wash your bowl. And he was really confused. And then one of his attendants, he was seeing all this. Well he got really confused. He was more confused than this fellow. What, you know, just a little while ago just, this new fellow

came. And then, you know, just upon hearing, you know, go wash your bowl, and he attained realization. And another monk who has been here for three years training very hard came along and asked exactly, posed the same question. And then instead of attaining enlightenment he got more confused. So I'm very confused, master, you know. I mean, why do you do this? Could you enlighten me?

Sure. Have you had breakfast yet? Yes, I have. Go wash your bowl. Then he got enlightened. Go wash your bowl.

And then we ask, we ask students, so, what did this fellow attain? What did he attain? When you heard, go wash your bowl? What did he attain? Think about it deeply.

And, on another occasion, it's, his old teacher came. His old teacher came. And he received him remaining seated, which looked rather rude. He's an old teacher. And so, after exchanging greetings, Chao Chou asked him, well, go have a cup of tea. Treated him like that. And then one of his monks came in and then he stood up. He stood up. And greeted him. Then he said, go and have a cup of tea. And then finally there was a rag picker who was just living next to the temple, and he went all the way out to the gate to greet this rag picker. But said the same thing, go and have a cup of tea. So one of his attendants, he got really puzzled by this. So asked him, and again, Chao Chou said, go and have a cup of tea.

Now, the rag picker was quite different, if I offer explanation. Rag picker is a rag picker. It's unlike the monks altogether. So, the monks, they have much to learn from rag picker. So, he went out, all the way out, to greet him. But said the same thing. Go and have a cup of tea. And so, it's getting hot, so he says, go and have a cup of tea, means go and have a cold drink. Have a cold drink, to cool you off. Or have a clear mind, clear head. So maybe it's, it's time for us to take a, to go and have a cup of tea.

Things are quite as simple and clear as they are. But why does it take longer for some of us to realize that? What are the barriers and what are our conditionings? All beings are Buddhas, passions are enlightenment, samsara is nirvana. This very land is no other than Pure Land. Form is emptiness, all forms are empty. Then emptiness is form again. Mountains are mountains, rivers and rivers.

Sometimes when things are not clear, when things are still not clear, then we have to sit relentlessly. In spite of all the good things, bad things, we just have to sit relentlessly. In order to touch, in order to experience, that formless self, spaceless self, and timeless being.

[Chanting]

What is one's lifetime like? This master, Chao Chou, he became monk when he was 18. And then he served his master for nearly 40 years. That's quite a feat, if one can do that. So, when he was 37, no when he was 57, his master passed away. So, he spent another two years at his master's gravesite. It's like kind of a filial piety. Then at the age of 60, he set out on a journey, on a pilgrimage, to visit other monasteries and to visit other teachers. At the age of 60. So, when he set out on a journey, he made this vow. Even though one is five years old, if that child has something to offer, to teach me, then I'll go, I'll follow and get the teaching from him. Even though one is 80 years old, if I have something to teach him then I'll go after him and teach him. And if the right person follows the wrong path, then the wrong path becomes right by the person. But if the wrong person follows the right path, then the right path becomes wrong by the person.

So he had much more faith in man, in beings. It's not dogmas, not the abstract truth. Zen detests dogmas and abstract truth.

And this Korean master, about whom I sometimes tell, he left a lot of episodes. After he attained enlightenment he journeyed to a temple, all night, it's under moonlight, and he felt so good. So when he arrived at this monastery, it was just, the day was breaking so he faced the Buddha Hall and he pulled down his pants and started taking leak. That was his real offering. What could you say? It's right coming, right coming out of his body, you see. Real offering. He felt really good, so he must make some good offerings to Buddha.

Just that time, you know, these, all these monks came out, you know, to sweep the ground. And then the head monk came and looked at what this monk is doing, you know. And he got so upset and then with a broom, you know, he was trying to beat him and, you know, get out of here, this crazy monk, mad monk. Okay, well, well, then look here. Well you tell me where there is no Buddhas so that I could take a good leak, you know. Well you say every way is Buddha, everywhere is Buddha, Buddha is, you know, field. So you tell me any place where, you know, there is no Buddha so then I could, you know, turn there and then take a good leak, you know.

So, well it's, you know, well we live in the world of opposites. We all [unclear], you know, profane and sacred, and this, you know, people [unclear], you know?

I'll take questions.

[Side B]

[Unclear]

There are a number of reasons but one strong reason would be, in my opinion, the Thomas Merton, who is now getting popular after his death, and anyway, among some Christian circles, and I read somewhere, that on his deathbed, he said, apparently he whispered to his close friend, "Zen and Christianity is our future." That's apparently what he said.

Now, if I offer my interpretation for that, well, obviously Christianity is very important, simply because of the sheer numbers. I think if, if we have open Christians, if Christianity is peaceful, I think the world would be a lot more peaceful than it is now. So, we cannot ignore this fact.

Now, I mean, the, people, lot of people know or read books about Zen but people who actually practice Zen is actually a very, very tiny minority. But Zen has this, this, Zen is a fermenting stock, you know? Wherever it goes, Zen has this transforming power and can play the seminal role, it's a stronger role than that. Which is affecting North American culture to quite out of proportion, you know, of number who actually practice Zen. Like, you know, in art. You know, among intellectual circles.

Even, just some of the ideas, because for a long time we thought, you know, how we have moved around like, we've had a number of shockwaves, like when Copernicus said, you know, I mean, look here, the world is not flat it's revolving, it's going around. That was quite a shocking statement. It took quite a few centuries to recover from that shock. And then Darwin came. Look here, human beings are not that great, it's just part of organism. That was another shocking statement. And then Freud came along, he said, look here, well, you know, human consciousness is just a part of, you know. And then, so it has been coming a long way. So, we still suffer from that hollow, broken views like the alpha and omega. That's why I say Samsara is Nirvana.

So, we must enlarge our spiritual outlook, especially with a nuclear holocaust coming. Well, as some people say we must up-level our consciousness. Because we can, simply cannot cope, I mean, even the, most of the religions, they cannot cope with the technology. They are being pushed out. These Buddhist-Christian dialogues is, something like they get pushed out and they bump into each other, you know, somewhere out in the servers. That's why they like to talk about each other's religion.

Yes.

(Can you comment or draw a relationship between the Eastern path of Zen Buddhism and the Western path of spiritual fulfillment that was discussed by Rudolph Steiner and [Unclear]?

Well, I don't know much about Rudolph Steiner so I really cannot make any comparison. I mean, and, well, speaking of Zen Buddhism, Zen Buddhism, for over thousand years, Zen Buddhism or Zen has been confined to Asian continent. But now, somehow it left Asian continent. It's like mendicant monk. It's now roaming around. It's wandering around, meeting with open minds.

You know, just really good thing. It's like ongoing experiment. So, we can no longer say it's Eastern path or Western path.

Even, you know, in some circles of, you know, Buddhism, we talk about Western Buddhism. Oh, what I'm doing is Western Buddhism. I mean, you know, you say I do this but when I go back to, you know, I cannot talk like this, you know. That there is, this, we are coming together, they are, like, Korea is becoming, you know, Christianized. There are a lot of, you know, very aggressive [unclear] like, for instance, what is it, Billy Graham has been going there for years, you know, making, converting a lot of Koreans to Christianity. And they are quite aggressive, I cannot talk to them, you know. It's kind of unfortunate that, for that country, which is already divided, that that kind of Christianity is flourishing. It's very divisive, aggressive.

(Well, almost a question that's a statement so why don't I say it anyway?)

Sure.

(You know, what I'm thinking is that, well maybe I'm not thinking it, is that all these distinctions are just meaningless, they're just bother. It's just like dogs have flees, so what? You know, because it's almost as if any time people say that, well, I'm a Christian, then there are some group of people that are not Christians. So, there's this distinction. But so what? So, I think that all, it's just all talk. It's just all talk. But we could talk for hours, we could intellectualize. Was Jesus a Buddha? Was Moses a Buddha? Was, is Ronald Reagan a Buddha? I don't know, that's what I…)

That's right, that's why it's important to go and have a cup of tea. Yes?

(Do you feel that Zen is something that can be practiced without any context of Buddhism?)

Buddhism is not dogma, it's, the Way of Buddha, that's what it's saying. Buddhism means, whether you're awake or not, that's what it means. It's, like, when Shakyamuni Buddha, they found there are a lot of Buddhas, who are you? Everybody's Buddha. And it's, when he attained enlightenment under bodhi tree, he journeyed to Sarnath. On his way, the first person he met after he got enlightened was this fellow called Upaka. And, you know, like, he just attained, you know, he just attained liberation so, you know, like, he was pretty high, you know. Like, his complexion, and clear, and bright, and, you know, like, you know, very good, you know, high vibrations coming out. So, like, and he was resting in the shade so, you know, this guy, you know, he was Ajivaka but it's like, it's, the picture is there, like, try to give us some visual thing. Some things I say, some, you know, people living in this climate it's hard to, you know, picture. See, India is a very spiritual country. It remains, you know, like that even today and apparently, I have never been to India but there's this, the oldest city, this very holy city, Varanasi, it's quite, I mean, some people, you can either go there and, you know, this stench, and poverty, you know,

all these things, you can get very upset or you can get really spiritually inspired, you see. And, so, I mean, you know, some people, like, who are brought up in this material comfort, it's very, you know, [unclear], it's appalling thing, in a sense. But I guess you have to penetrate that.

So there, it does not matter. I mean, so, you know, I mean, people get born, and grow old, and get sick, and even here, we don't have even direct living experience with that. You know, I mean, if people get sick, they go to hospital. So, you don't, it's all technology so you don't, I mean, when I was little I was brought up village. I mean, I knew what, you know, old age is all about, you know. The grandmother's, you know, back bent, you know, I mean, depending on a cane. It's so, you know, vivid, you know. I knew, you know, what growing old. And then people get sick and all this, you know, you know, really groaning, you know. You come in direct contact with them. And people die and even in the middle of the night you suddenly hear this wailing and whole village is awake, you know that. And it affects your mind, you know. It's so close, it's all sides, you understand the cycle. Here, people die, go funeral service, you know, all embalmed, you know, it's, you don't really get that feeling. It's all, all technology. Technology throws you around. If you are old, go to old age home. It's in telephone, you phone, you know. You don't have to go, necessarily go and visit, you phone. So, technology throws people around, you see.

So there, it's the most important thing is attaining enlightenment, nirvana. I mean, life is infinite. They are not afraid to die, you know. We, here we say, like, social work or, their concern is a little bit different. So, like, so it's much more important for them, you know, like, to go to temple, or practice meditation, or even sit down at the feet of a guru, these are very important things. I mean, here, I mean, you know, you people do the extra work, you know, to get that colour television, you see. And then, as you say, I mean, you throw in extra work to get colour television and all this but when they go away it hurts you more because of your attachment, you know. You know how it is. Well there, it's entirely different. They put that extra work into, you know, spiritual practice. So, it's quite different, you know. And sometimes I try hard, you know, sometimes these people come to meditation, it's, I have been, years I have been trying. Now it's a little bit different. Sometimes people come, you know, take meditation class, it's like going to, like joining meditation club. You pay fees, you know.

So anyway, this guy was passing by and he got, you know, he was so attracted to the vibrations which, you know, this Buddha was actually [unclear]. So, he, you know, he went there and, you know, he said, well I, you know, well I certainly see something. Well, are you, are you some kind of deva? Are you a, you know, are you a god? No, said Buddha. Are you some kind of angel? No. Are you a man? No. Or are you, what is it, are you some kind of magician? No. Then what are you? And he said, I'm a Buddha, means I'm awake. That's all he said, I'm awake. That's, when you say Buddha means I'm awake. That's what Buddhism is all about. So, you can relate to Buddhism like that, instead of the religion or all that, you know. So, thing is, right now what

are you doing, right? Are you still nicely confused? Or cultivating fantasies? Or are you awake? Yes.

(Is non-dualistic practice with Christianity possible in your view?)

Oh sure, I think so. There, you have to go beyond the faith and the, some of the, I mean, their dogmas. So apparently these, you know, mystics and contemplatives, you know, I mean, well, you know, when they involve themselves into that they kind of transcend these things. Yes.

(You mentioned the experience of being awake. Is it a, something that happens and forever then after that in your life you're awake or is it something that…)

It takes place anytime, it's always, I said it's always, every moment, every moment is this moment. It's always this moment. I mean, you live always this moment. Aside from this moment there is, you haven't got anything. So, your life originally is from this moment. So, what are you doing right now? It comes down to that. But you have to realize it, you know. But if, you know, if you, you know, if you connect it conceptually there's still, you know, wide gap there. So then, you know, like this time thing, space thing, you know, it's quite a different outlook. It's a living experience. But we live life, but we lack this living experience. It's spontaneous living experience. In a sense, we are crippled by civilization. We cannot do anything properly or spontaneously. So even these days people have to be very highly motivated. Or it's something like, you know, it's like, nuclear holocaust is motivating lot of people, it's kind of waking up people, you see. It's, in a sense, good. And they, well it's, I mean, it takes that kind of thing to wake people up. Or Vietnam War. Yes.

(Does fear of the holocaust motivate a lot of people to study Zen?)

Nuclear holocaust?

(Yes.)

Oh, apparently it does. Look at the peace movement, some of those guys are quite violent, and…

(No, I mean does it motivate them to study Zen. Do you get a lot of students from that sort of…)

Well, I don't know about that but apparently, you know, it's, you know, it's, what is it, you know, you know, when people get desperate, you know, then they search with all earnest, you know, in all earnest. That's very important. That's very important. And it's, we call it despair. Well, enlightenment, you know, there is a spontaneous experience but otherwise there is this process of training. And that requires, sometimes, despair or even hopelessness. The other word for that is single-minded. Otherwise, you always, you know, carry 84,000 different distractions, as we say. Yes.

(Is there a quality to the enlightenment that is, that it's like a gift at all? Is it from anything else? Or [unclear]?)

It's, it's a universal experience. It's, if there is gift it's an innate gift. It does not come from outside, if that is what you are talking about, or external power. But it's a universal experience. And it's not open to examination. Yes

(Since you said that it's not a method of books or learning, you talk about training. You said there's some…)

Sometimes what?

(Absoluteness?. And…)

Uh huh. That's right, that's conditioning, the knowledge as conditioning.

(The training that you're talking about, does it require books, or study? Or is it…)

It inspires them. They are, we have this sayings, live words or dead words. Like, it's not one way or another. To give you an idea, someone can spend 60 years reading books and, and become totally blind and unenlightened. And another person can read a single sentence and get sparked and attain enlightenment right away. It's, thing is, it's, there's nothing wrong with knowledge, per se. But once you know, you get stuck with your knowledge. And you see some people, lot of us, they are nothing but knowledge, you see. So, they become subject to their knowledge. That's very large conditioning for most of us. And it's very difficult to remove this conditioning. You're just stuck. So, for that you have to do real work that is, it happens to be in this case meditation. Real work. So, we say, it's easy to know, but it's very difficult once you know to unlearn your knowledge, or not to know.

So, I, so over and over again I say, it's, you know, this, I deal with intellectuals or, you know, I deal with people who come through this public school, you know. And, so I'm, it's, in my, it's, for me, it's very learning education, you know, how to deal with these people. And, so, it's, basically I say the same things in many different ways. One of the things which I often say is just do it. Just do it. Whether you like it or not, whether you feel good or bad, just do it. It's called The Art of Just Doing It. Just doing it. Well, it's, life is a, you know, series of these spontaneous actions. Like, I mean, you wake up, you just wake up. When you have a bowel movement, you don't debate, you don't argue about it, you just go and do the darn thing, you know. And feel great. And then when you are hungry, you don't think about hunger, you know. You just look for something like apple and then munch. So, I mean, it's, after all, I mean, wouldn't it be better if you can free yourself from anxiety, you know? Or neurosis? So, you know, just try to act free

from your anxiety. Means spontaneously, selflessly. It's realizing your non-self instead of always, you know, setting up conflicts. You know, barriers. That's why every day is a good day. Yes.

(What is the purpose of chanting? And do you use a stick to wake people up?)

What is the purpose of what?

(Chanting.)

Oh, chanting. Oh, chanting is a beautiful experience. It's, chanting is like meditation in sound. It's a very deep experience. Which, we do chanting, we do chanting, we do prostrations. And you can do it, it's beautiful. If you have difficulty sitting in meditation do chanting, it's a beautiful experience. It's not like a Christian thing, is high and all that, it's monotonous. But, like, you chant for a while, like half an hour, you know, so you get a little bit tired, you know, saying these things over and over again. Then you chant but you continue to chant, as I said, just do it, just do it. If you just do it, then after now, suddenly, you know, another dimension emerges. You feel really vigorous, you find yourself, you know, chanting, you know, vigorously. It surprises you, you know. So, it's called inconceivable liberation. Well after all it's, well the common phenomenon of life is impermanent, right? Impermanence. So that's what Buddhism emphasizes, impermanence. So, you can change. Because we are impermanent you can change. You can attain liberation. You can help all beings. Because we are impermanent, we can realize the vow, all beings one body. But the thing is, do it. That's important.

You know here, like, it's, all like, consumer oriented mentality, you know. We just like to sit and receive things. So, it's, it's self-help. The Zen training, the spirit of Zen training is self-help, and self-reliance, and self-discipline. It's, no one, you know, would come and liberate you or, you know, I mean save you, unless you do it. Well, that's, it has become apparent, you know. It's collective karma. Well, you know, we've done all this, like, pollution, overpopulation, and nuclear war threat. It's all man-made programs. We have to take responsibility now, have to do something. Before too late. Yes.

(In response to a really good question you brought up Thomas Merton, and if I understood you correctly you said he saw the future as being Zen Christianity? By that do you believe that he meant that the two would meld somehow and that they would complement one another, and could you speak into that? Are the two complementary, or mutually exclusive, or…?)

Well, in order to make room for Zen within Christian tradition, Christianity would have to change. And, well some English Buddhists saying, you know, apparently Buddhism is very flourishing in England, and saying, Buddhism is always peaceful. It's, they have a very gentle attitude. If somebody would come and kill you the Buddhism would not put up resistance. But Buddhism, and Zen in particular, they have been enriching some Christian traditions. There has

been a lot of influence upon Christianity. And, who are not, you know, sapping their strength but, like, even some Catholic monasteries, they have been, they have introduced Zen training. Like, that's, I heard there's, in a Catholic monastery in New York, I mean, the Abbott, he was trained in Japan and, if you go to monastery you cannot tell whether it is a Zen monastery or Catholic monastery. There's Zen garden and all these schedule, it's like a mostly Zen schedule. But there is a lot of this spiritual experience. But Buddhism is, has a radical element for change. And this one English Buddhist was saying that Christianity, if they really want to change for humanity, they have to be disturbed. And being disturbed is good. You know, being disturbed is, in a sense, be awake, you know. And, but unfortunately, we have so much fundamentalism going on, you know, like, it's, it's quite a lot of hatred going on. But this thing, not only Thomas Merton, I think, what is it, Toynbee, said very early about, I don't know when Toynbee passed away but 20 years ago, like, the most important thing that would take place in the 20th century is the meeting of Buddhism and Christianity, that's what he said.

Well, it's, like, I'm very privileged to be here, having originally come from the East, and meeting with you and having talk. Listening to each other. You know, the people from different traditions are coming together like this is, I think, the most positive thing that's taking place in the world. I mean, some other people are making bombs. I mean, compared to that it's a thousand times better, you know. So, we should do something like this more. This is very necessary, especially in the face of, in the light of what's going on in today's world. We cannot simply ignore this. That's why I talk. There is no other reason.

Okay, thank you very much.

[recording ends and new recording begins with talking too faint to hear]

[recording ends and new recording begins]

…and, like, you know, I mean, for instance, we sit on this Earth and we are concerned about this Earth because, you know, it's like, human beings have come up with, you know, nuclear bombs that can just destroy the Earth.

(But is there a concept of God?)

We don't have a concept of God, that's, we don't have a concept of Creator. So that's why I try to bring your attention back to this minute. Like, you know, our life originates from this very moment.

(That's very difficult, I can see that it's very difficult for the Western mind to even conceive of what you're talking about. Because so many of the questions, like Juanita is asking right now, is a whole part of the Western culture. You know, to the concept of Creation, of a beginning, of a

God. You know, of that kind of a force. So, it's very difficult, I would think, for a Westerner to really grasp and accept the concept of Buddhism.)

(Can I ask one more question please?)

Surely.

(When we speak of reincarnation and, [Unclear] I believe his name is, he speaks of a continuation of life. And it seems that we in the West, when we think of reincarnation, we think of appearing on this Earth again with an awareness of who we are as the same, you know, we're talking about a spirit taking form in a new body. And I get the impression that in the Buddhist culture, that perhaps what they're talking about is the physical coming back, returning to dust, and coming and being part of a new life form but a different personality altogether. Could, could that…?)

Yeah, well, in Buddhism, the Buddhists, they believe we are constantly subject to samsara, there's a coming and going through the different life forms. But also, in Dharma, they are constantly urged to awaken to their true nature. And that is, well we are talking about life that is neither born nor annihilated. Life form that does not increase nor decrease.

(So, you're talking about, when you are saying a, the nature of something, that's sort of an aspect of what we might think of as personality.)

Yeah, we refer to it as unborn nature.

(Mhm.)

So, this is called, of course, Buddha-nature or Buddha-mind, they use different terms to refer to that. Well, it's, like different device to, to waken people, you know. People need different terms to awaken to their true nature. So here, and then they have a vow, they come back to, like, all beings one body. Now how do you realize that? When you awaken to your Buddha-nature then you realize all beings one body, then you realize that you are not separate. You are not separate from your relatives and friends, from rocks and trees. Here the, you know, comes the Buddhist worldview called Oneness, or concentration. Otherwise, aside from this we get constantly distracted, like reincarnation.

(Right, right.)

So, we constantly like to remind the beings right at this moment what are you doing?

(Another concept that's difficult for the Western mind to conceive. Juanita, thank you so much for your call. Bye bye. This is WXYZ Religion on the line.)

[Advertisement plays]

(WXYZ time, 9:42, I'm Levier Birdette and you're listening to Religion On The Line. And tonight, we're talking about Zen Buddhism, and with us in the studio is a Buddhist priest, a Zen master, Samu, who is here to respond to your questions and comments about Buddhism. The WXYZ phone lines are now open for your calls, toll free, from the following areas: phone 353-TALK toll free from Southfield, Franklin and Ferndale. Phone 873-TALK toll free from Detroit, Highland Park and Deerborn Heights. Dial toll free from Westland and Garden City, 425-TALK. Now from Waterford, you're on WXYZ with Levier Birdette and Samu. How are you, Fred?)

(Pretty good. This is Fred from Waterford, how are you folks tonight?)

(Fine.)

(Good. I'd like to know, on the marks on the forehead there's, I have one here which is a left arm sticking up with a cane or whatever, and I want to know if the marking on the foreheads, you know, the ones with the marks on the forehead you can rub his belly and ask him anything or what, how does that work?)

Mark on the forehead?

(Yeah, they got three marks above his forehead.)

What kind of statue have you got over there?

(It's what?)

It's a statue or, what is it?

(Yeah, it's a statue.)

(And you think it's a Buddhist statue?)

(Yeah?)

What kind of mark is that?

(Three marks above its forehead. This lady in a garage sale where I got it said you can rub its belly and you can get anything you want.)

I'm not familiar with that kind of statue at all and, where did you get it?

(In a garage sale.)

Oh, I see.

(You know, I wonder if that's a kind of Western concept of the mysteries that are sort of unknown to a lot of the Western people about Buddhism, and so that it may be easy to put any kind of concept on something, you know? Sort of like a magic lantern idea.)

Yeah.

(What kind of Buddha is it that you can just rub his belly and hold it in your left hand or something?)

Well, I just spent two weeks down in Mexico and a friend of mine down there took me to this witchcraft market. And there, to my surprise, I saw what we call here, you know, Laughing Buddha. You know, the one with a pot belly and, you know, with a grinning face?

(That's what I got.)

Oh, okay.

(Yeah, with three marks…)

That's not Buddha, it's, it's, this is something that got developed in the West, we don't have that in the East. But there, down there, the Mexican witches, well, I mean, I asked them, you know, I mean, it surprised me, they, you know, every witchcraft store, they had this, you know, pot bellied, grinning, laughing Buddha. And then they told me that, I asked, you know, what do you, what do people, you know, use this for? And they say, you know, you, you know, touch the belly and then, you know, luck gets invited. So I don't know how did this all get started but this, the one called Laughing Buddha, he was a Chinese monk who lived in 9th Century and he left quite a few episodes. And then after his death and his episodes, you know, got spread and he finally became kind of a legendary figure. But he's always associated, he took great care of children. He was very fond of playing with children. So the Chinese ones, you know, that, you know, adorn the Chinese windows, they usually, he, you know, he usually has, you know, seven or eight, or six or seven children. He's surrounded by children.

(Which is the best kind to get then?)

Yeah.

(Well, do you believe, like, it sounds to me like Fred is believing that he can get this Laughing Buddha, and rub his stomach, and hold it in his left hand, and all this kind of thing, and his wish is going to come true. Now that's, is that a concept of Buddhism?)

Yeah, okay, well no, it's not a concept of Buddhism. Well, there is such element in folk Buddhism, but it does not matter whether you've got, you know, Buddha statue, or pot bellied grinning, you know, Budai, you know, that's his original name, or Jesus, or Mary, or whatever.

As long as it works with you that's fine, you know. I mean, try it, and see whether it works, and then, you know.

(Sounds like a gimmick to me, Fred.)

(Yeah, what's a better kind to get to try though?)

(But Fred, I think the whole concept is something, if you believe in it, you know, you may want to give it a try but it sounds like a gimmick to just sell something, just as if you had walked to the store and somebody were going to sell you a magic lantern, and you would buy it.)

(What kind does he have?)

(He doesn't believe in that same kind of concept, of rubbing the stomach and you'll get your wish. That's not a Buddhist concept, that's a Western idea that's been placed on this Laughing Buddha.)

(Oh, I see.)

(Okay, thank you for your call, Fred.)

(Alright, have a good night.)

(You too, bye bye.)

(Bye bye.)

(This is WXYZ Religion On The Line. From Detroit, you're on WXYZ with Lavier Birdette and Samu. How are you, Dwayne?)

(Oh, good evening. My name's Dwayne, I'm calling from Detroit. And I was wondering, I'd like to ask the priest, does he have a organization or some foundation located in the Detroit area and if so, how would someone go about learning more about the Buddhist doctrine and contacting him?)

Well, we have a temple in Ann Arbor on Packard Road, 1214. And some of my students, they come from Detroit area. Right now we don't have any center in downtown Detroit but, well you can come to our Ann Arbor temple.

(There are also a couple of different meetings that are going to be taking place. One is on July the 14th at 7:30 in Ann Arbor at the Friends Meeting House. This is a talk about Zen Buddhism in the West today. That's going to be on Saturday July the 14th at 7:30PM in Ann Arbor, Friends Meeting House. Okay?)

(Okay, but does he plan to do anything along that line in Detroit in the near future, would you know?)

(In Detroit?)

(Yes.)

Well we'd like to but right now we have a summer training program going on in Ann Arbor at Ann Arbor temple so, if you come to Ann Arbor temple that's the first step you should take right now since there's no temple in Detroit now.

(Okay.)

(So you're going to need to travel, Dwayne.)

(I see.)

(Are you interested in Buddhism?)

(Yes, I am.)

(As a religion that you may want to practice, or just for your own understanding and knowledge, or what?)

(Well, in the sense that I would like to enlighten myself, right? And from what I've heard and thought about the Buddhist religion it seems to be a good path to take.)

(Okay. Dwayne, thank you so much for your call.)

(Okay, thank you.)

(Good luck to you, bye bye.)

Thank you.

(This is WXYZ Religion On The Line. From Birmingham, you're on with Lavier Birdette and Samu.)

(Yes, this is Dominic from Birmingham?)

(Yes, Dominic.)

(Good evening. I was wondering, how old is your guest and how long has he been practicing Buddhism.)

I was born in 1941, and I was left an orphan when I was 10 and then I was taken to a monastery. Actually, it all got started for very insignificant reason because, well, as an orphan I wanted to

live in a place, like a big place, which is very peaceful. So that happened to be Buddhist temple so my training got started there. Sometimes important things start with a very insignificant reason.

(Okay, and I was also wondering, how are you able to concentrate and practice your Buddhism with everyday anxieties such as depression, things along that line?)

Well, you have to learn some Dharma, or we say, you know, spiritual techniques to cope with your problems. And…

(What is Dharma?)

Dharma is, it has, it's a broad concept. It means teachings, or truth, or practice. You know, spiritual practice.

(So you're suggesting there are some Dharmas that perhaps Dominic could learn that could help him.)

Yeah, for instance, meditation is Dharma.

(Okay, and one more question. I was wondering, can you explain the impact yoga has had on Zen Buddhism, please?)

What did you say, yoga has?

(Has yoga had an impact on Buddhism, on Zen Buddhism?)

Yes, actually. Well, Shakyamuni Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, before he attained enlightenment under bodhi tree at Bodh Gaya, he tried yoga but, mind you there are many different types of yoga and actually, Zen, you might say, originated from yoga. It's a very refined, you know, form of spiritual yoga.

(Okay. Dominic, thank you so much for your call. This is WXYZ Religion On The Line. I'd like to hear from you. We're talking tonight about Zen Buddhism with our guest who is a Buddhist priest and Zen master, Samu, right here at WXYZ.)

Do Not Hesitate To Meditate
Teacher: Samu Sunim
Date: September 30, 1991
Location: Unknown
Event: Dharma Talk
Transcriber: Zack, Toronto
Date of Transcription: November 5, 2025 (re-listened by Jisik)

Buddhism is the teachings of Buddha or Buddhas …

… Buddha is not a name. Buddha is title. One who is awake. One who is fully awake. One who is enlightened. So Buddha, Buddhism, is about waking up or being awake.

Now, in Mahayana Buddhism, [”maum” (마음)] means mind. Our mind is Buddha. So unlike, unlike the teachings of other religions, in Buddhism we believe in ourselves. We believe in our capacity to help ourselves. So, for instance, we don’t reject ourselves. We are not sinners. So the beginning of Buddhist practice is learning to accept yourself. You know, for instance, meditation practices, you cannot sit and meditate rejecting yourself. That would be ridiculous. So meditation entails full acceptance of yourself.

Of course, you come in, say, you know, you have a good side, bad side, you have strengths and weakness, but you accept them all. Say you are a lazy person, accept that. You accept your misery, too. And anxiety, frustrations, despair, you accept them all. And you accept them all and give them job, give them work.

Now, I’ve found that people in this culture, they have great difficulty accepting themselves. They have a lot of struggle accepting themselves fully. The tendency is, people dwell too much on their negativities, on their weaknesses. So I urge you to accept yourself. You cannot start Buddhist practice, you cannot start meditation, without accepting yourself.

So some people do have difficulties, so even some Buddhist gurus, they specialize in empowerment setting. To instill trust, to initiate these people into, basically, trusting themselves. Tibetan Buddhism, for instance, is very good for these things. They, you know, come up with deities and they form special relationship with deities. Until, eventually, they would be transported to level of deities. It’s a gradual path. So that’s important. In order to trust yourself, in order to begin Buddhist practices, you must accept yourself. And you learn to rely on your

strength, not on your weakness. This is called Buddhist orientation. In other words, you learn, you start to follow, you start following, you start going in the direction of truth. We call it Dharma. Not in the direction of your karma. You don't fall into the details of your karma or non-truth, which would produce, inevitably, sorrow, separation, loneliness, and despair.

And another important thing is, say you have x number of bad habits. But important thing is you don't worry about it. Not worry about it, don't worry about it. And the focus, the emphasis, is to attach Dharma habits. So as you attach Dharma habits, as you accept spiritual values, as you follow spiritual directions and teachings, then these teachings, and this practice, and this discipline will deal with your defilements so you don't worry about that. That's also orientation.

So it's important to bring about this shift in your attitude and your outlook, in order to meditate, in order to follow a Buddhist practice. You have to make this clear over and over. You know, you hear me and something clicks, yeah, that makes sense, but it's still cerebral truth. It must touch your heart. So feelings are important.

Now, your meditation practice must contain three important things. No, before I mention this, first, you know, it's, when I say don't hesitate to meditate, don't hesitate to help yourself. In this consumer society, helping oneself becomes a task. People don't like tasks, but it becomes task. Because, for instance, we used to rely on supermarkets. So helping yourself does not come easily. We rely on the system. You don't help yourself. In other words, people don't exert themselves. They would take and receive.

So, for instance, meditation practice, like, well I sometimes tell people, if you cannot sit still, sit, sit still and see if you can help yourself [unclear] yourself. If you cannot sit still, say, for five minutes, you don't have to go and see your psychiatrist to find out what's wrong with you. See, you know, just sitting still. Sit quiet, and peacefully, without worrying about things. If you can spend five minutes, ten minutes each day, just sitting still, doing nothing, without worrying about anything, that would be big help, big help.

Eventually you'll find out what happiness that brings. You can do that, you can help yourself like that. But we have to come up with a little discipline. Even, it's always good to come up with a minimum practice. Sometimes people, you know, people are eager to make progress. This is after achievement or [unclear]. Now, this is different. You know, forget about making progress. So in Buddhism you say, you just sit. Just sit peacefully, just sit quietly, peacefully. And come out with a minimum practice, not maximum practice. Five minutes or ten minutes, yeah, you can do that

no matter how busy you are. So it's workable. You can do that without too much difficulty. If you cannot sit quiet and peacefully for five minutes every day or five days a week, you can take the weekend off, and, then, if you cannot do that, I mean, you would be in a very sorry state as a human being.
But now, that is not enough. You have to come up with a timeframe. Say, when I get up in the morning, after washing up, say you get up around 6:30 or 7:00, and from 7:10 to 7:15 you put that time aside for your meditation. No matter what happens, this is this five minute discipline, my meditation. Without this you will not be able to help yourself. So that's a little discipline. A little discipline in your life should help.

Now, the first thing is, just sit still. This thing is called playing host. It's like a mountain and white clouds. You play the mountain, you don't move. Thoughts, feelings, sensations, or daydreaming, they come and go, it's okay. They're like white clouds or floating clouds. They don't really affect you. That's what I mean, play host, play host, you don't play guest. Stop running around. You've done that enough, running here and there. Very exhausting, very tiring. You play host. You play the center. You play the mountain. The guests, they come and go, the clouds, they come and go. That's okay, that's okay.

And your meditation practice must contain three important elements. The first one is peace of mind. So you practice your meditation with great peace of mind. [Unclear] attend to peace. It's very important. And peace is inner work, inside job. You don't go around trying to attain peace, trying to achieve peace. So peace of mind. You sit peacefully. That is, your anxieties must cease when you sit. There are some techniques to help yourself with that. Of course, you know, I mean, you have acquired a number of anxieties, you know. So they would not easily go away. But there are ways to help, to keep them away. To be alone and sit still, and to remain unaffected by distractions.

And second, your meditation practice must contain happiness. You must sit with happy mind. That's very important. Peace and happiness are the two most important elements for successful work. You know, I know successful life is very important. We all go after successful life. Lot of, many of us, we go to the extremes to make our lives successful. Usually it is measured by material gains. Or ambitions or achievement. I can tell you the name of someone who has been very, very successful. And this guy comes home after another successful day. And he has, he has been admired by all because of his success. So he comes home after another successful day and quietly commits suicide. Because you cannot deceive yourself for long. It's that charade, or

dishonesty, or self-deception, or encrustation, that have been building inside. Has been choking this guy. Because he finally, he reached a point where he cannot stand it.

In traditional Buddhist Asia, if everything fails in your worldly life, people there, they know they could go up to the mountains and join the monastic community, you know. That's an alternative. But here, we don't enjoy such nice alternatives. So you either commit suicide or you find escape in drugs. And you may end up with mental hospitals, or correctional services. That's why the state spends a lot of time building and improving mental institutions and correctional services. So unfortunate. But then, when you think about it, we do have alternatives in this society. We have retreat centers. To a limited degree they provide help. It's nice. You can go to monasteries. You can go to retreat centers. Or you can come place like this. It's a humble place, but it's real. It's no lack of any amount of sincerity in a place like this.

Number three, your meditation practice must contain strong dose of gratitude. So you must practice your meditation with great gratitude. You know that lack of gratitude often leads to complaints and negativities. And you know that complaints and negativities kill our life. Lot of people, they ruin their life with complaints and negativities. They don't know, they don't even know about, about it. But in order to meditate, in order to help yourself, first you have to initiate. That means there has to be willingness on your part to help yourself. In other words, Buddhist salvation, Buddhist emancipation, always lies with you. We don't rely on our side resources, it's agencies for our salvation. Not only that, we emphasize human life gratefully. Because first you help yourself, and also human birth is very, very precious. As I say, as I pointed out, it is only in human life that not only can help yourself but to help others. In other words, you can help all beings. In other words, in human life, each of you must become accountable for the welfare of our society. For the welfare of all beings. The happiness and wellbeing of all beings very much depend upon the enlightenment of human beings. The awakened life of humankind. And meditation practice is a very important first step. And as Master [Unclear] said, it is not that you cannot do it, but it is only that you do not do it.

What time is it?

Once again, if you can sit up and close your eyes. Or maybe briefly you can now stand up. Oh, you are sitting in chairs, [something?]. Please repeat after me, M-A ma and U-M um. Maum means mind. It's, in Buddhism when we say mind it has wider connotation. Sometimes it means Dharma, sometimes it means Buddha, or teachings of enlightenment. And sometimes it means peace. My mind, my mind is peace, my mind is love, my mind is compassion, my mind is

enlightenment, my mind is Buddha, my meditation is Buddha, [enlightened peace?]. And the other day someone asked me about ocean mind. We talk about the journey of one's mind. And also, in high Buddhism, mind refers to the absolute truth, like Buddha in Dharmakaya, Dharmabody. That is unborn, uncreated. You know, in Christianity they talk about a creator. In the same way, the Buddhists, they point out the unborn and uncreated entity. That means the truth that is not subject to the cycle of birth and death. And the timeframe is very, very different in Buddhism. I mean, very different from Christian timeframe, than our timeframe at the beginning and the end.

Now, it's the, the journey of one's mind and, Buddhism is also rich in symbols. You know, we have Buddha statues, say [unclear] Buddha statue. These are teaching devices. It's very, Buddhism is a very visual religion. In the olden times, in traditional societies, women were discriminated. Women are still discriminated in our societies and, but by and large, woman in Buddhist societies, they fared much better. Even in religious traditions, the monks and nuns, they, at least outwardly, some nuns, they become subservient, but at least in doctrine they enjoy equal status. You know, I mean, they look the same. Sometimes you cannot tell one from the other. Their heads are shaved, and they don the same clothes, and all that. And they are very independent, they run their own temples. They are not, they don't depend upon monks like in Catholic traditions. In fact, in Korea, there is very, very flourishing nuns traditions. They, they were, so in traditional Buddhist societies, the women were not very well educated, even the common ordinary people. Anyways, [unclear…]. So the Buddhist monks, they were concerned with the salvation of common, ordinary people. So what they did is they came up with a lot of visual aids as teaching methods. So it's, you know, Buddhist culture is full of, like, visual art. Like the wall paintings, all kinds of paintings, and imageries, sculptures. So they, you know, make, I mean, they don't read and write so they cannot understand the high doctrine in the scriptures, but they can see these visual imageries and, you know, I mean, they are quite vivid, they are quite, some are very didactic, you know, nature and they do carry message. So, as we say, they make tactile contact with Buddhist teachings through the visual aids. So anyway they are, the flow of water or flowers, lotus feature, they feature highly in these visual teachings. They know what it is. So the journey of water which begins in very, very remote mountains, you know, as, what you call, as a trickle of water. Something like Buddhist movement…

[recording ends briefly and resumes]

As you can see, my English is still broken. Not much changed, it seems. Well, speaking of toilet tissue, toilet paper, well, that's one of the first words you have to learn when you come to…

In recent times, there has been increasing concern with unbalance in our lifestyle. This concern has been raised not in the third world or underdeveloped countries where people suffer from hunger, malnutrition, or common ailments due to poor sanitary conditions, but in civilized and industrialized countries. Like in the U.S. We live in a society where there is a strong preoccupation with excitement and pleasure-seeking or fun-loving. We also live in a society in which we identify urban life with drug addiction and violent crimes. And lot of people indulge in overconsumption. And also in these societies, we human beings have become masters of manipulation. For instance, we go to the extremes to stay young or to prolong life. And so, these days people in some circles, they are debating about the right to die gracefully. And also we have come up with this artificial insemination for reproduction. And we have created ethical problems in this. And all in all we suffer from too much materialism. And it seems that we have a blind trust with science and technology. So there have been some outcry for balanced life. In other words, lack of balance in our lifestyle has become an issue.
There is this beautiful book called Dhammapada, the sayings of Buddha. This is, this book is a collection of, of verses, or pithy sayings, or wisdom words. And there is, I forgot which chapter this line appears, it says, meditate, actually it says sit, you know. Meditate. Meditate, rest, and work. In a nutshell it captures the spirit of a balanced life.

The result of this too much materialism or seeking excitement has caused a lot of anxiety. So one characteristic of modern life is that we worry a lot. In this society, this is, this symptom is generally described as stress. We live in a stressful society, we live in an anxiety-ridden society. For instance, we worry about getting old. I never knew about this until I came to America, you know. It's quite anxiety. You know, I'm still surprised how many people worry about getting old. Apparently they don't, they don't like to get recycled. And if you worry a lot, of course you are not happy. And also, the other symptom that contributes to illness of our society is we are not quiet. We are not peaceful. In other words, we have gone astray.

One reason I may point out for this is we have been pursuing material or a successful life at the expense of some very important values which are of vital importance to human life. That is a religious life or spiritual life. You know, as you know, human beings are not only homo sapiens, not only homo [unclear], but also homo religious. In other words, we are, well this, I'll get back to this religion business later on, but we are spiritual being. Spirituality comes with human birth. In Buddhism we believe, among all beings, including gods, human birth is the most precious. It is only in human life, in human body, that one is capable of helping oneself. One is capable of spiritual awakening. And this has been neglected. Born in human body, born with spirituality, we

all have spiritual [unclear], spiritual longing. Regardless of who you are, privileged or underprivileged, man or woman, young and old. All have spiritual longing. And this has been neglected, the pursuit of spiritual happiness.

So we worry a lot and we like to be happy, we like to lead a happy life, but it seems that we don't know how. We don't know how to help ourselves to become a happy person. Because we have forgotten about spiritual values. In the Dhammapada it says, I lead you back to Dhammapada, you can live happily in poverty. It's true. One can live happily in poverty. It's called spiritual happiness. You can think about it, why you are not happy in the society of abundance? Why the quality of life does not improve in spite of a high standard of living? We have been pursuing certain things almost to the extent of being perverted.

Now, we human beings come in body and mind. And even in medical field, some doctors recognize unbalance in our medical cure. The tendency has been overtreatment, or overdose, overmedication. It's very interesting. So there is a cry for being wholesome again, being balanced again. To restore balance to our body, to restore balance to our mind. In these days, in this complex society, it requires awareness to do that. To be on guard. Because so much is available. And advertising is very strong. See, everything's promoted. You know, we have become consumers helplessly.

So, and we have become, we have begun to recognize there is a built in mechanism for self-healing. I have to be careful here, I'm not trying to be too superstitious. I know, you know, here, again, it's, here balance means, in Buddhism, wisdom. To come up with wisdom. In other words, to good common sense. Good common sense. I'm using this good common sense, or balance, or wisdom, interchangeably. I'm using these words, for instance, in non-theological terms. Everyday use. So it's, here, again, ecology can be very useful. Not only for the cure of environmental problems. Sometimes Buddhism is called eco-religion. There is a built in healing system, built in mechanism, for self-help, for self-healing, in our ecosystem. Either in our physical body or in the nature.

So, for instance, people talk about balanced diet. This is no nonsense, you know. Balanced life, balanced lifestyle. In other words, avoiding, first, you know, the first lesson to take is to avoid excesses, to avoid extremes. This is called the Middle Way. That's the starting point of Buddhism, Middle Way. To restore balance in your life. In other words, to become happy. Living should be joyful. Living is happiness. So now, in our mind, or in our spirit, Buddhism does not separate body from mind. There again, you know, there's healing or cure.

Now, in the world we have two large traditions that have traditionally provided answers for cure, for healing spiritually, or for salvation, or inner emancipation. That's…

[side A ends, side B begins]

…that have traditionally provided answers for cure, for healing, spiritual healing, and for salvation. Healing and salvation. That's a prayer tradition, and meditation tradition. In the West, we all are used to praying, prayer tradition. For instance, Christianity. Christians pray. Muslims pray. I suppose Jewish people pray. Hindus pray. Some Buddhists pray actually, but the Buddhists, they meditate. To heal. To cure yourself. You, first of all, you know, you meditate to be quiet, to be peaceful, to heal yourself. And to come to freedom. To awaken.

Now, it is important to note this here. The, Buddhism arose in ancient India about 2500 years ago. So historically, the oldest religion is Buddhism. The prevalent religion of the time when Buddhism arose was Brahmans. It was later known as Hindus. So Buddhism have to deal with the Brahmans. Now, this religion, Brahmanism, was introduced to the Northwest of Indian subcontinent about 1500, before the common era.

Now, this religion, Brahmanism, came with distinct spoken language and also the people who carried this religion were known as Aryans. So eventually these people conquered the subcontinent and became the dominant race. And the form of the language spoken by these people was Sanskrit. Now Sanskrit is, through Greek and, through Greek and Latin, it's linked to modern European languages like English, such as English. And they, the Brahmanism, this religion was based on a body of revealed oral teachings called Veda, like Bible. Revealed oral teachings. And the followers of this religion, they worshipped gods. For instance, they would sing praises of a special god. For instance, they would pray to a special god asking for a good harvest, or increasing cattle, or, important of all, immortality in the afterlife with the gods in Heaven.

Now, Buddhism rejected this. Buddhism rejected the scriptural authority of the Vedas. Buddhism denied the efficacy of prayers and sacrifices. Buddhism refused to accord divine status to God or gods. So it was revolutionary in that way.

Now, interestingly enough, say, 2500 years later, now in the West, Buddhism is confronting Christianity, which is related to the Hinduism, historically. And it's, as Arnold Toynbee said

before he died, he said, when we look at the 20th century two or three hundred years later from now, we may have to recognize that the most brilliant achievement of this century is not technological and scientific advancement, but encounter of Buddhism in the West, and with Christianity, in particular. So, it's a very interesting period.
And now, having said that much, having given that much background, I'll talk about meditation. The topic of this evening's talk is do not hesitate to meditate. It's, you don't have to think about meditation in difficult terms. In Buddhism, meditation is sitting quietly. You can start with that, sitting quietly. To help yourself.

Now I mentioned balanced life, or wholesome life. We yearn for wholesomeness. See, spiritual life, and religious life, and also spiritual values, we cannot become happy without embracing some vital spiritual values. And without spiritual cultivation, in other words, without spiritual life. So meditation practice is very central to Buddhist life. You cannot think of Buddhist life without meditation, just like you cannot think of Christian life without prayer. So when I say wholesome life, or awakened life, balanced life, whatever language you use, eventually, Buddhism does not attach much importance to words. So sometimes Buddhist teachers, they use words pretty loosely, which sometimes confuses people because in this culture you have very strong, kind of, you know, what was it called, I mean, Christianity has strong novice tradition. It's very, you know, like, they take words very, very seriously. Buddhists, they don't. They don't take words very seriously. In other words, they don't, well, you know, there are lots of scriptures. All the scriptures of great religions of the world combined would be no match for Buddhist scriptures, there are hundreds and hundreds of volumes. And the reason is, Buddhists, they don't take scripture seriously. I mean, they would go crazy if they take all these scriptures seriously. It's called a wisdom tradition. It's, words are necessary to point out the way. So once you see the way, then you don't have to carry the words with you. It's like a fisherman, I mean, fishermen need fishing net in order to catch fish. I mean, it would be stupid if he still carries the fishing net after catching a fish. So Buddhists are sometimes very practical people.

My mind is Buddha. That is, our spiritual essence is enlightenment. In other words, enlightenment is already present in human life. And we take care of that, must take care of that. And that's what meditation practice is about. Taking care of our enlightenment that is already present in our life is our meditation practice.

I'll take questions.

(Tips on breathing?)

Pardon?

(Any techniques for breathing?)

Buddhist, traditional Buddhist meditation always begins with a breathing technique or breathing meditation. That is, usually Buddhist teachers will tell you to focus on your breath to, in order to concentrate, in order to focus your attention. The reason is your breath is your life. Your breath is there all the time, with your life. So it's easy to focus on your breath. And you can do that any time. Watch your breath, follow your breath, or you count your breath, in order to focus yourself. In order to concentrate yourself. So that's the, usually, first thing one does in Buddhist meditation. It's concentrating, we make great effort to eliminate distractions, our life is full of distractions so it's concentration. We talk about, meditation is concentration, which is called Samadhi. So concentration, we have this Sila Samadhi and Prajna, concentration, wisdom. So wisdom concentration. In other words, you know, you cannot seeking emancipation through distractions. So even some of the Christian teachers, they, you know, they, their Christian meditation, they call it centering practice, but it's Zen practice. They learn to concentrate, in order to pray. In order to pray they need concentration.

Sorry, what were…?

(The lotus position, is there any, I mean, I don't know a thing about the Zen Buddhist teachings, but I've read about the position, the lotus position in meditation. Is it, is it that important?)

Yes, it is important to, not just the lotus position, but it's important to learn to sit correctly. For instance, it's difficult, you cannot do meditation properly while lying down, or while slouching around, or sitting in a couch. So, like, sitting in upright posture, holding your back straight, holding your spinal column straight, like the way I'm sitting now, it helps you concentrate better. And also, it's, we say body has to sit correctly, then mind settles. And conversely when mind settles also it helps body so mind affects body and body affects mind. Both affect our lifestyle. And when you sit firm and solid in correct posture then you can remain indifferent, or you can remain free from some distractions. As we say, you know, you can remain unaffected by either praise or by insult. In other words, you can hold your center, not getting tossed around, you see. So you feel that when you sit right. Say it's, you feel very wholesome. You know, there's optimum feeling that comes with the correct posture. So posture is important.

Now, but there is this thing. More important than posture is your sincere heart. If you sit in the wonderful, majestic posture, but if you lack sincere heart, you would not go, you cannot go very far. Now I can tell you from my own experience, like, when I was training as a student Zen monk in Korea, in South Korea, like, this, you know, we were professionals, you know, like, we were monastics. We did nothing but meditation until you get enlightened, until we open up our Wisdom Eye. So even though we are professionals in sitting in meditation, you know, I mean, if you sit for days, and months, and sometimes years, that's why, you know, pain accumulates. So, like say you sit in lotus posture and, but as soon as we have two legs, you can sit in two different full lotus postures. I could manage only one full lotus posture, but, well, the other guys, they were pretty good. You know, they could sit in this full lotus posture and after a while in the other full lotus posture. So, you know, if you sit for a while in one posture and then, and then you switch to the other posture, and it's such a relief, it's like a vacation. And it's, truly, you know. And I was unable to do that so it was very, it was quite painful, quite hard. But I persevered. And looking back I think it helped me, and those guys, you know, they could do that, you know, sit in this posture, and after a while switch the other, and, you know, they were good, you know. But, you know, like, perseverance, and of course you cannot persevere for long without a sincere heart. So sincere heart is more important than the postures. So I can tell you, if you cannot sit in lotus postures or if you cannot sit on the mat and cushion, you know, you can certainly sit in chair. So like the way you're sitting now, but somehow there are ways you can sit in chairs firm and solid, not wobbly. Because if you are wobbly, you know, it's not good. You have to sit without wobbling. So, but if you have a sincere heart, sure, you can help yourself. You can attain enlightenment while sitting on chairs.

Yes. Yes.

(You gave me the impression that the lack of spirituality, in our life that we're living is the fact that we live in a developed society. I'm not sure that in developing country we can enjoy higher level of spirituality. Is it true that we can be happy in poverty, but I don't think that poverty is enough to be happy. What do you think?)

Yeah, well, I didn't mean that. I was referring to balance and unbalance. I was mainly referring to unbalance. Actually I was pointing out overconsumption. Well sure, people in underdeveloped countries, they suffer from hunger and malnutrition, but in developed or overdeveloped countries like United States we suffer from overconsumption and drug addiction. So, I mean, the poor and rich, they both suffer. And when I say, well, I mean, you can talk about voluntary poverty, I mean, you know, like, say the monastics, you know, they undergo voluntary poverty. You know, I

mean, but, well I, you see, the, South Korea is very developed now but when I was growing up, we were very poor, you know. You know, I can really tell you the, you know, it's, often, you know, for breakfast I had, you know, it's rice soup but, you know, the, you know, the, just a few grains of rice and a lot of water. Just to make up, you know, a meal. And then lunch is kind of porridge so when I attended elementary school and was, one day we went on excursion and the excursion was, you know, to go and see airplane. There was a military airport, you know, just light planes. But that was a kind of a novelty, we had never seen any planes. I mean, during the Korean War we saw a lot of planes but…

So, I mean, you cannot take porridge for lunch. It spills, you know. You know, I was very embarrassed so, but I really wanted to join the excursion so I went anyway without lunch, without lunchbox. So when the lunchtime comes around, the teacher whistles. Then, usually they, you know, the parents come along with their children on excursion and I had no mother, I was alone. And so lunchtime is a very enjoyable time, eating and chatting. And often, you know, rich families, they invite teachers to join, you know, and their lunch and open special delicacies. So what I did was, when the whistle rang for the lunchtime, I immediately ran into the woods, you know, to hide myself. Because it's very embarrassing that I came without a lunchbox. So in the woods I saw people, I watched people eating and that made me really hungry. It was pain, I [unclear]. It was really pain, watching them enjoy eating.

I come from such a culture, but it's, who knows, so I remember, so, you know, I would walk to school and then, it's a long walk. So I got exhausted, I had to lie down. I was young, I had to lie down. It's malnutrition. And just had no energy to make it home, so I would lie, it's, was, I, in spring I would see, what, that, the radish stalk, the yellow flowers, you know. There's always, halfway there's yellow flowers, you know. Long stalks, you know, I remember that. And then the whole world become yellow and I would almost, very close to fainting. So I would always, yeah, sit down and practically lie down looking up to sky. I remember that experience.

Well, sure it's, it's painful, you know, not being able to have enough to eat. But it's, some villages, you know, like, there are vegetables and, say the crop is okay, and then, before, you know, television, it was [unclear] before electricity came, you know, they were happy. I mean, they, you know, I mean, they were content with what they had. But now, I mean, here we have plenty. It's, it's still amazing, you know, like, I can't tell you, like, this temple, like, for three or four years now we are, we've had a rummage sale, huge rummage sale. We go around and pick up things. And very useful things, you know. I just, again and again, I'm very surprised how, you know, what kind of things people throw away. And then, the students, when they return they buy

those things. So that's how we have survived and, you know, built a temple. So the wastefulness. But it's, still it's, you know, it's, learn to be content with the way you are, with contentment.

Did I answer your question?

([Unclear])

I think you got the message. Any other questions? Yes?

(Did your teacher tell you to come to North America or why did you come to North America?)

It's quite a long and boring story. And I sometimes say, to make the long story short, just have a, it was unplanned. I was just drifting along. You might say I was, well, in 1960 when Chung-hee Park, the general, when he came to power through the military coup, he order all the monks serve in the armed forces. Before then the monks were exempt from military duties. So a lot of monks got drafted, and I was also drafted. And a lot of monks deserted because, you know, military life is very traumatic. You know, I mean, it's violent and all that. So anyway, I was a deserter. But that's what happened. And, of course, if I stayed back there perhaps I may have enjoyed a better life. Sometimes, I mean, over there to be monk means, you know, he's a somebody. You do enjoy, well there is a lot of Christianity going on there, the evangelical brand of Christianity, very aggressive, but still there's a very strong Buddhist culture, so if you're a monk you gain respect and, you know, you enjoy, there is certain social status. And over here, and, to be a Buddhist monk does not mean anything, I found out. And that was nice, that was nice, and fresh. And, so, but, you know, if I stayed back I would have been deprived of, you know, this enriching experience. Bringing Buddhism over to the West. It just, kind of, unexpected, you know, happened.

I'll take one last question.

(In the practice of meditation you say to meditate from 7:10 to 7:15 but, say at 6:00 you were stung by a bee, would you still meditate at 7:10 because it would be kind of hard to get peace of mind, and happiness, and gratitude that comes?)

Mhm. Do you think you would be stung by bee early in the morning?

(Well, say a migraine headache. [Unclear…])

There is this, some kind of, we have folk hwadus or folk koans. Not really high koans, folk koans. It's, say there is the, you know, the Zen teachers, they throw these kind of questions to test the different qualities of the candidate, you know, students. And say, well, you are on the road and, say, traveling monk. You are on the road and you come across an instant where, like, spider, you know, makes web and waits in hiding, you know, and, to catch flies or butterflies. So, and finally butterfly, a butterfly got caught and tried to escape and cannot make it, and then spider comes down and, in order to swallow this butterfly. So monk is watching this. So now, if you save butterfly you would deprive the spider of his meal, it would be hungry. Then, if you help spider then you would sacrifice butterfly. So what would you do?
Well there is this, it's, you know, eventually it develops, you know, I mean, there are situations in which you run into this kind of dilemma in society, real society. Usually, then, you know, the students, they point out, sometimes, you know, smart students point out, nevermind about the outside circumstances and conflict. What about the conflict inside your mind? So that, of course, leads you to meditation. To come up with wisdom.

Okay, thank you everybody. Do you have any announcements?

(Yes. For a start, first of all, [unclear…] in the United States for the next [unclear]. And we'll be conducting our Sunday Service [unclear…] on the 13th, and the 20th, and 3rd of November. The 13th and the 20th of October and the 3rd of November. The Sunday Service is between 5 to 7PM and so you're all welcome to come at that time. We conduct some meditation and Buddhist chanting [unclear…]. This Sunday Service is open all of the time, that's when he isn't here, so you're welcome to come along and it's a great way to learn about the basic practices of the temple. And if you already meditate, to meditate with other people. It's all very supportive [unclear]. So you can have an idea of the offerings of the temple, on the 31st of October we're offering a five Thursday evening introductory meditation course. Okay, so Zen meditation course, which covers the basics of all the things that Sunim talked about. The posture, the breath, the basics of your practice but mainly that awareness bit [unclear…]. He usually teaches one [unclear]. We have a study group coming up. It's for five Monday evenings. Two in October, two in November, and one in December. And it's led by one of our members who [unclear…], his name is [Unclear]. It's on basic Buddhist [unclear]. It will begin with study on the basic sutras and we had it during the summer. And I think the people that were in that group really enjoy it. We have a period of study and then we stop to meditate [unclear], then we have a period of study and stop to meditate. We used to study the whole time but it got too much for us. So the combination seems to work. [Unclear]. We have a retreat, one day, in October, and two days in

November. And at our Toronto temple, five days in December. So if you're interested in any of those things, [unclear…]. [Unclear…]. Our temple is supported by the [unclear] of members who are [unclear…]. Also, [unclear…]. That we officially [unclear…]. If you're interested in being on our mailing list there's a special card that you can fill out. [Unclear…]. Tea is being served after in our bookshop and you're welcome to stay and talk to someone that was here or any of us in meditation class. [Unclear].)

They can pick up the information on Introductory Course. That information is here somewhere, [unclear].

([Unclear…])

[Unclear…]

(In the hallway is this brochure. It doesn't look much, just like that. But Sunim spent quite a bit of time writing about the introductory courses which we teach. We've been doing it for about twelve years now, and it's very well written. Posters just didn't seem to do it but the explanation is excellent here. And also the explanation of retreats has been done by Sunim. So it's a really valuable thing to have to understand what we're doing but also to understand the idea of learning meditation when doing retreats. And you're certainly welcome to pick up any [unclear…].)

Thank you.
…
…U-M, um.
(Um.)
Ma…
(Ma…)
Um.
(Um.)
Ma…
(Ma...)
Um.
(Um.)

And join your hands together in hapjang. It is nice, we say two hands, you bring them together and form a single unit. It's called sincere heart. Sincere heart is very important, sincere heart.

Even though you don't know about religion, you know sincere heart. That's your religion. So if you have a sincere heart, you know, you'll become clear and you'll find direction. And, in Buddhism we say right hand represents the enlightened world. And that's the world of Buddhas and bodhisattvas. Left hand represents unenlightened world, the world of ordinary sentient beings. So instead of talking about Heaven and Hell you talk about enlightened world, unenlightened world. The journey is from unenlightened world to enlightened world. Or unenlightened society to enlightened society.

So this is a very peaceful song and you can sing quiet.

(Chanting Maum)

Sunday Morning Dharma Talk
Teacher: Samu Sunim
Date: Unknown
Location: Unknown
Event: Dharma Talk
Transcriber: Zack, Toronto
Date of Transcription: November 24, 2025 (re-listened by Jisik)
…

Good morning. Please sit comfortably.

You would recall a while back we heard something about political correctness or religious correctness, whatever correctness that society is demanding correctness in specialized areas. These days you may have noticed the demand for civil attitude, so we talk about it, uncivil attitude and civil attitude in our society. We have to think about the social climate that questions the public attitude in certain sectors of our society. In a word, we can say our society suffers from a lack of civilizing influence. For instance, television, movies, or talk shows, or violent confrontations, or seeking justice through legislation and law enforcement, these are hardly civilized influence. So, we live in such a social climate which seems to perpetuate this vicious cycle.

When Buddhism, well, if I just dwell on this correct [unclear] civil and uncivil attitude for just a little bit, like, say, religious bigotry, fundamentalism, just as yesterday I saw that a group of people, they would come out and say publicly they don't believe in other religious beliefs that's other than Christianity and they don't approve and they don't appreciate any other than Christianity. Well, that, this would be partly ignorance, but it's, that would be including Judaism and Islamism, for instance. I think these people would say those things publicly, they may not be aware of the origin of Christianity. I think these three religions, Christianity, Judaism, and Islamism, they are all grounded in biblical tradition, so they are called biblical traditions.

Anyway, when Buddhism was being introduced to the West, still Buddhism is going through the process of establishing itself in the West. The religious scholars, they found out that Buddhism is not anthropomorphism. In other words, Buddhism is a non-theistic religion, so it does not fit into their traditional definition of what religion is about. For instance, like biblical religions.

So, they tried number of things. Obviously, you know, like, although Buddhism, Buddhist tradition or Buddhist religion, does not fit into their conventional definition of what religion is, but if you go and visit Buddhist country in Asia, over there it's very much religion. So, it is

practiced. It is a major world religion. So, they tried to redefine what religion is. And one scholar in particular, he, I think that scholar is still alive, English scholar, he came up with this idea after studying the Buddhist tradition and doctrine and history extensively, he came up with this, said Buddhism is a whole range of civilization, and he said if you look at the Buddhist practice and Buddhist teachings like, such as tolerance and, Buddhism is like a repository of wisdom, a wisdom tradition, and compassion attitude, and all this. It's a civilizing influence. And you can look at Dalai Lama. He goes around, and saying kindness is the best policy. A simple teaching, but it's certainly, what he's saying is, you know, like, he is contributing to civilizing influence in this society. If everyone is, for instance, if everyone meditates for a little while, and our society would become a lot less violent. And also, the Buddhist idea of promoting enlightened society and promoting liberation for all beings, not just human beings. Or cutting across gender, and all this race, and creed. It's certainly civilizing influence. And the lack of dogma in the Buddhist teachings. Certainly, lack of religious bigotry, for instance. So great religious tolerance.

Now, and also one way you can look at your own practice is, beside from what I used to emphasize for your meditation practice, for your coming to temple, it's like, you can take, look at this like peace study. You come to temple to study peace and to study, you know, wisdom, and to study compassion in order to devote your life and to promote, to devote your life to peaceful equality, nirvana. Nirvana may be a dirty word, maybe open to misinterpretation. And you can see at the shop sign of nirvana, samsara. You know, it's words. Words are live and it's how people use or misuse. And, but you can say peace, promote peace and happiness of all beings. That, that comes with your commitment to meditation practice. That's, what we call it bodhisattva vows. So that's inherent in Buddhist teachings.

Now, in the, in the past, in the olden times, the Buddhist teachers, they came up with these various teaching methods to spread Dharma. Actually, the word of religion in Buddhist countries is called Dharma. And they came up with this numerical list. Like I can see here, people living in contemporary society, on daily basis they wrestle with this number of distractions, you know. And so, it's very stressful to deal with, say, so many commitments and, I mean, they like conditions, I like to do this, this, this. They run, you know, of course and the list goes almost endlessly. And then they suffer from very short span of attention. You know, I conduct introductory meditation course and I show them a relatively simple teaching. I show them how to sit, postures, like asanas. And, like, you know, three lotus postures, and modified Burmese posture, and [unclear] posture, and good for nothing Confucian, Korean Confucian scholar posture. They like that, you know. And also, the story that comes with it. And then, you know, about a week later, or even just in the same class that you sat from 6:30 to 8:30, and then I ask them what postures did we do? And they forget, already forget. They cannot name them. It's just

terrible. And, so just, you know, it's, they just, you know, they just cannot have a kind of sustained, you know, maintain sustained attention. You know, concentrate. Concentration.

So, in the past, obviously there are some people just cannot, even one of the Buddha's disciples, he was terrible, he just couldn't remember anything. That's why, you know, finally, well, there is some euphemistic teaching, Buddha finally gave him a mantra, mantra. You know, like, Christians have mantra. Have mercy on me, or something like that. Something to just repeat over and over again, simple teaching. So, they have, they came up with this numerical listing. Say okay, Dharma, and [unclear] under categories, but one, two, and three, four, and five are the Three Refuges, Threefold Worlds, and all this. So, if you like at this, you know, first you, it's called recollection, you know. It's, it's Dharma, and Dharani, and Sati, and Samadhi. And first you don't have to, you know, know all these things, you know. They come, the teachings, they come like this. But it's, like, you can see Dharma and Dharani, they are related. At least the root. And then Sati and Samadhi are related. So, Sati is like Vipassana meditation and Samadhi is like concentration and, like, Mahayana and Zen tradition.

Now here, numerical listing so they say Dharma, and Dharani, and Sati, and Samadhi. So, they, it's called recollection practice, try first to remember. And that's also what happens to, when you, in society, you know, it's, it's secular world. If you, you learn all these electrical gadgets and all these things, you know, trademarks and good products. But also, like, if you, you know, show interest in, you know, Dharma study, that's how you remember what is Dharma, what is Dharani. And Dharma and Dharani, the root of, called D-H-R, or D-H-A-R. It's to uphold and to support what is universally wise, what is infinitely wise, and to maintain that. It's like Dharma Guardians. So, it's a recollection, first you have to remember these things. And then Sati comes. Sati means, you know, you, like, memorize and you pay attention. So, mindfulness. And then Samadhi and concentration. So, this way you can all, you know, that's a kind of numerical list, they recite this, you see.

First, the Buddhist tradition, you know, when the Buddhist sutras, scriptures, they got committed to writing about, almost five centuries after the first Buddha, the historical Buddha, passed away. So, during, over these five centuries, the teachings were transmitted, you know, through oral transmission. Orally. So that's, you know, that's why the early Buddhist teachings, they're all devised to help you recite and learn things by heart. So that was great tradition, and that was somewhat kept even after the teachings were committed to writing. And then that's why it says, even in the Metta Sutta it says recollection. You have to remember these things, certain things. Before you die.

And now, when you practice meditation, it's, first there is posture and then it's, two things are very important. First, you know, we call it meditation light or Dharma moon. That's, when you

sit, like, it's, chin tucked in and, of course, if you, if you watch the tip of your nose, and then, where, after watching the tip of your nose briefly where your eyesight falls, that's about three feet ahead of you, that's where you keep your eyesight during meditation. So, we don't close our eyes, this is important. So, your eyes are half closed. So, you maintain your awareness during the meditation, you maintain your awareness over there. And, of course, if you lose your eyesight, if you lose your meditation light, then it means your mind is wandering, your mind is gone for shopping. So, and there, it's, this awareness, this meditation light, helps you protect your meditation practice. In other words, helps you, it helps you, it helps your mind, it helps you prevent your mind from running around. So, when you're in good concentration, it's, of course the concentration is focused inward, just awareness. Like, it's, provides protection for your light. Because when you are in good concentration you feel, you know, like kind of, you [unclear], where your meditation light is very bright. Very, kind of, brightness prevails. Sometimes you get that feeling in your concentration light.

Now, the second thing is, like, concentration. That's, like, awareness, that provides protection for your meditation light. Concentration, say you, if your meditation practice is jhana, jhana meditation, jhana means oneness meditation, so you concentrate, you learn to concentrate your mind. Here, your mind means your feelings, sentiments, sensations, everything, all included. Thoughts. That's your mind, so manifestation of mind. So, you concentrate your mind on the sound of jhana on outgoing breath. So that's, so when you breathe out it's called dantian breathing. It's about three inches below your navel, so as your breath goes out it becomes a little bit hollow. You feel that. But you don't have to be always conscious about that, all you have to do is refocus your mind, concentrate your mind, on the sound jhana, identifying it with outgoing breath.

And then you, then you pause and allow your breath to come in, allow your breath come in. And then you go onto next practice. But now, you have to feel very, very comfortable with your breath. So, in other words, don't rush to next practice, next practice. You know, we have, unconsciously we have always that achievement-oriented mind. Like craving, always, you know, like, you know, if you do it, you know, go next, next, you think you're achieving or making progress, something like that. It does not work like that. It's just almost the opposite. When I say feeling comfortable it's also relating that you have to have peace of mind, peace of mind is very important. So, under no circumstance you should lose peace of mind. If you lose peace of mind, if you become anxious, you just stop practicing for a while and just sit, sit just in resting, you know, restful feeling. And then when you have peace of mind then you resume your practice.

Now, talking about breath, you just concentrate on big breaths. Now, when you feel, when you run out of breath or when you feel short of breath, there's always small breaths coming in and out. They adjust, they always do their work, so you don't have to worry about it. So, what I'm

saying is, all you have to do is, you start the next practice when you feel, almost absolutely, when you feel very, very comfortable with your breath. You feel that.

Okay, now the other thing that is of importance is, say when you do formal practice like you did this morning, right? So you sit for 15 minutes, we sit for 25 minutes, say when you practice at home for formal practice, say you sit for 15 minutes or 5 minutes, 10 minutes, 20 minutes, then at the beginning, at the beginning if you do jhana practice, jhana meditation practice, then just make sure that you do a set of three jhana practice. Like, jhana, jhana, jhana. And that may take a minute or two minutes depending upon, you know, the length of your breath and all that. That, make sure that you do at least one set of three jhana practice in good concentration. Usually, you can do that because your mind is fresh at the beginning. And also, in order to help you practice better, if you practice by yourself, you can make a little sound. That helps. That helps you maintain your concentration. And then with that strength see if you can, you know, do the next set of three jhana practice as well. But somewhere along your mind would wander. Okay? And, and then don't worry about it. It just, habitually your mind, it's nothing to worry about. That's the way your mind has got used to, you see. Just like, you know, like when you wake up people habitually, you know, drink coffee or something like that.

And then, and then at the end if you sit for 15 minutes, just towards the end you have one set of three jhana practice, you know, in good concentration. So, if you have, like, say if you sit for 5 minutes, 10 minutes, or 15 minutes, 20 minutes, at least at the beginning and towards the end you have, you know, one good practice. You know, one set of three jhana practice, or you [unclear] jhana [unclear], that's, you know, in good concentration. That way you can control. That's your Dharma practice. And then, if you can do that pretty good, then you can try, say, in the middle, in the middle part of your meditation you can have another good practice with good concentration. So that way you can control. And then the main thing is, your mind wanders, that's nothing unusual. So don't worry about it.

Now, good concentration means, one word, Buddhists, they use different words. I mean, you know, like, you remember Zen has this famous expression, no dependence upon words and letters. Simply because you are not dependent upon words and letters you can use words very, very creatively. That's why there are so many books about Zen. Not just in the West but, you know, you're not tied up with words. But if you're just tied with words, I mean, that, you know, like, like bible, you know. They take it very seriously. So it's all kinds of, you know, the correct interpretation, they argue about it. Which is correct interpretation, the whole theology is based upon that. What is the correct interpretation of the Logos or the words of God. So, it's, anyway, one word they use is self-forgetfulness. You can attain self-forgetfulness through good concentration. That means you can really attain freedom of mind. That's like, from these all, oppressive forces. Inside and all that. But always remember it's awakening. First, mindfulness

means, you know, like, breathing means aliveness, fully alive. And then that comes with awakening.

Samu Sunim Ann Arbor Feb 1986
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[chanting in Korean]

Once upon a time, once upon a time is a good way of beginning. It indicates timelessness and universality, which Buddhists learned very early. Actually in the inception of Buddhism. It's embedded in the teachings of Buddha. So once upon a time, Lord Buddha assembled the twelve animals and had them race a long distance, like long distance track. Like snakes, and tigers, and cow, and rat. It's such a long distance.

So, they all started out and, but rat, you know. Rat is small and, you know, it thought, well, you know, I'll never cover that long distance, so he jumped up on the back of cow. And cow didn't know, you know. He was completely unaware that small rat was riding on his back all the while. So anyway, so, cow is like, always, you know, steady and faithful, you know. Never slows down. It's slow animal, but, you know, like, keeps his steady faith, pace.

So cow came out, you know, first runner. And just before cow reached the goal, you know, the rat jumped out. So rat became number one. So Buddha was, Buddha know all along, you know. So rat came out proudly that he was the number one, you know. And, well, cow was completely unaware of that and, and also he looked innocent as usual, you know.

So, the Lord Buddha said, that was okay. So rat was number one and cow was number two. So that's why, like, the twelve animals and then ten stems, combination of them makes the 60 year cycle, you know, in oriental counting of the years and ages, anyway, in making up numerical lists.

So, last year was the year of the rat. So that's the beginning of the 60 year cycle. And usually, you know, the occult Buddhists, they are active, you know, at the beginning of the year and just beginning of, kind of, new cycle, you know. They perform all kinds of rites. And now, this year is, so the year of cow so I just wanted to let you know how it happened in case you may be curious.

There are these three Dharma seals. Seals means, you know, these, the absolute truth is, like, sealed, you know. No change. So the first of the three Dharma seals is everything is impermanent. All things are impermanent. They call it Anicca. So we all suffer that, you know. If you have attachment and, no matter what that is, you know, it's going to come to an end, you know. So it's, everything is impermanent. And your physical body, everything is brittle.

Number two is, there isn't really true self, you know. You think, well, you've got self, your personal identity, you know. You think there is a continuity, you know, in your selfhood. But then, there is no such thing as, you know, selfhood or [unclear]. There is no true self. It's just, the five skandhas, the form, feelings, perceptions, impulses, and consciousness, you know, they make up, they create a kind of a false notion of a personal identity. They interact. That's what we are all about.

So, in the Heart Sutra, which the temple people recite, five skandhas are empty. Form is empty. Feelings, perceptions, impulses, and consciousness, they are all empty. So, observing Avalokitesvara, the Bodhisattva of Great Compassion, delivered all beings from their suffering. Sounds very simple.

So, if you realize, I mean, to your bone that everything is impermanent and there is no true self, then you attain enlightenment. Then you gain your freedom. That's called nirvana. It's as simple as that.

But our conditions persist. Now, what conditions? The Buddhists, they talk about the three obstacles, three main obstacles. Number one is greed. Greed. And then anger or hatred. You know, you can see, you know, some people, they can get angry for a number of years or for hundred years. Something bothers them, you know. And of course delusion or ignorance. So, we've got greed, anger, delusion or ignorance.

Now, these are created because of the conditions. So if you remove those conditions, then we'll be freed from greed, anger, and ignorance. So how can we remove our conditions and function properly? Gaining freedom?

Now, this year we are going to have a precept taking ceremony. So usually I ask people, I mean, those who are willing to take precepts, or willing to make a spiritual commitment, to do prostrations. It's, prostrations are kind of a new custom, alien custom to North America. Like, years ago, I used to go to Artpark, Lewiston, New York, where these Indians, they get together and hold kind of international powwow. It's a big outside park. That's what they do in summer, you know. They get out and do outdoor activities, you know.

So, and they, and then different tribes, you know, they pull up and, to put up their own, you know, dance and all that thing. And the Indians, they don't have, they still, still lot of them, they don't have this mechanical sense of time so they arrive on their own time. So things never get underway, you know, as scheduled.

So there was these Aztec Indians from down Mexico, they were supposed to arrive. And then, you know, the guy, the master of ceremony, he kept saying, you know, well, they'll be arrive, they'll be here soon, you know, trying to hold the public, you know. But they were never there.

But anyway, I think we sticked around for half an hour and then they showed up, you see. And they're saying we just got off the plane, you know. And the Aztecs said, the first time I saw them I said beautiful bodies, you know. Beautiful shape. Makes you wonder how, you know, I mean, just sixty Spanish conquistadors, you know, they just conquered the whole country, you know.

And, so they showed some dance and then they invited gringos, you know, to join them in what they called, you know, friendship dance. So, like, you know, like, they realized gringos, they spend too much time at office, you know. Like, you know, stiff legs and all that. So, you know, try to show some movement, you know, outdoor movement. So, like, the gringos, they reluctantly joined, you know. They were holding hands, you know, together. And then finally to show them how to make a bow to the ground, you know. I mean, these gringos never did that, you know. It's kind of humiliating, you know. I mean, you never thought, you know, going down in your knees and kind of, you know, making, touching your forehead on the, right on the dirt, you know. So, and, so they created quite a scene. Some did nicely, some just went down and, you know, like, they knelt and did. And others, like ladies, you know, extremely awkward.

So it's, usually here, the spiritual training is, like, I mean you feel comfortable with, you know, with what you have a strong affinity or with what you like to do. But you're weak, you know, I mean there are some areas which you dislike or not good at. So here, we make people do what they are not good at or what they dislike, you know. Because they break that down and gain freedom, you know.

So here comes prostrations. And do prostrations. It's quite a practice, you know. It's, I can tell you the whole story, but I'll tell you just two stories to give you some idea how it works, spiritually. Now, there was this guy and he saw death, he saw three deaths in two days. You know, it just happened his sister died and then upon hearing his sister died his brother in law kind of collapsed in shock and died. And then, you know, his girlfriend died. So he was just left utterly hopeless. So he said, well, he was so attached to them, he was living in his sister's house and then going out with his girlfriend who was living not too far away. So when all these things happened at the same time, you know, that happens to some people anyway, like all these

misfortunes, you know, they kind of, they come all at once. To shock you out of, it's kind of enlightening occasion. That's, in Zen we use that, you know. To shock you into kind of instant enlightenment.

So he said, well, he said he was going to kill himself. There is nothing that could, you know, pull him to the world. So he thought, so, well maybe, but he didn't like to die in the city, you know. So, like, kind of, he has ascetic idea, you know, to die in the temple would be good or in a, temples are located in the mountains.

So he visited a temple and then got a room there. So he was contemplating on a way to kill himself. In a beautiful way. Nice, you know, beautiful suicide. It's quite a predicament. Then he thought, then he saw the monks, you know, doing all these things, you know. Doing spiritual practice, getting up early in the morning and, you know, all these things, you know, like [unclear], they recite sutras and do some kind of meditation sitting, you know, stock still and all these things which were quite alien to him. Maybe, and then he thought, he hit upon the idea, maybe this is an alternative to dying, you know. So he saw that maybe becoming monk is just an alternative to dying, you know, to dying to yourself.

So he decided to become a monk. As an alternative. So, then this guy, he was, you know, he comes from kind of upper middle class family. So if you become a monk, say, well, you start as a novice monk. Novice monk, they, in the temples they have these strange customs. Like, you know, washing your own dishes, you know, on the table and then drinking the dishwater. It's not pleasant if you're not accustomed to it, you know. So that he couldn't stand.

So, like, what they do is, you know, I mean, you use four bowls, right? One for rice, one for soup, and one for side dish. And the fourth bowl is, like, water. It's like washing your bowl. So, I mean, you know, I mean, depending upon how cleanly you eat, I mean, your eating habits are not really wonderful, you see. All these spills and all that. But you have to clean it with tea water and you must drink that, you see. And real clean, otherwise, you know, it's, you know, it's, there are regulations. You can get kicked out.

So that he cannot stand. I mean, it's regulation, you know, he has to do it but every time he's like, it makes me really sick, you know. Sometimes, couple of times, he tried to throw it out, you know, out of the sight of senior monks. But that does not always work, I mean, if he gets discovered for that he can get expelled. So very unpleasant, but somehow he had to hack it.

So, but that was not alone. In, on Buddha's birthday, there was Buddha's birthday finally came. And there are, it's big temple, practically thousand people, you know, show up to light lanterns and all that. Then, you know, like, you serve in the kitchen quarter, there are some novice monks cooking rice and making, preparing side dishes, all that, you know. There are about ten of them

working really, like, busy like a bumblebee, you know. So, you have to feed all these people, you know. All these Buddhist laypeople who come to the temple to celebrate the occasion. So, and you know how it is, the lay people, they are not properly trained in their, you know, Buddhist eating manners. So they all spills around. So the regulation is, all the spills, they should never go down the drain. So all the novice monks, they have to eat them up, you know. They have to collect all these spills and they have to eat them, you see. Because not a single grain of cooked rice, or even uncooked rice, they should be wasted. That's the spirit of training.

So it's quite a job. Lot of spills, you know, you wipe it with, you know, rag and then you have to eat them up.

So he just couldn't hack that so, like, before he became away, he was just strung down, you know.

And then, it was a misty morning and then this, it's, the supervising monk. Supervising monk, he had a nickname called Ugly Nose, you know. He has a very ugly face but a beautiful mind. And he was known for strictness. The reason why he got ugly nose was, you know, I mean, on his ugly face, his ugly nose really sticked out, somehow, unusually.

So sometimes in the mountains there's mist and fog in early mornings. So his teacher, who is old monk, one day he was sitting, sipping tea in his room, quietly in the morning, and then suddenly, you know, it's, fog is so thick, you cannot see, you know, just a few foot. So his door opened, you know. There was no one there, but when he looked very closely there is this ugly nose stuck in. Just all he can see, so the nose, you know, before he saw his body, you know. So he got the name Ugly Nose.

So suddenly Ugly Nose appeared and then he rose and he saw this novice monk, you know, throwing all these spills down the drain. Road. And then this novice monk, he finally came to his senses and he realized, what is he doing, and then he was really apologetic. Please, please, please excuse me. I was just out of my mind, you know. But no way. Said, well, I am as much responsible as you are for this because, after all, I am your supervisor, you know. I'm your senior monk in charge of kitchen area. So we must go to main hall and do prostrations, you know, to clear our karma, you know. There's, grave karma was committed doing all this so we must immediately clear our karma. That is, you have to go and do the 3000 prostrations.

Now, you know, I mean, it's very busy, you know. If, well he said, doing prostration, I can do it but, you know, if I'm missing from the kitchen quarters, you know, what would happen? There is, you know, it's so hectic, you know. It's the, it would create chaos, you know, in serving people.

And then the monk rose again. You are missing the point. What are you doing here? Are you here just to serve people? You are here for training. You are neglecting vital training here. Never mind serving people. So this is much more important that we are doing this.

And then he said, well, I mean, he feels bad enough that, having done that but, like, this monk, supervising monk, he's coming with him to do prostrations together, you know. So, well, it's my fault, entirely my fault so I'll do it myself, you know. It really makes me feel bad to see that you are doing this, you know, with me because it's not your fault. But he said, insistent, it is my fault as well. You must see it is my fault so we must do it together.

So, you know, the, once he says that, you know, this monk, he'll do it, you know. So, like, reluctantly, you know, they, he followed him to the Buddha Hall and there, doing prostrations. Up and down, up and down. Took them, you know, seven hours to finish 3000 prostrations.

So it's, you know, some of you who have never done prostrations, it may be pretty difficult to imagine, you know, when one does 3000 prostrations. It's quite a spiritual experience. You can get really, really high, you know. So when this guy, when he did that, you know, there is this, it's Haeinsa it's, there is 108 stone steps, stone stairs. It's pretty steep, you know. And, he barely made it down, to down the steps. And then he just, as soon as he got to his room he collapsed. But since then, he never had any trouble eating spills and, you know, he never got sick, you know, about swallowing, you know, his own dish water. Just fixed them right away.

Now, another story was, there was this, it's this country school principal. And this fellow, he was just, you know, school principal serving in the country district and somehow this guy he ended up with his ambition of becoming the Minister of Education for the country. Of course, you know, I mean, as a school principal in the country, this, he's not qualified, you know. But somehow he landed this ambition.

So, you know how it is with people burning with certain kind of ambitions, you know. Somehow, whether he's qualified or not, that's a second matter. He must become the Minister of Education for the country. And then, so he studies ways. Every day he would study ways how he can become, how he can become appointed to be Minister of Education for the country, you know. He would draw up long lists, you know. Once he becomes the Minister of Education, you know, he would come up with, you know, school reform system and this and that, you know. But of course, you know, there is no way he would ever become appointed unless miracle happens, you know. It was kind of, you know, he landed with a hopeless ambition, you know. But that does not matter. So, you know, he's burning with his ambition, every way he's trying to find ways, somehow, you know. Illegal, legal, does not matter. Somehow he has to become Minister of Education for the country.

So, I mean, such a mind operates in such a way, so he found out that a high priest living up in Seoul, he has a good connection with the president and his wife, too. So, like, I mean, in such a country, I mean, especially if you get good connection somehow you get appointed, you know. So he said, that's right, I must approach this priest, you know.

So he made a journey to Seoul and visited the temple and then obtained interview with him. And then, so, like, I have this very sincere hope that I like to become a Minister of Education for the country. And then he would explain, you know, if he somehow helps him, you know, become Minister of Education, then he would do this, this, this. Aside from that, he would help his temple, you know, become big temple, and all that.

So the priest looked at him, said, well, obviously you don't qualify for the Minister of Education but somehow you have to make yourself qualified, some way. So are you willing to listen to me?

Said sure, you know. I'm desperate. I'm, you know, whatever you say I'll just follow if you can just help me, you know. Use your influence and appoint me as Minister of Education for the country.

So, okay, then somehow you must qualify, you must qualify to become the Minister, to be worthy of the Minister of Education. So now you come and do prostrations for one week. Like, the first day you do 3000 prostrations, and the second day you do 4000 prostrations, and the third day you do 5000 prostrations, this way, you know.

He never did prostrations before, he does not know what it's all about. But just, you know, like it's a, you know, pie in the sky, just, Minister of Education. No matter what happens, you know. Like, either he dies or alive, he must become Minister of Education.

So, and said, well, so he came home and he told that to his wife and his wife said forget it, you have always been crazy. This is, I think, it's craziest thing I've ever heard. Forget it, you know. Do you think you will ever make that? But, I must do that, you know. Either, you know, just no point of, you know, continuing to live without becoming Minister of Education. It's just so hopeless, you know. So, well, you know, he did say to me that if I finish doing such prostrations for one week then he will, you know, help me become Minister of Education.

So, well, he wrote a will, you know, in case he dies, you know, doing the prostrations. So, and then, he, like, just coming for Yeongmaeng Jeongjin, you know, like, and then toilet articles and, you know, all these necessary items. So he showed up at the temple, you know, prepared to do the prostrations.

Now, it's cold winter and also the place where he is going to do prostrations is, like it's Buddha figure carved out of living rock. And then it's all rock, you know, not even even, you know. He

has to do prostration right out there, on the rocks. And, and it's winter too, so it's very cold and you have to break the ice and to wash your face you get up 3 o'clock in the morning. But if you do over hundred prostrations your body gets heated up, you know. It's really perspiring, you know.

So, he would do, like Yeongmaeng Jeongjin, you know, he would do 250 prostrations or 750 prostrations, it spread out, you know, on four periods. And then, and then he, it's hard and all his, you know, knees would, you know, blister and, you know, bleed. But somehow, you know, it's, when he does, even single prostration is difficult, but he thinks if I do this I'll become Minister of Education, you see. So that keeps him ticking, you know. You know how it is, and this guy, he does not realize, I mean, he is doing this spiritual practice for most secular reason, you know. Just to become Minister of Education. So that keeps him ticking. But you can do so much, you know, I mean, every time you cannot think of, so after hundred prostrations, well, somehow you just keep doing that instead of thinking all the time Minister of Education. Of course, that kept him ticking for a while, but to…

So, well, he finished it, finally he finished it, the first day, and really he got knocked out. And then straight went home, went to bed, and then doing, started doing the next time, next day. So, it's something happening in this guy. You know, it's, like, in doing spiritual training, sometimes it helps if you're absolutely hopeless. Not even despair, despair would not do. Absolutely hopeless. Nothing to hold. So the extremes, they correspond to each other.

So, he was just, he found himself just doing that, just doing up and down, up and down, doing prostrations. And then the third day he, after he finished prostrations he looked down. There is all, in the distance there is downtown, downtown Seoul blinking lights. And then something dawned on him. What is all this?

Then at the end of day he went to the monk, say, well, I no longer wish to become Minister of Education. And the priest said, well, it does not matter but you must, you committed yourself to doing the prostrations, so you must finish your prostrations. So he went back and did, finished his prostrations. And at the end of the sixth day he got some awakening. So, on the seventh day, when he did finish the prostrations, he asked the priest to shave his head. So he became a monk at the end of the week. And then, he is now working for retarded children, and also he was going to build some kind of rehabilitation centre for inmates. Well, he was Korean guy, but he is doing this in Japan for the Japanese.

So, like, he was very desperate to become somebody, like, Minister of Education is somebody. So, of course, if you try to become somebody you run into conflict, you run into lot of troubles.

So anyway, he was very desperate so first he wanted to becomes somebody, but he came out as nobody, you see. So he found freedom.

…

If there are no questions I would like to teach you a little bit of chanting. There is this beautiful chanting called My Mind is Buddha or Calming the Waves of Passions.

[Chanting Maum]

Listen couple of times and then…

[Chanting Maum]

I'll chant along to show you how to chant. It's, when you go home, perhaps you can try it at home. This chant has spiritual power to transform peoples' lives. We can change. If we change we can benefit the society.

[Chanting Maum]

Usually simple teachings are powerful. Doing simple training, following simple guidelines, and your mind, or Buddha-mind, rejoices in simplicity. Doing simple things. Concentration and meditation.

And, anyway, finally I'd like, I wish you all the happiness in the Year of Cow. And, in Buddhist definition, you become happy or you get happiness when you can inspire others through your own spiritual practice. That's called happiness. But anyway, I wish you lot of fun and lot of joy for this year. And, please join me in reciting the Four Great Vows.

All beings one body, I vow to liberate.

Endless blind passions, I vow to uproot.

Dharma gates without number, I vow to penetrate.

The great way of Buddha, I vow to attain.

Thank you.

New Year's Eve 1992 Sunim
Teacher: Samu Sunim
Date: December 31, 1992
Location: Toronto
Event: Dharma Talk
Transcriber: Zack, Toronto
Date of Transcription: December 01, 2025 (re-listened by Jisik)

…purpose of our being on this planet, in order to make reconciliation with ourselves and with all beings, and also in order to create the spirit of peace and harmony for the New Year. This has been another difficult year for this country, for many of us in this country and in the world. Many of us have lost jobs and many remain unemployed without prospect of being employed in the near future. The unemployment situation has hit particularly hard our young people who are trying to establish themselves in the society. There have been many business failures and record number of bankruptcies. Economic and political uncertainties surround us.

The situation is made worse because we are used to economic growth and not economic failures. We are used to pay increase and not pay cuts or pay loss. In other words, we are used to think in terms of getting more and making profits. All of a sudden, we cannot get more for our enjoyment and pleasure. We cannot feed our family adequately. We cannot maintain our usual living standard.

Times change. We've had good times, now we have bad or harder times.

Now, what are good times and what are bad or harder times? Predominant thinking is that we enjoy increased economic activity and material wellbeing in the good times. In other words, we are at advantage for social progress and material achievement in the good times. So good times are favourable times for us all.

On the other hand, harder times are unfavourable times. We are at a disadvantage. This is a prevailing thought and attitude based on material progress in our society. However, harder times force us to question our prevailing attitude and rethink about social progress and personal happiness.

Finally, out of complacency and complicity with a prevailing public mood, we are challenged and forced to search for advantage in different context. We find this is a small awakening and an

advantage which good times could not provide us with. Therefore, harder times are time for reflection and time for change.

We are now living in such times. We have been brought up in a society where we are taught to compete and win. The spirit of competition dominates in every corner of our society. We must compete and we must win. Everything we do in life becomes a game and a contest which we must, which you must win. In order to win, in order to compete and win, we must assert ourselves and promote ourselves vigorously. We have to become aggressive. And our entire society has been promoting this. For instance, if you visit bookstores there are a number of books solely dedicated to, how to win, how to become number one, how to become the best.

Now, somebody wins, that means somebody else has to lose. And few win, but many lose. So few are the winners and many will be the losers. The painful experience is, winning is associated with success, admiration, and happiness, while losing is associated with failure and unhappiness. So no wonder resentment and blame spread, because many people lose in order to have a few win. And, and also the winners, they cannot always win. And many times they have to lose. And both winners and losers, they go through very stressful times. Losing is very stressful and, but winning can be much more stressful.

You may have heard of a story. Someone, a successful person, he has been successful all along. In business deals, in games, in sports, in other matters. And he has been admired by all, because he has been successful. And he comes home one day and quietly commits suicide. Not only has it been too stressful for him to win all the time, but the charade that builds inside, choking him.

So this evening, I'd like to reflect upon losing, because many lose, many are the losers. And we can sometimes hear very loud the resentment and the blame coming from the losers. Now, is that all that bad, losing? There must be some positive side of losing. In other words, the prevailing value system in our society is producing winners, to win, to be successful, and to be happy. That's the prevailing thinking. And losing is bad, losing is miserable, losing brings pain.

So this is a positive value system and then losing is, can be negative thing. But there is something called negative values. What, in Asia called non-aggressive values or gentle values. Values that are usually associated with female side. And it's not all that difficult to think of a positive side of losing. For instance, you can lose anger, and you can lose resentment, and you can lose blame. And you can lose a job, that's true. Many people lose their jobs, which they had held for 10 or 20 years. That's very upsetting experience. Sometimes it can be traumatic experience. But then, you cannot always, you have to think about a possible advantage this experience, losing job, can bring to you and to your family. In other words, you know, losing job

forces you to live more simply, more frugally, or more economically. It can even point to a new direction in your life. In fact, there can be numerous advantages.

Now, in this regard you can see losing can be winning. There's this famous Buddhist philosophy. It's called form is emptiness, emptiness form. For is no other than emptiness, emptiness no other than form. That is, winning can be losing and losing can be winning.

And now, there is more to the losing than just, you know, looking at the positive side, in other words losing anger, losing greed, even losing your stupidity. That would be wonderful. And, now, finally you may realize losing can be a wonderful way to promote peace and harmony to our society. Not competing, at least learning to cooperate. In other words, losing can almost force people to become humble. Now say, can you think of losing reputation? And can you think of losing reputation as a very positive experience? It can be positive experience. You can become humble. You can become a true person.

And, but what Buddhism is finally aiming at with this, the philosophy of losing, is finally losing your ego. In other words, the way of liberation, the way of spiritual liberation. It's called selflessness. In other words, you can lose attachments. Among all attachments, you can lose attachment to yourself. That's called self-liberation. And Buddhist path always promotes non-dual path. So, when Shakyamuni Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, when he attained enlightenment at Bodhi Gaya, he journeyed to Sarnath, the Deer Park just outside the great city of Benares, and there he met his former friends, the five ascetics, and set in motion the Wheel of Dharma, as the Buddhists say. He delivered his first sermon. His first sermon consists of Four Noble Truth, the Middle Way, Four Noble Truth, and Eightfold Path.

Now, someone said if Shakyamuni Buddha is alive today, the first Noble Truth is suffering, you know, sorrow. And instead of saying, declaring sorrow or pain for the first Noble Truth, he would say stress. Because everybody knows what stress is about. Now the Middle Way is avoiding two extremes. That is, self-indulgence and morbid self-denial or self-mortification. And in this case we can avoid both the winning and the losing, or non-dual path in the Mahayana context.

So, at the end of this year, I'd like you to reflect upon losing. The positive side of losing. The benefits, actually there can be infinite benefits from understanding correctly what is losing, and how to lose yourself. That means how to lose the cycle of Samsara, the cycle of greed, anger or resentment and stupidity, our foolishness, human foolishness. That means to lose the birth and death. And that is identical with attaining liberation. First you can reflect and focus on losing your bad habits. That would be good thing to do. You think about your bad habits and see if you can lose them.

New Year's Day Service 1993 Sunim's Talk
Teacher: Samu Sunim
Date: January 01, 1993
Location: Toronto
Event: Dharma Talk
Transcriber: Zack, Toronto
Date of Transcription: December 03, 2025 (re-listened by Jisik)

Please put your hands down and sit comfortably, and relaxed, and with eyes closed. And please listen carefully, the sound of wisdom, the teachings of Buddha.

"We are what we think. All that we are arises with our thoughts. With our thoughts, we make the world. Speak or act with an impure mind and trouble will follow you as the wheel follows the ox that draws the cart. We are what we think. All that we are arises with our thoughts. With our thoughts, we make the world. Speak or act with a pure mind and happiness will follow you as your shadow, unshakeable."

"Look how he abused me and beat me. How he threw me down and robbed me. Live with such thoughts, and you live in hate. Look how he abused me and beat me, how he threw me down and robbed me. Abandon such thoughts, and live in love. In this world, hate never yet dispelled hate. Only love dispels hate. This is the Dharma, ancient and inexhaustible."

"You too shall pass away. Knowing this, how can you quarrel? How easily the wind overturns a frail tree. Seek happiness in the senses, indulge in food and sleep, and you too will be uprooted. The wind cannot overturn a mountain. Temptation cannot touch the man who is awake, strong, and humble. Who masters himself and minds the Dharma. If a man's thoughts are muddy, if he's reckless and full of deceit, how can he wear the yellow robe? Whoever is master of his own nature, bright, clear, and true, he may indeed wear the yellow robe."

The year is renewing this cycle today, today in the beginning of the new year. And there is a cycle in the nature which is renewed over and over again, like night and day, like the four seasons, and like the years. And we too renew our cycle, through birth, growth, decay and death, and rebirth. And this cycle, and this rebirth, which we Buddhists call Samsara. Samsara means, it's bondage, but it also means opportunities, repeated opportunities. So, for instance, what we couldn't accomplish this past year, then we have a new opportunity to accomplish that. And what we couldn't improve, or correct ourselves, or make amends, now we have a new opportunity to do that. To make reconciliation, to promote peace and happiness in your family, and to promote friendship, and to create a spirit of harmony and peace, say, where you work.

So, think about this new opportunity which is now in front of you, this moment and this day. And reflecting the teaching of Dhammapada, we just made incense offerings. The paper that wrapped fish smells like fish even after the fish was taken out. But the paper that wrapped incense smells incense, has incense smell, even after the incense was taken out from the paper. So is with the habits of karma and with the habits of Dharma. This fragrance. So try not to lose your fragrance in the midst of your life. You can carry this fragrance, this light and fragrance of Dharma in the good times, in favourable situations and also in unfavourable situations. If you don't lose your fragrance, if you maintain and sustain your fragrance, then you shine in all situations. Like flowers, like little blossoms, that bloom even in the garbage dump. Brightening the area where it blooms. Such is the power of fragrance of Dharma. So don't lose it, carry it all the time.

Last night, when we had a year end service, was a time for reflection. This morning at our New Year's Day service, it is time for making resolutions, new resolutions, and first I'd like to give you three foundation stones. The first foundation stone is Peace of Mind. I'd like you to have peace of mind. It's very important. Without peace of mind, you cannot be successful in your life. You cannot be truly happy in your life. So make sure that you have peace of mind in your life.

Peace of mind means, essentially there is nothing to worry about in your life. We worry a lot. Worry can do lot of harm. And worry, people worrying, waste their life. So have great peace of mind. When we meditate, you know, first I [unclear], right? Don't think much about meditating, first just learn to sit, quiet and peacefully, without wobbling, that means without worrying about anything in particular. Just sit quiet and peacefully, and enjoy yourself, relax. That's the first step. Just be yourself, be your true self, with no particular attachments. Like you, it's just, sitting is like, reveals the spirit of renunciation. You know, you sit with no possessions, you sit with your bare body and mind. And there, you know, while sitting with bare body and mind, you learn, you know, you come to realize that there is this simple joy of living every day. So have a simple joy in your life, the fragrance of Dharma.

And the second foundation stone is Happiness and Contentment. These two is very, very important. Happiness and contentment means nothing is lacking in this moment of your life. Then why do you always act as if something is lacking? You know, you always look around, go out, and buy new dress, and visit friends, and, we are not content. So learn to be content with yourself, with what you have, and be happy about it. So happiness and contentment. Just the way you are. Nothing is lacking in this moment of your life.

The third foundation stone is Gratitude, be grateful. There are a lot of things we can be grateful for in our life. And if you lack, you know, gratitude is the basis, you know, the feeling of gratitude provides basis for all other positive feelings and values in our life. So that means if you lack sense of gratitude in your life, something is really missing in your life. You know, for

instance, lack of gratitude often leads to complaint. And to other negatives. So be grateful and feeling, great feeling of gratitude will keep you free from other negativities.

These are three foundation stones. The reason why I call these three foundation stones is, I grew up in the rural Korean countryside, say, about 45 years ago or so, and in those days in the Korean countryside, nothing much was happening, you know. The life didn't change very much, you know. Every once in a while, that's like every 10 years or every 15 years, you know, someone in the village would do something about it. That means they would repair their house, or build a new house, and that's big event, that's big event. So when that happens, we kids in the village, right after breakfast we would run down and spend the whole day, you know, watching every move these, you know, kind of construction crew made. It's fascinating, you know, we never saw anything like that. These were the times when, you know, there were no even, you know, like, traveling candyman, you know? Like, when traveling candyman appeared that was big thing, you know, big news for the village. And, like the, you know, kind of culture where, you know, like, when we try to munch when, you know, after playing hard you feel something is missing, you know? Something to munch, then you run into the fields, you know. Sometimes into somebody else's field, and you pick, you pull carrots, you know, and munch carrot. That's big, you know, treat. And it was those times, and sometimes, you know, when, if you become, some, you know, venturesome, some, when kids get together they become venturesome, even village kids, then sometimes they ban together and raid somebody's fields, you know. Usually, you know, like, after dark, and then you pull the soybean stacks and then you, kind of, it's called [unclear Korean], it's kind of big fun for kids, you know. It's, you build fire and then, you know, roast the, you know, soybeans and eat them, you know. Or usually you go and steal some sweet potato and munch. I still like sweet, roast sweet potato, you know. A taste which I developed as a kid. So those are, like, you know, really good treats.

Anyway, so then we would watch, you know, with great fascination we would watch what these guys are doing. And it's interesting, you know, I mean, looking back, they, you know, building a new house, these guys, they would never disturb the ground, you see. I mean, not like the way we do, you know, this crane comes and, you know, ungracefully, you know, dug up, you know, the ground, like a bomb shelter, you know. That's the first thing they do, you know, when you build a new construction, when you do a new construction. But these guys, they would never touch the ground. They have this belief, you know? There is, down there, there's earth spirits there, you know. Local deities. If you disturb them, then you know you'll never live there peacefully, you see. I mean, how could you live peacefully in a place where you disturb the local spirits, you know. They could do you a lot of harm, you know, having been, you know, been displaced, having lost their abode. So they would never touch it, all they did is they would pound the ground. Days on end, they would pound it, just to make sure that this ground would not sink,

say, after heavy rain, you know. [Unclear…]. So they would pound it for seven days or ten days, and that was also interesting, we would watch that. And then they would go around and select natural stones, you know, select stones and then carefully place them, you know, with great, you know, feeling of reverence, religious feelings, they would place them carefully in four corners, or six corners, or seven corners there. And then on top of that was a foundation stone. And then they would erect, you know, post. Then build the house, you see.

So, that's why I call these three foundation stones. That's peace of mind, and happiness and contentment, and gratitude. So peace of mind is, you know, there is nothing to worry about in your life. That's called a, you know, foundation stage. If you are born in the human body it's very fortunate. You are not supposed to spend your life, this precious life, worrying about things. So, have great peace of mind.

And happiness and contentment. Means nothing is lacking in this moment of your life. And gratitude. So carry these three foundation stones always in your pocket. And make sure that you carry them. Even once a day, remind yourself of these three foundation stones. And they will yield a rich person. And you'll be a very happy person, and you'll be very content, you know. With yourself. And you'll be successful person. And if you are true person, happy person, and content, then you can do lot of good. To your family, to your friends, to your relatives, to your community. Happy person, you know, a true person, and peaceful person. Everything there is message, benign influence. You don't have to go around, you know, shouting, you know, this big social agenda or cause. You just, you know, be a wonderful person, happy person, and peaceful person. Okay?

So that's my New Year's gift to all of you. And I'd like to mention a couple of other things, but before I do that I'd like you to come up with a New Year's resolution. Not many, maybe just three. Just three, maybe as many as five, but maybe not more than that. Always have one big resolution that could relate to, say, higher principles of your life, you know. Like, like, you know, keeping three foundation stones and, well I would always keep my three foundation stones in my right side of pocket. Okay? That, something that could benefit and enrich your personal life, and which in turn would impact, you know, your relationship, your ties, and your shared life in family, and in the community, and in the society. And then you have two, I say personal ones.

[recording cuts off and resumes a few seconds later]

…and you make New Year's resolutions, we have a saying. New Year's resolutions don't last for more than three days. But don't worry about that, don't worry. It's perhaps true, and having made New Year's resolutions, maybe it would last three days, maybe five days, maybe seven days, but making New Year's resolutions is much better than not making New Year's resolutions, even

though they last three days, five days, seven days, you know. But then you think about it. That's improvement, that's, I mean, at least you bring quality of life, you know, you improve quality of your life by doing this, by the act of doing this, and that's very important. This consciousness and perception in your life. And that's very important. Don't forget that.

So then, so three days, five days, you know, you start out. And then if you see you are slipping by, you know, your old habits returning or whatever, or you become lazy or whatever, then you can renew your New Year's resolutions. Like, you know, this learning to renew yourself. And that's very important practice, how to renew your New Year's resolutions over and over again. So nothing to worry about, you know, three days later. Or maybe you have forgotten a month passed by. But then there, as soon as you become aware, and this awareness is there, awareness is there, awareness of your having made New Year's resolutions, [unclear…] one [unclear], twice, three times, as many times. And if you keep doing that, if you keep renewing your resolutions, you know, then somewhere along, if you do that, you come out with strength. You come out with, as we say, your Dharma has tested wonderful. So you try over and over again, always this day. You start out, renew yourself, and rededicate yourself, redirect yourself, recommit yourself. In other words, you come out with strength, not with weakness.

And there are some Dharma habits you can develop, that's, hapjang, it's wonderful. Like, for instance, at the end of the day, when you retire for the day, before you just fall asleep, you know, you take a few moments, few seconds, or a minute, and you sit up in your bedroom, in the dark, that's fine, you sit up, and then you do hapjang. Bring your two hands together, enlightened side and unenlightened side together, it's called hapjang practice. And living in a big city like this, you know, depending upon what kind of work you do, a lot of things can happen in the course of a day. Sometimes very traumatic things. And at the end of the day, if you just fall asleep, all these pleasant things, unpleasant things, joy and sorrow, you know, you carry them into your sleep, you know. They kind of, they get stored away in your psyche. And then day after day, what happens is sometimes, you know, your sleep is not very peaceful, you know. Because all these unresolved matters, you know, they affect you, unconsciously. So sometimes people have nightmare. And then when you wake up, so you acquire, all this confusion is still there. And then you drag yourself on, and on, and on like this. And somewhere along in your life, something goes wrong, you know. You know, you are falling apart. That's why so many people, so many people, they depend on medication to go through the day. That's a sad story. And, you know, people go through therapy, people go and depend on their psychiatrist, and that's not very healthy way. We are not supposed to do that. Depending, this whole health industry, you know. And government spends more and more money about these things, you know. Developing and maintaining all these different kind of health industry. And it's, even, there is debate about the right to die. It's just too much.

[side A ends, side B begins]

…self-help, you know. The end of the day you do hapjang, and take moment to end the day peacefully, to, you know, to bring everything together, and make reconciliation. Just, you can meditate for even one minute or two minute. So you bring peace and harmony, in other words, you restore yourself before your retire.

If you do that, if you do this hapjang practice by sitting up, then sometimes your mind wakes up. And then, then even if you like you can keep journal. That's nice thing to do, journal. Then you retire peacefully, and happily, and then, you know, our members said you can sleep better. And then when you wake up, you can wake up with new strength, with smile and happiness to face a new day. It's a little wisdom.

Okay. And another thing that would help is breathing out deeply in the morning, in the evening, out in the fresh air, breathing out. There are a lot of these pent up feelings or resentment. As they said, you know, hatred does not dispel hatred. So we have to learn to let go of our personal feelings in order to promote positive things in our life. Love, and compassion, reconciliation. So breathe out, you know, and let them go, this resentment, or ill will, or enmity, you know. So breathing out.

Now, so you take a few moments and see if you can come up with New Year's resolutions.

[rings bell twice]

…

[rings bell twice more after silence]

I'd like you to remember that on the first day of the year you came to temple and sat down on the temple floor in front of Buddha and you made New Year's resolutions. And I gave you the guideline, you have one big one and two small ones, or three small ones, four small ones, but one big one which is usually, like, relating to higher principles of your life, this big one will give you spiritual focus in your life. And it's important that you have spiritual focus in your life. And this spiritual focus provides you with purpose of your life, of your being here on this planet. And while you are doing what you are doing. So it's important to have this big one, and then the small ones, you know, if you have, if you cultivate a mindful attitude, you know, they will come along. With big one providing spiritual focus in your life, okay?

And also, as I said, renewing your resolutions or renewing your vows would become very important practice. Because somewhere along you are bound to lose your resolutions. You falter, and you go astray, you know. And somewhere you get lost in the highway, you know, like,

sometimes you get distracted and get high jacked, you see. So say you go on Dharma highway 401, you see? You set out, you know, big and happy, and then, you know, all of a sudden something happens and you take the side road and go around and get lost. Then there was, you remember and then you scurry back to highway 401, you see? And always the highway is there, Dharma highway, okay?

So, and sometimes to do that, you know, giving formal expression, doing it formally is important in order to renew yourself more formally. So, like sometimes you come back to temple to remind you more formally, and then you burn incense, you know. To remind you of the fragrance of the New Year's resolutions, you know? So you don't lose the fragrance, you carry them. So in order to rekindle your resolutions, you come and offer incense, and then you do three prostrations, and then you formally renew your resolutions, and then you go out again. So there are these mechanics, you know, these things that could help you along the way, like reminders.

Now, M-A, as you open your mouth, please close your eyes and, it's not terribly comfortable sitting on the floor, right? But it's also, there is, sometimes you learn much more from being uncomfortable, like discomfort, you know. It's, for instance you learn to be patient. That's important to us. You learn to be patient with yourself, and you learn to endure, and you learn to persevere. That's strength, that's not, you know, negative, you know. People are, you know, I deal with the whole generation that were brought up in throwaway society. It's quite a lesson for me. I struggle with them all the time, you know. They are being wasteful, not mindful, because they have taken lot of things for granted. Because in my situation, like, getting a rundown place and fixing them up, you know, with very limited budget, you know, with no financial or emotional security, it's quite, and I deal with these people, you know. So, and also I deal with people who lack enduring, who lack perseverance. They run away, you see, when things get tough and difficult. But you have to learn to face difficulties. That's how you grow and mature. Because if you run away you don't grow and you don't become mature. You always end up with the same old limiting self. And that's, that's very frustrating and, you know. And eventually you end up hating yourself, you know.

M-A, close your eyes. M-A, Ma…

(chanting Maum)

In our tradition, in Buddhism, we do not believe in a outside agent as our saviour. That means we rely, we do not rely on a external spiritual source for salvation and liberation. So we say everyone has Buddha-nature. So for instance, you have, you all have a pure and sincere heart. And you can always rely on your pure and sincere heart for strength and inspiration. Ma means

mind. Say mind is Buddha, your original untainted mind, pure mind, is Buddha. Meditation is enlightenment. So, we'll sing Maum for a while, we'll sing very quietly, gently and peacefully.

(Chanting Maum)

…

…meditation on six perfections.

(Meditation on six perfections.)

First perfection…

(First perfection...)

May I be generous and helpful.

(May I be generous and helpful.)

Second perfection…

(Second perfection.)

May I be pure and virtuous.

(May I be pure and virtuous.)

Third perfection…

(Third perfection.)

May I be patient…

(May I be patient.)

May I be able to bear…

(May I be able to bear…)

And forebear the wrongs of others.

(And forebear the wrongs of others.)

Fourth perfection…

(Fourth perfection…)

May I be strenuous…

(May I be strenuous…)

Energetic…

(Energetic…)

And persevering.

(And persevering.)

Fifth perfection…

(Fifth perfection…)

May I practice meditation…

(May I practice meditation…)

And attain concentration…

(And attain concentration…)

And oneness…

(And oneness…)

To serve all beings.

(To serve all beings.)

Sixth perfection…

(Sixth perfection…)

May I gain wisdom…

(May I gain wisdom…)

And be able to give the benefit of my wisdom…

(And be able to give the benefit of my wisdom…)

To others.

(To others.)

Thank you. Please put your hands down. And once again I'd like you to keep your fragrance of Dharma always in the midst of your life throughout the year. And you may feel like a boat moored at a small harbour and, then, now you sail out. You sail out of the harbour into the wide ocean. So I wish you a very wonderful journey for the year. And I wish you a very wonderful and special happy New Year.

(Thank you.)

Samu Sunim – Talk On Buddhism + World Peace
Teacher: Samu Sunim
Date: Unknown
Location: Unknown
Event: Dharma Talk
Transcriber: Zack, Toronto
Date of Transcription: December 22, 2025 (re-listened by Jisik)

Please join your hands together in hapjang, like this. And repeat after me aloud.

Buddha's golden chain of love.

(Buddha's golden chain of love.)

I'm a link in Lord Buddha's golden chain of love,

(I'm a link in Lord Buddha's golden chain of love,)

that stretches round the world.

(that stretches round the world.)

I must keep my link bright and strong.

(I must keep my link bright and strong.)

I'll try to think pure and beautiful thoughts.

(I'll try to think pure and beautiful thoughts.)

Do pure and beautiful deeds.

(Do pure and beautiful deeds.)

Knowing that on what I do now,

(Knowing that on what I do now,)

depends not only my own happiness,

(depends not only my own happiness,)

but also that of others.

(but also that of others.)

May every link in Lord Buddha's golden chain of love,

(May every link in Lord Buddha's golden chain of love,)

become bright and strong.

(become bright and strong.)

And may we all attain perfect peace.

(And may we all attain perfect peace.)

Okay. Please make yourself comfortable.

If you chant for a while, you come together and become genuine. Because you feel something down here, in your heart. Otherwise you just come and listen to talks, and you just get your head filled up and go, and that's, like, well, you know, someone's books. It's not genuine, you know. That's what you have been doing quite a lot. So you come and do your own practice [unclear]. Chanting is, chanting along is a timeless practice. Any spiritual practice is timeless because in the end it involves selflessness. So that takes you beyond the cycle of life and death.

(Three strikes and chanting)

Could you close the door back there?

Shakyamuni Buddha, or Gotama, the Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, historical founder of Buddhism, he left home and he led a homeless life. And not only did he leave home life, but he left his kingdom, his country. He was a prince so he was to become the ruler of his small kingdom. So he abandoned his country by renouncing the world. So without country and homeless, he attained Buddhism. It's called the way of Buddha. So in other words, he obtained peace after sacrifice of his home life and country. So when he attained enlightenment, everything became enlightened along with him. So he saw himself everywhere. In the rocks, in the streams, in the birds. So peace was attained.

So this kind of transmission. By the way, in Buddhism you use different words, enlightenment, kensho, Nirvana, but it all comes down to peace. So Buddhism is no other than peace. When peace attained, we no longer need Buddhism because peace is Buddhism. If other religions

would feel the same way it would be wonderful thing. Then the world would become that much more peaceful. Not attaining to their own creeds or, you know, race or whatever.

So this kind of, Buddhism has been peace movement all along, in this regard. And I want you to know what was happening to this transmission. So, well I know, like, in big cities, of course North America, people are involved in peace movement. They have their own programs. That's nuclear weapons, which arouse people, because they have to. Their survival is at stake. So some people, they strongly feel they must do something. So that's their predicament. So they, you know, chant peace and they do sittings in front of the United Nations and so forth. In a sense, the situation is desperate. But I want you to know how this transmission of peace was being carried on, say, in the mountains. Like, where the temples are it's, so that's why I went to Korea last fall after seven years of absence. And Korea is a very mountainous country. So the rulers, they set up this walled towns, castles, and towns. So the ruling class, they lived inside the wall, you know, protected. While the common people, the ordinary folks, they lived in the valleys, you know, where mountain range, they comes down where mountain range stops, and then the river, and then there's some fields, so they grow rice over there. So these are the common ordinary folks.

And, but now, with this Westernization and industrialization going on, lot of folks, they moved to big cities and they find jobs at factories right there. Like labour class. They're workers. So some traditional peasants, they became workers working at a factory. So there are a lot of problems there. But I want you to know, these common ordinary folks which was approached by Buddhist monks in the olden times, and there is still living tradition going on there, and how they are carrying on peace, you see. How they practice Buddhism. I was concerned about this.

So we went to these Jia mountains, mountain range. It's like, if you go inside this mountain range all you see is mountains, surrounded by mountains, mountain after mountain. And we visited, quite a few temples were destroyed during the Korean war, there were some guerilla activities in the mountains. And we saw some monks restoring temples over there. It's very difficult task restoring temples in such a remote area. And we were staying overnight at this particular temple where the five nuns were practicing there. It's quite an isolated place, no electricity or anything. The head nun, she was 82 years old and she was, she has been practicing this raw diet, avoiding eating grains for 50 years now. So recently she tried to go back to cooked food and then, you know, her system would not listen to this. So until she died she just has to eat food raw. That means avoiding grains, not eating grains. She was not there when we got there and their accommodation was poor. Well, here we practice high Buddhism. People are educated here. So, first they read books and then somehow they have to grow to like Buddhist teachings, and then they come and practice. So we are all, you know, intellectuals and, you know, you find one reason or another for liking Buddhism. So, in other words, we practice high Buddhism here.

But folks over there, even the nuns, the kind of Buddhism they practice is called folk Buddhism. It's a combination of local shamanism and Buddhism, and with some element of Taoism. So if you go to the Buddha Hall, there is Buddha enshrined there. You know, there is Bodhidharma, going back to India only with one straw sandals on. And then there are mountain gods, paintings of mountain gods. And then dragons. It's the elements. After all, you know, there is water element, fire element, and, what is it, water element, fire element, and earth element, and wind element. So, you know, so they have dragons, and mountain gods, and various deities. It's all crowded here.

And then, in the mountains they get up 3 o'clock in the morning to do the service. And then we were huddled in a place where it's all mud works. It's very small, very earthy place. And in the middle of the night I woke up by this chanting, you know, by reciting sutra, but by the sound of the reciting sutras. And, it's such an isolated place, and dark, and very, in the mountain, quiet. And then, you know, like in the dead of night you hear these sutras being recited. It's quite experience. Couldn't go back to bed.

And then 3 o'clock, moktak was played and service began. But later I learned there is this man, he was just turning 55, this man, for the last 11 years, every morning from 2 o'clock to 3:10, he would recite this scripture called Earth Store Sutra. And he's very, a simple ordinary man. And he was not a monk, and he was a lay man, he comes from a province in Korea where people are extremely gentle and docile so he said, and actually happened to many of them, you see the rock falling up there? And said, they speak so slowly, too. So by the time they finish, the rock is falling, they already crashed. So it's, they have such beautiful minds, so it comes from that province.

He, he was not a monk, but it's, on inquiry I learned it never occurred to him to become a monk. And his head is shaven, and he follows the monks life, but he was what you call a sexton. He does all kinds of chores for the nuns. You know, carrying firewood, and splitting firewood, and carrying water. In order to go to market you have to walk, I think about 50 kilos or so. And he's so agile he does all that. And just seeing him doing all these things impressed me greatly. And, well he does not know much about Buddhism. Maybe we talk much about peace, perhaps he never heard of peace, but he was the embodiment of peace and Buddhist practice. And this, over and over again, I came across later on in my travels. This is called form is emptiness.

And in Japan, in Kyoto, I went to this monastic complex called Daikōmyō-ji(?). And there were quite a few sub-temples dedicated to different, this one, this one I visited was dedicated to [unclear]. And you may have seen the statue of [unclear] with a fierce face, sword on one hand. And I went in and it's, the Japanese temple structure is a little different from Korean ones. And I heard this sutra being recited, so I went in. And then this 70 or 80 year old grandmother with her

back bent, and she was reciting Heart Sutra completely oblivious of anything around. So I was right beside her and she didn't realize that someone was beside her. And she bored this bunch of wooden sticks. So she recites Heart Sutra and then she moves one wooden stick. So she recited, she got 108 wooden sticks. So by the wooden sticks she counts each time she finishes reciting in Heart Sutra she moves one like that. And later on, on my way back when I dropped by again, then she was outside. There was another stone figure in the yard, out in the yard, and there's a stone slab. Over many hundred years people knelt down on this stone so it's like, like a cushion is flat, you know. Worn by people sitting on the rock. Then she was reciting Heart Sutra again. Heart Sutra is no eyes, no ears, no nose, no tongue, no body-mind. And then no sight, no taste. So that's the formless values. Whatever you see with your eyes, your ears, forms. So, well she, you know, she just recite, I mean I'm sure she does not think about these formless values but she practiced it that way.

It's, these formless values, which we say form is emptiness, and unless we realize this within ourself, whatever we say it would become, you know, empty words. So this man in the temple and this old lady was practicing the sound of water that does not get wet. Or the freedom of candlelight dancing all alone in the middle of the night.

The pursuit of self nature, we call it self nature or true nature, is unique and of the greatest mystery. Of course, self nature, in pursuit of this you must believe in yourself. That's the main thing. In seeking that you must believe in your ability. Called self reliance, which comes with self realization.

And now, peace is also state of being, the way we are, the way we conduct ourselves. Now, we are concerned, some people are pessimistic. Like this clover can be destroyed. We often see the cycle of life and death, and not beyond. But, okay the Earth planet get destroyed, so what? I'm not pessimistic at all. We have come to a time where we really have to see what it is living on this planet and living in the universe. It's called Earth household management.

Life and death, our own passions, karma and Samsara, it's the same thing. Unless we see, we begin to see beyond this, there is no other hope. Some people know this, but I think they are afraid to say this. Because we have, we have been dependent on them for so long. The universe does not get destroyed, no matter what happens to us or the planet. We are not the universe. We are equals with rocks and trees. Buddhism and world peace is nothing, but to see these formless values and begin, we have to begin to change our life.

I'll take questions. Yes.

([Unclear…]. If it doesn't matter what happens to man in terms of the whole universe, then should you work towards [unclear…]?)

Yes. You are responsible for the destruction of the Earth planet if it happens. You are responsible for whatever happens in the universe. It's one in all. So the work must begin with you. That's why Shakyamuni said I'm the honoured one. In Heaven, on Earth, I'm the honoured one. How can you become the honoured one? That's great task. You have to really see that you are not separate from the universe.

The, speaking of the formless values, people doing good, say religious folks doing good or social workers doing good, there's nothing to be proud about this. So when you get to see the formless values, something is really wrong with our culture. It's very superficial.

Any other questions?

([Unclear…])

How does the Buddha teach what?

(That we can work towards peace and [unclear…] we are [unclear…].)

Mhm. The 84,000 teachings available for each of us. And some can do chanting, some do meditation, but all these teachings, they come down to emptiness. The Indians were great, they found this concept, zero. All the positive numbers and negative numbers, they all come down to zero. So we have to become simple, that means we have to return to the fundamental. So we have to return to the origins, because we are originators. That's why we meditate. When we meditate, or when we chant, we bare ourselves. We drop all our burdens. That's called renunciation. And, then you attain the level of selflessness. Then you understand oneness, one in all. When you're truly selfless, all beings one body, this you understand. Then you understand you are not subject to birth and death. But you can hear all this, but we must practice in order to realize this.

Somehow you have to become true to yourself. That means you have to discover your true nature. As Huineng said, produce your mind without abiding anywhere. Otherwise - yes. [Unclear…]. Otherwise even people who work for peace, they, you know, they can be quite violent. They use violence in disguise of peace, you see that. Whether it's a peace movement, or women's lib. So the answer is not in shouting and do all that. There's strong element of hatred, too. You can hear all the rhetoric, you know, they throw at you. But so what?

Any other questions?

Speaking of different ways of attaining peace, we are familiar with meditation and chanting but there are other forms of practice which here we are not very familiar with. The Asian countries are mountainous, so they often go into the mountains in order to seek inspiration and

enlightenment. And they have these holy places around. In North America, we do have holy places which we have destroyed. Like, native North Americans, they did have holy places. So, and destruction of these holy places makes it more difficult to understand peace of spirituality. And the native Indian culture was, they used just these clay and wood and then built structures. And they are all subject to decay, like our body, you know. This is called impermanence. And this is a real thing, this is a real, organic thing. Not like the Egyptian and Chinese civilizations where they built these monuments. Something inorganic.

So anyway, there are these, one mountain, during the service we did bodhisattvas, different bodhisattvas. Like Bodhisattvas of Great Wisdom, Bodhisattvas of Great Deeds. So Bodhisattva of Great Wisdom is called Manjusri. So there is this mountain where there are five peaks, and this mountain is dedicated to Manjusri, wisdom. So some devotees, they go and they make pilgrimage to this mountain in order to see the bodhisattva Manjusri in person. So that means to see bodhisattva in person and attain, obtain wisdom from him. It's like attaining, another way of attaining enlightenment.

So, so this monk, he went to this mountain and, so in his earnest desire to see this bodhisattva in person he did chanting for three years. All to no avail. So one day, after three years, he ran out of his food. So, I mean, you know, chanting makes you hungry. You chant for a while, it's quite hard work. Meditation, too. So if you don't have any appetite, do some chanting and, you know, do mediation. Or if you have trouble going to bed, and sit meditation and chanting, then no problem. If you have stress, then do some prostrations, then stress goes away. So, well he had to stop chanting. After all, he's getting hungry. So he had to come down the mountain to go on a begging round. So he would visit these villages, you know, and obtain some rice. So he was coming back, eh? To be ready for another year of chanting. And on his way back he met this old man, a very old man carrying an ox from opposite direction. You know, ox is this thing. You know, there are these 10 ox herding pictures, you see. An ox herding picture. We are looking for ox, that means it's our self nature, true nature. Like our Buddha-nature.

[side A ends, side B begins]

…and that's quite an achievement. You anchor somewhere, you see. So finding traces. And then finally you have some clue, then you finally see the actual ox. That's the absurdity, you see. And in the fourth picture, then you get it by bridal. You got the ox by bridal. And in the fifth picture, then you begin to tame the ox. And in the sixth picture you ride on it. Then in the seventh, the ox disappears. And in the eighth, you too disappear. And then in the ninth, it's a Zen circle shining

bright. Then the man appears again, quite ordinary, just like before he started this journey. But he is ready to resume his ordinary life among people. People would [unclear] smell like fish. [Unclear] called syncretic harmonization. I mean, if you go to outhouse you have to smell a little bit like outhouse, you know. That's a very [unclear] kind of, [unclear] thing.

So he met this old man, you know, riding an ox. He said, well it's very unusual. I mean, after all, he was in the mountain for three years, he never saw, you know, some old man. But there was something with him, you know, so, you know, some, before he became aware of it he found himself following after him. You know, sometimes you have to do that. You know, like, it's, a beautiful thing is when someone calls your name aloud, you don't think about it. You answer it right away, right? Or sometimes, you know, someone calling your name in the middle of your dream and then you wake up and then, you know, you go out, answer the door. It's, there's something like that.

So, he found himself following this man. And then ahead of him he saw this big temple, you know. Never saw before. And then when, the old man, when he arrived in front of the temple, he shouted aloud, [unclear]! And out of nowhere this, you know, young boy appears. [Unclear…]. He went in, the old man went in and he [unclear], he just followed him right into his room, and he made prostrations. [Unclear…]. You know, something different happened. Well, I have been in the mountain for three years and I, I have this [unclear…]. Well, doesn't like you. Could get to see bodhisattva Manjusri? [Unclear…]. And then the old man asked him, where are you from? I'm from such and such Buddhist temple. How many, how many people are training there. About three hundred training there [unclear…], scriptures, while others work in the kitchen, or do some laundry, and throwing bins. And then he said, how about here [unclear…]. So three by three, [unclear] three by three. [Unclear].

And just, snake and dragons, they mingle and make, [unclear] play together. But latter part he could understand a little bit. You know, snakes and dragons, they go together, but ordinary [unclear] play together. But for that three by three, [unclear] three by three, [unclear] play together.

So, you know, he was sitting there and, you know, that kind of psychological makeup, and then it was getting dark. So he said, could I stay here overnight? No. People like you cannot stay here. You don't have freedom. People who are not free cannot stay here. So then he called the young boy, and the young boy came and pushed his back. So he got kicked out. And then out the gate, passed the young boy. Well, [unclear..]. How many people living in this monastery? Well, he said, well three by three [unclear] and three by three behind. And said this monk's name is Mucha. And then the young boy called his name aloud, Mucha. You know, when you get called, you know, [unclear] you answer, yes.

Now, how many monks, how many people are living in this monastery? That's what he asked. So he felt, you know, he really, you know, something greatly wrong with him. Something's wrong. So then, finally he gathered his courage to ask, what's the name of the temple? Prajna. That's what [unclear] looking, Prajna, and the bodhisattva Manjusri is all the same thing. So he really felt, you know, he was beaten.

And then, and then he turned around, then suddenly the boy disappeared, and the temple disappeared, and the old man [unclear] disappeared. And he felt really bad, he felt really, you know, dejected. So then he had no more desire to go back to the mountain. So he went straight to his place and picked up his belongings and packed. And so he was going around like a clock.

And three years later he found himself in this monastery and there was this Zen master, [unclear] was name. So he trained there for quite a while. And finally, one day, he saw his self nature. He got enlightened. So when winter solstice come around, when winter solstice comes around, the Koreans and Chinese make this red bean porridge. You know, there are a lot of monks living there. This cauldron, and you climb up the cauldron. So you have to make enough bean porridge to feed a couple hundred monks. It's a lot of bean porridge. So you have to work hard, there's all this steam coming up. And then with, you know, with big rice paddle you have to, you know, stir around, otherwise it gets burned, you know, at the bottom. So you have to really, really stir it. It's quite a work. And then when it starts boiling, you know, it's, boil, boil, magical sound, right? Boiling. So quite a concentration, you know, it's quite a selfless activity he was engaging in. Quite a meditation.

And suddenly he saw the bodhisattva Manjusri coming out of one, you know, one boil, you know. Hi, hi Mucha, how are you? And, well he was just unconscious doing that, and suddenly he saw that bodhisattva Manjusri, and he was really mad at him. With big rice patty, just slapped him on his cheek. And then the bodhisattva Manjusri would have all these, you know, [unclear]. And then said, I don't need you anymore. I don't need you anymore. After all, you are you and me am me. Even, you know, Shakyamuni Buddha and, you know, Maitreya come I don't need them now. And said, well you were looking for me. Well, not anymore. Not anymore.

So, and he composed a little poem which said, sweet melon, sweet melon has to be sweet right to the stem. And bitter melon has to be bitter right down to the roots. That's called [perfect? unclear].

Have you got anymore questions?

…

When we sit down like this with other thoughts or sit with your [unclear], you get Zen. And then you don't feel uncomfortable about it. That's called peaceful, peaceful. You know, like, just, it's just happy, the way it is. That's called Suchness Zen.

(Chanting Maum)

All beings one body, I vow to liberate.

Endless blind passions, I vow to uproot.

Dharma gates without number, I vow to penetrate.

The great way of Buddha, I vow to attain.

Thank you.

Sunday Morning Dharma Talk
Teacher: Samu Sunim
Date: February 13, 1994
Location: Unknown (likely Toronto)
Event: Dharma Talk
Transcriber: Zack, Toronto
Date of Transcription: February 04, 2026 (re-listened by Jisik)

Good morning.

(Good morning.)

Please sit comfortably.

This past Thursday was Lunar New Year's day. And I had to do funeral service for someone who took his life. He took his life February 4th. I've known this person over a period of a few years, six or seven years, since our Parkdale days. We moved to this place in 1988. He was a member for [unclear]. Lived at our temple for a one month period [unclear]. He, his name was Stephen Freeman. Actually, he was born with the name Stephen Eagleman and he didn't like his name. [unknown…]. He didn't get along with his father so he wanted to become completely independent and he wanted to move away from his biological family, although he was attached to his mother. His parents split, his mother's now [unclear]. So he changed his last name legally and got himself Freeman. Somewhat it's Eagleman and Freeman, but he was Free man. And he has degree from University of Toronto. He's, he comes from a relatively well to do family. And he had a twin brother who was a doctor, his brother was doctor [unclear]. But he never, apparently, he couldn't reconcile himself with the lifestyle his family members were leading. So I think it might have been he was even committed to voluntary poverty. And he, one time he was making living by, through bicycle courier, he would ride bicycle to deliver items. And he was always, he wanted to live simply, in a uncomplicated way. And also he always wanted to make himself available for help and service. He did have some kind of mental illness, but anyway he failed in adjusting himself to this society. Actually, I know quite a number of people who are more or less like him. Either I have attracted or [unclear] since [unclear] basically I was living in the basement. They couldn't reconcile with what's going on in the society so they were hoping to get something in Buddhist philosophy, and they were attracted to peacefulness of Buddhism [unclear…] philosophical doctrine.

Now, a, some board members may have met him. We have not seen him for last couple of years. He was quite sporadic. So it seems in the meantime he may have gotten into different things because police detectives came and they were asking me a couple of questions. He took his life in Parry Sound. Apparently he was on his way to see his mother. So he got a ticket down from Vancouver and got on a bus in Toronto to Thunder Bay where he was supposed to change bus for further trips. And when bus stopped in Parry Sound he got out and he never returned, so it took off without him. Anyway, the local people saw him around, around 2 pm, fighting, and there was a recording so, and apparently he was doing some rituals and the Police were asking that this was a Buddhist ritual [unclear]. I couldn't recognize any of them as Buddhist rituals.

In the Buddhist scriptures, this Buddhist scripture mentions three groups of people. First group of people who are certain to attain Nirvana, to attain enlightenment eventually, if not in this lifetime in a future lifetime. Then there's another group of people who are bound to fall into evil realms of transmigration. And then there are another group of people whose destines are simply unknown, whose destinies are undecided, uncertain. I'll talk about this first group of people who are certain to attain enlightenment.

First, these people, in Theravada Buddhism they say they have entered the stream. It's called Sotapanna. It's a stream winner. In Mahayana it's seeing into your true nature. In Zen [unclear]. So people who have seen into their true nature. Now, what is this stream or what is this true nature? It's, for the sake of conveying the Buddhist teachings, say outwardly or phenomenally, you see, say you see yourself making mistakes, committing misdeeds, over and over again. And you clearly see your weaknesses, evil habits, or whatever. And sometimes many people find it very difficult accepting this side of themselves. And goes on. And then the true nature means, in spite of all these defilements taking place outside, on a daily basis, or weekly basis, or even hourly basis or whatever, say your own master, say your true nature, your Buddhamind remains pure and untainted in spite of all this. So it's quite different. It's what we call the Self-nature, pure and untainted. In Heart Sutra it says does not increase nor does it decrease, it's neither born or annihilated. In Buddhist, in Zen literally says your unborn nature. Because it's not subject to the cycle of birth and death. And sometimes it's called Suchness. Because this true nature, everyone has that, and it's around. And also it's, it's something like existential stuff. So, it is for you to discover this. So, and develop faith in your true nature. Without getting confused about what is going on every day about your defilements.

So in order to help people understand this, there's this Buddhist term. Say your defilements that are not native to you. It's called, like it's, dust from the outside. It's called, actually, we use guest as, the literal translation is guest dust. So, I mean, say, like, you know, I mean, numerous visitors come in and out, you know, I mean, visit you, but the master remains pure and untainted. So there's this master, you know, the host and guest theory they apply to help you understand. So in

other words, if your guest behaves, you know, errantly you don't have to get too much worried about it, because people get upset. It's a guest. You forgive and whatever. And that's what training, so based upon this, like, [unclear], your original Buddhamind, you have to proceed with practice, in other words you have to learn to deal with your defilements.

So such a person, it's, usually it's called bodhisattva, such a person, you know, embraces Dharma and comes with awakened heart and even makes vow. And also, it is important that, it's called [unclear] or [unclear]. It's non-retrogressing mind. This person, bodhisattva, because of his vow comes out with non-retrogressing mind, non-retrogressing faith, unshakeable. And, now these people, they practice, in the Mahayana tradition, they follow Six Paramitas as a guideline for their lifestyle, and also four, it's called Four Brahmaviharas, and these are called sometimes Four Immeasurable or Four Unlimited, Four Boundless States of Mind. And what are these Four Boundless States of Mind? The first one is called Karuna. It's loving-kindness. Arousing these Four Boundless States of Mind, and these people, they overcome the feeling of, for instance, ill will, or gloating over someone's misfortune, or discontent, or passion. So Karuna, which is loving-kindness, they practice loving-kindness. So, for instance, if you're a mother then of course it's easy to practice your Karuna for your child. Say, particularly if you have one child and you really dote, you give, you know, give everything to your child. So, in the teaching says first you radiate, you radiate your mind, filled with loving-kindness, with a mind filled with loving-kindness. First a direction, you radiate, you know, a first direction. Then a second direction, then a third direction, then a fourth direction, then below, as well, and above, and all around. So that's how you progress, so first your child, then maybe the first direction, easiest direction, and then what would be second direction? Maybe next, after your child, you know, like, people whom you can direct your loving-kindness, your friends or relatives. And then what would be third direction? Then, you know, your colleagues, anyway, people known to you. And then, eventually, you know, people whom you do not know. And then from there you extend to, you know, animals. And eventually, you know, people you hate, your foes, and people in, hell beings. Beings in hell.

So, the second Illimitable or Boundless State of Mind, the first one is Maitri. Maitri means loving-kindness. The second one is Karuna which is usually translated as compassion. So, and in Mahayana Buddhism it says the first one, loving-kindness, is, you know, it's like, happy state of mind. It's joy. Second one is you are, like it's, you identify their suffering as yours. So in this way, practicing both Maitri and Karuna, you feel yourself connected with everything, everywhere, eventually. And then the third Boundless State of Mind is called Mudita. It's sympathetic joy. You identify yourself with the happiness of others, joy of others. Like, this is such a wonderful English expression, I'm happy for you. And then the last, the fourth Boundless State of Mind is called Upeksa, equanimity. That means, it's a transcendent mind. You transcend

all the differences. Like, friend or foe and all discriminations. And Buddhamind prevails. Your mind remain firm, unshakeable. Radiating, radiating your Buddhamind, radiating this Boundless State of Mind in every direction.

So you practice these Four Illimitables. Sometimes [unclear] means unlimited mind, that's unlimited action coming from unconfined mind. Buddhamind. And these unlimited actions are bodhisattva action. So that's, you know, a progression. Even though you cannot come up with this Boundless State of Mind right away, you work on it, embracing Dharma. And that's called non-retrogressing activity, based on non-retrogressing faith. And in this, well, it's important to understand you, you know, don't come up that, we say, broken views. We have this feeling, well, you know, this is my life, maybe, just, I'll live this life as best as I can, you know. Making myself happy and whatever happens after my death I don't know about that. And then your, you know, maybe consciously and unconsciously apply this kind of mind, state of mind, to other things as well. That's called broken view of the world, or shortsighted view of the world. So you have to come up with unlimited mind. Unlimited, eternal view of world. That's a Buddhist view of Samsara and Nirvana. Or you can lead it, all ourselves, all beings, from conflict to peace.

Samu Sunim A2 Feb 1985 Tape #1
Teacher: Samu Sunim
Date: February 1985
Location: Ann Arbor, MI
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Transcriber: Zack, Toronto
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[Chanting in Korean]

청산 첩첩이 미타굴이요

창해망망이 적멸궁 하느니라

나무 쁘라즈나 파라미타 (원효스님 오도송)

Once upon a time, once upon a time is a good way of beginning. It indicates timelessness and universality, which Buddhists learned very early, actually in the inception of Buddhism. It's embedded in the teachings of Buddha. So once upon a time, Lord Buddha assembled the twelve animals and had them race a long distance, like long distance track. Like snakes, and tigers, and cow, and rat. Such a long distance. So they all started out and, but rat, rat is small and, you know, thought, well, you know, I'll never cover that long distance. So he jumped up on the back of cow. And cow didn't know. He was completely unaware that small rat was riding on his back all the while.

So anyway, so cow is like, always, you know, steady and faithful, you know. Never slows down. It's slow animal, but keeps his steady faith, pace. So cow came out, you know, first runner. And just before cow reached the goal, you know, the rat jumped out. So rat became number one. So Buddha was, Buddha know all along, you know. So rat came out proudly that he was the number one, you know. And, well, cow was completely unaware of that and also he looked innocent as usual, you know.

So the Lord Buddha said, that was okay, so rat was number one and cow was number two. So that's why, like the, the twelve animals, and then ten stems, combination of them makes the 60

year cycle, you know, in oriental counting of the years and ages anyway. Numeric, in making up numerical lists.

So last year was the year of the rat. So that's the beginning of the 60 year cycle. So, and usually, you know, the occult Buddhists, they are active, you know, at the beginning of the year. I mean, just beginning of, kind of, a new cycle, you know. They perform all kinds of rites. And now, this year is, so, the year of cow so I just wanted to let you know how it happened in case you may be curious.

There are these three Dharma seals. Seals means, you know, these are the absolute truth. It's, like, sealed, you know. No change. So the first of the three Dharma seals is everything is impermanent. All things are impermanent. They call it the anicca. So we all suffer that, you know. If you have attachment, and no matter what that is, you know, it's going to come to an end, you know. So it's, everything is impermanent. And your physical body, everything is brittle.

Number two is, there isn't really true self, you know. You think, well, you've got self, personal identity, you know. You think there is continuity, you know, in your selfhood. But then, there is no such thing as selfhood [unclear]. There's no true self. It just, the five skandhas, form, feelings, perceptions, impulses, and consciousness, you know, they may up, they create a kind of false notion of a personal identity. They interact. That's what we are all about. So in the Heart Sutra, which the temple people recite, five skandhas are empty. Form is empty, feelings, perceptions, impulses, and consciousness, they are all empty. So observing, Avalokitesvara, the Bodhisattva of Great Compassion, delivered all beings from their suffering. Sounds very simple. So if you realize, I mean, to your bone that everything is impermanent and there is no true self, then you attain enlightenment. Then you gain your freedom. That's called Nirvana. It's as simple as that.

But our conditions persist. Now what conditions? The Buddhists, they talk about the three obstacles, three main obstacles. Number one is greed. Greed. And then anger or hatred. You know, you can see, you know, some people, they can get angry for a number of years, or for hundred years. Something bothers them, you know. And, of course, delusion or ignorance. So we've got greed, anger, delusion or ignorance.

Now, these are created because of the conditions. So if you remove those conditions, then we'll be freed from greed, anger, and ignorance. So how can we remove our conditions and function properly? Gaining freedom.

Now, this year we are going to have a precept taking ceremony. So usually I ask people, I mean, those who are willing to take precepts, or willing to make a spiritual commitment, to do prostrations. It's, prostrations are kind of a new custom, alien custom to North America. Like, years ago I used to go to Art Park, Lewiston, New York, where these Indians, they get together

and hold a kind of international powwow. It's a big outside park. That's what they do in summer, you know. They get out and do outdoor activities, you know. So, and they, and then different tribes, you know, they pull up and, to put up their own, you know, dance and all that thing. And the Indians, they don't have this, still lot of them, they don't have this mechanical sense of time so they arrive on their own time. So things never get underway, you know, as scheduled.

So there was these Aztec Indians from down Mexico, they were supposed to arrive. And then, you know, the guy, the master of ceremony, he kept saying, well, you know, they'll be arrived, they'll be here soon, you know, trying to hold the public, you know. But they were never there. But anyway, I think we sticked around for half an hour and then they showed up, you see. And they were saying we just got off the plane, you know. And the Aztecs said, the first time I saw them I said beautiful bodies, you know, beautiful shape. Makes you wonder how, you know, I mean, just 60 Spanish conquistadors, you know, they just conquered the whole country, you know. And, so they showed some dance, and then they invited gringos, you know, to join them in what they called, you know, friendship dance.

So, like, you know, like, they realized, gringos, they spend too much time at office, you know. Like, stiff legs and all that. So, you know, try to show some movement, you know, outdoor movement. So, like, the gringos, they reluctantly join, you know. They were, holding hands, you know, together. And then finally, to show them how to make bow to the ground, you know. I mean, these gringos never did that, you know. It's kind of humiliating, you know. I mean, you never thought, you know, going down in your knees and, kind of, you know, making, touching your forehead on the, right on the dirt, you know. So, and, so, it's, they created quite a scene. Some did it nicely, some just went down and, you know, like, they knelt and did, and others, like, ladies, you know, extremely awkward.

So it's, usually here, the spiritual training is, I mean, you feel comfortable with, you know, with what you have a strong affinity or with what you like to do. But you are weak, you know, I mean, there are some areas which you dislike, or not good at. So here we make people do what they are not good at or what they dislike. Because they break that down and gain freedom, you know.

So here comes prostrations. Do prostrations. It's quite a practice, you know. It's, I can tell you the whole story, but I'll tell you just two stories to give you some idea how it works, spiritually. Now, there was this guy and he saw death, he saw three deaths in two days. You know, it just happened his sister died, and then, upon hearing his sister died, his brother-in-law kind of collapsed in shock and died, and then, you know, his girlfriend died. So he was just left utterly hopeless. So he said, well, he was so attached to them, he was living in his sister's house, and then going out with his girlfriend who was living not too far away.

So when all these things happened at the same time, you know, that happens to some people anyway, like, all these misfortunes, you know. They kind of, they come all at once. To shock you out of, it's kind of enlightening occasion. In Zen we use that, you know, to shock you into, kind of, instant enlightenment. So he said, well, he said he was going to kill himself. There is nothing that could pull him, you know, to the world. So he thought, so, well maybe, but he didn't like to die in the city. So, like, kind of, he has ascetic idea, you know, to die in the temple would be good, or in the temples that are located in the mountains.

So he visited a temple and then got a room there. So he was contemplating on a way to kill himself. In a beautiful way. Nice, you know, beautiful suicide. It's quite a predicament. Then he thought, then he saw the monks, you know, doing all these things, you know. Doing spiritual practice, getting up early in the morning and, you know, all these things, you know, like [unclear], they recite sutras, and do some kind of meditation, sitting, you know, stock still and all these things, which were quite alien to him. Maybe, and then, he thought, he upon, he hit upon the idea, maybe this is an alternative to dying, you know. So he thought that maybe becoming monk is just, you know, an alternative to dying, you know, to dying to yourself.

So he decided to become a monk, as an alternative. So, then this guy, he was, you know, he comes from, kind of, upper-middle class family. So if you become a monk, say, you start as a novice monk. Novice monk, they, in the temples they have these strange customs. Like, you know, like, washing your own dishes, you know, on the table and drinking the dish water. It's not pleasant if you're not accustomed to it, you know. So that he couldn't stand. So, like, what they do is, you know, I mean, you use four bowls, right? One for rice, one for soup, and one for side dishes. And the fourth bowl is like water, it's like washing your bowl. So, I mean, you know, I mean, depending upon how clean you eat, I mean, your eating habits are not really wonderful, you see. All these spills, and all that. But you have to clean it, you know, with tea water. And you must drink that, you see. And real clean, otherwise, you know, there are regulations. You can get kicked out.

So that he cannot stand. I mean, it's regulation, you know. He has to do it. But every time he's like, it makes me really sick, you know. And sometimes, couple of times, he tried to throw it out, you know, out of the sign of senior monks. But that does not always work. I mean, if he gets discovered for that he can get expelled. So very unpleasant but somehow he had to hack it.

So, but that was not alone, on Buddha's birthday, there was, Buddha's birthday finally came and there, this big temple, practically thousand people, you know, show up, to light lanterns and all that. Then, you know, like, you serve in the kitchen quarter, you know, there are some novice monks cooking rice, and making, preparing side dishes, all that, you know. There are about 10 of them working really, like, busy like a bumblebee, you know. So all, you have to feed all these

people, all these Buddhist lay people who come to the temple to celebrate the occasion. So, and you know how it is. The lay people, they are not properly trained in their, you know, Buddhist eating manners. So there are all spills around.

So the regulation is, all the spills, they should never go down the drain. So all the novice monks, they have to eat them up, you know. They have to collect all these spills and they have to eat them, you see. Because not a single grain of cooked rice, or even uncooked rice, they should be wasted. That's the spirit of training.

So it's quite a job. Lot of spills, you know, I mean, you wipe it with, you know, rag and then you have to eat them up. So he just couldn't hack that so, like, before he became aware he was just strung out and down, you know. And then, it was a misty morning and then this, it's, the supervising monk, it's, supervising monk, he was, he had a nickname called Ugly Nose. He has a very ugly face, but a beautiful mind. And he was known for strictness. The reason why he got ugly nose was, you know, I mean, on his ugly face his ugly nose really sticked out somehow, unusually. So sometimes in the mountains there is mist and fog in early mornings, so his teacher, who is old monk, one day he was sitting sipping tea in his room quietly in the morning. And then suddenly, you know, fog is so thick, you cannot see, you know, just a few foot. So his door opened, there was no one there, but when he looked very closely there is this ugly nose stuck in. Just, all he can see is the nose, you know, before he saw his body, you know. So he got the name Ugly Nose.

So suddenly Ugly Nose appeared, and then he roared. I mean, he saw this novice monk, you know, throwing all this, you know, spills down the drain. Roared. And then this novice monk, he finally came to his senses and he realized what is he doing, and then he was really apologetic. Please, please, please excuse me. I was just out of my mind. But no way. Said, well, I am as much responsible as you are for this because, after all, I am your supervisor, you know. I am your senior monk in charge of kitchen area. So we must go to main hall and do prostrations, you know. To clear our karma, you know. There's, grave karma was committed doing all this. So we must immediately clear our karma. That is, you have to go and do the 3000 prostrations.

Now, you know, I mean, so it's very busy, you know. If, well, well he said, doing prostration, I can do it but, you know, if I'm missing from the kitchen quarters, you know, what would happen. There is, you know, it's so hectic, you know. It's, it would create chaos, you know, in serving people. And then the monk roared again. You are missing the point. What are you doing here? Are you here just to serve people? You are here for training. You are neglecting vital training here. Never mind serving people. So this is much more important, that we are doing this.

And then he said, well, I mean, he feels bad enough that, having done that, but like, this monk, supervising monk, he's coming with him to do prostrations together, you know. So, like, well, it's my fault, entirely my fault, so I'll do it myself, you know. It really makes me feel bad to see that you are doing this, you know, with me because it's not your fault. But he's insistent, it is my fault as well. You must see it is my fault, so we must do it together.

So, you know, the, once he says that, you know, this monk, he do it. So, like, reluctantly he followed him to the Buddha Hall. And there, doing prostrations, up and down, up and down. Took them, you know, seven hours to finish 3000 prostrations. So it's, you know, some of you who have never done prostrations, it may be pretty difficult to imagine what happens, you know, when one does 3000 prostrations. It's, it's quite a spiritual experience. You can get really, really high. So when, this guy, when he did that, you know, there's this, it's Haeinsa, it's, there is 108 stone steps, stone stairs. It's pretty steep, you know. And he barely made it down, down the steps. And then he just, as soon as he got to his room he collapsed. But since then he never had any trouble eating spills and, you know, he never got sick, you know, about swallowing, you know, his own dish water. Just fixed them right away.

Now, another story was, there was this country school principal. And this fellow, he was just, you know, school principal serving in the country district. And somehow this guy, he ended up with his ambition of becoming the Minister of Education for the country. Of course, you know, I mean, as as school principal in the country he's not qualified. But somehow he landed this ambition.

So, you know how it is with people burning with a certain kind of ambition, you see. Somehow, whether he's qualified or not, that's a second matter. He must become the Minister of Education for the country. And then, so he studies ways, every day he would study ways, how he can become, how he can become appointed to the Minister of Education for the country, you know. He would draw up long lists, you know. Once he becomes the Minister of Education, you know, he would come up with, you know, school reform system and this and that, you know. But of course, you know, there is no way he would ever become appointed unless miracle happens, you know. It's kind of, you know, he landed with a hopeless ambition. But that does not matter. So, you know, he is burning with his ambition and every way he's trying to find ways, somehow, illegal, legal, does not matter. Somehow he has to become Minister of Education for the country.

So, I mean, such a mind operates in such a way, so he found out that a high priest living up in Seoul, he has a good connection with the president, and his wife too. So, like, I mean, in such a country, I mean, if you get good connection, somehow you get appointed, you know. So he said, that's right, I must approach this priest, you know. So he made a journey to Seoul and visited the temple and then obtained interview with him. And then, so, like, I have this very sincere hope

that I'd like to become Minister of Education for the country. And then he would explain, you know, if he somehow helps him, you know, become Minister of Education then he would do this, this, this. Aside from that he would help his temple, you know, become big temple, and all that.

So the priest looked at him and said, well obviously you don't qualify for the Minister of Education, but somehow you have to make yourself qualified some way. So are you willing to listen to me? He said, sure, you know. I mean, I'm desperate, you know. Whatever you say I'll just follow, if you can just help me, you know, use your influence and appoint me as Minister of Education for the country.

So, okay, then somehow you must qualify to become the minister of, to be worthy of the Minister of Education. Minister of Education. So now you come and do prostrations for one week. Like, the first day you do 3000 prostrations, and the second day you do 4000 prostrations, and the third day you do 5000 prostrations, this way. He never did prostrations before, he does not know what it's all about. But just, you know, just it's a, you know, pie in the sky, just Minister of Education, no matter what happens, you know. Like, either he dies or alive, you know, he must become Minister of Education.

So, and he said, well, so he came home and he told that to his wife and his wife said, forget it, you have always been crazy. This is, I think it's the craziest thing I've ever heard. Forget it. Do you think you would ever make that?

But I must do that, you know. Either, you know, just no point of, you know, continuing to live without becoming Minister of Education. Just so hopeless, you know. So, well, you know, he did say to me that if I finish doing such prostrations for one week then he would, you know, help me become Minister of Education.

So, well he wrote a will, you know, in case he dies, you know, doing the prostrations. So, and then, like, just coming for Yongmaeng Jeongjin, you know. Like, and then toilet articles, and, you know, and, you know, all these necessary items. So he showed up at the temple, you know, prepared to do the prostrations.

Now, it's cold winter and also the way, the place where he's going to do prostrations is, like it's Buddha figure carved out of living rock. And then it's all rock, you know, not even even, you know. He has to do prostration right out there, you know, on the rocks. And, and it's winter too so it's very cold and you have to break the ice and to wash your face you get up 3 o'clock in the morning. So, but if you do over 100 prostrations your body gets heated up, you know. It's really, you know, perspiring. So he would do, like Yongmaeng Jeongjin, you know, he would do 250 prostrations, or 750 prostrations, it's spread out, you know, over four periods. And then, it's hard and all his, you know, knees would, you know, blister and, you know, bleed. But somehow it's,

when he does even a single prostration is difficult. But he thinks if I do this I'll become Minister of Education, you see.

So that keeps him ticking, you know. You know how it is, and this guy, he does not realize, I mean, he's doing this spiritual practice for most secular reason, you know. Just to become Minister of Education. So that keeps him ticking. But you can do so much, you know, I mean, every time you cannot think of, so after 100 prostrations, well, somehow you just keep doing that instead of thinking all the time Minister of Education. Of course, that kept him ticking for a while but, you know…

So, well he finished it, finally he finished it the first day and really he got knocked out. And then straight, went home, went to bed and then doing, started doing the next time, next day. So, it's something happening in this guy. You know, it's, like, in doing spiritual training, sometimes it helps if you're absolutely hopeless. Not even despair, despair would not do. Absolutely hopeless. Nothing to hold. So the extremes, they correspond to each other. So he was just, he found himself just doing that, just doing up and down, up and down, doing prostrations.

And then the third day he, after he finished the prostrations, he looked down. There is all, in the distance there is downtown Seoul blinking lights. And then something dawned on him. What is all this? Then at the end of the day he went to the monk and say, well, I no longer wish to become Minister of Education. And the priest said, well, it does not matter but you must, you committed yourself to doing the prostrations so you must finish your prostrations. So he went back and did, finished these prostrations. And at the end of the sixth day he got some awakening. So on the seventh day, when he did finish the prostrations, he asked the priest to shave his head. So he became a monk at the end of the week. And then, he is now working for retarded children, and also he was going to build some kind of rehabilitation centre for inmates. Well he was Korean guy, but he is doing this in Japan for the Japanese.

So, like, he was very desperate to become somebody, like Minister of Education is somebody. So, of course, if you try to become somebody you run into conflict, you run into a lot of troubles. So anyway, he was very desperate so, first he wanted to become somebody but he came out as nobody. So he found freedom.

On Hwadu (Koan) Study

"How to raise the vital question that brings the light of wisdom and spiritual awakening"

Teacher: Samu Sunim

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…you know, where Buddhism is in the West, you know, Buddhism begins by dealing with confusion. Buddhism begins by dealing with ignorance. Buddhism begins by dealing with neurosis. So it's wonderful that way.

And the other mind-body is called Dharmakaya, the body of Dharma, the body of truth, the body of liberation. And this tradition continues in the teachings of, like, in the scriptures. So in my Dharma talk, you know. So that's what I'm going to talk about. The tradition of Dharmakaya, the tradition of the body of truth.

Body becomes manifest, but what is this body here, like, living embodiment of truth? Like, Buddha-hood in this fresh present body? Now, the, a little Dharma verse which I recited is the enlightenment song, the enlightenment verse of 22nd ancestor, Indian, Manura.

The mind moves with the ten thousand things. The mind turns in every direction. Even while moving it is serene, it is cool. Perceive it's essence as it moves, and neither sorrow nor joy there is.

It's basically Suchness, just the way it is. As it is. It refers to Tathata. Called Suchness, true nature, of life, true nature of all beings. It's called Buddha-nature, Buddhata. So everybody has this nature. And it's also called mind, [unclear] the mind.

Buddhism confuses people by using all these so many words. Actually, Zen Buddhism in particular, they are not supposed to rely on words and letters. That's the four famous statements, special transmission outside scriptures. Scriptures are no good. Because they are made up of written words. No dependence upon words and letters. Directly pointing to the heart. Directly seeing, directly pointing to the way, seeing into your true nature and attainment of Buddha-hood. But you can see that because Buddhism does not rely on words and letters, you are not restricted. So the words comes from your original untainted mind without restrictions. So that's one reason

why there are so many books can be written on the topic of Zen. And then Buddhism itself comes from meditation practice.

So let me just dwell on this verse. The mind, so the ultimate reality, moves with the ten thousand things. It's, in the Dhammapada, you may be familiar with the Dhammapada, there's a chapter called The Ten Thousand. The ten thousand distractions, conflicts. You wrestle with the ten thousand things, conflicts. And your mind moves with. It's not, your mind is not apart from these conflicts. Your mind is not apart from these ten thousand things. You go around. But even while moving, the mind essence remains serene. Remains untainted. So your task is, perceive its essence as it moves, and you realize Suchness. As-it-is-ness.

When, like a prayer, like, in the West you have a prayer tradition. In prayer you keep in touch with God. You commune with God. But, of course, you are never the same as God. You can never enjoy the same equal status with God. So there's a radical difference. It's a very heterogeneous difference, between God, the Creator, and man, person, the created. But any case, like in prayer, in meditation you inevitably come in touch with Suchness or your mind, your Buddha-nature. Because Buddha-hood, Buddha-nature, Suchness, or Dharma is in the depth of every being.

In other words, in plain language, you see, when you sit in meditation, it simply practice of waking up. That's what Buddhism is all about. It's practice of waking up, practice of awakening. So we say you're sitting up. You rise up. So you relax your body, you quiet your mind, and you open your heart, and you find out what life is all about, and you find out who you really are, and you find out how you should lead, live your life. That much is clear. That's what it is about. That's how much, at least, meditation directs you to.

Now, once again going back, this Dharma verse. It's, there is another, another, this beautiful thing about this living your life like a floating gourd. So how you maintain this Buddha-mind in your everyday life?

An empty gourd floats on the waters. At the mercy of the winds, it is never steady. Now thinking, now rising, always at the mercy of the winds. But the gourd itself is altogether unconcerned. Buddha, or God, or Jesus Christ, bodhisattvas, or devil, may come to take hold of it. But it would always elusively slip out of their grasp. Amazing.

What it means is, the mind, the ultimate reality, the way of Buddha, is unattainable. It's completely independent of any efforts to comprehend it. So that's why it is said in the Diamond Sutra, you know, mind is ungraspable. Past mind cannot be grasped. Future mind cannot be grasped. The present mind cannot be grasped. So if you go after it, if you make any attempt, surely you would know it would be out of your reach. Then how can you live with Dharma? Be

at one with it? Leave yourself completely to its natural course, or in this case, leave yourself to float with it? And experiencing Suchness?

To put it in a little bit different way, like, for instance, when I conduct introductory meditation course, we show them different postures. And it's not comfortable. Some of you may feel being not comfortable, you know, being here this evening. But I can tell you where you are right now is the perfect situation. There is no other perfect situation. Each situation you are in is perfect. So you have to always start from there. Perfect situation. Perfect situation and enlightened living starts from right where you are. So I tell them, you know, you exert yourself, help yourself, do your best, and your, that's your perfect posture. There is no other perfect posture. At least that much is clear, if you care for wisdom. Here I'm talking about wisdom, that's what it is all about.

Now, Shakyamuni Buddha, he was born the prince of a small tribal kingdom. His father was chief, like Indian chief, you know, chief of Indian tribe. So in those days, he, you know, he had this comfort of life and he led a very sheltered life in the palace grounds. And one day he got very tired of living in the confined palace grounds. So he wanted to see the outside world, you know. How people live outside the palace grounds. So he went out on excursion. That is, traditionally, four gates. Like, east gate, west gate, north gate, and south gate. So he asked his charioteer, groom, you know, Chandaka, to take him, you know, outside the palace.

So they went out the east gate. There, it's called two things, in the biographies call it, you know, four encounters. There he encounters an old person. In the palace ground he never saw an old person, so he was completely ignorant about life. And, so he asked his groom, his charioteer, what kind of person is this? What did he do to look like, you know, this way? He's bent, you know, his tooth's gone, mouth dripping. And his hair white. Not very nice.

So his charioteer says, he's called an old person. And, and everyone grows old. And when you grow old you look like that. And you too one day would become old and would look like that. Really? That's an eye opening encounter, you know. It's old age. Our young people are like that.

So then he lost all interest, you know, about his experience, so he returned to the palace. On another occasion he left outside, this time, south gate. There he encountered, on the roadside, a sick person, ill person. And that was also quite a sight and, what kind of person is that? Well, he's sick. Sometimes you get sick, you know. You get old, and get sick, but sometimes you are still young and get sick. And if you get sick, you know, you are like that. That's also an eye opening experience.

So he finds out you, you know, people grow old, people get sick, and finally, one day they go out west gate. And there he encounters funeral procession. And what is this? And he learns about death and dying.

So he got this vital question, what is birth and what is death? Basically Samsara. Everyone gets old. So what is the meaning of this life?

So in that quest, he left the palace and became sramana, mendicant monk. Now here, you too have a quest. You know, people in the world, they're all in quest of something. Mainly two things. One is for money. People really busy, busy in quest for money. Wealth and fame, you know it comes with, these days, in capitalism, it's money. Money's the word, the key word. And then there are some who go in quest for spiritual liberation, salvation, enlightenment.

So Shakyamuni, he wanted to find what life is all about. The meaning of life. That's Shakyamuni's hwadu. And he spent six years, and finally sat down in meditation and discovered the truth called Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Path. Then Bodhidharma, the Indian monk, brought this tradition to China in 6th Century. So then, they framed this question. Why did Bodhidharma come from the West? It may sound strange to you but that was the question, why? It's something like, what is Buddhadharma doing in the West? What is Buddhadharma in the West right now?

So one day this monk, [shue-lao? unclear], he came, he went around, so monks, they would have this vital question, you know. They bring all the things into one question. And it's like, what is life, what is life? What is the meaning of life? What is enlightenment? What is Buddha? So the question was, why did Bodhidharma come from the West, to the middle kingdom?

So this monk, he went around asking this vital question. He wanted to understand what life is all about. Well there are other vital questions, for instance, like, one thing you can think about is, I'm not person. I'm not self. I'm not a being. Who am I?

So, he posed this question to one master. And this master, without saying anything, gave him a kick in the chest, which caused him to fall down to the ground. And this poor guy, getting up from the toughest experience anyone could have as a result, you know, all he wanted to do was get enlightened. So, he got up, and then he would rub, he rubbed his hands and gave out one of the heartiest of laughs, exclaiming, ten thousands of Samadhi can be seen in the tip of a hair down to the bottom of great reality. And he said, how wonderful, how wonderful. He just had a wonderful experience.

Then later on, this fellow, when he started teaching, he would say to his students, ever since I got this great kick from my master, I have known no end of my laughter. And so one day, a disciple came and asked, What is Buddha? And he just laughed. What do you think about this?

And then, it comes down to 6th patriarch, Huineng. And he was, in his time, he was just an ordinary fellow. Well, he was Chinese and he was living in Guangdong province. And this was

6th Century, ancient China has not changed much since then. I mean, in terms of discrimination, all these things is concerned. So, the China is divided into North and South by Yangshuo river, you know. And then, so the Northern Chinese, they are all very proud of themselves, they are the Mandarin official class. They speak the good language, standard, and they are learned. And people south of Yangshuo, those are Cantonese. Those are short in stature, and they don't know how to read and write, and they smell like chop suey. So, like, all the obvious Chinese you see, they are from Canton, you know. And so, they used to banish, you know, bad officials down to, so it's a kind of malaria infested area so, if you banish them they languish and eventually die, you know. So they're barbarians. So, and this Huineng, [unclear], actually the…

[side A ends, side B begins]

…[unclear] is dialect. [unclear]. He peddled, he peddled firewood to support himself and his mother. And one day, he was delivering firewood to his customer and then he heard, this Dharma was recited. What it said was, without abiding anywhere let your mind come forth. The moment he heard that, his mind opened and experienced deep realization. Without abiding anywhere, let your mind come forth.

There's this Korean Zen master, [전강스님] Sunim, and he lived during the Korean war. He was such a master, he, first he trained in Zen with a group of monks, like in Zen meditation. Then he said, this is not good enough. So he retired into, you know, deep mountain and became hermit, you know. So he was practicing all by himself in the deep mountains. When he came to his freedom, it was on the full moon night when he attained enlightenment. So overflowing with joy, apparently this master, he was, he was pretty good, he was pretty good drinking, too and, but he was good making Korean pancakes, you know. And he was very good singing. Like, I mean, this is Buddhist singing. And, so he walked all night, dancing, and singing, and, you know. So at dawn, he arrived at this beautiful monastery called [태안사], temple of great peace, you know. And the trouble is, the monks, they get up early in the morning, you know, they get up at 3 o'clock. And then they finish their breakfast by 5:30. So when he arrived at the monastery, the monks were just finishing their breakfast. So he felt so good, so he wanted to make a real good offering, you know. To Buddha, to the main Buddha Hall.

So, when he arrived at the courtyard of Buddha Hall, you know, and facing the Buddha Hall, he took down his pants and started taking good leak, you know. Then these monks started coming out, you see. And then when the abbot and senior monks saw that, oh what a blasphemy, you know. This cannot be allowed. So, you know, they, you know, after breakfast they, you know, they sweeped the yard so they had all these brooms, you know. So they tried to beat him and drive him away, this crazy monk. And, you know, crazy behaviour in this holy place. And so,

[Ch'unsong?] Sunim, pulling up his pants, well you tell me where there is no Buddhas so I could take a good leak, you know.

And so, he, he had this one disciple, you know. And during the Korean, it's war, you know, in war, every young people have to be drafted, right? So they don't leave monks, every able bodies have to go to war. So to him, Dharma is much more important than winning the war or losing the war. So I cannot send my disciple to war, and also it's against Buddhist precept.

So, he actually professionally, he made his disciple deaf and dumb and mute. So if you are deaf and dumb and mute then you are exempt from conscription. And his disciple did the job so well, you know. And he even took him to, you know, hospital and got him, you know, certified, and this person is deaf and, you know, mute. And, of course his disciple's family was very, very upset, you know. I mean, certainly he was not deaf and mute, he was, like, you know, very well cared for child, you know. How could this monk make our son turn into deaf and mute? you know.

So anyway, so they played pretty good, you know. And so, they ran. They didn't live in the temple, that's also dangerous business, living in the temple, you know. Usually, you know, like, if they fight, you know, the temple becomes kind of a, you know, temporary hospital, you know, field hospital, or they hide in the temples. So they run, you know, convenience stores. You see, not in Chicago, some other, like, in LA, the Koreans run all these convenience stores. Small convenience stores. And, so two of them, they would sell all kinds of things like chewing gums, you know, like, it's like Dharma peddling, you know. And then, at midnight, when everyone goes to sleep, then they whisper each other. Then their training starts. So they practice late into night. And he did the job very well.

But then, when the American B29, when it started coming to bomb, you see, then it's okay I die, but you must stay alive and trust me to Dharma, the light of wisdom to all beings. So he personally took him to this island, which was pretty safe, you know, I mean safe from the bombing, aerial bombing. So, and then, you know, you stay here in hiding and then, you know, he would continue to run the business. And also, this disciple, he was later on known, [묵언] Sunim, like, silent monk. He didn't say a word except whispering to his master for 10 years. He did a pretty good job, 10 years, you know. So he observed silence for 10 years. It's called 묵언 Sunim.

Now, of course, his disciple, the master died and his disciple is now the master. But anyway, 전강 Sunim, he would usually say 언하대오 言下大悟. At the drop of word, at the drop of word, that's hwadu, live word, after drop of word, you should attain great enlightenment. It's called 언하대오. At the drop of word, you should experience great enlightenment.

Now, but this awakening takes place in all situations. Actually there is this one monk, he was, he was very diligent monk, very diligent practitioner. He would practice all night. And then, his roommate, his fellow monk, was completely the opposite. He would sleep all the time, you know. Whenever he can he would sleep, you know. So it's quite a contrast, but they didn't bother each other so, you know, that's fine. Excellent roommate. So one night, as usual, this diligent monk, he was sitting up, meditating, while the other monk was sleeping. Well, this monk, you know, who was sleeping, in the middle of the night he fell down from his bed. So at the sound of this, of his fellow monk falling down from bed, this guy attained enlightenment. What do you think about that? So that's how they help each other, you see.

And also, yeah, there was another monk, and this monk was also diligent monk. So he would sit up and practice all night, you know. So all by himself in a room. So when morning came, he felt a little bit tired and he was sleepy. So he decided to lean against a wall and, you know, it's not lying down, not touching your waist, that's the practice but you can lean against the wall and, you know, catch a little sleep. So he was trying to lean against the wall. And then he just fell, he fell right back, there was no wall there. And he came to enlightenment.

And yet another monk, he was in the outhouse doing his big business, you know, having big bowel movement, and still, you know, hwadu, you know. Preoccupied with hwadu. So, and as he was trying to give a big push, and he attained enlightenment. And also there was another person who attained enlightenment when he heard his turd dropping, you know.

My own tonsure master, Tongsan Sunim, he did a three year meditation retreat and then one day he was, he became resident of Beomeosa monastery, which is my mother monastery and also it became his monastery. Actually, that's the monastery where he was initially ordained. And he was taking walk, he was coming down the stairs when he heard this, there's bamboo grove, and then the westerly wind blew and when he heard the sound of bamboos rustling in the wind his mind opened.

Now, so hwadu, hwadu is the Chinese, the Cantonese, actually, this Huineng's tradition, they call it hwadou. It means word, but it means, like, point. My friend, Seung Sahn Sunim (숭산스님), used to call it primary point or punchline. But actually what it means is the end of word, the end of word. So, like, it is not mind. You know, like, Buddhists think mind is the ultimate reality. It's called mind Dharma. So, like, mind is Buddha. So it's ultimate reality. Buddhist comes from agriculture society so, like, mind is compared to ground, soil, that helps grow all kinds of vegetables. Beans, rice, and, that nourish all beings. So it's fertile ground, Buddha-field, that produce all. So it's like Buddhist creation. Mind is the creator. Like, for instance, you know, the Christians they go around ask who created this world? That does not apply to Buddhism, because

in Buddhism we believe creation is taking place any moment. It's continuous. Creation is taking place all the time. So it's different time concepts, you see.

So it is not mind, nor is it Buddha. And, nor are they things that sustain your life. It's either Buddha or mind, you know, or things, whatever things, your parents or, you know, material things, or non-material things. It could be any of these things that could sustain your life, but it is none of these things that sustain your life. Then what is it? What is it that sustains your life? What is it that keeps you go on like this? What is it? That's hwadu. What is it? It's questioning.

So you forget yourself completely in this question. And so you put everything into this question. So questioning alone prevails. Questioning alone leads you or guides you. Or questioning alone prevails in vast emptiness. It's something like, it is not God, nor is it bible, nor is it anything. You know, I mean, if you are Christian, right, what is it?

This is, in traditional Zen practice, this is called killing Buddha. You know, first, first you start out, you know, like, I mean, when you see, like, you know, cows are cows, and monkeys are monkeys, and mountains are mountains, rivers and rivers, right? So these opinions prevail. You've got something in your eye, as we say. You, when you get something in your eye you cannot see things straight, right? You cannot see things as they really are in their true nature. Like, that's called fly in the ointment, right?

So then, when you work on hwadu, then mountains are no longer mountains, rivers are no longer rivers, and cows are no longer cows. Say, say, well, we say practitioners, you turn your mind into rocks and rivers. Then it becomes completely different reality. So anything, you know, so whether it is Christ, or bible, anything, it's called killing Buddhas, and patriarchs, and ancestors. Nothing applies here. You are completely on your own. You have to discover your own truth. You don't depend on these things. Well, in this case, killing Buddha is, Buddha, Christ, this, all deluded conceptions.

So, when it come down to 6th patriarch, [unclear], when he heard, without abiding anywhere, that's killing Buddhas, killing everything. You set yourself free from all these things to discover your unborn nature. So without abiding anything, let your mind come forth. That's questioning. That's questioning.

So then Huineng asks, where did you get this teaching? So this scholar tells him, you know, I got it from the 5th ancestor, Hongren, and he lives very, very far away. 1000 or more li away. So kindly he showed Huineng how to get there, you know, I must go there to study Dharma. So when he came home he related this instance to his mother. And his mother was old, his mother depends on him, you know, for being alive. So his mother didn't say, well, you son of gun, you know, like, how could you abandon me like this, and said, his mother said, please don't worry

about it. I'm going to die anyway, you should not waste your precious life on account of me. And then his neighbour kindly agreed to look after his mother.

So finally he arrived. When he arrived he was shown into the masters quarters. And he did his obeisance, and then the master asked, where are you from and what is it you want, you are seeking? I'm from Lingnan, that means south of the path, that means Cantonese. I'm from Lingnan, and I'm here not seeking anything special, but just Buddhadharma. I want to become Buddha. And Hongren says, you are from Lingnan, so you are barbarian. How can you expect to attain Buddhahood? Barbarian. And then Hongren says, your honourable body and my body may be different. The Southerners' body and the Northerners' body may be different. But there is not South, nor North in the Dharma. What difference is there in the Buddhanature? There is no such difference in the Buddhanature.

So Hongren recognized the worth of this fellow, but assigned him to work in the kitchen quarters. And one day, Hongren, the master, he wanted to find his successor, he wanted to transmit his Dharma, so he called the assembly and made announcement, and he called a contest for Dharma succession. Anyone who is capable of showing his profound understanding of Dharma, and if I find it worthy of Dharma transmission, then the Dharma would be transmitted to such a person. So you should all go and present a poem, a verse, showing your deep realization.

So everyone saw that the, the head monk, Shenxiu, since he's the leader of the community and he knows the best, he has the deepest insight of Dharma, so there's no need for us to trouble ourselves writing, you know, composing a poetry. So Shenxiu, this guy, he was aware, you know, the feeling of the community, and so he has to present a poem but he was not so sure about his ability. So he came, he retired into his room, and thought about it, and he said, well, okay I'll, anonymously, I'll present a poem. If the master approves of it then I'll step forward and tell him that I did it and if he does not approve of it then I'll just remain quiet and silent, you see.

So in the middle of night he took a lamp and wrote this poem. It said, this body is bodhi tree. Sensible, this body is the bodhi tree. And this mind is like a clear mirror. Moment by moment wipe the mirror carefully. Let no dust get upon it. So that's his poem, he wrote it. And then the morning came, and people all saw it, and they were reciting it, and the master came and he praised the verse, and had everyone commit it to their memory, but he didn't say anything about Dharma transmission.

So everyone was reciting it. This body is the bodhi tree. This mind is like a clear mirror. Moment by moment wipe the mirror carefully. Let no dust get on it. And Huineng, when he heard that, and he immediately realized the limitation of the understanding of this poem, expressed in this

poem. So he asked the monk, and he too dictated a poem to the monk who wrote it down, right beneath it. And this one went like this. The body has no tree. [보리본무수]. The mind, too, has no stand for mirror. From the very beginning there is nothing at all. Where can the dust alight?

So now, obviously the Huineng's verse transcended the duality. The subject-object. Subject and object is gone. Well, a little later on actually the, eventually the Dharma was transmitted to Huineng. And the, the 5th patriarch transmitted the Dharma to Huineng in the middle of night. And he wants him, jealous monks may pursue and do you harm. So actually the 5th patriarch, he rowed Huineng across the river and tells him, you go South and go into hiding for a while until the proper time, which he does. But when the morning came, and the master announced, the Dharma is gone with Huineng. Now this Huineng, this guy, Huineng, he was not even ordained. He was a layman. You know, this is 500 strong monastic community, you know. And this new guy, rookie guy, working in the kitchen quarters, and overnight took the Dharma, he's gone, you know. I mean, this is, you know, I mean, you know, it's this, I mean, it's, in a sense, it's revolutionary, but what would be the feeling of this establishment, monastic establishment? The monastic establishment would just disband because of this?

So several monks, actually, many felt they should chase after this rookie guy and bring the Dharma back. But all he got was, like, I mean, if you are monk that's, the symbol of transmission is, you know, this piece of robe, it's robe, it used to be, like, patched robe. And then begging bowl, that's all you get for Dharma transmission. But that's the symbol of Dharma transmission. So quite a few guys, you know, chased after Huineng to bring this begging bowl and robe back, you know, as a symbol of transmission. And there was this one monk who used to be general in the army, so he's a very big fellow, powerful, you know, in strength and will. So he outdistanced everyone. So finally he caught up with Huineng. Huineng is a short guy and he was, he got a little bit scared, you know, when he saw this big guy, you know, coming after him. So, you know, very carefully he put his begging bowl and robe he got from his master, you know, he put it on top of the rock, you know. If this is what you came after please take them away. Take them away with you. And then he hid himself under the rock.

So this Huineng, when he came and, then he finally realized, well, you know, he had a better thought. Well, after all this is just a begging bowl and robe, and, I mean, just symbol. So I didn't really come, you know, trying to steal these things. So, well, actually, I came for Dharma. Could you please enlighten me? And there, the Huineng's famous Dharma talk comes. Think of no evil and think of no good. Don't think of good and don't think evil. At this very moment, what is your original face? So there, the, this Ming got enlightened.

Now, our position is, like, I mean, you can, at least you can clearly see the difference between these two Dharma verses. And now this bodhi tree business, this mind, body-mind business, we

leave that alone. But last two lines, like, from the very beginning there is nothing. Where can any dust alight? What's wrong with this? What's wrong with this? You can replace them, you can replace these two lines with your Wisdom Eye.

Advice & Information for those planning to take precepts May 30 1991 Part 1
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What I'll do is, first I'll make presentations. I'll give you two traditional views of what it is to become a Buddhist. According to Theravada tradition and also Mahayana Buddhist tradition.

According to Theravada tradition, which is also accepted by Mahayana Buddhists, there is this word, Madhyama Pratipada. It means the Middle Way. Madhyama Pratipada, or Majjhima Patipada in Pali, was the name, word, for Buddhism in early days. You know, as you know the word Buddhism is the word that was adopted when Buddhism came to the West.

The reason why Buddhism was called the Middle Way or the Middle Path in those early days was, Buddha said this. I don't have the text in front of me, but this is what he said roughly, according to Samyutta Nikaya, one of the Pali canons. Avoiding two extremes. And the two extremes being indulgement of desires, that's sensual indulgence and materialism on the one hand and rationalism and asceticism, or ascetic deprivation, on the other. So avoiding these two extremes, I teach Middle Path or Middle Way, which gives knowledge and which produces insight, understanding, enlightenment, and Nirvana. And what is the Middle Path? And he declares it's the Eightfold Path.

The Eightfold Path are, as you know that's, Eightfold Path constitutes the last of the Four Noble Truths. So, and it's, usually it's translated as Right Understanding or Right View and Right Thought or Right Aspiration. And then Right Speech, Right Action or Conduct, and Right Livelihood, Right Effort, and Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration. Now, the word for Right is, in Sanskrit or in Pali, it's Sama or Samya. In Heart Sutra, you sometimes you will hear of Anuttara Samyaksambodhi. Because, how is it translated in our Heart Sutra, in English rendering?

(Utmost supreme enlightenment.)

Yes, That's Anuttara Samyaksambodhi. Samya here means it's perfect, so in certain translations it says Perfect Understanding, and Perfect Thought or Aspiration, and Perfect Speech, it's Perfect. So some scholars say Right is not correct, some scholars maintain, so Perfect or

Wholesome. So, and that means there are imperfect understanding and unwholesome understanding of the realities.

So usually the first two, that's Perfect View or Understanding, and then Perfect Thought or Attitude or Aspiration, this is considered, like, Buddhists, they have to cultivate this as their faith. So in other words, in order to be able to advance along the Buddhist path, you have to have correct or wholesome understanding of life and the world. So, for instance, Buddhism has infinite worldview. So in other words, you know, when you die and that's the end of it or you just end up in hell or heaven. That is incorrect understanding. That is imperfect understanding of life and the world. So, then you would not be able to advance along the Buddhist path. In other words, you cannot cultivate yourself with imperfect understanding of the world with unwholesome view. So Buddhist worldview is infinite. So you must, you know, attain this wholesome and perfect understanding of infinite worldview of Buddhism. And then, of course, following that. Wholesome or Perfect Aspiration which is also very important. So there, I mean, you know, people can have wrong aspirations.

And now, so, understanding the Middle Way, avoiding those two extremes, and also understanding the Eightfold Path, the first two and then the next one, Right, Perfect Speech, and Perfect Conduct, and Perfect Livelihood. That's morality. And then meditation follows. That's Perfect Effort and Perfect Mindfulness. Before you attain concentration, you know, like, first you have to become mindful, more alert, awake. Then you learn to focus. So that's meditation. And then back to the first two, that's understanding, the Perfect Understanding and Perfect Thought or Aspiration. That produces wisdom. So those are called Threefold Learnings. Morality, and meditation, and wisdom.

Now, so if you understand the Middle Path, the Middle Way, and the Eightfold Path, then you gain the stream. It's called Stream Entry. It's called Sotapana. In other words that means, that's how you enter the Buddhist path based on this. It's called Sotapana. The very first stage of the four stages. And that's the Middle Path, that's, and then you enter the stream. It's called the Stream Enterer. Then you, first you get wet, and then you get soaked, and then you start flowing. And as long as you advance along the path, as long as you stay with the stream, getting wet and getting soaked, then of course, like the body of water, it has its own ability to purify itself. That's what Buddhist community and practicing together is all about. And once you become Sotapana, once you gain the stream, then your enlightenment, your final salvation, is assured. In other words, you do not fall into the existence below that of a human being.

Now, the Mahayana Buddhist view is, it's called, there are two things. One is making vow and become a bodhisattva and the other one is raising the thought of enlightenment, which is called bodhicitta. And bodhicitta is awakened mind or mind of enlightenment. And, and there are two.

One is relative stage, relative phase, and then absolute phase. And relative stage, phase, is also again divided into two. The first one is, you have intention and you make wish to work for the sake of the welfare of all beings. In other words, you free yourself from the belief in the substantial ego. So you, you know, you act in unselfish manner. Even in Theravada traditions actually, gaining the stream or Sotapana stage means you are free from three fetters, and the first one is the fetter of belief in the permanent self. As you know, all kinds of pain and suffering arise from one's blind belief in his own identity or selfishness or ego. So that's the first fetter. And second fetter is, you know, the fetter of doubting your own Dharma practice. In other words, you doubt the veracity and validity of your Dharma. And the third one is, it's fetter of clinging to religious externalism. That means, you know, fetter of the belief of clinging to external forms of religion. There are a lot of rituals and all these things, so instead of following the correct Dharma, like meditation all that, you can get caught in the faithfulness of religion, external forms. So that's the third fetter. So Sotapana means one who is free from these three fetters.

Back to Mahayana, that is bodhicitta. So the, first you have intention and the second stage is you gain direct entry into practice, such as meditation. So you move one step further from intention to, to action. And then the absolute stage is, absolute mind of enlightenment is, like, all these phenomena. It's, what we say in Heart Sutra, form is emptiness. So it means you lose your delusion.

And then, making vow. All Mahayana Buddhists they make vow. For instance, there's these Four Great Vows. And Four Great Vows is called a common vow, it's a vow common to all Mahayana Buddhists. And then there is particular vows each bodhisattva, here, when you make a commitment to Dharma or the Way of Buddha, and you, in Mahayana tradition you become bodhisattva. In other words, you turn from delusion into wisdom. So bodhisattva means bodhi beings. Your life, the conduct of your life is based on wisdom, not on delusion. So, and they make vow, and then there, usually a bodhisattva has three vows. The first vow is to attain enlightenment. That is also means to correctly understand the Dharma. So you will exert yourself so that you could understand the right Dharma and attain enlightenment, gain freedom. And then the second vow is, based on your understanding of Dharma you will tirelessly devote yourself to teaching Dharma. And the third vow is, you will sacrifice yourself, you will sacrifice yourself, to protect and guard the correct Dharma. So usually Mahayana bodhisattvas, they make these three vows.

And this is, that's the traditional views, the Theravada and Mahayana views. But what it comes down to is, you may have heard of these Three Fires or Three Poisons. That's called, usually, greed, hatred or anger, or delusion. So when you watch yourself, you know, when you look at yourself conducting, how you conduct yourself on daily basis, you know, you act with, you know, you react with a certain object. And then either you like it or dislike it. You know, like,

greed means you like it, so you react with your likings. That's greed. You go after it. Like, selfish craving. You pursue that. And of course there's attachment and all defilements, that come with attachments. And certain things you don't like it so you react with your dislike. And that produce anger or hatred, so that's almost the opposite of greed. So usually you act and react, either with likings or with disliking. So that's called stupid, that's called ignorance. Not understanding the Dharma, in other words, not understanding the reality of life. So these are called the Three Fires. And that produces a lot of karma. And that's how we become subject to rebirth and Samsara, in other words, unenlightened world. So these Three Fires or Poisons produce a lot of defilements. And it becomes chain and you become subject to Samsara. So these are called Three Impurities of one's mind.

So by taking precepts and by making formal commitment to Dharma is, it's like you make a transition from unenlightened life to enlightened life. In other words, from karma, from karmic activities to Dharma. And this is very much urgent, and we call it, this is very, very urgent matter. So how you can go forward from unfreedom to freedom.

It's, the Zen view is very well expressed in this essay which I'll read to you. It's *Secrets on Cultivating the Mind*.

"The Triple World is blazing in defilement as if it were a house on fire. How can you bear to tarry here and complacently undergo such a long suffering? If you wish to avoid wandering in Samsara, there is no better way than to seek Buddhahood. If you want to become a Buddha, understand that Buddha is the mind. How can you search for the mind in the far distance? It is not outside the body. The physical body is a phantom, for it is subject to birth and death. The true mind is like space, for it neither ends nor changes. Therefore it is said, these hundred bones will crumble and return to fire and wind, but one thing is eternally numinous and covers heaven and Earth. It is tragic, people have been deluded for so long. They do not recognize that their own minds are the true Buddhas. They do not recognize that their own natures are the true Dharma. They want to search for the Dharma yet they still look far away for holy ones. They want to search for the Buddha, yet they will not observe their own minds. If they aspire to the path of Buddhahood while obstinately holding to their feeling that the Buddha is outside the mind, or the Dharma is outside the nature, then even though they pass through kalpas, like innumerable eons, as numerous as dust motes burning their bodies, charring their arms,[that's referring to devotional acts one can do] crushing their bones and exposing their marrow, or else write sutras with their own blood, never lying down to sleep, eating only one offering a day at the hour of the hare, [that's 5 to 7 AM] or even studying through the entire Buddhist canon and cultivating all sorts of ascetic practices, it is like trying to make rice by boiling sand. It will only add to their tribulation. If they would only understand their own minds then, without searching, approach to Dharma as numerous as the sands of the Ganges and unaccountable sublime meanings would all

be understood. As the World Honoured one said, as the Buddha said, I see that all sentient beings everywhere are endowed with a Tathagata's wisdom and virtue. He also said all the illusory guises in which sentient beings appear take shape in the sublime mind of the Tathagata's complete enlightenment. Consequently you should know that outside this mind there is no Buddhahood which can be attained. All the Buddhas of the past were merely persons who understood their minds. All the sages and saints of the present are likewise merely persons who have cultivated their minds. All future meditators should rely on this Dharma as well. I hope that you who cultivate the path will never search outside. The nature of the mind is unstained. It is originally whole and complete in itself. If you will only leave behind false conditioning you'll be such like the Buddha."

I don't think anyone else can make it more perfectly clear than this. Just, referring to which I'll just read one more, a few lines, to give you an idea what vows mean, bodhicitta.

"Thus, by the virtue collected through all that I have done, may the pain of every living creature be completely cleared away. May I be the doctor and the medicine, and may I be the nurse, for all sick beings in the world until everyone is healed. May a rain of food and drink descend to clear away the pain of thirst and hunger, and during the eon of famine may I myself change into food and drink. May I become an inexhaustible treasure for those who are poor and destitute. May I turn into all the things they need, and may these be placed close behind them."

Well, of course when I was novice monk I, we used to recite this in Korean, it used to bring me tears, you know, reciting this.

"Without any sense of loss I shall give up my body and enjoyments as well as my virtues of past, present, future, for the sake of benefiting all. By giving up all, sorrow is transcended, and my mind will realize the sorrowless state. It is best that I now give everything to all beings in the same way as I shall at death. Having given this body up for the pleasure of all living beings, by killing, abusing and beating, and may they all, by killing, abusing and beating it, may they always do as they please. Although they may play with my body and make it a source of jest and blame, because I have given it up to them, what is the use of holding it dear? Therefore I shall let them do anything to it as long as it does not cause them harm. And whenever anyone encounters me may it never be meaningless for him. Whether those who encounter me conceive a faithful or an angry thought, may that always become the source for fulfilling all their wishes. May all who say bad things to me or cause me any other harm, and those who mock and insult me, have the fortune to awaken fully. May I be a saviour of those without one, a guide for all travellers on the way. May I be a bridge, a boat, and a ship, for all who wish to cross the water. May I be an island for those who seek one, and a lamp for those desiring light. May I be a bed for all who wish to rest, and a slave for all who want a slave. And may I be a wishing jewel, a magic vase, powerful

mantras and great medicine. May I become a wish fulfilling tree and a cow of plenty for the world. Just like space and the great elements such as earth, may I always support the life of all the countless creatures. And until they pass away from pain may I also be the source of life for all the realms of varied things that reach unto the ends of space." And it goes on like this.

I'll entertain questions and then we'll have a little break, and then I'll give you instructions on how you prepare yourself for taking precepts. Okay. So please ask questions.

(I'm thinking of what is a Buddhist approach or thought on the difference between love and attachment. Could be family love between parents and children. Seems to me that, you know, it could be, there doesn't seem to be a lot of discussion about family life in Buddhist study and practice.)

So, one indication is if you take a look at all these lay Buddhists, say in Korea or in Japan or in other Southeast Asian cultures, and they live a pretty normal life and they, it's, I think respect for parents and love for children are very much emphasized. And one thing is from early on the children, they are taught obedience. You know, they learn to show gratitude and respect to their parents for, they are very indebted to their parents for what they are.

…it's actually called, there's one scripture devoted to filial duties. It recounts what kind of trouble your parents, both parents, had to go through in order to raise you. Like, it's quite moving, you know, they, for education they come with illustrations. They, when, you know, like, your mother, the mother had to spend 10 months carrying you around, and the, refers to prenatal education, you know? Like, the mothers, they would abstain from eating extremely hot food or extremely cold food in due consideration of the baby inside. And also they would abstain from eating certain food that they may, so there's all these things. And then once they are born mother really had to go through such labour in order to give birth. And also, like, you know, usually they're changing diapers, you know, when it's wet, always, you know, pay attention and, you know. So all this education is provided, there are a lot of those educations so that, to inculcate, you know, into the young the gratitude and respect, which is I think is obviously lacking in our society. They take it all granted and there's not very much feeling about that. And also, you know, it goes on about the duties as a parent. How to bring the children up as a good member of the society, there's a lot of that. But these are, like, more higher teachings. They usually, they are, more secular education is all provided, that's what we consider secular education. So provided. This is, like, you know, all about liberation and enlightenment. Yes.

(You were reading that you come to doubt your own wisdom, to doubt your own Dharma. If you think that you doubt your wisdom, how do you reverse that? How do you come to have more faith in your wisdom?)

Basically, you know, as it is said in the Zen instruction, also, like, I mean, you are the embodiment of Dharma. So it comes down to, you know, rejecting or accepting yourself. So it says, you know, it gives a clear warning not to search for Dharma or Buddha outside your own body. So it comes down to cultivating yourself, raising yourself. It's, basically what it means is, it does not of course deny family life or life of attachment and all that, but it's urging you, I mean, obviously there is a limit to secular life, to what you can get, and it does not lead to liberation and freedom. So basically it's urging you to raise enlightened, like, according to Mahayana tradition, bodhicitta. Enlightened thoughts. It points in the direction whether you should lead your life, and you make commitment towards that. I mean, it's trying to raise you from sentient beings to either bodhisattva or to enlightened being. It's like a journey, as I say, crossing. So traditional attitude is, well we don't delay good thing. So the Korean Buddhists, for instance, the ladies, they would take precepts and, over and over again to commit and recommit themselves. I mean, you do need guidelines, I mean, moral guidelines. Yes.

(That was my question. If I don't take the precepts, I can still can be a member, I realize that, I can come to temple, but all this is is really, I say I'm sort of a card-holding Buddhist at this point when I do take the precepts. Other than that I could lay claim to being a Buddhist by nature, but not having taken the final vows or whatever it is that makes me something. I have a difficulty with that and I think I talked to you about it and maybe other people don't and it's not something to bring up, but the difficulty is being something, I love what is here, what I'm receiving, but I'm not sure I want to be pegged, you know, say I am a, I can say I'm a Buddhist or Buddhist in my nature, but to do this, this sort of puts me into a category and nothing else changes other than I'm now classed as a Buddhist, is this…?)

Let me see if I can help you. Like, for instance, you know, when you take introductory meditation course and then when you become a member and you come for meditation practice and you have been coming to temple on regular basis or on sporadic basis, and you have been practicing meditation, but that does not make you, that does not make you an expert in concentration, right? You know, the struggle is on. That's part of the process, you see, on meditation. It's, something like this happens. So if you take a precept that does not make you perfect overnight. It's obvious. But what I say is, like, the difference between people here and, say, over in Asia, is, like, Koreans or Japanese and some Chinese, they know it that, you know, maybe couple of days later or even few hours later after taking precepts they are going to violate them, you know. And knowing that, knowing that fully they take precepts. But here people think, well, well I'm going to violate them anyway so what's the point of taking the precepts? So you take the approach of pointlessness. Well the thing is, I told this before, but I'll tell you again, like, there is great difference between those who have taken precepts and those who have not taken precepts. For instance, that this person, he knows he's going to, he's not going to, you

know, he's not going to be able to keep the precepts, not for long, but still he takes them. And then, when he violates the precepts, he becomes aware of that. That, the thing is he has taken precepts and he has violated them. So there is a thought about that, you become aware. And, but if you have not taken precepts then there is no such awareness. It's just kind of normal thing. No awareness whatsoever. You know, it's just part of your lifestyle. Whether you lie or, you know, do wrong things or whatever. It's just your lifestyle. But those who have taken precepts, you become aware. You did something wrong. So, and then next time he takes precepts again, he renews his precepts. So he becomes greatly aware. So this way he slowly moves away and begins to change. So that's why, you know, like, some Buddhists, they take it, overtake it and that, finally they get unstuck and they go forward. That's also called Buddha-consciousness. You slowly wake up, and do something about it. You become less selfish. You become less harmful. At least you think about it. The seed is sewn. And it will grow. And it will help you, to go in the right direction. And then you have, you build faith about that. So then crossing takes place.

Of course, it's important decision. I mean, it's, well, I mean, it's like, like, it's like this spiritual hunger. And you take food, and then you nourish yourself. You don't become shy. And there is an important work you can do in this life and you don't just walk away. Yes.

(When you say to become a Dharma teacher, do you mean teaching simply by doing, like setting an example, as it were, or by speaking of…)

Well, you know, Shakyamuni Buddha, he always serves as a paradigm and a model, great model, like, he was great teacher. Well, we may not be great model, but it's, this, you know, take it this way. Like, rely on your strength, there is something, there is something in you that is good, which you can share. You know, I mean, you have a feeling of love, like, you know, compassionate living. There's something about that. Otherwise you would not be here. I mean, you are here expressing your spirituality. So you trust that, that's, we call it Buddha-nature. Why are you here? So that's called foundation. We all seem to lack basic commitment to the good, to the truth, and foundation practice. So trust yourself more, and then, so you must have something to share. Even though you are not great Buddhist, you don't know much about Buddhism, you have not practiced Buddhism for many years, you know. You can share whatever you have. And also, even though you are not a great example, you talk about it, Buddha's teachings. Then something happens, since you are talking about it, you realize you have to do something about it. It's always, there is interaction, you know. If you talk about kindness you, somehow you have to act in a kind manner. So it's, I don't know, there is this kind, we always try to run away, you know? Shirk responsibility.

(When does a sense of duty come in and, as opposed to doing an act of kindness spontaneously and as opposed to a sense of duty, something that you can conceive up here.)

Mhm. Yeah, it's, as householder, or as a student, or as worker, you have a lot of responsibilities, social obligation, family duties. The best thing is, don't have these duties and obligations come in conflict with your Buddhist practice. Let Buddhist practice, let your Buddhist commitment embrace those duties.

So it's, I'll talk about the Middle Way, avoiding extremes. The Middle Way in the Mahayana tradition is called as Madhyamaka philosophy. Usually they refrain, they refrain from choosing between opposing extremes. That's how Buddhists, they seek harmony and peace. But there are guidelines, there's like, in Buddhism, or Buddha once said, well these people came and say, they all claim that they are the right religion. They are all different theories and different propositions made so they can, well, all these people, they claim, you know, they know the God, or they have the true path and all that so are they, could it be that they are all right? Then I can understand, they would conflict with each other. Or half of them true or none of them true? So Buddha said, there is Eightfold, it would be, they would be true religion to the extent to which their teachings accord with the Eightfold Path. So he used the Eightfold Path as a criterion. So first that's, you know, Correct Understanding. That's important, and Correct Aspiration. Sometimes that transition or transformation takes place very, very slowly.

Well, I got a, someone called, well this, he wants to take precepts, but somehow he understood that taking precepts means that he has to become a monk. I don't know, there, you may have all kinds of thoughts. Maybe if I, you know, like, if I take precepts then I have to lead a perfect life? No, I'm not ready for that. No, it's not like that. It's like, maybe more correct, it's like empowerment. Like empowerment. You need something like that. You need some focus and some purpose in your life. That's, Buddha said, like, avoiding those two extremes, he's referring to the ascetic practice, the futility of ascetic practice. He said it's low, ignoble, and meaningless. And he said the same thing referring to the sensual indulgence. So that means you have to become a little bit wise. I'm sure many of you, you don't like to let go of certain things, you know. That's why, that's what's holding you. You know, does it mean I have to give up this and this, this, you know. That's usually foremost in your mind. But it's, as I say, taking precepts, well, will make you better person. Yes.

(I would guess that some of us have been raised in certain religions, such as Christianity for example. By taking the precepts would you add to that or would you replace that?)

Can you elaborate on that?

(If a Christian person was to take the precepts would they still be Christian and they're adding to their lives or would they be expected to leave their Christianity and…)

Buddhism, one of the principals which Buddhism is promoting is tolerance. And in Ann Arbor we have one Roman Catholic, he's a very committed Roman Catholic, but apparently he does not see any conflict coming to temple and doing Buddhist practice. He thinks he's Buddhist and he's Catholic. And about a month ago I got a call and, they'd like to get married, but his fiancé comes from Jewish background, but he's Anglican. And they are rejected by either church. So that's, I said, well, could you come and get married at Buddhist temple? I should have said yes, I don't know why but, I said what are your feelings about Buddhism? But they'd just like to use the place, they know nothing about Buddhism. So I said no. Yes.

(I thought you had said earlier in one of your readings, your comments about, about giving up other religion or other religious things, which you were reading tonight.)

Well it's, basically it is not my intention to convert Christians to Buddhism, but I think, you know, many of them, I have not run into this problem but, like, in your case, like, you are practicing Christian?

(Yes. I'd like to think I can add to my life by taking the precepts.)

Mhm. Certainly you can do that, I think it would enrich your Christian faith. Usually the Chinese, they have no problem. You know, like, the more the better, because in case one fails… (laughter). So the Chinese, on, like, on certain religious holidays, they would go to church, they go to Buddhist temple, they would go to Taoist temple, they would go to Jewish synagogue, you know. I mean, the more merits they accrued what better would be, I mean, even for their business. But anyway, I'm joking but, I think it's, like, this religious bigotry or religious zealotry would have no place in global village. So I think certainly we would see new generation of, you know, harbouring the best of different religious traditions. I think Buddhism has, you know, some contribution to make in this regard. Yes.

Any other questions? Yes.

(I think you did say the third poison or something was the idea of getting obsessive about religious form. I think that might relate to what you guys mean.)

Yeah, clinging to, clinging to…

(But that's, so it's clinging to ritual and this sort of thing, but nevertheless we do have ritual and nevertheless you do take precepts. And why not then…)

That's, usually that's, I think in these things. It means, there, well, sometimes the teachings reflect the times in which the teachings were composed. So when Korean Buddhists come to this temple and watch us doing, we hardly have any rituals. I mean, you want to see rituals, this is

nothing. Sometimes rituals, you know, they would have a long ceremony and lasting three days and seven days, ritually. It's probably, well sometimes it provides healings. You know when someone dies, they go through mourning period and all that, they need that and also some rituals when carried out meaningfully, you know, we have, you have a lot of emotional, troubled emotions, you know. It helps, you know, refine and heal your emotions. People here, they go through lots of therapies. And also there are a lot of superstitious practices. So I think it refers to those kinds. It's long, and lengthy, and useless. Superstitious practices under name of, under rubric of rituals. Well, you know, I mean, after sitting you get, I mean, after all you cannot sit all the time, you have to get up at some point and do prostrations. It's, because I have to learn from you too. If there is anything that prevents you from taking precepts, you know, like, well, let me know. Because my position is urging you to take precepts so that you could lead a life of Dharma.

(When you said preventing do you mean, I mean, is there anything that could prevent you from taking precepts?)

I mean, usually, well this is, in a sense, a matter of conscience so usually, like, and, you know, usually there are secular values, like a touchstone in your pocket which you like to maintain intact, you know. There is, that plays a large role, you know. It's, but I think, you know, if you can come up with a better mind, I mean, what, I mean, you know, what would really make you happy, you know. Or healthy, wholesome life. You think about that. What would be wholesome life? What would be the meaning of my life in this lifetime? Would be good to lead a little harmless life. A little unselfish life, practice love and compassion. So you can just reduce it down to those basics instead of really thinking, you know, be, you need a little guidance, moral and spiritual guidance, and this is it. That's where you begin. You don't expect to make great progress, you know, right away but you just take a step and get a little bit wet. And move from karma to Dharma. Little, little, you know, well, you can clean up a little bit of your karmic acts. That does not mean you don't have to eat meat right away but, you know, you can be a little bit more, like, mindfulness. You can be a little bit more mindful about how you conduct yourself and it would help you. Yes.

(What is a religion?)

Well, well, I'm a Buddhist so I can only, I can give you a Buddhist answer. As Buddha said, that, you know, in Theravada interpretation there are Four Noble Truths. So, like the, the third one is called Nirodha. Nirodha means cessation. In other words, you have to learn to stop, at one point to stop doing wrong things in your life. Because if you keep doing wrong things that would have karmic effects, you know. And you would have to pay for that and you would be very unhappy about that. So that's cessation.

Advice & Information for those planning to take precepts May 30 1991 Part 2
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…so you, you know, you go in the direction of liberation rather than of bondage. In other words, you move from Samsara to Nirvana. Like, from violence to peace. You all like peace, you don't like violence, right? Violence committed by mind, body, and speech. So religion is path to freedom and path to liberation. Yes.

(I'll ask, and I've often thought of the question similar to this, the difference between religion and philosophy. Is there a difference?)

It's, when Westerners first encountered Buddhism they were very reluctant to classify Buddhism as a religion because their criteria was, Buddhism does not believe in, you know, God, you know, I mean, creator, transcendent God. So they were very reluctant to call Buddhism religion. And so they either, well, is Buddhism then philosophy or is Buddhism psychology? Or Buddhism is what, you know. And even, you know, some Buddhist monks also, you know, faced with this situation. You know, you know, I mean, narrowly interpreted, religion is man's relationship to God, right? So in that sense Buddhism is not religion. And, so, well recently some Buddhist leaders got together and decided to call Buddhism the way of life. But in my mind, I mean, you know, an anthropologist and social, I mean, Buddhism is taught as world religion at university, if it is not religion it would not be taught, you know, at religious studies department. So it's a religion, if different from the conventional interpretation of religion. But it's, some scholars say, they like to view Buddhism as what they call a civilizational religion, you know. Like, this may get into another subject, Buddhism does not believe in national boundaries and all that so with, particularly with the reign of Ashoka, who reigned in 3rd Century before the common era, Buddhism transcended local boundaries and politics and it became what they call civilizational religion. It had a very, not only was it associated with high culture, but it became kind of civilization, like civilizing influence upon peoples. So I'm sure that would be one task I think which is expected of Buddhism in the West. Buddhism has a civilization. So in other words, as Buddhism gets established, I mean, you know, people like here, we would promote certain values. Like non-violence, or compassionate living, or mindfulness. That's pretty good one,

mindfulness, and all these values. We would obviously promote these values, and tolerance. I mean, Buddhism has a teaching of this non-self or non-individuality. But they have all these wonderful teachings. But they would, Buddhists, they would have to come up with a more assertive language. You know, Buddhism coming from the East, they have lots of negative languages or passive languages. But that, that went quite well in Asian societies. Because they were gentle societies, it's agriculture. Like emptiness, you know, non-self. You know, it had a great message, but this is different society. It's a very aggressive society. It's a very assertive society. So, you know, probably that's one task, Buddhists would have to come up with more assertive language. Unless we can change the society or the values, this is, you know, values. Yes.

(One aspect of the first piece that I have always had trouble with and that is, if it is necessary to exercise violence to come to the defence of another, where exactly does one, one's obligation?)

Buddhists, usually they run away. You know, you know that story in the Lotus Sutra, there is this, it's called Bodhisattva Never Despise. And this bodhisattva, his only work is, like, he was like a missionary. He would all go around and then, you know, tell people, you know, hey, you know, do you know what? You know, you are Buddha, you know. You know, I mean, you have great potential to attain enlightenment in the future. So, you know, take care of yourself, don't downplay yourself, you know, show more respect and appreciation about yourself, your Buddha-nature, and he would all, you know, encourage people, you know. You know, and then, so practice Dharma and take care of yourself because you are Buddha, you are future Buddha, you know. And all these thing, you know, talking to young people, you know. I mean, you are our future, you know. Do something about it, encouraging them, you know. Don't, you know, run away and take, become more responsible. And then some people thinking what kind of thing, what, Buddha? I mean, Buddha, you know, I mean, there's, you know, what nonsense, you know, they would, you know, you know, persecute him and hurl insults, then, you know, then he would run away, you know, he don't just sit there, you know, kept, you know, stone, so he would always run away. So that run away, that, you know, saves their karma and he, you know, if he stays and get hurt then, of course, he help them, you know, created their karma, you see. So the best thing is run away so that, you know, save them from committing any violence on him. So still running away he would shout that, you know, you are still Buddha, you know. I mean, you are just great, you know. Take care of yourself and, you know. So it means, that means, it's, you don't, never, ever despise yourself. Don't ever, that's called this name, you know, Bodhisattva Never Despise.

So, well, you know, like, we have, I mean, Buddha himself, like, I mean, he renounced his country, he came wandering monk and then as a result he had his country destroyed. The Shakyan tribe is gone. So as a result he is a Buddhist. Dalai Lama is someone in the same situation. So it's something like this, there is this story. You see, when this monk was meditating

he saw a wild pig was just, was passing by. And then soon after a hunter came along and said, asked him, hey, have you seen this wild pig running away? He said, of course he saw it, but he said, hey, come on, you sit down here, you know. You know, he didn't answer, you sit down here. So, you know, so they got into talking so that, I mean, you know, the, you know, earning time, the wild pig ran away. And then, and then by talking to him, and also through his insight, this monk learned, what happened was, in the past lives, that's this, a crow was sitting on the branch of a pear tree. And then, you know, he was just resting and, and then after good rest he flew away, the crow flew away. And then just, you know, like, just from that weight a pear fell, you know. The moment he flew away, because, you know. And then the pear fell, just it happened, it fell on head of snake which was just lying under the tree. I mean, of course there was no intention, you know. I mean, you know, crow had no idea, you know, snake was lying down and he had no intention, you know, to drop pear, you know, particularly on top of a snake head, the head of the snake. So as a result snake got killed. So this snake was reborn.

([unclear])

No, the snake was reborn as a pig, you know, as wild pig. And so, well somehow, you know, he didn't feel good, you know. Like, I mean, there was, well, you know, somehow he got killed, whatever happened. So this is kind of a blind passion, you know. So he went around, he's always restless, you know. He does not feel good. You know, some of us like that, you know, restless and, you know, looking for some kind of a cause.

And, so in the meantime the crow died and was reborn as a pheasant. So was spring time and pheasant was, you know, hatching, you know, he has eggs and then, down in the valley, and then this wild pig, you know, like, restless, going around, always, you know, digging something, you know. So he was digging something, you know, he's unhappy, you know. Because he didn't die peacefully, you know. And he got killed. So it's digging and then, you know, a, you know, he, he rolled on a big piece of stone and that happened, dropped and killed the pheasant, you see.

Now this time, it's rolling, it's karmic rolling, you know. And this time pheasant was reborn as a hunter. Now he has clear intention, by this time karma is clearly established, you know. So this time it's purposefully, and this hunter is purposely pursuing the wild pig, you know. So they are going around. So, and then the monk said, hunter, you know, now you have to drop your arrow. Somebody has to stop, it's Nirodha.

It's something like, you know, I mean, this is, like, a story, but like, you know, like the Gulf War, you see. The Americans, they should learn to stop, you know. But they didn't stop. So that repercussion, the, you know, karmic is building up, going on. So all wars are like that. That

means you have to learn to lose, stop after. Stop the karma, the wheel of karma. And then change, and so that, you know, the, you have to, you know, prepare the work for the Dharma.

So that's what precept taking about. Somewhere you have to learn to stop your karma. Get unstuck and then, you know, move from karma to Dharma, you know, from Samsara to Nirvana. That's Buddhist work. Well, I mean, it has to start with each of us. Taking the journey. Yes.

(Could you [unclear] more of the dependent origination, I think it is?)

It's, it's like universal causation. It's cause and effect. It's very elaborated, you know. How it starts from ignorance and, you know, actions, and feelings, and, you know, craving, and touch, and contact. And then eventually the cycle, that's what you're referring to, right? Yeah, dependent origination. So, in other words, what we are trying to do is, like, that, there are two roads, one is a Samsaric path, the other one is a, like, Nirodha, like cessation path. That's Nirvana path. Cessation means Nirvana. So, well, we are trying to follow the path of Nirvana, you know, Nirodha, rather than the path of Samsara. That's following, you know, I mean, instead of following our passions and, you know, ignorance, we are trying to reverse it and follow the path of Nirvana.

It's, there are different ways of taking this seriously. Of course this is a serious commitment and, it's, this, she's a member, but she lives in Owen Sound. She has cancer and she's dying. But she would die any day, but she's undergoing chemotherapy. She likes to stay alive until she takes precepts. Of course, another thing is she likes to see her daughter coming from England. So these two things are very foremost, then she would die. So just, she just likes to stay alive until the first week in July. And you have lots of time, but you know, it's better to start. Also she comes from, by the way, Christian background and she thought about it very hard.

The precepts have two qualities, it's called [지악수선]. One is a negative quality and the other is a positive quality. It means, usually, like, don't lie, or do not harm, or do not kill, you know. That's called, it's called not committing evil, but to do good. So, and then the other side is positive quality. But in Mahayana Buddhist tradition where I come from, we usually dwell on, instead of saying don't do that, don't do this, what we say is just cherish all life. And also, I have been speaking about this for some time. It's like, I say don't worry about, people usually about worry their karma, you know. Should I, should I be able to keep all my habits, bad habits. Your bad habits would be around, you know, but you take precepts …I 'm pretty sure about that, you know. But that does not mean, you know, you should not do anything about it, so, I'm just urging you to take, you know, the first step, you know, to go in the right direction. So, like, okay, well, if you are a meat eater, and if you do this and that, okay, let that be, you know. But concentrate on cherishing life. So what, for instance, what Buddhists do is, actually I told you about this. When I

first came to Toronto we used to go for liberation of life service twice a year. Once in spring, once in fall. We don't do it anymore, but that's why maybe … So we would, you know, we would take quite trouble going around and buying these turtles and pigeons and, you know, and all these things, you know? And then, you know, and then I would conduct this ceremony, you know, like, I mean, we would take them up to the north. You know, sanctuaries where these animals would be protected. But some, one time they raised, well, you know, these are very domesticated so they would not survive in the wilderness. So what's the point, people always ask that. People always ask that. It's something like, you know, like, why take precepts? So I tell them, okay, well, in this case, we give them chance, you know. Okay, we give them chance, take two weeks, so I make sure that's, we take them to this Dharma centre, used to be a mink farm and they bought the place and turned it into Dharma centre. That's nice, you know. And, so okay, well, we would ask them to look after these animals for a couple of weeks. Like, for instance, some ducks, you know. Some, you know, sometimes these, what is it, these animals, they come around and they beat them, you know. So watch them and protect them for a couple weeks. If they cannot adapt, you know, to the nature for two weeks, that's too bad. I can't, you know … At least, you know, I give them two weeks of chance. Two weeks of opportunity to adapt to nature, you know. Right?

So anyway, so, well, you know, and then they, people learn, it's education for people too, you know. So we, you know, I conduct ceremony and then, you know, they hold pigeons or, you know, turtles. Children, they love that, you know. It's very good education for children. How we, you know, care for environment. And then we let them go, you know, and then watch their eyes. You know, they are also glad but, you know, they are really afraid, these animals, you know, scared, and then we let them free, you know, going, you know, flying away, you know. Children like that and something educational, there are, you learn, you know. In a sense it's indirect approach but you learn how to, you know, all living beings, and also I give them these instructions. Okay, meat eating is so widespread, you know. So it's not going to work if you tell them don't eat meat. Because some are really attached to eating meat, you see. Then the instruction is, then, okay, then on certain days of the year you don't eat meat. For instance, on your birthday. On your birthday, I mean, everyone, I mean, including animals, you know, like, the, you know, the mother goes through great pain to give birth, you know. And then all creatures, they rejoice with their newly born, you know. It's the same with animals, same with. And if you think about it, if you think about how your mother went through, in labour and all that, to give birth to you, then would you celebrate your own birthday by causing pain and grief to animals? That's not right, you know, when you think about it. So that's education. And also on, you know, anniversaries. On wedding days, you know. So it's, you know, there are about seven occasions when you can really, you know, when you think about, these are really joyful occasions. Like, you know, it's joyful to be alive, to be among the living, you know. And then,

so, but it makes sense, so this way, you know, slowly, and then the rituals, and you watch the animals, you know, how they, you know, go away freely, you know. So slowly you, you begin to get the message. It starts sinking in, you know. And then one way or another, you know, like, you can slowly reduce your meat consumption and then, and then coupled with this it's, you know, that's education, liberation of life service is, so you focus more on positive quality. Instead of fighting your negative things, well, you are trying to, you know, fighting or run into conflicts with your bad habits like meat eating, but you concentrate on liberating life, or doing, you know, serving people, and helping people, helping animals or, you know. That way, then you can, you know, begin to message that. The other precepts are the same thing.

So eventually then your bad habits and all, drop away, would, you know, much less emphasized. Considerably weakened, you know. So that's a good approach too. But from the beginning, if you just fight, maybe I have to be clean, and pure, and all these things, and, you know, you already, you know, have all these habits, you know. So they are not going to go away, you see, you know. So you, kind of like watercourse way. You know, like, what you do is, like, when you come to obstacle, which is your karmic habits, when you come to obstacle, water does not fight the obstacles, it meanders around and then, you know, surrounds. And then, you know, that's how it overcomes the obstacles. It's something like that.

So instead of, in other words, instead of trying to stop committing any evils or trying to, you know, stop, you know, your bad habits, which would be hard for, you don't fight, you would not succeed, you know. And then you might concentrate on doing good. On doing something positive. Then that would cover up, you know. In other words, as I say, instead of dwelling on your weakness you dwell on your strength, you know, and display your spiritual strength.

Okay, now, are you scared about doing the prostrations? Well this evening I expected you to perform some prostrations. Just instead of you, you know, you're just sitting there. But anyway, for some reason, if you cannot complete your three thousand prostrations by the time of, you know, the precept taking day, you can do that by the end of this year, but you must promise to me, that's another precept. You must promise to me. But then it's easy. Then you've got more than six months to go. Say if you do, you know, even ten prostrations each day, you know, or even five days a week with weekends off. But you, you've got to do it and if you don't do it then you have to simply come to temple and then Toan and Tohaeng will do prostrations with you, 108. I mean, it's much easier, you know, do it together. So you have to work it out. And now, if you cannot perform, you know, the prostrations for physical reasons, I mean, there are alternative ways of doing that. For instance, like, you know, you figure out how many prostrations you can do each day. Say, if you can do 13 or 17 or 20, 25 prostrations, then if you cannot perform the full prostrations then what you can do is you perform one full prostrations and then five prostration, you can just sit down and make bow, like that, or standing bow, you can just, for

instance, you, you know, you do one prostration, one full prostration and then you make standing bow, like that. And then standing bow five times and then you perform another full prostrations, or, you know, you can adjust that but you have to be really honest with yourself. And the thing is, prostrations is, you know, good exercise, you know. You know, it's like, say, figure out you are climbing up mountain, you know, like, it strengthens your willpower, and it strengthens your heart condition, and if you have, what is it, insomnia, if you have insomnia or constipation, do prostrations. You would have, it's true, you have, you know, having done prostrations, you have no trouble having bowel movement. And you have no trouble going to, you know, going to bed at night, you know. It moderately strengthens your willpower and you feel good. And if you have difficulty meditating you do prostrations and, you know, active prostration, then sit down, it's good.

The highest benefit is, if you do lot of prostrations, all your pores open up. So all your bad karmas would come out through the pores, you know. Then that's the best way to get your laundry done, you know.

(Is there a significance to the number 3000? I mean, as opposed to four, or two, or…)

(Don't make us do four…)

That's, again, Middle Way, you know. Not too many, not too less, you know. Kind of optimum, pardon?

(Yeah, no, 1000 you're getting there, 2000, three is just, something…)

Well…

(Is it an age old, has 3000 always been the number to prepare the person?)

3000, well, Buddhists, they are good coming up with interpretations. Well, you know, in one Buddhist theory has there are 1000 Buddhas in the present world, and then 1000 Buddhas in the past world, and 1000 Buddhas in the future world. So if you perform 3000 prostrations then you cover, you've got all 3000 Buddhas protecting you. So don't worry about your past, present, or future, then you are in good shape.

It's, doing these prostrations, and also reciting Great Compassion Dharani is, it's, you know, make resolve so that, it's kind of, like, passage, you know. You know, you depart from your past, you know, karmic ridden life, so and then you are now entering, gaining the stream, you know. So it brings about a change in your consciousness, you know. Buddha awareness. So you resolve, you would, you know, you know, raise bodhicitta, awakened heart, and enter into the Buddhist path. So it's, it's, I mean, you all come from non-Buddhist or secular background so I just, you

know, like, if I just transport you somewhere in, you know, in, not in Himalayas, but in some, you know, Buddhist sacred mountain, I'm sure one way or another, you know, you would come up with strong feelings. But down here in Toronto, you know, I'm not of very much help in raising good feelings in you. But I think, you know, Buddhists, they always have some kind of humour, so they try to ease the situation. But some Buddhists, they have great feelings about this, about taking precepts. It comes up when we collectively do, you know, the precept taking ceremony. You know, there's, we do prostrations together in the morning and then by the time we finish the prostrations, sometimes 300 prostrations, you would be amazed you can do that because, it's, you're helping…

[end of side A, side B begins]

…and everybody's doing that so you have to do it so, you know, altogether, you know. That's a wonderful thing, practicing together. If you are left alone, I don't think you'll…and by the time you finish the prostrations everybody's, like, kind of high, very high. Yeah.

The temple will help you if you have difficulty carrying on the prostrations at home. I think some of you may have difficulty, it's like, also environment affects. You know, it's better you have a focus like Buddha figure, candle lights, all that, you know. Environment is important. You can come to temple and then someone, you know, like one of us, we'll do prostration with you, like, you know, 300, or 108, or 500. You know, if you come and do 500 prostration, it does not, it takes, 500, performing 500 prostrations at most takes an hour, maybe less than an hour. You know, it takes only six times that. But maybe just 300 prostrations.

So you figure out, it's better you figure out how many prostration you can do at home and then maybe when you come to temple you do x number of prostrations, you figure it out. You work it out and, you know, bring it. So you figure out, when you go home tonight you figure out. And then you can start it tomorrow morning. But better spread, it's better to come up with a minimum figure. For instance, if you, say to yourself, okay, every day I would do 108 prostrations, probably you would not be able to do that. But you come up with a minimum figure. Like, say, maybe 15 prostrations, then you feel confident, you know, I can, sure, I can do 15 prostrations, I'm young and all that. Then having done 15 prostrations, then you can do more, then you feel good. But if you just target it at, you know, at 108, then if you cannot do it then you get really discouraged. So always come up with low figures.

And then also, learn to recite Great Compassion Dharani, at least once a day. First you have the, like, sin-myo-jang-gu, but you would like that, it's, there is something about it. There's something about it. It's, it says, all these Buddhist teachings have just this single object. That is to take you beyond the stage of thoughts and opinions. That's interesting, you know, so do it.

First, of course, you struggle, you know, you don't understand what it means and, you know, sa-ra, sa-ra, well Buddhists, the thing is, interesting thing is, it's, Great Compassion Dharani is, it's siddham, it's a kind of hybrid Sanskrit, but it's made in such a way to help you memorize it. Sa-ra sa-ra si-ri si-ri, the same thing repeats, you know. So, you know, it's like, you know, sometimes, you know, I got the feeling, like [unclear], like water flowing. So, and then after a while, you know, after, it's, you know, when you become familiar, and, you know, it becomes, you know, it's okay, you know, it's, like, sin-myo jang-gu te-da-ra-ni. It's, you know, when you concentrate then you forget about all these anxieties, you know. So it's okay, you know, if you don't make much money that's okay. And, I mean, you're happy, that's what, I mean, you, people worry about it if you don't, if you don't make a certain amount of money it really gets you. But, you know, it's a sense of liberation there. I mean, by reciting Great Compassion Dharani it's okay, you know. It's okay. If you don't eat steak that's okay, you know. That's something. That's almost invaluable.

If you do so many prostrations, after a while, if you do just a few prostrations a day that's, well, but if you do a lot of prostrations at one time you would have a little bruise but that's nothing. Sometimes it bleeds but it's nothing. You know, it's just, it looks awful but, you know, after a few days just…yeah, yeah. But then you develop scab or whatever, then after a while, after that experience your legs become invincible, you know.

Did I tell you the, the story about this guy who wanted to become the Minister of Education of the country? This guy, he was, you know, high school principal in the countryside in Korea. And this guy was always kind of ambitious, you know. And, so he, you know, like, somehow he had his mind that he has to become the Minister of Education for the country, that's the, you know, highest thing, you know, he has all, so, well, you know, I mean, he does not have such a qualification, you know. But in such countries, you know, qualifications don't matter much. Like, the influence feathering, if you, you know, bribe somebody you can…so, but he didn't have that kind of money and he didn't have, you know, kind of, influence so he thought, you know, and then he heard that there is this Buddhist monk and the president of the country has great respect for this monk. So he hit upon an idea, so if he went to this monk and somehow if he can move this monk, and then this monk would influence the president to get him appointed as Minister of Education, he got this idea.

So he went to the monk, you know, he was, this monk was living on top of the mountain and he said, well, you see, I, and then he is so obsessed with this, you know, ambition so, it's like, his wife thought he's really crazy. Look, honey, you know, I mean, you cannot become Minister of Education. I mean, you, it just, I mean, you know, and he said no honey, I just have to become minister of education. Without becoming Minister of Education n my life is void, you know. Has no meaning whatsoever.

And so, and many years he spent dreaming of his becoming Minister of Education and he worked out education policy, you know, what would, what kind of school system he would introduce, and all these things. And so finally, and anyway, he figured, many years later he discovered that this monk has influence upon the president. So that he figured this is his last chance. So he wrote, you know, this my last chance, if I cannot make it, you know, like, I would end my life, or something. So he wrote will before he left, you know. So his wife is just, just hopeless, you know.

And so he went to the, he climbed up the mountain and, you know, went to the monk and, you know, said, well, you see, I have this dream and I must fulfill this dream, you know. Without this dream fulfilled my life is just meaningless. I'm, you know, in great despair, you know. So you must help me, you're a great monk and I heard great monks help all kinds of people and I, simply I'm in despair and you must help me, in fact you must save my life, you know. So he said what is your problem, and said, well, it's, I have been high school principal for many years but I have to become Minister of Education. And without becoming Minister of Education just, you know, my life is meaningful. And, you know, I just…

And indeed he looked very desperate, you know. So the monk, well, he couldn't, you know, I mean, to say anything otherwise, you know, he would become suicide. So he said, okay, okay, well, I think I can help you, but there is, you know, somehow you have to qualify, you know, for such a high position in the country. So I somehow have to help you so that you would qualify for the job. And so I insist you come and do 25000 prostrations. And he said, and he was just happy that, you know, at least the monk would help him and, become the Minister of Education. That's all he cares, you know. That's only, that's pie in the sky, that's, keeps his life, you know, ticking, you know. Nothing else matters. So, I mean, sure, I never did any prostrations before, but if you can help me become Minister of Education, 25000, I can do 30000 prostrations, no problem. And he was, became so confident, you know, because his mind is set. He would do anything to become Minister of Education. So okay, well, and then I think you would go home. Well, he showed me, but way he does prostrations, there is this Buddha carved on the living rock, you know. It's not even wooden floor like that, you know, it's outside, it's in winter, you know. And then it's, so living, there is some kind of flat rock, but it's pretty broad. So he has to do prostrations outside on the rock there. I mean, there is [unclear] and then down there is a cliff and then in the distance there is Seoul, the capital, you see. So it's, you can see that, you know, doing prostrations on the rock, you know. And outside in winter, you know, this all winter. And then if he, you know, if he makes a mistake he would, you know, drop dead over the cliff, you know. But anyway his mind is set, you know. If I finish this I would become Minister of Education. Just think about becoming Minister of Education, you know. Nothing…

So he went to his wife and, and then so he would, got the instructions, you know, and then, you know, would, he, and he has to complete the prostrations in, in seven days. And so many in the morning and all that, you know, it's all laid out. So he said, well, you would go and then take, you know, clean pants and clean, he has to change his clothes, you know, I mean, you do prostrations, you are all wet, you know. So he got, and towels and, you know, and under wears, and then, you know, and then also, and then he wrote his will anew, you know. If I die, in case I die, you know, my wife, don't regret, at least I tried, you know, all that.

So he came back and started doing prostrations. He got up early in the morning, 3 o'clock in the morning and he would perform, you know, such prostrations. And, you know, he never did so many prostrations before, it's hard. It's very hard. So, and it's all, you know, all bruised, you know. He was bleeding, you know, bleeding and then sweating and cannot tell which is sweat, which is blood, it's all, you know, get soaked in, you know, sweat and, you know, bleeding, you know.

And the first day was alright, first day was alright. And second day, he barely managed through second day. I mean, it's cold winter, but it's, his, you know, his body is all kind of heat, you know, so much heat, you know, doing prostration up and down. And, I mean, he would sleep only six hours and then, you know, and then he would barely, you know, the third day he would barely make it and then, you know, go up and down. And then he would crawl back to his room. So, and he was sure he could not make it through the fourth day.

So, and then, at the end of the third day he looked down. You know, there is, the Seoul is in the distance. There are all these, you know, all these lights, you know, city lights all there. And he just thought about it, if somehow I could get it through I would be there, right there, in the centre of the power, you know, becoming Minister of Education, you know.

So, and then that sustained him. And then the end of the fifth day, and then he said, he, something happened. He looked, you know, he looked again, you know, that something that keeps him ticking that, you know, that looking at the Seoul, you know. If somehow I go, get through then I would be down there, I would live high, you know. And, like, and look down there, and something dawned him, you know, like, Minister of Education? So what? What is this, you know?

And then, so, then he went to monk and did prostrations, I'm very grateful that you are giving me this opportunity, but I'm not interested in becoming Minister of Education anymore. But the monk encouraged, yeah, okay that's alright, that's alright. Well, you know, but you continue. Just, you know, continue prostrations, you know.

So, and then his mind changed. And, you know, and then the prostrations kept easy, you know, there's no thought, there's no thought. So then, like, he let go all these things, you know. All these heavy karmic things. Then, you know, up and down, like butterfly, you know. Light, you know. And then by that time he lost quite a few pounds, you know, so, and then, you know, prostration became easy and all this sweating, all these things. So, like, up and down, up and down, just going up and down, up and down, that's all that is, you know. So he finished seven days of prostrations, and he felt so good, high. And that's just, you know, it's that precious moments. So he became monk. And, and then he decided to devote his life looking after, you know, the mentally handicapped and those, but those inmates and mentally handicapped and, you know, you know, all these people.

Okay. But you may still run into difficulties doing prostrations so, that, but basically, you know, I would urge you to do as best as you can. Because the attitude and, the attitude and sincerity, sincerity of heart you bring into practice, that's much more important. But as I say, you can complete your prostrations by the end of this year, but those who are capable, certainly you can finish it by, by the time, you know, of the precept, I'm sure you young people, you should have no trouble doing that. If you, you know, for any reason, if you are lazy and all these things, or whatever, or there are too many distractions at home to do prostrations, well, you come to temple. And we can, you know, set date and it's, it's very wonderful experience, you know. Five, or 10, or 15 of you doing prostration together, you know, like 300 prostrations. It's great feeling, doing it together. It's really, here you will see it. It's, you will feel it, that, you know, it's not your strength in which you are doing prostrations, it's really, you will see shared strength. You really motivate each other, you know, doing it together. So we'll set some dates so that we would get together and do prostrations together.

And another thing is, even while doing prostrations, you know, thoughts appear, you know, like, sometimes, as I say, like, if you do 108 prostrations, well, you struggle, you know, the first 30 prostrations are difficult. It's, you know, well, you'd like to run away and then, you know, go out and, you know, sit down, or lie down, or watch television, or, like that. But so, but if you keep doing it, you know, you'll, you know, thoughts go through your mind and, you know. But if you keep doing it then, 40 and 50 prostrations, the rest, no problem. You just keep doing it. The thoughts thin out and, you know. Yes.

Doing prostrations, if you saw, you know, thoughts run through, but when doing prostrations it's called body, mind, and speech practice. You chant Kwan Seum Bosal, that really helps. Kwan Seum Bosal, you know. So, like, empower you in it. Kwan Seum Bosal, Kwan Seum Bosal, you keep going. Now…

The thing is, well, you know, we, we grew up in the consumer, if it is easy you would not be doing it because, you know, it's, it's challenge, you know. I mean, I mean, if it is easy it's not practice, you know. So, because it's difficult, it's challenge, it's, you have to learn to exert yourself. So that's, that's part of the fun, you know. I mean, otherwise you would not have any fun doing practice.

Another thing is, another thing is, that's, again, you know, on certain days we'll set up and we'll, you know, recite Great Compassion Dharani together, playing moktak, you know. And, well, the way you memorize is like, you say, sin-myo jang-gu te-da-ra-ni na-mo-ra da-na da-ra, you work with that, you know. So it's just, just that, you know. Sin-myo jang-gu te-da-ra-ni na-mo-ra da-na da-ra, that, you know. So, like, on, you know, driving car and, sin-myo jang-gu te-da-ra-ni na-mo-ra, you know, well, think you are simpleton, you know.

(Especially if you use public transit. But I wouldn't be doing it out loud, mind you, on the bus but, you know, you can still memorize something without doing it out loud. You know, and there it's a very short step from chanting it in your mind to chanting it out loud when you're at the temple. Just…)

You can move your lips, like sin-myo-jang-gu. And all the things, you know, carrying beads also helps, you know. You know, it's kind of, with, like hands, like, idle instead, you know, if you hold beads, sin-myo jang-gu te-da-ra-ni na-mo-ra da-na, you can do that.

Well first, you know, like, like, you can, sin-myo jang-gu te-da-ra-ni, first, you know, first you memorize it, you know. You can sing song, you know, like, sin-myo jang-gu te-da-ra-ni na-mo-ra da-na da-ra-ya-ya, you know. Sin-myo jang-gu te-da-ra-ni na-mo-ra da-na da-ra ya-ya, you know, and then move onto the next, you know, sentence or something like that. And, the thing is just, you know, like, give a break to your, like, logical mind and just, you know, just do it. Do it and, there is something about it, you know. It's, it's also good practice for people who, you know, who come out of public school. It's like, you learn, you learn to do something spontaneously, you know. Even though you don't know what it is. Like participating in, in the Indian powwow or something like that. There's something earthy about that. Yeah, something organic, like, you know, like manure, you know.

It's, I mean, you know, like, logically you could do, this is, Great Compassion Dharani is Mahayana account part of loving kindness meditation in Theravada tradition. You know, Theravada tradition is, you can certainly relate to meditation on loving kindness, you know. I'm sure you, there is something about that. But Mahayana approach is more like, blunt and direct, you know. It does not explain, but you know, kind of somehow direct experience. Like, as I say, spontaneous, intimate, and immediate, and obvious experience. Like pure experience. Not tainted

by, you know, explanations and all that, you know. In other words, it's non-karmic making. Like, it's, of course there is, well, you know, the bad things you move away but even good things, you know. Good things, they, you can be powerfully attached to doing good things, you know. And then you like to, you know, like, you are proud of how many good things you've done and, you know, all this, and get your name printed for the kind of good things you did, that also stinks, you see. So Mahayana approach is just, you know, no nonsense, just, you know.

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We have some new people today, you have not been to the previous two meetings, so I have to repeat certain things. So those who have been to the other two meetings, you have to bear with me.

In Theravada Buddhism, one who enters the Buddhist path formally is called Sotapana. The word Sotapana literally means stream-enterer, one who enters the stream, you know, in this Buddhist stream. And Sotapana is the first of the four stages of spiritual development. The last stage is Arahant, you know, or Arahan in Pali. So, for instance, Shakyamuni Buddha, he, usually he has ten epithets that, Buddha is one of them, that's Buddha, the one who is fully enlightened. And another one is Arahant, which means worthy or deserving, you know, worthy of one's respect, Arahant. So anyway, Sotapana is the very first stage of this four stage of, what do you call it, spiritual development.

And, it's the, the idea of entering the stream is, say you are lost in the mountains. I have never been to Rockies, but, say, I think in Korea, for instance, the country where I come from, it's very mountainous so I really know what it means to get lost in the mountains. You can get quite lost and if you cannot make yourself down the mountains, you know, you can die, you know. You, and, and so, like, it's, Samsara, you know. It's wandering through the misery of Samsara is sometimes compared to getting lost in the mountains, you know. Like, getting lost in your delusions. And getting lost in the misery. So then you wander around in pain and suffering. Then all of a sudden you come across this clear running stream, you know. And you get such a feeling,

you know, stream, you know. And not only do you discover the water, but also now you know if you follow the stream you can make it down the mountain, you see. That's surest way, you know. So that's why when you get lost in the mountains you look for the sound of the water. There is, you know, if you can, you know, hear the sound of the water, it's such a joy, such a relief, you know. Then sure the stream is there, and if you follow down the stream you make it down the mountain, you know. And in the village, the world.

So, and it's, so, you know, if you gain the stream, that is, it's, Sotapana means the Buddhist stream, that means finally you are out of the Samsara, you're out of the, you know, that pain and suffering of the cycle of, you know, birth and death, you know. Sense of liberation. So, and then, you know, you just enter the stream. That's called Sotapana. So in the Buddhist scriptures, I mean, Sotapana is such, you know, finally, you know, I am near the liberation, you know. I'm out of that, you know, forest of Samsara, of the pain of Samsara. That means once you enter the stream then you, you know, you may return to the human world once again, so that's, the second stage is called Sakadagami, it literally means once-returner. And then the third stage is Anagami, no-returner or never-returner. And then the fourth stage is Arahant. So, but you may return once again to the human world. But you are no longer subject to the form existence, to the form of existence below the human realm. In other words, you would not be born as animals, you know. You would not be born as, you know, pretas, you know. Hungry ghosts or spirits, you know. So that's, you know, that, the Buddhist worldview, you know. There are the six realms, and then the human realm is precious.

So, and once you enter stream, of course, you have to get wet. That means, here it's, Sotapana is free from the three fetters, it said. The three fetters are, first, you know, believe in the individual identity, individual entity. That's attachments, that's what, you know, ties us to the Samsaric circle. So, like, you, you, you are attached to your individual ego, you know, individual entity. So finally you gain liberation from such false belief, you know, in your individual entity. So, for instance, you walk out of that delusion and enter the stream. Then, in other words, you become wet in the Dharma, and you get soaked with Dharma, you become body of the water, that's liberation, you know. That's selfless activity, the Prajna, you know. Then you start flowing. Without getting lost anymore.

And then, the other analogy is also, like, from this shore, this shore is Samsara. And then, you know, crossing over to the other shore, crossing over to the further shore, which is Nirvana, you know. In Samsara there is no peace, there's no justice, no true happiness. Always there's conflict, there's violence, there's war. So finally, you know, you cross over to the other shore, that Nirvana, peace, happiness. So, and that's, you know, crossing the stream. So there is that analogy. Says, I'm Sotapana, stream-enterer. That means, usually, convert to the way of the Buddha.

And in the Mahayana tradition, of course, you have to raise, you know, when finally, you know, like, discovering the stream after getting lost in the mountains of Samsara for so long it's, like, you raise, you arouse bodhicitta. Awakened heart, mind of enlightenment. So that's always very emphasized. That means you become bodhisattva. Bodhisattva means, sattva means beings. So we are sentient beings, that's true. But, you know, we are sentient beings relying on our bodhi-mind. So it's not just sentient beings. So there is a connection made and, like, there is, Samsara is unenlightened world. And then, so Nirvana is enlightened world. So we make that cross over, you know. Bodhisattva, that's means. You know, finally you discover enlightenment. You know, you discover seed of enlightenment, bodhicitta, you know. So you go over there, you know. You go over from darkness to the light, you go over from Samsara to Nirvana. You make that cross over.

And now, preparing for taking precepts we do prostrations, reciting Kwan Seum Bosal, and then we also recite Great Compassion Dharani, why? In Zen tradition, which is the main practice of this temple, there's this wisdom aspect. It's, wisdom is only one of the two fundamental aspects of Buddhahood or enlightenment, you know. And the other aspect is compassion, compassion is somehow neglected. Now, in Buddhism there is always, like, say self-sufficient practice and non-self-sufficient practice. In Zen there is emphasis on self-sufficient practice. But then we have always emotions, you know. I know some people don't like ritual practice, but there's something about ritual practice, you know. You know it's, even though we clearly see into the true nature, the nature of ourselves or the selfless nature, you get enlightened, it becomes dry wisdom, but still the sentient feelings remain. It's like, you know, some resentment, you know, that's hard to, you know, kind of die-hard thing. That's, you remember in the Dhammapada, hatred does not cease by hatred, hatred ceases only by love. That practicing love, that's also very important practice. Selfless love, compassion. So, and, so if you neglect this, you know, you, like, like one Zen master remarked, well, three days ago, sure I was enlightened, today I'm deluded again. Because that resentment returns, that old karma returns, even though you clearly see what it is. But, you know, it's, there is, that self-sufficient practice becomes, you know, in, you know, it's again mixed up with non-self-sufficient practice.

So I'll talk about this compassion aspect. It's, that's, well, like, Kwan Seum Bosal, that's this bodhisattva, Avalokitesvara, one who hears the sound of the world and one who hears the outcries of the world and comes to help. This, about the origin of Kwan Seum Bosal, Kwan Seum Bosal represents this important aspect of Buddhahood that is compassion or compassionate heart. And there is this story I told before, I'll repeat. And this, there is this sutra called [관음본연경] and in this sutra there was a, a merchant who lived in Southern India in the ancient times. And this merchant married a maiden, a beautiful woman, her name was Manasara. So they lived happily, the only, the only thing that troubled them was, they were advanced in the age but still

they didn't have any children. So they were getting lonesome and they wished they had children. So they went, they visited different deities to pray for child, for a child. Maybe as a response to that his wife became pregnant and a child was born, it was boy. So they were quite happy and, and three years later they had another child. And this was boy too, so now they have two children, two sons, and they were very, very happy. They were very content.

Now, the parents, according to the custom they became anxious about what would be the future of these two children. They wanted to gain some knowledge about their future so they invited sooth-sayers and, to help them tell about the future of their children. And this sooth-sayer, he came and examined the two children very carefully. Then he said, alas, you've got two wonderful children. They are very fine, their complexion, everything is very fine, but unfortunately they don't have very strong ties with their parents. What I mean by that is they would lose their parents when they were still quite young. And, but they said they are fine children. So the parents didn't think much about it. Well, you know, at least they have children and the sooth-sayer says they are fine. So they were happy.

Now, when, the eldest child, when he became seven and the younger one five, the country was struck with a famine. Famine stalked the land and people, lot of people were starving. And even this merchant, he was well over compared to other people and the food supply was very, running very, very low. So if they just, you know, and waited, they too soon would starve. So the merchant figured out that he simply had to do something, he cannot just sit and wait to starve to death. So he told his wife, well there is another country, the journey to this country would take about ten days. And since we still have some fruits left and, I think if I go there and obtain, I'll talk to my old friends and I'll obtain some food supplies, then I'll return before, you know, our food supply run out. So you just have to wait.

So they bid farewell and he went, he left. Now while he was away, well his wife, you know, and, oh I'm sorry, I got a little mixed up. It's, and few years, when the eldest child, when he was seven and the younger child was five, their mother became seriously ill, became very, very ill, you know. So, and they loved each other dearly, and so the, the merchant became a little frantic. So he went all around and obtained all the good medicines for her but the medicines didn't do much good, didn't cure her illness, actually she was getting quite ill and close to death. So he became frantic and went around and came home just to discover she was dying now. And that's what help her.

So, well she couldn't close her eyes while her husband was away so, and she would, and also, like, the children are still very young and, just, she couldn't close her eyes and so holding the two children's hands she would tell them, well, your mother is going to die, and everyone has to face that. And, so you should not cry and we'll just wait until your father comes home and then

after I die you have to live with your father and you have to be good children to your father. And also you will become wonderful people, you know. Listen to me very carefully and don't forget you'll become very, very wonderful people. And you'll become, you'll do sagely acts, you'll become, and even though I die I'll be always watching over you so you should never forget and always remember what I said, you'll become wonderful people and never hurt others, and you'll engage in sagely acts. But the children cried. But I like mom better than our dad and, you know, how can we live if you die?

So after such moment their father arrived and the day after she died. So, and he felt like, you know, it's the, the relationship between wife and husband are like two wheels of the cart and like two wings of the bird. So he bitterly cried, how can I live? Feeling like, you know, bird without wing and cart without one wheel. But then, they cannot just stay with the dead body, so he had to pick up his courage and they buried her. And a month passed, and two month passed, and then the neighbours, they become concerned because, you know, he would just go on mourning like that. He has to pick up and, you know, even for the sake of the children, continue the life.

So finally they introduced a woman in the neighbouring village. And even you have to marry again, even for the sake of children, you know. And they pleaded with him and finally he agreed. And it so happened that the woman he married resembled quite his dead wife, you know. In complexion, and manners, and kind. So he was very happy, and also children followed her so, you know, and she was very kind to his children. So then, as I said, the famine stalked the land and then, you know, the food supply was lost. So finally he said to his wife, you know, I must take this journey and I'll be back before the food supply runs out.

So while her husband was away, she thought about it. And, you know, like, because of these children he thinks about, you know, his former wife all the time, and she has been dead so, you know, because of his attachment to his first wife, you know, he does not really care for me as much as he should and all these things, you know, comes around. And also if I have a child, of course these, you know, these two children from previous marriage and he would have rights, first rights, you know, to the property and all these things, you know. So, you know, all these karmic thoughts she was raising and then, now think about it, now since he's away this is excellent opportunity to get rid of these two children. Then when he comes back, you know, I mean, he would never find out then, you know, I mean, you know, then these children who stood in the way between our love relationship, then with the children gone, you know, I mean, he would pay much more attention and…

So with all this thinking and he was, she was getting into more and more murky thoughts. So finally she decided to hire somebody to take the children to a remote island and just drop then there. And so, you know, she talked to the children. Children look here, well, you know, if you,

there is this beautiful tropical island. If you go there, you know, for picnic, there are, you know, strange birds and fruits and, you'll have a wonderful picnic. So the children liked that. So they set out in a boat and then they arrived at this island which was uninhabited. And then, so she said, well, you go and play around. This land is all yours, this island is all yours. And I'll make some lunch and then, you know, you can, I'll, you know, call you when the lunch is ready and then you come back. So the children was happy and then, you know, set out.

And then after a few hours, they didn't hear their mother calling and they were getting very hungry. And so they came back where they disembarked to find the boat was gone and their mother's gone and the boatman was gone, and they couldn't figure out. I mean, there was no lunch available. So they couldn't figure out what happened. And would it be possible they just abandoned us here?

And then, so they looked, you know, over the ocean and on the horizon they saw this boat. You know, there's two persons in the boat, one person, you know, their mother and boatman disappearing over the horizon. And, just they couldn't think that they were abandoned like that. Maybe she went to get some food supplies or something. But day passed, and two days passed, and they now realized they were completely abandoned. And there were no food supplies in the island so they knew they were going to die. So the elder one, they hugged each other and, and finally they realized they were very close to death. And first, you know, the younger one thought, you know, our mother was a bad mother, our real mother would never do things like this. Then they thought about what their mother said before she died. We would become wonderful people, we would never hurt anyone, and we would engage in sagely acts. So, and then their thoughts changed and they think about it like, if we were given another chance, like if we were reborn in other forms of existence, like, we think about like, you know, they now know the pain, what it is, you know, to be left without, for a lot of people would be starving, you know. Then, you know, we know the pain, we know the, you know, suffering so we would come and help them, you see. Or children or adults who are starving, who are left without food, who are hungry, we'd help them. And we know how it is to be ill, to get sick, you know. Our mother died of sickness, no medicine cured them, then we would become wonderful medicine that could cure illness, you know. Corresponding to each situation.

So they would, you know, they took off their clothes, they would write the, they wrote down this so that they would not forget. Say, they cut out their finger, in blood they would write them, you know, how they would do, you know. People who are hungry, people who are ill, and then people who suffer in various, you know, distress, you know. They tried to remember all these things, you know, and list them. People who are lonely, you know. People who are in danger, you know, like flood, you know. So they made a list of 32 vows. And then they died.

So then, now their father returned and, and then he couldn't find the children, you know. Usually the children would come out first to greet him and, you know, he couldn't hear the sound of children so he felt strange and asked his wife what happened to the children. And his wife said, well, a few days ago they went out for picnic and since then they never returned. What? I mean, did you look? Sure I looked. I looked everywhere, I couldn't find them. And somehow he didn't believe her. So, and he inquired around and finally he learned that the children were taken to this island. And, but people would not say much about it. And finally he, you know, he located the boatman and pleaded with him to take him to the island. So he went to the island and there he couldn't see the children, but at one spot he saw these vultures and crows and seagulls were hovering around. So at the spot the children died and there were all these animals and they were beyond recognition. The birds were…

So he cried bitterly and, and he now found out what happened to the children. And there, he gathered the bones, and then on the branch of a tree he saw these, you know, these clothes, their, you know, with listings of 32 vows, you see. So that touched him very deeply so, and there, I mean, his children, you know, they have no resentments, the only thought they had is how they could become help, you know, actively help people who are in distress. So he changed his mind, he said, so, like, he came up with 500 vows, he too would help people who would be free from any resentment, from any hatred, from any ill wills. So he came up with 500 vows because he would be better than his children.

So, anyway the story goes one of the children became Avalokitesvara, Kwan Seum Bosal. And Kwan Seum Bosal is Maha Karuna, great compassion, great compassion. So in imitation of this we call the name to arouse compassionate heart within us. You know, well, you know, at the same time we seek forgiveness and whatever wrong things we have done in the past, so we like to be free from the past wrongdoings so that we could go forward with a compassionate heart, aiding all beings who come in our way.

That's the story and the place is called Potalaka. So, the scholars still trying to find whether it was, like, actually historically true, and try to find a location. But anyway the, the faith spread and, like, for instance, the Lhasa, the Dalai Lama is Chenrezig, Dalai Lama is called reincarnation of great compassion. That's, Chenrezig means Kwan Seum Bosal, Avalokitesvara. His patron. And his palace was called Potalaka, it's after the name of this island. And then in China that's, there is Putuo Shan, also it's the island near, just over Shanghai. That's one of the very, four sacred Buddhist places. Many people go there on a pilgrimage, you know. The island is very sacred to Kwan Seum Bosal, Avalokitesvara, Guan Yin. And in Korea we have also. So it's the sacred place devoted to Kwan Seum Bosal.

Lord Buddha's Teaching Pain + Enlightenment May 21 1989
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…So, and must have been a very powerful experience for her. And then she would come and visit the temple almost every day and, I didn't speak much English at the time. And finally, I think about three or four months later, her husband's term expired, so they had to leave Korea. And I think she really wanted to be left behind. She wanted to die in one of the Korean temples. I think, you know, like, I saw them off at the train station. So I think her husband had a hard time taking her along with him, you know, on their way back to Netherlands. But I think one of the compromise, you know, I think they agreed was they would take his cruiser, you know, which would stop at all these Buddhist countries in Southeast Asia. So, you know, after they left I got all these beautiful cards, you know, like, Buddha statues and all those things. And I'm in Malaysia, and Indonesia, and Thailand. And I, I received a few letters from her, but I think, I think sometime, I think she has been dead.

So from time to time I remember that instant when I celebrate Buddha's birthday. It had some impact on me. That time, of course, I had no idea I would be ended up in North America. And just something related to this was there was a French ambassador who served in Korea, I think about six or seven years, and then she, he returned to France and then he served in other countries. But when he died, his will was that he would be buried in, there's this beautiful monastery in Haeinsa. So when he died his ashes were flown and unturned in the monastic cemetery at this beautiful monastery.

Now, back to my topic this morning. You know, Buddha's teachings on pain and enlightenment. From pain to enlightenment. [unclear…]. Buddha was born, Shakyamuni Buddha was born as Siddhartha Gautama. He was born as a prince of a small kingdom at the silent foothills of the Himalayas more than 2500 years ago. Now scholars say it would be more accurate to say that he was born the son of a leader, of the leader of a clan in the ancient India, which is now Nepal. So I guess in modern historical perspective, you know, I can't really discuss. After all, after he was born into the highest class of his society, and often he's called Prince Siddhartha. But his country or his kingdom [unclear] was very small. Something like tribe. And so he led a very sheltered life

being born as a prince. He, until he reached 35 years of age, he led a, quite a normal life. He married and he had a child. And also, after he renounced the world in pursuit of religious truth, he underwent spiritual cultivation, ascetic practice, which was popular in his time, for six years and finally he, you know, sat under bodhi tree, bodhi tree, in deep meditation [unclear] to freedom. So this is, like, a key experience in his spiritual training. I think, like, this is experience was his coming to freedom, his attaining enlightenment, is comparable to experience salvation in Christianity.

And then he devoted the rest of his life to teaching, to ministry work. For this, the scriptures say he was on foot, most of the time travelling across the Northeastern India. And there is this interesting description in one of the scriptures. There were two powerful kingdoms in his time. One is called Kosala [unclear]. And [unclear] eventually became a dominant power and unified most of India. And I think it became the Magadha empire, Magadha empire.

So he, like, he attained, he attained enlightenment when he was 35 years old and he lived a long life. He died, he passed away, at age 80. [unclear] by today's standard he lived long, fulfilled life. And so he devoted 35 years of his life to teaching, mainly travelling between these two kingdoms. And the distance between these two kingdoms, I mean, actually, the distance between the two capitals of these two kingdoms is, they say, as a close flight. That's how they measure the distance. They say about, it's four or five hundred kilometres as close flight. But I guess if, you know, like, on human foot or human chunks, would be, I think scholars, they estimated might have been seven to eight hundred kilometres or more. And not only that, there were, you know, often, you know, during the rainy season, you know, he would stay with his disciples at their place and, for meditation retreat. But sometimes the road condition was very primitive so [unclear…].

So, and also his life before renunciation and after renunciation, or before his enlightenment and after his enlightenment, his life was remarkably free from any turmoil or turbulence. Which often marked the religious, like, findings of, you know, other world religions. So, often, like, the life of a religious teacher is found, serve as a seeds for doctrinal development of the religion, or later development. So certainly, you know, like, by comparison we say the life of Jesus Christ there was a lot of turbulence and turmoil. I think it was only one year of his life, or at least no more than three years of his life, was devoted to teaching. And then he, the end of his life was tragic. Crucifixion, capital punishment. And, whereas Buddha's life, he ended, his life ended on a note of peace and fulfillment. And then, maybe one reason why Buddhist teachings are remarkably free from any aggressiveness or any hard dogmas is, there is vast literature of Buddhism, but almost every Buddhist literature and scriptures are remarkably free from this dogmatism. And it's filled with, you know, peaceful teachings, extremely tolerant, and gentleness.

So now, in the light of this, one may wonder why. You know, pain, suffering, and unhappiness feature, you know, highly in the Buddhist teachings. Because after all, like, it is said after attaining enlightenment one of the, you know, first teachings which Buddha gave to his five Panca-vaggiya, five disciples, is, you know, his first sermon is Four Noble Truths. And the first Noble Truth is pain. It says simply there is pain, there is unhappiness, and there is unsatisfactoriness. Actually the original word is dukkha. And the meaning of dukkha, you know, embraces any of these adjectives. Unhappiness, pain, suffering, unsatisfactoriness, frustration. And not only does it fit in the form of truth but the other teaching, which also serves as a comment to all Buddhist scriptures, three characteristic marks of all existence. And number one is also dukkha. The other two being anicca, impermanence. [Unclear…]. Anatta. And selflessness, non-self. Absence of any substantial identity.

And if you go back to his life once again to find any trace, any slight which might have influenced him to come up with teaching of pain, his mother passed away only eight days after he was born. So while growing up, you know, in his tender age, the scriptures [unclear] he must have experienced sorrow as a result of this. And also scriptures refer to him as a very sensitive child. There's this one episode which is called, scriptures [unclear…] was a agricultural society and so when spring comes around there's this special ceremony [unclear] planting. Like, I mean, the kings and nobles, they all participated. That's the main industry and without it, you know, peoples life would be [unclear]. So such a importance was attached to this symbolic rite so, like, they would [unclear…] and all [unclear] would come out and symbolically [unclear] shovel,led into the ground. Like, you know, turning the soil over for planting.

So at this ceremony, you know, Siddhartha participated and he saw, like, when spring comes around, you know, everything comes to life. There is, you know, there is such a special energy when spring comes around. [Unclear…] all the trees, and your body aches, or something. So then, then, you know, as farmers turned the soil over, then all these insects that were hibernating, they came and they were turned over. You know, suddenly they were exposed, you know, in the daylight. And then these birds hovering above, they, there's this, you know, they would swoop down and pick up the worms and insects. And, so the scriptures, you know, goes on to say, and this, the sensitive Buddha, you know, Siddhartha, watched this, how, like the, I mean, worms and insects are also [unclear], birds are [unclear], they are killing each other. So it sat on him and so he retired and sat himself under the tree in deep reflection. One can argue whether this is really historically true or not, but you never know.

So that episode, and then, of course, the, and, well, growing up he led a very sheltered life in the palace. And his father, king, was Suddhodana, and Siddhartha was born, like, his parents were already approaching late 40s, so they were really, you know, joyous that there was a son given to them. So they took every precaution that, you know, they wanted to make sure that Siddhartha

would grow up and, you know, inherit the country, you know, so that his kingdom would prosper under his reign. And this is all his father had, you know, in his mind all the time. This kind of preoccupation.

So he was given a kind of, a spoiled life. Like, something like growing up in North American society, going to supermarkets and, you know, having access to colour television and all these things, and well protected from, really, human misery. So when you go to, you know, like, third world countries, you get culture shock. So then there is this, this event in his life which is, which is more or less portentous. So he was getting tired of living within the palace prisons all the time. So he wanted to see how other people lived their life outside a palace. And he became curious. So he asked his charioteer to take him on an excursion outside the palace.

So this happened. I'll read it to you, a translation. For quite a while after Buddha's passing away, nobody reported his biography. You know, India was a society in which written words were not very much honoured. And so for quite a while his teachings and his life stories were transmitted orally until they were finally committed to writing, you know, 1st century BC. And when it, when they were finally committed to writing, of course, the deification of Buddha was well in progress. So, and there were many hundred years, few hundred years, since Buddha passed away. So people, Buddha's followers, they needed a, some kind of a great example that would inspire them. So when you read the scriptures, they are full of, you know, highest, you know, beautiful language. Which, of course, historically not true. So scholars have a harder time separating, you know, facts from fancy or, you know, just historical, unhistorical elements. But then, in my opinion, it does not really matter. At least, you know, one thing is, these scriptures, they reflect the view of the Buddha held by the Buddhists who lived in their time. So we have to take it that way and so in that sense it's a very good record. And now if I just digress a little bit. Now, Buddhism in America, in the West now, has some parallel with the spirit of early Buddhism. So it is possible for us to discuss things like this.

Now, on a certain day the future Buddha wished to go to the park and told his charioteer to make ready the chariot. Accordingly the man brought out a sumptuous and elegant chariot, and adorning it richly. He harnessed to it four state horses of Sindhata breed as white as the petals of the white lotus and announced to the future Buddha that everything was ready. And the future Buddha mounted the chariot, which was like to a palace of the gods, and proceeded towards the park. The time for the enlightenment of Prince Siddhartha draws nigh, thought the gods. We must show him a sign. They changed one of their number into a decrepit old man, broken toothed, grey haired, and bent of body, leaning on a step and trembling, trembling. And showed him to the future Buddha. But so that only he and the charioteer saw him. Then said the future Buddha to the charioteer in the manner related in the Maharashtra, friend, pray, who is this man? Even his hair is not like that of other men. And when he heard the answer he said, shame on the world.

Since to everyone that is born, old age must come. And agitated in heart, he thereupon returned and ascended his palace. Why has my son returned so quickly, asked the king. Sire, he has seen an old man, was the reply. And because he has seen an old man, he is about to retire from the world. Do you want to kill me, that you say such things. Quickly, get ready some plays to be performed before my son. If we can but get him to enjoy pleasure, he will cease to think of retiring from the world. Then the king extended the guard to half a league in each direction.

Again, on a certain day, as the future Buddha was going to the park, he saw a diseased man whom the gods had fashioned. And having again made inquiry, he returned agitated in heart and ascended his palace. And the king made the same inquiry and gathered the same orders as before, again extending the guard, twice that, for three quarters of a league around.

And again on a certain day as the future Buddha was going to the park, he saw a dead man whom the gods had fashioned. And having again made inquiry, he returned agitated in heart and ascended his palace. And the king made the same inquiry, and gave the same orders as before, and again extending the guard, placed them for a league around.

And again on a certain day as the future Buddha was going to the park, he saw a monk carefully and decently clad whom the gods had fashioned. And he had asked his charioteer, pray, whom is this man? Now, although there was no Buddha in the world and the charioteer had no knowledge of either monks or their good qualities, yet by the power of the gods he was inspired to say, sire, this is one who has overcome the world. And he thereupon proceeded to sound the praises of retirement from the world. The thought of retiring from the world was a pleasing one to future Buddha. And this day, he went on until he came to the park. The repeaters of the [unclear] however say that he went to the park after having some [unclear…] in the same day.

Now, well the language may be different, but in term, first he saw, like, other scriptures say four outings. One day, you know, he went out east gate, then north, four gates. And first he saw an old man and then diseased man. You know, very sick person. And then dead man and, finally, he came across the monk. So, in other words, for the first time he experienced, you know, seeing old age, and then a man who is diseased, and then a man who is dead. So since he led such a sheltered life this was kind of a cultural shock.

Maybe if I say, like, almost ever since I came to the West, I've felt that, in this society, we don't really experience old age. We don't really experience sickness. We don't really experience death. It's, for instance, you know, old man. If you are old, you know, you are very carefully separated from the youth, from the rest of the society, in old age home. We have to make a special visit to old age home, you know, to get a glimpse of what it is getting old and senile. And one gets sick, you know, people put them to hospital, so nice, convalescence hospitals, doctors and nurses in

gowns. And so you don't really experience getting sick and groaning. And then also being dead is the same thing. Even sometimes when you go to funeral parlour, you don't really experience, don't really get the message, what it is really like. Person, dead.

For instance, well, growing up in a small village, like, almost every day as a boy, I came in contact with an old man. You see right away and you know, growing up you know, you realize that this is part of life. And, you know, back bent and, you know, limping along or you know, supporting themselves with cane, all wrinkled. It's so obvious. And also sick man, you know. There's really pain there. And now finally if someone is dead, small village, even in the middle of night. I mean here sometimes you see sirens wailing, ambulance rushing to their hospital, but over there, even in the middle of night, if someone dies wailing goes on which wakes up the whole village. So even as a child I sat up in the middle of the night, we'd partake, and directly partake of, you know, like, this person dead. That sorrow and pain.

So, now, there are three things. One reason, the number one reason why Buddha featured so highly the truth of pain, the truth of sorrow in his teachings is, well, unless you seek divine help, unless you look for supernatural solutions, you must come to grips with pain and sorrow. In other words, it's a reality of life. Pain and sorrow is a reality of life. Unhappiness is reality of life. So when he says, you know, in the first Noble Truth, there is sick, there is pain, there is unhappiness. And then of course [unclear…] but he put that thing ahead of the three Noble Truths, three other Noble teachings. It's simply seems there's nothing unusual about pain. It just remind you, because people, there is this strong tendency to run away from pain, to run away from sorrow. And to avoid and to run away from the consequences of your own life, of your own deeds. So, of course, if you run away from pain, then you run away to another pain. So what happens is you run away from pain to pain. So that's what it is about, Samsara. So sooner or later, sooner the better, you have to feel the pain. You have to face life. Instead of running away, instead of shunning your responsibility. And you have to meet the challenge.

And throughout his teaching career, he uses what we may call parables. And this skillful means to bring people faced with the sorrow. You know, there's this, one story is the Kiss of the Dharma. I'll read it. It's called Mustard Seed of [unclear…].

Gotami was her family name, but because she tired easily she was called [unclear], or frail [unclear]. She was reborn at Shravasti in a poverty stricken house. When she grew up she married, went to the house of the husband family to live. There, because she was the daughter of a poverty stricken house, they treated her with contempt. At the time she gave birth to a son, then they accorded her respect. When that boy of her's was old enough to play and run here and about, sorrow sprang up within her. Thought she, since the birth of my son, I who was once denied honour and respect in this very house have received respect. These folk may even seek to

cast my son away. Taking her son on her hip she went about from one house door to another saying, give me medicine for my son. Wherever people encountered her they said, where did you ever meet with medicine for the dead? So saying, they clapped their hands and laughed in derision. She had not the slightest idea what they meant.

Now, a certain wise man saw her and thought, this woman must have been driven out of her mind out of sorrow for her son. But the medicine for her, no one else is likely to know. The possessor of the ten forces alone is likely to know. Said he, woman, as for medicine for your son, there is no one else who knows. The possessor of the ten forces, the foremost individual in the world of man and the worlds of gods, resides in a neighbouring monastery. Go to it and ask. The man speaks the truth, thought she. Taking son over hip, when the Tathagata sat down in the seat of the Buddhas, she took her stand in the outer circle of the congregation and said, All Exhalted One, give me medicine for my son. The teacher, seeing that she was ripe for conversion said, you did well, Gotami, in coming here for medicine. Go enter the city. Make the rounds of the entire city, beginning at the beginning. And in whatever house no one has ever died, from that house fetch tiny grains of mustard seed. [Unclear…], said she.

Delighted in heart, she entered within the city. And at the very house said, the possessor of the ten forces bids me fetch tiny grains of mustard seed for medicine for my son. Give me tiny grains of mustard seed. Alas, Gotami, said they, and brought and yelled to her, this particular seed I cannot take. In this house, someone has died. What say you, Gotami? Here, it's impossible to counter death. Well then, enough. I'll not take it. The possessor of the ten forces did not tell me to take mustard seed from a house where anyone has ever died. In the same way she went to the second house and to the third. Thought she, in the entire city, this must be the way.

This, the Buddha, full of compassion for the welfare of mankind, must have seen. Overcome with emotion, she went outside of city, carried her son to the burning ground. And holding him in her arms, said, dear little son, I thought that you alone had been overtaken by this thing which men call death. But you are not the only one death has overtaken. This is a law common to all mankind. So saying, she cast her son away in the burning ground, then she uttered the following stanza. No village law, no law of market, no law of a single house is this. Of all the worlds, of all the worlds of gods, this only is the law, and all things are impermanent.

Now, when she had so said, she went to her teacher. And said the teacher to her, Gotami, did you get the tiny grains of mustard seed? [Unclear…] is the business of the mustard seed. Will you give me a refuge? Then the teacher recited to her the following stanzas. Dead men would give away rice and cattle. You know what cattle would be in today's parlance. Dead men [unclear…], as sweeps away a mighty flood a sweeping village. Though one should live a hundred years, the reason of the grassroots [unclear].

Well, there are two things in this story which, well, I mean, this story itself is eloquent if you get the message. One is, I mean, this woman, in her position, and having son, and what's, you know, birth of son brought to her. So, well, I guess any mom would have the same feeling. It's very, it's part of her own identity, it's her own being. So losing the child, what it reveals. When she's gone mad, or out of her mind. So what would Buddha say? This mustard, it's skillful means.

So, well, helping people to help themselves was, I mean, you have to be willing to help yourself. So one thing but Buddha's teaching is so skillful. I mean, first have her go around trying to attain mustard seed in house where no death. And finally she comes around, realizing the truth and ready to help herself. And the second message is, like, you know, in order to help yourself, first you come to grips with lack of happiness, which is part of our life, which is the reality of life. And without [unclear] this you can come to freedom. [Unclear…] further and further [unclear] into pain, [unclear] Samsara, and predicament. Ever forlorn, furthering the pain rather than reducing. And creating Karma.

Now the second message which I think Buddha wanted to bring about through teaching this [unclear] practical thing, practical thought, to emancipation. And for that I'll read you a story. It's Malunkyaputta. Story of Malunkyaputta.

Thus have I heard, on a certain occasion the Blessed One was dwelling at Savatthi in Jetavana monastery in Anathapindika's park. Now it happened to the Venerable Malunkyaputta, being in seclusion and constant in meditation that a consideration presented itself to his mind as follows. These theories which the Blessed One has left unexplained, has set aside and rejected, that the world is eternal, that the world is not eternal, that the world is finite, that the world is infinite, that the soul and the body are identical, that the soul is one thing and the body another, that the saint exists after death, that the saint does not exist after death, that the saint both exists and does not exist after death, that the saint neither exists nor does not exist after death, these the Blessed One does not explain to me. And the fact that the Blessed One has not explained them to me does not please me nor soothe me. Therefore, I'll return near to the Blessed One and bring the [unclear] concerning this matter. If the Blessed One will explain to me either that the world is eternal, or that the world is not eternal, or that the world is finite, or that the world is infinite, or that the soul and the body are identical, or that the soul is one thing and the body another, or that the saint exists after death, or that the saint does not exist after death, or that the saint both exists and does not exist after death, or that the saint neither exists nor does not exist after death, in that case will I lead the religious life under the Blessed One. If the Blessed One will not explain to me either that the world is eternal or that the world is not eternal, or that the saint neither exists nor does not exist after death, in that case I'll abandon religious training and return to the lower life of a layman.

Believing me, this thing did not only happen to [unclear] in ancient India, it has been happening to many of us over and over again. You know, I mean, outwardly you sit in meditation, you know, beautifully, but suddenly all these things [unclear].

And, then the Venerable Malunkyaputta arose at even tide from his seclusion and drew near to where the Blessed One was. And having drawn near and greeted the Blessed One, he sat down respectfully at one side. And seated respectfully at one side, the Venerable Malunkyaputta spoke to the Blessed One as follows. Reverend Sir, it happened to me as I was just now in seclusion and planted in meditation, that a consideration presented itself to my mind as follows. These theories which the Blessed One has left unexplained, has set aside and rejected, that the world is eternal, that the world is not eternal, that the saint neither exists nor does not exist after death, these the Blessed One has not explained to me. And the fact that the Blessed One does not explain them to me does not please me nor soothe me. I'll draw near to the Blessed One, inquire with him…

[end of side A, side B begins]

…or that the saint exists nor does not exist after death, in that case will I abandon religious training and return to the lower life of a layman. If the Blessed One knows that the world is eternal, let the Blessed One explain to me that the world is eternal. If the Blessed One knows that the world is not eternal, let the Blessed One explain to me that the world is not eternal. If the Blessed One does not know either that the world is eternal or that the world is not eternal, excuse me, that the only upright thing for one who does not know or who has not that insight is to say I do not know. I have not that insight.

Pray, Malunkyaputta, did I ever say to you, come Malunkyaputta, lead the religious life under me and I'll explain to you either that the world is eternal or that the world is not eternal, or that the saint neither exists nor does not exist after death? Nay, verily, Reverend Sir. Or did you ever say to me, Reverend Sir, I will lead the religious life under the Blessed One under condition that the Blessed One explain to me either that the world is eternal or that the world is not eternal, or that the saint neither exists nor does not exist after death? Nay, verily, Reverend Sir. So you acknowledge, Malunkyaputta that I have not said to you, come Malunkyaputta, lead the religious life under me and I will explain to you either that the world is eternal or that the world is not eternal, or that the saint neither exists nor does not exist after death, and again that you have not said to me, Reverend Sir, I will lead the religious life under the Blessed One under condition that the Blessed One explain to me either that the world is eternal or that the world is not eternal, or that the saint neither exists nor does not exist after death? That being the case, Malunkyaputta, whom are you so angrily denouncing? Malunkyaputta, anyone who should say I will not lead the religious life under the Blessed One until the Blessed One shall explain to me either that the

world is eternal or that the world is not eternal, or that the saint neither exists nor does not exist after death, that the person should die. Malunkyaputta, before the Tathagata had ever explained this to me.

It is as if, Malunkyaputta, a man who had been wounded by an arrow thickly smeared with poison and his friends and companions, his relatives and kinfolk, were to procure for him a physician or surgeon, and the same man were to say I'll not have this arrow taken out until I have learned whether the man who wounded me belonged to the warrior class or to the Brahmin cast or to the agricultural cast or to the menial cast. Or again he were to say, I will not have this arrow taken out until I have learned the name of the man who wounded me, to what clan he belongs. Or again he were to say, I'll not have this arrow taken out until I have learned whether the man who wounded me was tall, or short, or of the middle height. Or again he were to say, I'll not have this arrow taken out until I have learned whether the man who wounded me was black or dusky or of yellow skin. Or again he were to say, I'll not have this arrow taken out until I have learned whether the man who wounded me was from this or that village or town or city. That man would die, Malunkyaputta, without ever having learned this.

And then it goes on. See, Buddhist attitude is, there is a man who is struck with a poison arrow. That's the predicament of each one of us. Like, you know, sure time has changed, but people come to me from time to time with burning questions. Say, about in Dharma crisis, they're really angry. They're frustrated. And they blame certain people. And they are morally indignant. Well, the Buddha's message is, if you keep arguing like this it would be endless. The thing is, well, we are wounded. And the planet is polluted. Let's clean it up. Let's pull out the arrow, poisoned arrow, so that this man would live. So that planet would be saved. That's cause of Buddhist social action.

Well, later on in the Mahayana Buddhist development, it's again along the line of skillful means which, you know, Buddha used to help each individual who came to him for help is, it's again same thing, is perfectly normal. Nothing wrong with it. You know, feeling the pain, being unhappy. So here is the Mahayana Buddhist teaching. It's called Ten Guides Along The Path. Do not hope for perfect health. Perfect health leads only to greater greed. Treat illness as medicine, not as disease. So spoke the Enlightened One. Do not long for a life free from hardship. Such a life leads only to holiness and self-pampering. Make worries and hardships a way of life. So spoke the Enlightened One. I think this is really the message for those of us living in this very comfortable society. We seek comfort. We run away from discomfort. Don't hope for a lack of impediments in your study. This means spiritual cultivation. We always wish everything was much … Release is hiding right behind obstructions. So spoke the Enlightened One. Don't hope for a lack of temptations in your training. A lack of temptations would only serve to soften your resolve. Treat temptations as friends who are helping you along the path. So spoke the

Enlightened One. Don't hope for easy success. Easy accomplishment leads only to increased rashness. Accomplish through difficulties. So spoke the Enlightened One. Don't hope to get your own way with friends. Having friends give in to your wishes only leads to arrogance. Make long term friends through compromise in your relationships. So spoke the Enlightened One. Don't expect people to follow your wishes and commands. This too leads to arrogance. Consider those who differ with you to be your character builders. So spoke the Enlightened One. Don't expect rewards for your kindnesses. This leads only to a scheming mind. Throw out the expectation of reward like you would throw out old shoes. So spoke the Enlightened One. Don't expect more out of life than you deserve. Exaggerated profit-seeking leads only to foolishness. Become rich at heart with small amounts. So spoke the Enlightened One. Don't complain about vexations. This leads only to resentment and poison in the heart. Consider vexations as the first door in the path. So spoke the Enlightened, the Enlightened One.

Now, the third message which Buddha brought about for all of us through the teaching of pain is learning compassion, developing compassionate heart. The only way, the only real, true way to develop compassionate heart is feeling pain and developing sincere feelings. I mean, without feeling the pain, experiencing sorrow, and coming to grips with your own [unclear] would [unclear], misery and your happiness, which is so widespread among all living beings. But this message does not come very easy. I mean, usually our tendency is either, escape comes in many different ways. Either we seek divine happiness, or go for supernatural solutions, or even superstitious deviations. Or just run away.

So, and the Buddhists, they come up again and again with this skillful means. And sometimes it's, you know, one lifetime is not enough. You have to, you know, over and over again, you have to feel the pain. So finally, I mean, maybe you run away so many times, and so many times you experience frustrations, unhappiness. Each time you run away, you run away to another pain. So, and maybe this lifetime, next lifetime, maybe finally you realize, even though, no matter how foolish you are, finally you'll come to grips, well, cannot really run away. There are a lot of Buddhist stories like that. You cannot really run away. So finally we know, you somehow have to face it. You have to come to grips with your own sorrow. And then, there, for the first time, you move on from pain to freedom, and develop compassionate heart for all beings. And by that time you are really ready to understand your fellow beings. How they too suffer, you are not alone.

I think, collectively, each society has different kinds of pain. I mean, the kind of pain we experience in this society is quite a different kind of pain than what the people in Third World Countries experience. I mean, it took me quite a while. While growing up in South Korea after war, I mean it's, people, you know, who are exposed to cold, hunger, and suffering under malnutritions, those are real, you know, I, you know, I was part of that, I would go for [unclear]. And people who are lazy, and like, and like, drug addicts or alcoholics, and, or people who are

insane, have no compassion. Those are, you know, the society is such, those are just, they help, you know, they failed to help themselves. They are not really, you know, among the really, those suffering the pain. But in this society, everyone is clothed and fed. So those who really, you know, [unclear] or alcoholics, it took me some time to develop compassion for alcoholics. Because these people are, if they want to, they are perfectly help themselves. But they went that way. And growing up, we had no compassion for these people. Because we thought they don't really deserve our compassion and care.

So we have this, there is a particular pain going around in this society. And which we all, as members of the society, share. So, I think the Buddhist task is bring Buddhist teaching of pain to meet with predicament of this society. Thank you.

Please repeat after me aloud.

All beings one body…

(All beings one body…)

I vow to liberate.

(I vow to liberate.)

Endless blind passions…

(Endless blind passions…)

I vow to uproot.

(I vow to uproot.)

Dharma gates without number…

(Dharma gates without number…)

I vow to penetrate.

(I vow to penetrate.)

The great way of Buddha…

(The great way of Buddha…)

I vow to attain.

(I vow to attain.)

Sunim's Dharma Talk Sunday June 23, 1996
Teacher: Samu Sunim
Date: June 23, 1996
Location: Unknown
Event: Dharma Talk
Transcriber: Zack, Toronto
Date of Transcription: February 18, 2026 (re-listened by Jisik)

[Three strikes and chanting]

Good morning.

[Poem in Korean]

Nothing to learn, nothing to gain. I'm at ease.

And realize there is no need to seek enlightenment, or to seek truth, or to eliminate my defilements. This sums up the state of mind in authentic sitting, in authentic meditation. In other words, you sit and become one with your true self. But this morning, for your benefit I'd like to go over some details of the foundation practice. The kind of details which you can observe to learn to meditate properly.

When you enter the meditation hall, when you enter seonbang, you face the altar, and you face the meditation hall, and you do hapjang. So Anjali, you bring your two hands together. And that's called attention, mindfulness practice. In other words, you bring your two sides together. You always struggle with your worldly side and unworldly side, or enlightened side or unenlightened side, or liberated side or unliberated side. But you bring that together. So palm to palm. And pay attention, and you make bow. To honour the place. To honour the tradition. To honour your practice. To honour your involvement in the Dharma. Also the implication is, you go forward from the life of Samsara, the life of violence, and the life of unwholesome life, based on the three roots of evil. That's greed, hatred, and delusion or spiritual ignorance to the six paramitas. To the life of non-violence and wholesome life. So there is that implication.

And then, usually I assess that doing some prostrations, three prostrations or seven prostrations, nine prostrations for body mindfulness, so the body would wake up, and also for physical stamina. Because you can sit better after doing prostrations. And also to bring yourself down to

the ground, some kind of ego attrition. To get you grounded, to get you focused. It's useful. And then you sit.

Now, the postures are important. Right away, you can sit in chairs and also you can sit on mat and cushion, but the first two rows on either side, they are reserved for advisory council members and priests and also senior members. So if you are non-members please honour that. There are a number of reasons for that instead of honouring the seniority or duty monks. But if you are new person, and if you really don't know how to sit, and if you sit there and then, you know, make move and make noise, it does not inspire people sitting at the back. So there's, it's non-verbal communication. You know, you look at people then, you know, you get inspired. This guy is really cool, you know? So that's inspiring. And also there's psychology, too. If she can do it, I can do it. So that kind of feeling goes around. It's collective Dharma energy going around.

And, and then when you sit, when you settle your body-mind, you do hapjang again and make vow, or non-theological prayer, may I be fully enlightened, may I be fully awakened. Or may I have a clear mind and a pure heart. You can come up with your own vows, with your own prayer, to guide your meditation.

And then, that's the first sitting. You can dedicate the second sitting to the benefit of all beings, something like that. May I live for the benefit of all beings. May the world be awake. Or the other option is, when you end your meditation, the last sitting, then again you do hapjang and it's called the transference of merits. Whatever merits accrued from your sitting, you dedicate it to the benefit of all beings. Or another suggestion is, say, if you like to have the benefit of your meditation go to your family, there may be some special reason, you know, when you need peace and harmony in you family, then, the Buddhists in Asia, they offer incense. Or they offer, you can offer, you can light candles, you can request the priests and Ilcho, you can light a little, you can dedicate a little candle to your family. It's called a family light. So you can dedicate a lantern and also burn incense, either or, or both. You can burn incense and remember your sick family members or relatives or friends. Or, you know, there may be other reasons, you know. [Unclear] of your wedding, or remembrance day of your parents, or you like to settle a dispute, or a number of things. Before sitting you can do that.

And then now, when it comes to sitting, it depends upon your progression of meditation. First, you learn to sit. It's called just sitting still. You learn to sit still. You learn to sit in silence. But the best state of mind you can have for just sitting still, just sitting in silence, it's because you enjoy it. You just enjoy sitting still. And also because you believe in it. You're just sitting still, and have less worries, and have fewer thoughts, and have less complications in your life. Peace of mind, and freedom. Have some great break from your Samsara.

And then, if you can do that, I usually say five stages of meditation. First stage is meditation as healing, but in single sitting you can go through that. And then meditation as a moral discipline. And then you learn to pay attention. Now first, when you just sit still, when you just sit in silence, but even then, it's a good idea that, don't close your eyes. If you really have to, you know, I mean, you can, but what happens when you sit with eyes closed is you daydream. And sometimes you even hallucinate. But of course you don't have to look up or, you know, you don't have to, you know, look your eyes wide open, you know. Just half closed, look down about three feet ahead of you. And then in order to pay attention, in order to focus your mind, you follow your breath. In other words, you experience your breath, your breath is there all the time. So, by focusing your attention on your breath you experience your breath. In other words, you become at one with your breath. And when you can do that it's very refreshing. It's like experiencing your life, your still life. Sometimes very clear.

…

Or, you know, you can count your breath, or you can count your breath from 5…4…3…2…1, in reverse order. So that helps you pay more attentions, because you're not used to counting that way. So helps you more alert and mindful. Instead of counting 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, then, you know, you can counting mindlessly.

And now, so we have two sittings on Sunday mornings. It's, if you like, you can sit on mat and cushion, but after first sitting, if you find it difficult, it's painful, then please you can, please move onto the chair. You can alternate, the first sitting you try on mat and cushion and, second sitting, you sit in a chair. Or first sitting you can sit in chair and second sitting you can try on mat and cushion. So, because if you move a lot it, it also, we sit together, so it can be disturbing. So in other words, you have to learn to help yourself to help others.

So I'd like you to honour, these are minimum instructions which I'd like you to honour and observe and follow. I say this, we will, you know, I cover, we cover all these things during the introductory meditation course which I give in two formats, the five Tuesday evening course and then overnight course from Friday evening through Saturday afternoon. But since they are, you know, some of you come here regularly without taking introductory meditation course or, even this is open to the public, public meditation service, but for the sake of having good meditation, so I'd like you to observe this. So that at least when you come, when you come to this temple, you would be able to enjoy sitting. You would be able to experience peace. Like, I'd like you to come and experience deep peace, or happiness, or gain clarity, or develop some wisdom heart. So that your presence in your family, and your presence in your community and in your society, would be beneficial. So your family and the society would benefit from your presence.

Okay, do you have any questions? Time to ask questions. Yes.

…

Yeah, we have two sittings. Yeah, yeah. That's, sitting. So, like, I distinguished between sitting and meditating, in a sense, to give you some helpful, you know, tips. Because some people just come and just don't know, wondering. Some people can sit there and read books. It happens. And, but we are not here to read books. It's, basically you have to look within. There's nothing lacking. You just sit and find out, actually nothing's wrong with you. And you find out you can be the solution to all the problems you have. That's self-help, self-empowerment and spiritual awakening. That's what meditation is about. You don't have to read another books, and you can do that at home. You don't have to look at each other. Some people do that, wondering, you know, what it's about. Looking around. That can be very distracting. That's understandable because people just come out of curiosity. We thought about it, we just sometimes write up, you know, something so that newcomers, just handout so that they would know, you know, how to behave here.

Any other questions? Yes.

…

It's, fixing environment, it's when, for meditators, you know, mat and cushion, you know, they, it's simplicity itself. You know, it's, the size of mat and cushion is just to support yourself, to contain your body, while meditating. So at least one monk came to freedom, attained enlightenment, when he saw empty seat, empty meditation mat and cushion. So, well for instance, like, say your room or your house, when your house is in a mess, and when your house is kept in good order and immaculate, I mean, do you see the difference? It's, you know, when the mat is neat and, you know, it's conducive to meditate. It affects your mind, state of mind. So fixing your environment, I mean, it's your mind environment. And also, when you stand up you already have mat and cushion fixed and ready to sit down, so that when we finish the Yebul, the service, then you don't have to fix it again, you just sit down. So that makes it easy, you know. Everybody's getting, so it's kind of order, keeping it in good order and simplicity. So simplicity and clarity, those are strong guidelines, and keeping distractions at minimum. Because when your mind is calm and you become very, very sensitive, your mind reacts against any kind of, smallest distractions, you see. So, you know, in the monasteries, when the monks and nuns, when they meditate, they say you can hear the sound of incense falling. I mean, that's impossible, you know, I mean. But it's really quiet, you can, you know. So everybody's so alert. Okay.

Yeah it's, sometimes, sometimes you have to forgive me, you know. I mean, being a monastic product, I take these all things for granted. But obviously if you come to the Zen Buddhist

temple first time this is, at first sight it's not obvious. It took me a while to realize this because, you know, in Toronto, we have a temple in Toronto. I did, we have school groups, and here also we start getting school groups, college groups, here mostly college groups. And in Toronto we get a lot of High School groups, you know, grade 11 and 12. And the teachers. They love to bring these kids to temple. Because the teachers, they have a harder time controlling the class. So when they come, we spend about an hour and we have them sit in silence, quiet and peacefully. And this is big thing. They are so alien to the value of just not doing anything, and silence, and being quiet, you know. It's a big discovery. They don't know what to do. You think about it, it's, these kids, they are our future. We depend on them for our future. It's scary to think about it. They are so restless. So some teachers, they told me they start the class with one minute silence to help them calm down so that they would be able to concentrate on their study. They just cannot concentrate. They are so scattered. Sometimes I tell them, you know, straight talk helps. You know, if you cannot sit still for five minutes you don't have to go and see your psychiatrist to find out what's wrong with you. They think about it.

I can take just one or two more questions. It's a good day to ask a question. Yes.

…

People afraid of being, silence? Silence?

…

Are you afraid of silence?

…

Mhm. You mean solitude.

…

Yeah. Partly it has something to do with the culture here. You know, like, for instance, depending upon the occasions, if you don't say anything, if you just remain silent, people think something's wrong with you. You experience that all, like in company, in company, when you're in company with friends, you know, it's like, this is like, I mean, as American, as Westerners say, it's a party animal, you know? You're supposed to say something and relate to each other, you see. Then if you're not party animal, there's something wrong with this guy, you know.

…

But, anyway, it's, well, I mean, if that is your problem, I don't know what's your problem, but I assess that, beads, you know. Like, it's, I experience this a long time ago. You know, when we sit

around, then we are supposed to be talking, you know. But, I mean, talking is okay, of course you have to communicate, but sometimes when you don't have anything to talk you don't have to be forced to talk or, you know, babble out something like, they just, you know, so then, you know, uneasy feeling goes around. So when that happens I, you know, I usually hold beads, you know. I do my Dharma practice. Then, you know, I mean, if they like to talk that's fine. I can listen, you know. And, you know, if I don't feel like talking, you know, I don't have to talk, you see. And then I feel at ease so, you know, beads, and then people understand, at least, you know, I'm holding something, not just like this. So, yeah, it's more, you know, people, eh? No. Anyway some, you know, meditation beads and, you know, I'm not closing my eyes. I look at them, but you know, I feel at ease and then, so they feel at ease, and they can talk, you see. So that's fine. So it's, and also, like, people who come here, like, you know, like if you are, as you said, if you're afraid of silence, or if you really don't know what to do, or if you are restless, you know, then I assess you get meditation beads and start your meditation playing beads. It helps to settle your mind, to settle your body. And also holding beads reminds something. We sell, you know, these mindful driving beads. You know, like, we talked about last night at Sangha meeting. I's, you know, it's, driving can be very risky thing, you know, like, so your life is in your hand, also other peoples' lives can be in your hand too. So it's, mindful driving is very important. And also when someone cuts in, you know, don't get upset, you reach for, you know, it's, your hand, mindful driving beads right, you know, in front of the mirror. Not in front, but around it, so it's, you know, you can't avoid it. Just constantly remind you, and in case of emergency, you can always reach for it. So instead of swearing, you know, or get angry you reach for the, you know, mindful beads. On some other occasions I said this, there's this famous Buddhist scholar Robert Thurman who teaches at Colombia University. Wherever he goes, he's the guy, you know. Robert Thurman and, what's the other fellow? Let me see, about 20 years ago these two guys, they graduated from Harvard on top or some, you know, alpha. Something like that, these are, you know, top students. And then what these guys did after graduating from Harvard is they went to the Mongolian monastery. So that was in the news, you know. It was carried in the New York Times in those days. So all, well what's happening to America, all these, you know, the most bright students, you know, after graduating from Harvard they go to Mongolian monastery. It's a very insignificant monastery, it's this Lama monk, you know, refugee from Soviet Russia. And not, what was his, he died, you know, he had a little temple in the countryside in New Jersey state. And then eventually, you know, those two of them, they are Buddhist scholars and they're teaching. But anyway, Robert Thurman, he was the fellow. Everywhere he goes he carries, you know, beads, and when he gives talks, you know, he works on beads and, so the beads never leaves him. It helps, one Tibetan Buddhist, Westerner, he was working on beads and then, I forgot exactly what was the occasion, he was in company with people and he got upset about something. And then, you know, sometimes before you become aware your swearing comes

about, and said, son of bitch, fuck. And he said fuck. And then said, I'm sorry, om mani padme hum. Om mani padme hum. Om Mani padme hum. That was really cute, you know. I thought that was really cute.…

Sunim's Dharma Talk (not labelled)
Teacher: Samu Sunim
Date: Not labelled (the same tape with June 23 1996)
Location: Unknown
Event: Dharma Talk
Transcriber: Zack, Toronto
Date of Transcription: February 18, 2026 (re-listened by Jisik)

Good morning.

[poem in Korean]

The one who pursues the deer, that's hunter. The hunter fails to see the mountain because his mind is preoccupied with chasing after the deer. The one who wins jackpot,… Is that right, jack? I hear a lot of women are into gambling too. So, so the one who wins million dollars fails to see people.

In the traditional Zen training we pick up the worldly wisdom and turn it around, and put it in, put it to good use. Transform the values. Like Jewels, Three Jewels. So here means you develop single mind, like pickpocket. You have a single purpose. So you don't see anything else. Single mind.

Once there was this Zen monk. This Zen monk, he had a peculiar practice. He practiced eavesdropping. As a Zen monk training in the Zen monastery, you know, he, you know, every morning and every evening, you know, he is called into the master's quarter and he had to ruthlessly submit himself, you know, to Zen master's probing, and he didn't like that. Sometimes they just don't like to go, so they just hold the, you know, the, the temple, you know, column, you know, pillar. No, no, I won't go! Then the monitors come and, you know, take him away. So, so this guy, on, he just refused to come to meditation hall. What he did was, you know, like, I

mean, you know,… There are several others, you know, who are really well advanced, you know, who are good practitioners, good students. So, if I just, you know, catch their conversation, you know, in the private interviews, you see, then, you know, I'll be alright, you know. I don't have to go through that rigorous, you know, darn training anymore. So he practiced eavesdropping, so he would place himself just, you know, there is this paper door, you know. You can hear if you are close enough. So he did that for several months. So, you know, oh, that's all about, you see, so he got fairly good idea, you know, what is this Zen training or, you know, non-dual liberation is or direct authentic experience is all about. Then, you know, he would just follow this, you know, number one student, you know, he's very close. So then, he was very close, just in few more days, you know, that he would be like equal of this guy, you know. So then, unfortunately someone, you know, the last crucial interview, he could not hear anything, you know. It just, they whispered into the ears. It was very frustrating, you know. So it's very frustrating, so he missed the last thing. You know, what's happening is, you may be well advanced, you may understand everything, but it's like, it has to be hundred percent, you know. It's like dynamite burning, you know. You place everything, you know, you know, I mean, you've seen this, you know, the war, you know, movies or everything. You place it, they do great work, you know. Say, place the dynamite, you know, under the bridge to blow up. And then you run the wire and then, you know, you ran away. And then, you know, that has remote control, you know, you light it. So it has to burn all the way, you see, in order to get exploded. So if it burns 99% it would not explode, right? So all effort goes nothing. So it has to be right, you know, right into that. So he missed that last interview, you know. So he got so furious, so got mad. So, you know, I must get it from this guy. So, you know, he waited all day long, when this guy came out of meditation hall and, he went after him, you know, got it, you know. You must tell me, what was this last conversation, you know. And said no. No I cannot tell you. And then he knocked him down, you know. I would kill you. You can kill me, but I cannot say, you know.

So, but anyway, this guy, he was single-minded, you know, by that time, you know, that 99, he developed a single mind. So I'll spare you the rest of story, you know. So he really got into training, you know. So he, you know, single mind. It's like this story, like, this guy, thief, you know. It's a father and son, you know. It's like, it's a profession, you know. Like, it's, you know, handed down from father to son, like that. So they worked all night, you know, robbing, you know, the houses of the people. So usually, you know, they come home, you know, early in the morning, you know. So they got caught in the shower, you know, in the, you know, rainstorm. So they were, they took shelter under the eaves. It happens to be, you know, temple, but they didn't realize. They were just, you know, waiting for the rain to stop. And was early in the morning, like, you know, 3 o'clock in the morning. And there was a lot of, you know, shouting and yelling going on inside, from inside the temple, you know. So they got alarmed. Maybe something going on. I mean, you don't usually hear yelling and shouting around 3 o'clock in the morning. You

know, it was like meditation hall, monks, you know, the, you know, the master shouting and all that. So, and then, so, they lend ears, you know. What's going on here? Maybe that's another opportunity to rob something. So, and it turned out the, you know, the master was shouting. You know, there is this great secret to become millionaire. And then they woke up, you know, these, they have been working all these years to become millionaire.

[side A ends, side B begins]

…who is unemployed, looking for job, you know? And then he died while looking for job. And then he went to hell, you know. There are different hells, you know. Like, it's not one thing. There are, like, Buddhist hells, you know. Christian hells, you know. So he went to hell and then he was amazed, you know. So many people are suffering there, you know. So, I mean, he usually, he was just going around, he was still looking for job, you know, down there. And, but he was so impressed, so many people suffering, you know. So it occurred to him, you know, how wonderful it would be if I could just replace some of them so that they would have at least, you know, coffee break, you know. You know, Starbucks opening on the corner here? So it's called Avici hell.

[the recording was jammed.]

Samu Sunim Talk May 23 1993
Teacher: Samu Sunim
Date: May 23, 1993 (Buddha's Birthday)
Location: Toronto
Event: Dharma Talk
Transcriber: Zack, Toronto
Date of Transcription: February 25, 2026 (re-listened by Jisik)

[Three strikes and chanting]

The gatha, the Dharma verse which I just recited means: When birds sing and flowers bloom, the beautiful months comes for all beings.

And this is the month of May. We celebrate the Buddha's birthday.

The Buddha here, the Shakyamuni Buddha, Prince Siddhartha, he was born in the month of May. As a Buddhist, I always feel very fortunate that he was born in this beautiful season where everything comes back to life. Promising growth and future.

He was born happily and he lived a rather long, peaceful and happy life. And he died peacefully at the age of 80. This fact has significantly contributed to the gentle, peaceful character of Buddhism. He did not perform any miracles during his lifetime or afterwards. In his late 20s, he confronted the realities of life. That is, human birth. And people get old. And people become sick, ill, and people die. Not only that, he also realized, in Buddhism, following ancient Asian worldview, we believe in the continuity of life after death. And this is called rebirth, the cycle of rebirth known as Samsara. So he realized that over and over again we become subject to the cycle of rebirth. That's suffering. Not just in this lifetime.

So he asked the fundamental question. Why is there so much suffering life after life? And so he decided to find a path of liberation, path out of this cycle of Samsara, cycle of rebirth. So he set out and, on his spiritual journey, and led homeless life, and finally he sat down in meditation under bodhi tree and became awakened, enlightened. That was when he was 35 years old. And for remaining 45 years he taught meditation, and right livelihood, and the path of purification and liberation for all beings. Without relying on any divine help.

Now, the word Buddhism is relatively new. It's the word given to this system of Buddhist beliefs and meditation practice by Western scholars studying Buddhism around the turn of the century, say around 100 years ago. The Buddhists in Asia, they don't call their religion Buddhism. Then how do they call their religion? The word they use to refer to Buddhism is Buddha-dharma or,

Buddha-dharma in Mahayana tradition and Buddha-sasana in Theravada tradition. And Buddha-dharma is short for Buddha-dharma-sangha. So the Three Jewels. We just took Three Refuges in Buddha, Dharma, Sangha. So it's Buddha-dharma, or [unclear] in Korean. [unclear].

Now, so Prince Siddhartha, he asked this fundamental question and set out on a spiritual journey and discovered the way of Buddha, the path of liberation. Now, 500 years after Buddha's Parinirvana Buddhism reached China and that was big event, big event in Buddhist history. And there were a number of monks, and lay leaders, and even merchants or travelling salespersons who carried Buddha-dharma wisdom from India to China. It was a long, arduous journey. And so they brought Buddha-dharma to China. And you may have heard of the name Bodhidharma. Usually the figure with piercing eyes, no eyelashes, and always sitting facing the wall, wall-gazing Bodhidharma. Or Bodhidharma crossing the Yangtze river on his way to Shaolin temple. Or Bodhidharma carrying a straw sandal on his shoulder and crossing the Gobi Desert.

But I'm not talking about this Bodhidharma. There were a number of monks and lay leaders who arrived in China in those days teaching meditation methods. Meditation as the most important method to sing your true nature, in other words, to liberating yourself from selfish desires. So the Chinese in those days called this group of Buddhist teachers, they called them Bodhidharma. It's not exactly a name, it's, like Buddhadharma, Buddhadharma is the teachings of Buddha. And bodhi means enlightenment. It comes from anuttara-samyak-sambodhi, unexcelled complete enlightenment. Awakening. Wisdom, gaining wisdom. So means, when you say Bodhidharma, literally it means the way of enlightenment, the way of spiritual awakening, the way of liberation. So that's how Zen Buddhism became known. Bodhidharma. And this group of monks who were engaging themselves in this teaching method, they were simply called Bodhidharma collectively. So they were challenging people to ask the vital question, the fundamental question.

Now, Buddhism is about to take root in the West, in America. Buddhism is here to stay, to take root and stay. So when Bodhidharmas came to China, the people, the Chinese, they asked this vital question. One of the vital questions they posed to teachers, what is the deep meaning of Bodhidharma, the way of liberation, the way of enlightenment, what is the deep meaning of Bodhidharma coming from the West, that's coming to China.

So here in America, Buddhism being at crossroads, we must ask vital question, the fundamental question. Usually you say what is Buddhism, what Buddhism, what can Buddhism do for us? Living in a stressful society, or living in a post-industrial society? Or Buddhism is irrelevant to a post-modern society.

So this morning I'd like to dwell on Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. And see if we can come up with a creation of new values, new vision, new outlook on our life, drawing from Buddhist tradition.

Now Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, these are known as Three Jewels, Triratna, and Buddha is one who is awake. One who is wise. So anyone can be Buddha. That is, enlightenment, awakening, is within reach of everyone. In other words, if we want liberation and enlightenment, spiritual awakening, badly, badly enough, more than anything else, then we can become enlightened. And we can lead life wisely. We can conduct ourselves wisely.

And Dharma is the teaching, the truth, the discipline. That would help us get to the other shore, that's what Buddhists say, and attain liberation. And Sangha is community. Community of monks, nuns, they say these two-fold community or four-fold community, they can talk about universal community which includes all beings. Not only animals, but plants, mountains and rivers as well. Universal Sangha or, as we say, global village. Which includes all living beings, both ancient, both animate and inanimate, sentient, and both sentient and insentient beings.

Now, meditation practice and right livelihood, which help us make that vital transition from Samsara to Nirvana, from sorrow to happiness, from ignorance to wisdom. Now, the main contributing factors of our being constantly subject to suffering, pain, unhappiness are, the Buddhists call the Three Poisons or Three Fires, because they are harmful as poisons. So they are, the first one is greed. The second one is anger, hatred or ill-will. And the third one is foolishness, stupidity or delusion.

So Buddhists, they rely on Three Jewels, Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, to deal with Three Poisons. That's why they take refuge in Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. And there are quite a number of methods to embrace, to follow, and to rely on Three Jewels. The purpose is, eventually each of us would become the living embodiment of Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. That is, discovering the true nature, true nature of yourself, and the true nature of the universe. If you grasp the true nature of falling leaves or if you can grasp the true nature of new sprouts, then you can come to freedom. And this is called open secret. Discovering the true nature. And the true nature is also called Suchness, realization of Suchness, the Dharma.

Now, Buddha, which comes from buddh, spiritual awakening, wisdom, enlightenment, the value attached to Buddha is peace. First, you know, it's outer peace. We long for outer peace too, that's non-violence. That's ahimsa. It's the first precept of Buddhism, outer peace. Inner peace is wisdom, the illuminating nature, Buddha-nature. So you have to discover peace in your life. In Zen Buddhism we talk about Mind Dharma as ultimate reality, inherent in each of us. And I teach five contemplations. Which makes Buddhist meditation accessible to people, particularly

from Christian, particularly Roman Catholic traditions. You contemplate on your mind. So you, the first contemplation is your mind is peace. Your Buddha-nature. The nature of your wisdom. So that's where Buddhists, they make transition from sentient beings to wisdom beings. In other words, they realize wisdom is the essence of their life, not just desire. So that means they start leading, they make transition from what we call dukkha to nirodha. That's the Four Noble Holy Truths. From suffering to happiness, from bondage to liberation. In other words, from rebirth to Nirvana.

So the first Jewel, so you can think about peace. Both outer peace and inner peace. I think that's very, most important factor in our life. You must discover peace in your life and contribute to peace in our society and peace of the world. Through Right Livelihood.

And the second one, Dharma. Remember, these are called Jewels. It's interesting, Jewels. The second one, Dharma, is love. If you read the Dhammapada, it's this famous passage in Dhammapada. Hate never yet dispelled hate. Hate is dispelled by love. This is ancient and inexhaustible Dharma. So Dharma is love. Somewhere in the Bible it says God is love, then love is God. So we have to understand love, what is love. The Dharma is love and compassion.

In one of the Nikayas in the Theravada Buddhist canon Buddha says, there is one taste in the vast ocean. The taste of salt. As there is one taste in the vast ocean, the taste of salt, so there is a single taste in my Dharma. The taste of freedom, the taste of love. So it's love and freedom. Love and compassion, the practice of love. The practice of unselfish love, universal love, inevitably leads you to the gate of freedom, to the gate of liberation. And the Buddhists, they always talk about non-dual gate. In other words, practicing love and compassion is liberating act. Always liberating act, right in this moment.

And Sangha, which means community. It means happiness, shared life, community life, or communal life, or the life of kinship, is the path to happiness. Happiness and harmony. There is no other happiness. Even in married life, that's a shared life, which is very intimate, that's happiness. That's also liberated life, unselfish life.

Now, these Three Jewels, Buddha Jewel, Dharma Jewel, Sangha Jewel, that is peace, love and happiness, being jewels, they reflect each other. It's like three-in-one and one-in-three. So Buddha Jewel, peace Jewel, contains in it love Jewel and happiness Jewel. And love Jewel, the Dharma Jewel, also contains in it peace Jewel and happiness Jewel. And Sangha Jewel, happiness Jewel, contains in it peace Jewel and love Jewel. So we recite and we take refuge in Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, that is peace, love and happiness, no other refuge.

Now, today being, today we celebrate Buddha's birthday. It's like, it's Christmas for Buddhists. And the important message that comes with Buddha's birthday celebration is about human birth.

So on this day we honour children, the future of ours, the future of our society, the future of our world, to deliver important message to younger generation. We help them bathe birthday Buddha, baby Buddha, and also I urge you to reflect upon your human birth and your human life. And ask, I would urge you to ask the vital, fundamental question, what is human life? What is the meaning and purpose of human life? How should I lead my life as a human being? How should I conduct myself every day?

I know every year you celebrate your birthday. Your parents or your spouse would organize party, birthday party for you, and you eat piece of cake, and sing happy birthday song, and maybe sometimes get drunk. Now I don't think that's a good way to celebrate your birthday. Human birth is very precious and we must not waste this precious opportunity. In other words, we must not waste human life. At least on your birthday you have to reflect upon your human birth. And ask the fundamental question.

I mentioned outer peace. Outer peace if in peril. There is a lot of violence in our global village. Killings, murders, and slaughters go on every day. And the harming, harming living beings, and harming our environment, polluting our environment, poisoning our environment, goes on. That's also gross violation of the first Buddhist precept, it's violence.

There was one monk who was very skillful in his teaching method. So meat eating is widespread. And violence has been around. And people are afraid, some people are afraid to go out at night. Some people are afraid to go to a certain place. And some people carry guns, actually a lot of people carry guns. And more people keep buying weapons to protect themselves. We live in dangerous society. So this monk who lived about 300 years ago, he tried to come up with some guidelines. Okay, well he was concerned, for instance, well, in modern language animal lives. We talk, I mean, everyone knows about human lives. And the Buddhist history is, it's a movement of liberation. So many different kinds of liberation movement is in the progress in today's world, like women's liberation, animal rights, and all kinds of liberation movement. So modern day Buddhism is trying to come up with a role model, like new bodhisattva. Like, bodhisattvas, they are role models. Like we have bodhisattva for environmental movement. Like, if you look at the traditional bodhisattvas they have all different characteristics, different vows. In other words, they specialize in certain areas. So we need those, like bodhisattvas for women's rights, women's liberation, bodhisattvas for animal rights, or bodhisattvas for environmental movements, we can specialize.

Because we cannot deal, Peter, in his talk yesterday, he was, he talked about this coping strategy. We cannot deal with all these things so you have to become bodhisattva specializing in certain area where you can be confident reducing, eliminating suffering and sorrow. Where you can help people get liberated. So he said, back to reflection on human birth, he said, well, when you

celebrate your birthday, if you remember your mother giving birth to you, had to go through such pain and suffering, labour, and then finally when your mother had you, that was such a joy, bundle of joy. And so when you reflect upon this, anyone, including animals, we all rejoice in birth and life, and we detest being harmed, being killed. In other words, we dislike injustice, we dislike discrimination. So when you think about, would you have a life, animal, whether it be chicken, or cow, or rabbit, slaughtered, and hold a party on your birthday, if you reflect upon that that would not do.

So at least on your birthday, the message of Buddha's birthday celebration, when you celebrate your birthday you think about life. It's a celebration of life, celebration of human life. And then we think about non-violence, justice, and awareness, consciousness. That's, if you are involved in Buddhist practice, discovering your true nature, this Buddha-nature. Buddha-nature that comes with human birth is the most important gift.

New Year's Eve 1992
Teacher: Samu Sunim
Date: December 31, 1992
Location: Unknown
Event: Dharma Talk
Transcriber: Zack, Toronto
Date of Transcription: April 06, 2026 (re-listened by Jisik)

Purpose of our being on this planet, in order to make reconciliation with ourselves and with all beings, and also in order to create the spirit of peace and harmony for the New Year. This has been another difficult year for this country, for many of us in this country, and in the world. Many of us have lost jobs and many remain unemployed without prospect of being employed in the near future. The unemployment situation has hit particularly hard our young people who are trying to establish themselves in the society. There have been many business failures and record number of bankruptcies. Economic and political uncertainties surround us. The situation is made worse because we are used to economic growth and not economic failures. We are used to pay increase and not pay cuts or pay loss. In other words, we are used to think in terms of getting more and making profits. All of a sudden we cannot get more for our enjoyment and pleasure. We cannot feed our family adequately. We cannot maintain our usual living standard.

Times change. We've had good times, now we have bad or harder times. Now, what are good times and what are bad or harder times? Predominant thinking is that we enjoy increased economic activity and material wellbeing in the good times. In other words, we are at advantage for social progress and material achievement in the good times. So good times are favourable times for us all.

On the other hand, harder times are unfavourable times. We are at disadvantage. This is prevailing thought and attitude based on material progress in our society. However, hard times force us to question our prevailing attitude and rethink about social progress and personal happiness.

Finally, out of complacency and complicity with the prevailing public mood, we are challenged and forced to search for advantage in different context. We find this is a small awakening and an advantage which good times could not provide us with. Therefore hard times are time for reflection and time for change. We are now living in such times. We have been brought up in a society where we are taught to compete and win. The spirit of competition dominates in every corner of our society. We must compete and we must win. Everything we do in life becomes a game and a contest which we must, which you must win.

In order to win, in order to compete and win, we must assert ourselves and promote ourselves vigorously. We have to become aggressive. And our entire society has been promoting this. For instance, if you visit bookstores there are a number of books solely dedicated to how to win, how to become number one, how to become the best.

Now, somebody wins, that means somebody else has to lose. And few win, but many lose. So few are the winners and many will be the losers. The painful experience is winning is associated with success, admiration, and happiness, while losing is associated with failure and unhappiness. So no wonder resentment and blame spread because many people lose in order to have a few win. And also the winners, they cannot always win. And many times they have to lose. And both winners and losers, they go through very stressful times. Losing is very stressful, but winning can be much more stressful.

You may have heard of a story. Someone, a successful person, he has been successful all along. In business deals, in games, in sports, in other matters. And he has been admired by all because he has been successful. And he comes home one day and quietly commits suicide. Not only has it been too stressful for him to win all the time, but the charade that builds inside, choking him. So this evening I'd like to reflect upon losing, because many lose, many are the losers. And we can sometimes hear very loud the resentment and the blame coming from the losers.

Now is that all that bad losing? There must be some positive side of losing. In other words, the prevailing value system in our society is producing winners, to win, to be successful, and to be happy. That's the prevailing thinking. And losing is bad, losing is miserable, losing brings pain. So this is a positive value system, and then losing is, can be negative thing. But there is something called negative values. Or what, in Asia, called non-aggressive values or gentle values. Values that are usually associated with the female side. And it's not all that difficult to think of a positive side of losing. For instance, you can lose anger. And you can lose resentment. And you can lose blame. And you can lose a job, that's true. Many people lose their jobs which they had held for 10 or 20 years. That's a very upsetting experience. Sometimes can be traumatic experience. But then, you cannot always, you have to think about a possible advantage this experience, losing job, can bring to you and to your family. In other words, you know, losing job forces you to live more simply, more frugally or more economically. It can even point to a new direction in your life. In fact, there can be numerous advantages.

Now, in this regard you can see losing can be winning. There's this famous Buddhist philosophy. It's called form is emptiness, emptiness form. Form is no other than emptiness, emptiness no other than form. That is, winning can be losing and losing can be winning.

And now, there is more to the losing than just, you know, looking at the positive side. In other words, losing anger, losing greed, even losing your stupidity. That would be wonderful. And, now, finally you may realize losing can be a wonderful way to promote peace and harmony to our society. Not competing, at least learning to cooperate. In other words, losing can almost force people to become humble. You know, say, can you think of losing reputation? And can you think of losing reputation as a very positive experience? It can be positive experience. You can become humble. You can become a true person.

And, but what Buddhism is finally aiming at with this, the philosophy of losing, is finally losing your ego. In other words, the way of liberation. The way of spiritual liberation. It's called selflessness. In other words, you can lose attachments. Among all attachments you can lose attachment to your self. That's called self liberation. And Buddhist path always promotes non-dual path.

So when Shakyamuni Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, when he attained enlightenment at Bodh Gaya, he journeyed to Saranath, the deer park just outside the great city of Banaras. And there he met his former friends, the five ascetics, and set in motion the wheel of Dharma, as the Buddhists say. That's, he delivered his first sermon. His first sermon consists of Four Noble Truth, the Middle Way, Four Noble Truth, and Eightfold Path. Now, someone said, if Shakyamuni Buddha is alive today, the first Noble Truth is suffering, you know, sorrow. And

instead of saying, declaring sorrow or pain for the first Noble Truth, he would say stress. Because everybody knows what stress is about.

Now the Middle way is about avoiding two extremes. That is self-indulgence and morbid self-denial or self-mortification. And in this case we can avoid both the winning and the losing, or non-dual path in the Mahayana context. So at the end of this year I'd like you to reflect upon losing. The positive side of losing. The benefits. Actually there can be infinite benefits from understanding correctly what is losing, and how to lose yourself. That means how to lose the cycle of Samsara, the cycle of greed, anger or resentment, and stupidity, our foolishness, human foolishness. That means to lose the birth and death. And that is identical with attaining liberation.

First you can reflect and focus on losing your bad habits. That would be good thing to do. You think about your bad habits and see if you can lose them.

Talk On Buddhism with Q &A, Nov 1 1993

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Close your eyes or you can join your hands together in hapjang in order to bring your body-mind together, in order to bring your enlightened side and unenlightened side together.

[Chanting in Korean]

The mountain top is soaring above the white clouds. The pebble stones at the bottom of the ocean shine without notice.

Few years back, Oxford University paperback series put out a series of books titled Past Masters. This series included such religious figures as Jesus, Mohammed, Confucius, and the Buddha, and also philosophers like Plato, Aristotle, Pascal, Mencius, and literary giants like Shakespeare and Tolstoy. Now, in the book *The Buddha* which was authored by Michael Carrithers, this book, *The*

Buddha, begins with this introduction. I quote. Among the ruins of Anuradhapura, the ancient capital of Sri Lanka, there rests alone on a pedestal above the grass a seated image of a Buddha in stone, slightly larger than life. The back and head are disciplined, but the arms are relaxed and the face reposes in tranquility. The figure is intelligent and serene, wed perfectly to the unmoving granite. Standing before it, an elderly English sociologist told the author, Michael Carrithers, that this, in the whole mess of human history, this, referring to the statue, this at least, the statue, and what it stands for, is something of which we all could be proud. This English sociologist further reflected, saying, I have no use for religion, but I always felt that I had unknowingly, unwittingly, been a follower of the Buddha all along. The late English historian, Arnold Toynbee, known for his famous work, *Study of History*, had this to say. If we can look back upon the 20th Century two or three hundred years later, we would have to recognize that the most, the most brilliant achievements of this century are not scientific and technological innovations. But the coming, the introduction of Buddhism to the West and Buddhism's meeting with Western science and Christianity.

Now, what was it and what is it that impressed Michael Carrithers, the author of the book *The Buddha,* and Arnold Toynbee about Buddhism?

Buddhism, or the way of Buddha, the way of enlightenment, Buddha means one who is awake, one who is enlightened, one who is not deluded, one who is not sleeping. And Buddhism, the teachings of Buddhas, are about emptiness, wisdom, compassion, tolerance. It's about mind, awareness, mindfulness, and Right Livelihood. And civilizing influence. After all, it could be said that Buddhism is about space.

Now, what is this space I'm talking about? Lot of us, it seems to me, suffers from lack of space. Space could be inner vigilance. Space could be about timeless experience. Space could be selfless possession of the world.

There was this man, Indian Buddhist philosopher, Asanga. He was the founder of a Buddhist philosophy known as Consciousness-Only school or Mind-Only school, Vijnanavada. And his younger was Vasubandhu. He also became famous Indian Buddhist thinker. And along with his brother Vasubandhu and Nagarjuna, who was responsible for founding the philosophical school of Buddhism known as Madhyamaka or Sunyata, school of wisdom, Sunyata, Asanga became famous in expounding the teachings of Consciousness-only.

When he was a young man, he wanted to meet his future teacher. He wanted to train under a qualified teacher. So he felt that if he was sincere enough he would be able to meet his teacher or his teacher would appear to him in person or he would have a vision of him. So he entered a cave in the mountain and there did what is called guru meditation. And doing guru meditation

practice, he spent three years in the cave. But he was unable to meet his teacher. Nor was he able to have even vision of his teacher or even whereabouts, his whereabouts. So he was very disappointed. So he decided to leave the cave.

As he was leaving the cave, at the entranceway, he noticed a tiny crack in the rock, the solid rock. And in that tiny crack he further noticed a tiny birds were flying in and out. There they built a nest. Then he realized, a tiny birds, and over the years, how many years you don't know. Over the years, these birds flying in and out from their nest, and rubbing this solid rock with their gentle feathers, tiny birds, made such a crack. And a little crack, and then light was streaming through the crack. And he was very much impressed with that. So he returned to his cave, and inspired from that example he spent another three years doing his guru meditation. And again he was unable to meet his teacher, and once again he was very disappointed. So he decided to leave.

As he was coming out of his cave, as he was walking out of his cave, he felt a drop of cold water on top of his head and looking up, it's dark, he noticed there was condensation in the ceiling. And then drop of water, and then he looked down, there was a pool of water on the ground. He lived in that cave for six years and this first time he noticed it. You know, I mean, there was dry season and wet season so only in a certain period of the year there, the condensation would form and water would drip. And how many years it would have taken, you know, for drop of water to make pool of water on that hard solid rock ground. So once again he was inspired and returned to the cave, and spent another three years. And still there was no sign of his teacher. So once again he was very disappointed. And then he finally came out of his cave, went down the mountain, walked into the town, and he came to the marketplace. He already spent nine years in the cave, and he watched how people leading their lives, this bustle, he marvelled at that.

Now, at one corner of the market he saw an old man. Crafts person. In one hand he was holding iron rod. In another hand he was holding a bundle of cotton. Now these are two opposites. Iron rod is firm and solid. Cotton is very gentle, weak. And what he was doing with cotton and iron rod is, he would hold the iron rod with a kind of cotton padding and ceaselessly, with a deft motion, he would rub it, rub the iron rod with cotton. And from there he would make needles, there were stacks of needles. That's he was doing all, ceaselessly. And once again he was very inspired. So once again he returned to his cave and spent another three years. And still he was unable to meet his teacher.

So he came out of the cave again. So he already spent 12 years in the cave and he was not able to meet his teacher. And he came down the mountain and went into the marketplace, and walked around. In one corner he saw a dog suffering from open wound, open sore. And the dog was in pain, suffering. And when he saw that he felt great compassion for the dog. He completely forgot about what he was doing. And then he looked at the open sore. There were maggots in the open

sore so he figured if he could remove the maggots and clean the open sore, then he could help the dog and the dog would heal.

So he reached for the maggots to remove them from the wound. Then it occurred to him, maggots, too, have right to live. He just thought of, dog is big, you know. I mean, dog is more prominent. You have more feelings for dog but you don't have any feelings for maggots. But whether they are maggots or dogs, same life. So he felt he had to protect both lives.

So he had only two pieces of possession, one was his begging bowl, the other was his patched robe. So he sold them, and with the coins he obtained he bought a knife and cut out a little flesh from his side. So then he returned to the dog and he closed his eyes and he reached for the maggots, to remove the maggots, to move the maggots into his flesh. So when he, his hands reached, his hand could not touch anything. There was dog and open wound, you see. Then he opened his eyes and to his great surprise there was his teacher, practically shining. And he was so happy to see his teacher finally. But then it also occurred to him, you know. He spent 12 years in all earnest, with a sincere heart, to see his teacher. So he became a little bit resentful, you know. So, doing the prostrations, teacher, I have been waiting for you all this while. I spent 12 years doing guru meditation with only one wish, to meet you. Where have you been?

The teacher said, I have always been with you. I have never left you.

There, Asanga's wisdom mind opened, his wisdom eyes opened. So, overjoyed, he carried his teacher around. As he walked through the crowds, the crowds turned away from them. Because they said it's, oh, his monk is carrying a smelly dog. Only one person, just on the limit of the market, there was one grandmother. When she saw Asanga carrying this teacher, and she became so reverent, so respectful, and touching the feet of his guru, his teacher, I'll stop you. Now, what kind of space do you find here? Different kinds of space, or sacred space, spiritual space, available to different minds.

Once a teacher had a disciple, and this disciple was blind. One evening, this disciple was about to go home, to leave. And it was getting dark outside, wind was blowing, was getting cold. So the teacher lighted a lamp and handed over to his disciple. And the disciple thanked his teacher, but said, as you know, teacher, I'm blind. A lamp is no use for a blind person. But the teacher said, carry it anyway, take it. It may, you may think that, being blind, you have no use for lighted lantern. But people coming from opposite direction would see you carrying lantern, so they would avoid bumping into you in the dark. That was teacher's wisdom, teacher's space. So the blind disciple thanked him. Yes, you're right. I could benefit other people. So he carried a lantern.

20 minutes later someone bumped into him and this blind disciple got mad. Hey man, you know, I'm blind, but can't you see my lantern? The man said, apologized, I'm sorry but I, the only thing I could see was darkness. This blind disciple, the lantern was carried in the meantime, the wind blew out the light. Being blind, he didn't know. Think about it. Some of you may be like this blind disciple. Complaining without knowing the light of your lamp has gone out.

Now, Buddhism is different from other religions in a number of important ways. First of all, Buddhism does not believe in creator God. And that means in Buddhism you can practice religion without faith in God. That's something new. And Buddhism in the West is here to make contribution to new religious consciousness. At the turn of the century, when Buddhist monks came to the West, they were afraid to say this to the Westerners because in the West people are, people all, you know, you are used to associate religion with God. Of course, you know, time has changed so what do you really mean when you say God, so that's different thing. And because, in those days, even not long ago, if you say you don't believe in God that's, kind of, you are atheist. And being atheist, that's evil, you see. Like communism, you see, or pagan or heathen. So that's, that's evil. That's something to be condemned.

Buddhism believes that each and every one of us is endowed with Buddha-nature. That's like the seed of enlightenment, Buddha-mind. And this Buddha-mind exists, this Buddha-mind does not depend upon your defilements. Like the sound of the water that does not get wet. So everyone is endowed with this Buddha-nature. So Buddhist practice means to discover in your everyday life this Buddha-mind, Buddha-nature, that does not depend upon your defilements. So it is called innate enlightenment or original enlightenment. In other words, this enlightenment, this freedom of mind, this wisdom, is already inherent in each of you. It means it's always available. It's always available. Right in front of your eyes. Right in this moment. It does not exist apart from you.

The second thing is truth or whatever you call truth, or wisdom, salvation, enlightenment, or the ultimate reality, these are, truth is ineffable. You cannot really give a expression to truth or ultimate reality. If you do that it's limiting. Buddha, God, or Jesus, already limiting, becomes limited experience. So that the truth is ineffable means you have to experience it yourself instead of relying on outside sources or external sources. That's what meditation practice is about. Meditation practice comes with inner vigilance. It's actually, sitting or seated meditation practice, sitting in meditation, is the inner, innermost way of being.

In Buddhist precept there is this first precept, ahimsa or non-violence. That first you learn to do no harm to yourself, to do no violence to yourself. Physically, psychologically, mentally. If you lie, if you become dishonest person, that's doing harm, doing violence to yourself. And then you learn to do no violence to others. And then you learn to do no violence to rocks, mountains,

rivers, trees. But basically if you learn to do no violence to yourself, that includes the other too, not doing violence.

There was a, I'll give you one more example about this space. Lot of people, they try lot of things to relax, to unwind. And they go through therapies. This famous Korean monk, Wonhyo Sunim, he and his Dharma companion, Uisang Sunim, they set out on a long journey to go to Tong China to study Buddhism. In those days most of North Korea and whole Manchuria was abandoned. No one lived there so many people, many monks in those days who set out on this pilgrimage, many of them just perished. They died on the way.

Now, one summer they slept on the roadside, was just wilderness, and in the middle of night, Wonhyo Sunim woke up thirsty and in the dark, he was groping in the dark looking for something to drink. And his hand touched something in the shape of a vessel and there was some water contained there so he drank it deeply. It was very sweet, very refreshing. So he went back to sleep. In the morning he woke up only to find the vessel he drank from so refreshingly last night was no other than human skull. So upon realizing that he became violently sick, and so he threw up several times. Then he realized, you know, do I have two minds? Last night when I didn't know what it was it was so refreshing like honey water. Now I know what it is and it makes me sick. So he discovered mind Dharma. Since he discovered mind Dharma, he felt no need to go to Tang China to study Buddhism, so he decided to return home.

Now, of course, you know, it's two Dharma friends, I mean, on this, you know, arduous journey, I mean, they support each other, they encourage and motivate each other and, you know, was very difficult separation. So, and Uisang Sunim, he proceeded alone, you know, while Wonhyo returned home. So when he returned home he got a little flipped out, he, you know, went around paying respects to farmers and hanging around in the marketplace playing with children, all these things.

Now, at the time, the king of the Sila kingdom in South Korea, he had a princess, daughter, princess, and her husband got killed, was killed in the battlefield so she became widow and she was just languishing in her quarters in the palace. So her father, the king, would always think of, you know, her and there ways to help her. So when he heard about this monk roaming around, I mean, this monk comes from a noble family, you know. So only members of the noble family can be appointed to government positions and all that. In other words, their semen was protected, you know. So he called his courtesans and made a plan. So he had his courtesans follow him secretly and when they saw, when they located Wonhyo Sunim crossing the bridge, they ran after him from behind and pushed him into the water down the bridge, under the bridge. So the monk got all wet and then they ran down, rescued him, and then they took him to the palace and, so he stayed overnight at the princess's quarters. And the next day he was over again.

From that relationship a child, boy, was born. And this princess would always think about her lover. And seven years passed and one day she learned, this Wonhyo Sunim, her monk lover, was staying in the capital at the temple. So he called, she called her son. Now my son, now you have to go and see your father. He has never seen his father, so he was so happy that, you know, he could finally see his father. So this princess, you know, had been making these cassocks, you know, robes, you know. Robes for spring season and winter season and all that. So [unclear], take these robes to your father.

So the child went, the boy went, and knocked on the door. Father, this is your son and I came to see you, mother sent me over here. So the monk remembered, that was seven years ago. Seven years ago, so you must be seven years old and he opened the door. Oh you are my son. And it was fall so all these leaves have fallen on the ground. So my son, you know, could you sweep the yard, the compound? And the boy was very happy that his father gave him something to do. So with a broom he swept the courtyard very clean, and then he came back and knocked on his father's room. He said, father, I swept the yard. The father came out, oh, you did swept the yard. But could you sweep again?

So the son felt he did not do very good job, so this time he really swept not a single leaf was on the ground. Father, I really swept well this time. Oh, is that right? Could you sweep it again? And the boy was puzzled. Father, I really swept, there's not a single leaf. Then father came down and shook young ginkgo trees and a little leaves fell down on the ground, on the swept ground. This is how you sweep the ground. So there is that kind of space available.

You may heard of the non-dual path of Buddhist liberation, form is emptiness and emptiness is form.

[end of side A, side B begins]

…

I would stop here and take questions. Yes.

([Unclear…])

I did not say Buddhism is not a religion. Buddhism is a religion. Buddhism is very much religion. Of course, I mean, Buddhism is taught as one of the major world religions in high schools and at religious studies at college and universities. But I'm also aware that people who are attracted to Buddhism, they don't like to think Buddhism is religion, you know. But then, and

also I'm aware people have almost allergic reaction to the word religion. It has nothing to do with Buddhism, you know. When you find out, basically it has nothing to do with Buddhism.

Now, about bodhisattvas. Yes, we do have a lot of bodhisattvas. That's actually something I'm alluding to. Bodhisattva means, sattva means beings and bodhi means wisdom beings. Not sentient beings but wisdom beings. And you have Kwan Seum Bosal, there's Kwan Seum Bosal there, Bodhisattva of Great Compassion, but when we commit ourselves to the way of Buddha we also become Buddha. There are, of course, there is, kind of, celestial Buddhas, and Earthly Buddhas, and all different kind of Buddhas. Smiling Buddhas and unsmiling Buddhas. I mean, smiling bodhisattvas and unsmiling bodhisattvas. For instance, like, we need bodhisattvas for feminist movement or women's liberation movement. You see, all different bodhisattvas, they have their own specializations, you see. There are bodhisattvas for animal rights, you know. I'm sure there are some bodhisattvas working for green peace. And bodhisattvas for the, you know, caregivers. For the homeless, for AIDS patients.

Any other questions? Yes.

(About your method that you use, your type of meditation, do you use a koan type of meditation as in Rinzai or more of a mindfulness breath meditation [unclear]?)

I do use, we call it hwadu. It's same as koan, koan meditation, but Buddhism, say Zen Buddhism in this case, is at a crossroads. And some Zen teachers, traditional Zen teachers, have been using koans and if you look at some of these koans, these koans are one thousand years old. And some of them are obsolete, some of them are not relevant. It's something like, of course, if you work hard on one koan, there are different ways of working on koan. I know, you know, like Japanese style is going through, you know, 300 koan studies and 500 koan studies, and they have a system too. It's like, I don't know how, well, you know, here the dogs are domesticated. I guess they are like pets, but the dogs I know as I was growing up, these are like, not quite wild, but village dogs, you know. You don't domesticate them, but they are around village, you don't keep them, you know, but they are around. And what people do is they, you know, basically those guys, it's agricultural society. I mean, Buddhism comes from agrarian society. And just few times a year they would kill cow and have meat, you know. Then they really eat the meat. And then the bare bones, they would throw it at the dog. And the dog, you know, I mean, they almost vegetarian dogs, but, but you know, once, you know, on festival occasions they get some treat, this is treat, when they end up with this dry bones, you know. I mean, the family did a pretty good job already. So, but they end up with dry bones. And these dogs, if you watch them it's quite a performance. They are like almost playing, you know. You know, of course, they work very hard with a dry bone to get the marrow out of it from there. They work sometimes days on end. This way and that way, you know. Frolicking on the back, you know, holding it.

Now, the method I use here is, the big ones is sudden enlightenment, sudden awakening and gradual cultivation. To help you understand better, what is sudden enlightenment? Sudden enlightenment means, in other words, meditation. Your meditation practice has to be based on sudden enlightenment, and gradual cultivation follows. This room has been in the dark, say, for six years, or three years, or three months, three weeks. It does not matter how long this room has been in the dark. In other words, how long, how many lifetimes you have been, you have lived in delusion, that does not matter. This very moment, say, as we say, nothing is worth more than this very moment. Buddhism always goes [unclear] today. This very moment, if you turn the light on, if you light the candles, then the darkness is gone and it's light all over. This room is lighted.

Now, where did the darkness go? Maybe, did you give darkness to your neighbour? It does not mean darkness is gone anywhere. It means just transformed. The darkness was transformed into light. So that means the light has been available all the while, the light has been already inherent in the darkness. That's the non-dual approach to truth, to enlightenment.

Now, then, okay, well that much you can understand. Then what changed? Like, this room that has been in the dark for so many years, or for so many days, or whatever, and now this room is lighted. What's the difference? Nothing has changed, right? Like, one Zen master said when he became enlightened his disciple would eagerly ask, you know, what happened, you know? How do you feel now, you know? So, I just feel as miserable as before.

So nothing has really changed. But now the difference is now you can see things. Your Wisdom Eye is open. Now you can see the pictures, you can see cushions, you can see your own garbage. Now you can get your laundry done. That's gradual cultivation, now you can see things. Before you couldn't see things. You were blinded by, for instance, by Three Poisons. That's greed, resentment, and stupidity or ignorance. But now you can see things.

Any other questions, yes?

(Well this question of not doing violence to oneself or others, [unclear], as you know, many people in South Korea want to be united with [unclear]. And many families in North Korea want to be united with their families in South Korea. And by many accounts the governments stand in the way. The students and demonstrators take to the streets. The police charge, they throw firebombs and teargas. I know, I was there. Students catch fire. When they confront the police and confront the government they say if they didn't nothing would change. This is, isn't this not like a disciple taking the flesh from his thigh to save the dog, and isn't that not committing violence to oneself? And if you don't do that, how could there ever be one rule?)

Let me just, the students doing, can you just, you know, summarize that so that I could understand your question better?

(It's not just students, the students are the leaders. There are demonstrators installed [unclear…] throughout Korea. They demonstrate for unity, for North Korea, North and South. Often there is violence. And when you ask them, why the violence? Why the firebombs, and teargas, and fights in streets, and they say that nothing would change, the government won't listen to us unless we demonstrate. And I'm asking if, if that's not like the man who takes the flesh, the example you gave of the disciple who cuts his own flesh to save the dogs with the maggots?)

No, the reason there is violence means there is conflict, right?

(Yeah.)

So how do you resolve conflicts, that's, you know, you have to go to the root of the sources. Oh, because people can do all kinds of things, you see. Out of desperation. But so, you have to understand what's the nature of their conflict. Well, I agree with you, what you are saying. You know, people can do a lot of things out of desperation.

Now, this is a, well, as you know, the Korean society, if you were there, I don't know how long, well, I have been, you know, maybe you know about Korean situation much better than I do because I left the country in 1965. And, so, well I, you know, I can read in the newspapers, but I have been away from that country for that long. It's, the society, well Korean society in this case, has been very radicalized, you know, the students and all that. Now, of course, the civilian government is in power right now trying to introduce, you know, reform measures into the society. And, as you know, also the Christianity, the fundamentalist brand of Christianity made such deep inroads in South Korean society and the Christian forces mainly have been behind in this student radical movement.

The Buddhists, traditionally the Buddhists, they are not very familiar with these social actions. Of course, some Buddhists faced with almost increasing provocations, you would be also very surprised what fundamentalist Christians have been doing to Buddhists. They burn temples, they deface, you know, the statues, and incredible things. So all these things going on. But it's, I understand your concern and I do share your concern, but there is this, it's important to understand, kind of, alternative worldview, you see. Like, for instance, Judeo-Christian traditions have been advocating, say, single-life system along with Creationism, you see. So this life is the only life you've got, and your life is coming to an end. So whatever has to be done has to be done within this lifetime and that produces a lot of anxiety, you know. And that produce a lot of conflicts. And there is good side too, but there is dark side. So some, if you look at some, you know, theology like Kierkegaard, they are full of anxiety there.

Now, Buddhism does not, Buddhism has, Buddhism is almost the opposite. Buddhist worldview introduces multiple-life system. You always have another opportunity. But that does not, of

course, mean you have to goof off in this lifetime. Because there are a lot of, like, you know, these Zen folks, they have these pithy sayings. Like, for instance, when hungry you eat and when tired you rest or sleep. Well, some people think, oh, that's, Buddhism is very easy, you know. I mean, you know, that's very, you know, when tired, you know, you rest and when hungry you eat. But the message is when you are not hungry don't eat. But here, people eat all the time, you see. And when you are not tired, don't goof off. That's the message.

Now, it's, well Buddhism does believe in harmlessness or non-violence. So, although in Mahayana Buddhism there was, the Korea was invaded many times by Japan or by Manchurians and all that and, so, like, in 1592 when Japan invaded the country, Japan, the invading armies laid the country really waste. And they, and there the monks practicing in the mountains. Anyways some, there were, one monk, famous monk, Seosan. He was already in his 70s when the Japanese armies were going around slaughtering, you know, civilians, innocent people, and pillaging temples and all that. So he had a large following and he sent out letters, you know, asking them, we monks, we should not sit idle in the face of this, you know, barbarism. So he organized what may be called monk soldier who could run against Buddhism. But what he said is it's good to kill one to save ten, you know. So that's kind of Mahayana. Still some Mahayana Buddhists, they would not support that.

But there was another very famous monk. When, what he did was, when the invading armies came, he took his disciples and hid themselves under huge boulder. So you could say, well these are cowards, you know. I mean, you know, you don't care about our, but those two, you know, made two main streams into Korean Buddhism. You know, their Dharma families flourished so, like, Seosan, master Seosan's family would always be concerned with social issues, you know. And the other Dharma family, their main issue is the transmission of Dharma. Make sure that this Dharma hope is passed through, you know. As long as this torch of wisdom light is passed through, then it would spread. It would provide hope and enlightenment to the humanity. Both are very important. You cannot neglect, you know, like meditation practice, or solitary practice, or Buddhist enlightenment practice, you know, because of these burning social issues. But it's, oh of course the tenets, you can do both. There's something like this here. Well, this is our social, I mean, Buddhism is, right now it's a grass root movement. And so, we usually go around and find very rundown church. Sometimes that has, you know, 75 city work orders. Because that's something you can afford, you know. And, so you get that and mobilize, you know, volunteer work force, and then you fix it up. That's what we did with this building and hard work. And then you invite public for meditation practice.

But it's, you see, Buddhists are the kind of people, you know, like, when someone comes to do harm, they would run away, you know. So they would run away fast, they, so they have to run fast so that, not only to save himself, but to save this guy too who was trying to get him. That's

the way to help both. And also, another thing is, it's, in this lifetime, the Buddhists, they take vow. So that make sure that, for instance, the karmic defilements like resentment, you know, you know, if you see that there are a lot of resentment around, hatred, you know, that gets perpetuated either in the Middle East or in the China, all that, so that way, you know, just, you know, there are different ways, like crazy wisdom, different ways of working for liberation. Make sure that, if you get involved, if you get involved in entanglements, one way or another you end up contributing to that resentment. Perpetuating resentment. So you make sure that you are, you know, somehow pass on the legacy of liberation, not resentment. That's also important Buddhist practice.

Do I make sense to you?

(Very much.)

Yeah, thank you. Any other question? Yes.

(What is the basic difference between Zen Buddhism and Tibetan Buddhism?)

Zen Buddhism, you know, meditation practice is central to all Buddhist teachings because, you know, Shakyamuni Buddha, he sat, after six years of ascetic practice, and then he understood Middle Way, avoiding extremes. Either, you know, this self-mortification or self-indulgence, you go from one extreme to another. You know, like, sometimes, you know, like watching Charlie Chaplin movie, you know. From this and that and, you know. So, and he said both are ignoble and useless. And that's wisdom. So he sat in meditation under bodhi tree and then came to freedom. So in other words, Buddhism originated from his meditation. So, like, each time we sit in meditation, that's, our Buddhism arises. So in Zen Buddhism, like, the, well, Zen means meditation. We use meditation as a direct approach to attaining wisdom, enlightenment. And, but there are other ways. There are other liberative techniques, you know. In Korean Buddhism too, we are, Zen is predominant, they use other, for instance, like, I tell people, you know, to do five minute meditation every day, maybe not every day, you can take weekend off, say Monday through Friday. But it's, spiritual practice something that isn't, you should never be ambitious about spiritual practice so you always come up with minimum practice. So that, you know, it would not compete with your other interests, you see. Make sure about that. So if you say five minute, that's something you can afford no matter how busy you are, you know. And also, you know, it's, five minute, you know, like, if you cannot sit still, if you cannot sit, you know, still, without wobbling, then you don't have to go and see your psychiatrist to find out what's wrong with you, you know. So it's, that much is important, peace of mind, right? Peace of mind. That, just learn to sit. You can spend five minutes sitting quiet and peacefully without worrying about anything. Without worrying about anything. So five minutes. And if you can sit five minutes or,

you know, some of you, then, you know, your family, your society can benefit from such practice.

Okay, any other question? Yes.

(How can sitting meditation be applied to our regular lives?)

Mindfulness. Mindful living. It's meditation practice and Right Livelihood. So the first step of learning about meditation is learn to pay attention. That means learning to be content living in this moment. And I say, you know, happiness and contentment means nothing is lacking in this moment of your life. And another thing is, when you sit in meditation, and that's, I saw it said you play mountain. And then, of course, you know, sensations and, you know, stray thoughts, you know. I mean, your monkey mind loves to go to town, you know, and all these things, you notice. But that's alright, that's, you know, usually, like here, everyone has spiritual aspiration. You know, tonight, I mean, your presence here, I don't think you would have been here were it not for your spiritual longings. You may not think that way, you know. Modern men, they have difficulty giving proper expression to spiritual, to their spiritual longings. Maybe they have abandoned it on the highway or something but everyone has a spiritual aspiration. So you play mountain. That means you sit firm and solid, you know, rising up, sitting up, in a majestic beauty like mountain. And then, you know, always these thoughts, you know. They are like white clouds that hover around the mountain tops, they are around. But, you know, you, you know, first there is sincere heart. You know, that's your Buddha-nature. Or faith in yourself, that's sitting. And your monkey mind goes to town. But there is no, it always comes home, so you don't have to worry about monkey mind going to town. Because when sincere heart stays home, you know, playing mountain, it would always come home, you know. It's like ox herding pictures, you know. It's, they don't really go anywhere, they just, you know. So you need not worry about. And then, when you come out of meditation, when you return to society, then you can play white clouds, you know. Blending with each situation, developing great compassionate heart, with great okay mind.

Did I answer your question?

(You did.)

Tibetan Buddhism is, like, ritual practice. Devotional practice. And, yeah, that's right, it's, but sometimes, you know, I mean, say, five minute meditation, people like that, but depending upon what kind of work you do, like, say you are businessman, or lawyer, or you have a family, you know, like the morning hours can be very traumatic, right? Children running around, you see? So

even though you like, you cannot just sit quiet and peacefully, you are not just in a such a state of mind, right? Then, because lot of things go through your mind, you know, your mind is busy trying to organize the day. So if that is the situation you do prostrations, the physical practice. Actually Tibetan prostration is very vigorous, really. So if you do, you know, that kind of full prostrations, three times sincerely, five, seven, or twelve times sincerely, your mind-body calm down. Then you can meditate. It creates space for you to meditate. And there are a lot of ritual practice in Tibetan Buddhism. And as we say, the great way has no particular gate, so you can enter the great way from any direction.

So you don't have to be even Buddhist to become enlightened. As I say, the famous four line stanza in the Diamond Sutra, without abiding anywhere, let your mind come forth. That's what provoked the, provoked Huineng, who became the 6th Patriarch of Ch'an Buddhism in China, so much. He was supporting himself and his old mother by selling firewood. And one day he was delivering his firewood to a customer and then there he heard this line recited. Without abiding anywhere, let your mind come forth. And his mind opened. Now, what does this mean, without abiding anywhere? We keep abiding, right? Our mind always seeking, you know, identity.

So this, this monk called Diamond King, this monk who lived in Northern China, he specialized in Diamond Sutra, you know. It's beautiful sutra. It says, the other, it's, in this sutra, like, things are denied, say, if you say you are man, you know, make sure you don't get stuck. You don't get locked up in being man, so man is denied. And if you think you are woman, then being woman is denied. If you think you did a good thing, like dana or charity, that act is also denied. And evil is denied. You know, salvation is denied. Good things and bad things, everything is denied. Here, denied means liberated. Then you can become women again. Then you can become man again. Then you can practice dana, charity, again.

Now, this Diamond King and this monk, they, he specialized in Diamond Sutra. Like, he did PhD, you see. So, like, commentaries and sub-commentaries, and he became very well versed, you know, all these. You know how PhD was, you know. So he would proudly carry his library, you know, Diamond Sutras, all different versions, and commentaries, and sub-commentaries, and he was very proud of himself. And actually he, you know, like, he was known, like, when it comes to Diamond Sutra, that's, he's the king of Diamond Sutra. And one day he heard, in the South there are a group of monks who don't rely on the teachings of scriptures, you know. They don't believe in the scriptures. And so when he heard that he became incensed, you know. These are heretics, you know. So I must go and crush these devils. So he set out on a long mission and finally reached the South, and there he located, you know, he said this devil monk, the head of them, the Zen master, was living on top of the mountain. So he started climbing up the mountain to subdue this heretic. Was summer so, and that's kind of, it's a famous mountain. So, like, you know, the pilgrims, you know, not only tourists, pilgrims were, so the two [unclear] pilgrims,

there are snack bars, you know, set up around different spots on the mountain. So he dropped by at one snack bar which was manned by a grandmother. And, so he put down this, his PhD load, you know, the tote bag and sat and he ordered this tea and cookies, you know, rice cakes. And when grandma, the innkeeper, saw him, you know, said, Reverend, what are you carrying in your knapsacks? Looks pretty heavy. Oh, these are sutras, you know, Buddha's sutras. What sutras? Oh grandma, you would not know, they are called Diamond Sutra. Oh, Diamond Sutra, I heard about it, you know. As a matter of fact, I, you know, I have a question, you know. So, you know, I'd like to, you know, ask this question to you since you are well-versed in the Diamond Sutra. And if you can answer my question then I would be very happy to serve everything you want free of charge. But if you cannot answer my question I may have to refuse you to serve, refuse to serve you. So, go ahead. So the grandma said, in the Diamond Sutra it says, past mind cannot be grasped, present mind cannot be grasped, future mind cannot be grasped. Now, with what mind are you going to have tea? Are you going to have a snack?

It's true, indeed it says in the Diamond Sutra past mind cannot be grasped, present mind cannot be grasped, future mind cannot be grasped. But this guy, this PhD scholar, he got stuck. He didn't know how to answer that. So he had to go through, you know, kind of a post-PhD training, you know. I mean, he never thought he would be so humiliated in the South in front of this grandmother, you see. He didn't even get to, you know, the head honcho, the, you know. So, but he was a, he was a monk scholar, too so, you know, it took him five minutes to do his post-doc training. Other people may have taken, you know, many years. So for five minutes the face of his colour changed from green to red, from red to yellow, and all this, you know, this frustration, humiliation, anger, and all these things. But five minutes, then he came out alright. That's quite a accomplishment, you know.

So he, grandma, pray, please enlighten me. And, so the grandma pointed to the top of mountain, to the master. Now, how would you say it? I mean, you guys are going to have a dinner, or lunch, or something, doing something. With what mind?

If you throw things at dog, the dog will always run at the things thrown at you. That's called running dog. But if you throw things at the tiger, tiger would never run after things thrown at you. The tiger would go directly after the person who did the throwing. So that kind of space available. That's what Zen is about. Wisdom path.

Any other questions? Yes.

(Is Buddhism interested in healing?)

In healing?

I think meditation practice is healing. You know, in meditation, it's, it's detachment, it's, sometimes it's called radical detachment, because you sit with your bare body and bare mind. And, I mean, there, the message there, like, I don't know, … What kind of healing are you talking about?

(Oh, I imagine, kind of, total healing situation. [Unclear] easing the mind or easing the pain in the body, somehow moving…)

Physical, or mental, or, mental…?

(A situation that's beyond the prescribed, something that's, encapsulates and incorporates all of them.)

I can tell you this much. Meditation practice is for normal healthy person. So, of course, you know, like, there are people who need professional help, you know. You know, for instance, I would not pretend that I can help such a guy, you know. There, I would draw a line. And also I do make distinction between meditation and psychic tendency and occultism. But then, there is this thing too. Like, first people learn to sit so, like, in introductory meditation course we do teach postures, which is very important. It's called settling your body and settling your mind, peace of mind. That's very important. Learn to sit quiet and peacefully without worrying about anything. We worry a lot, you know. I keep telling people not worry. At least you are here, you see. Say, if you spend, you know, like five, an hour, or two hours without worrying anything, that's big help. That's big help. Your family members would benefit from you for that.

And, but now, and then, you can sit alright, then the next stage something happens. Then, you know, people sometimes come and to, I thought, you know, meditation is all quiet, serene, nice and, you know, peaceful and all that and they get more disturbed. But then, first you sit outwardly, physically quiet. That's big help, but that's like a quiet lake on the outside. It's nice, you people enjoy it, you know. But when you look down at the bottom of quiet lake, all this junks that have been accumulating, you have to learn to deal with that. You know, like, as you, usually you don't notice because, you know, it's, so much distractions.

So, like someone said, so when you sit quiet, you know, I mean, you store them away in the basement and they come up and sit next to you, what about me, you see? Then you get hot all, so that kind of thing happens. Then, well, you have a choice. You can go to therapy or you can just

sit. Sit and get processed through. That's a wonderful thing. That's how you get your laundry done.

Yes!

(If you already know how to meditate, do you need a teacher to guide you?)

Your question is do I need a, do I need a teacher in order to meditate? Is that your question?

(No, if you already know how to meditate do you need a teacher?)

Well, well you decide. There may be benefit, actually, great benefit to have a teacher. And there is something called guru practice. Like in Buddhism, we take refuge in Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, and sometimes we take fourth refuge in the teacher. That's teacher as a living embodiment of Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, the Three Jewels. So Buddha, Dharma, Sangha could be like peace, love, and happiness. You know, Sangha means community, you know, or joyful community or promoting happiness and harmony in the community. So, like, you learn to serve your teacher. So it's like, in Zen training, you know, like, to focus your mind, to tame your mind, first you learn to do things very simply. And you learn to do small things carefully, you know. To pay attention. And to keep your distractions at minimum. But actually you discover there, you know, it's, you know, you can live simply without much, you know, entanglements, and you can live happily. That's quite a, you know. And also, by greeting your teacher, by serving your teacher, it's, you learn to honour, well, you know, other teachers, what Buddhism stands for. And another important thing is, you may think you just, you're honouring your teacher or you're respecting or greeting your teacher in kind of vertical relationship.Not quite so. What happens is, by honouring your teacher, by honouring Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, or we have adornment practice or puja practice, what you are doing is you're working out your Three Poisons. Your attachments, your worldly attachments, your resentment, your anger, and…

The Buddhist practice is, say, you know, I know people in this culture have difficulty accepting themselves, you know. Sure, you know, like, you have been taught you are sinful and, maybe you are wicked, you have weaknesses, you made numerous mistakes or wrongdoings. Sure, you did that, but nobody is completely bad or hundred percent bad. But sure, you have, you know, sure you have unenlightened side, but you have enlightened side. So Buddhism brings that out, you see. Like, say for instance, in meditation practice, you know.If you meditate for half an hour, then your mind is all over. You just cannot concentrate. So then you think, what am I doing? I'm wasting my time, you see. You know, I just cannot concentrate. I just cannot meditate, you know. They just like to walk out. But the thing is, if you practice half an hour meditation, if you just, in half an hour meditation, if you can concentrate one minute, two minutes, that's pretty good. That's good meditation, I would say. Because one minute of concentration is like light, while,

you know, 25 minutes of your mind wandering away is like darkness. You cannot compare light with darkness. You just need a little bit of light to dispel darkness. So simply you have to, this is wisdom path. You have to bring a shift in your outlook, in your attitude, you see.

So our tendency, we usually dwell on our negatives, you see. In some Buddhist schools there is, I mean, people just, they don't trust themselves, you know. You know, that's, how can I do that, you know. Actually one Korean master said, it is not that you cannot do it, it is only that you do not do it. That's your predicament. It is, it's not that you cannot do it, but it is only that you do not do it. And so in some Buddhist schools they give you empowerment ceremony to empower you. That means you're alright, you know. Trust yourself. You can meditate, you can become bodhisattva. You can lead a wise life.

So, that's, Sangha is important. You know, like, you know, sometimes you just don't feel like making yourself available or doing volunteer work or anything like that, you know? You just don't like to extend yourself. But, you know, other people do it, you know. If you do it together you motivate each other, you know. If you can do it, I can do it. And then you end up doing it. And if you keep doing it, you attach Dharma habits. You know what habits can do for you. So then eventually, you know, you think it's fun to do, you know, to lead unselfish lifestyle, to feel happy. Like, you know, Buddhism talks about sorrow and suffering and pain. How do you overcome sorrow? How do you overcome pain? How do you overcome your suffering? One way to, don't dwell on your suffering so much. One way to overcome your sorrow, your pain or your suffering, is by suffering for others, you can overcome suffering by suffering for others. That's one way. Making yourself available for Dharma work. That's, wisdom and compassion are like the two wings of Buddhist teachings. I'll take one last question and then…

Yes.

(You know, there were a lot of books about meditation, all kinds of, you know, dissertations and techniques, do you encourage to read them? Some of them are [unclear…], but they're like different things and do you think are good to follow?)

Well it's, we live in, you know, literary society so people always read books. And Buddhism is not that kind of missionary religion, you know. We don't go around trying to convert people or, or stand on the corner, you know, handing over religious tracts, we don't. But Buddhism comes from, you know, agricultural society is a very passive society. So if you look at Buddhist words like emptiness, you know, I mean, people on the street, they don't understand emptiness. That's a pretty negative word, like being empty, you know? So Buddhism has trouble, you see? You know, so I'm sure Buddhism in the west, as Buddhism takes root in this society, Buddhism would have to come up with new language, new Dharma language. This is a very assertive

society. Actually it's aggressive society. So you have to promote yourself aggressively, you know. So Buddhism has weakness, how do you, you know, recruit, you know, people to temple?

So it's, one thing is, I, this is very interesting, you know. Our temple in Ann Arbor, we had a member who came from Detroit and he was raised as a Catholic. But he always had trouble relating himself to statue of Jesus bleeding on the cross. It's not a peaceful image. And one day he was passing by antique shop and there in the window he saw a statue. And he was very much struck by the, you know, peaceful and serene character of the statue. He never thought he would be so taken by a mere statue. When he came home he thought about it and then, the following day, he returned to that antique shop and this time he went inside and asked the owner, what's this statue? And the owner said, Buddha. That's the first time he heard the word Buddha. So almost immediately he went to the library and he started taking out books on Buddhism and became avid reader of books on Buddhism. And took him 15 years of reading before he came to temple to take introductory meditation course.

Well, you know, he was not alone, actually so, it's interesting, you know, people, I think, quite a number of years ago there was this television program in Toronto. it's called Psychiatrist's Hour, you know. So it would always show a Buddha statue, you know. And this psychiatrist, he would have some of his patients just sit in front of a Buddha statue. It's very gentle, calm and, and just looking at Buddha statue like a visualization practice, to heal, you know, to calm their mind. And the Buddhists in Theravada Buddhist countries, you know, like in Sri Lanka, Burma, now called Myanmar, Thailand, they don't have a Sunday system, so they come to temple anytime they want. And the woman folks, they, you know, they were not, in traditional societies women all discriminated. They were not educated to read and write. So they would come and do some prostrations and sit there looking at the Buddha statue. Absorbing the qualities the statue emits like compassion, wisdom, serenity, you know, gentleness. And so they would recover themselves and then return to society, get renewed. So that's, you know, that kind of practice is available.

And, so, you know, I mean, I'm sure people who are here, I mean, you heard or read something about Buddhism, otherwise I don't think you have been here. So, I mean, to that extent reading helps, but I say in the introductory meditation course, the best book you can read on the subject is no match for third-rate teacher. And then, quite often when you actually practice meditation, you would find it very different from the knowledge you gained from books. You have to really forget about what you read about books. Basically, you know, it's something you have to experience it first-hand, whatever it is. You know, if you believe in God, what God is, find that out. You know, find that out. Through meditation, find that out. Whether it's peace or divinity or whatever, find that out yourself. With your body and mind. That's all you've got for your life. Whatever it is, find out. Then it will be yours.

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…Sunyata school, or emptiness school of Mahayana Buddhist philosophy, that was India. Now Sangha propounded another great school of Mahayana philosophy that was called consciousness-only or mind-only. Consciousness-only or mind-only school of Mahayana philosophy. Vasubandhu was his younger brother, so Vasubandhu inherited his philosophy. So this Nagarjuna on the one hand and Asanga and Vasubandhu on the other, they are responsible for expounding the two great Mahayana philosophies of emptiness and mind-only school respectively.

And the third great Mahayana school of philosophy was this school of totality or all-embracing reality. And, which became Huayan philosophy or Avatamsaka school. Now Asanga, when he was young, when he was a young monk, he wanted to meet his teacher, his future teacher, he didn't know who he was, Maitreya. That's his teacher was Maitreya so, he, so in his earnest desire to meet and train under his teacher he spent three years in the cave meditating. He wanted to have a vision of Maitreya, or he wanted, you know, he thought his sincerity would touch and move his future teacher, whoever that was. So he spent three years meditating in the cave and he had no vision of his teacher, no one came to see him. So he was very disappointed. So he was to leave the cave and go down to the world.

As he was leaving, at the entranceway to the cave he saw a tiny opening. It's solid rock, a rock cave. He saw a little tiny small round opening through which sunlight came in and he was surprised to discover that tiny little opening in the solid rock. Upon further examination he saw a bird's nest, was a bird's nest was inside. And soon a little tiny bird flew out. So then he realized, you know, this couple of tiny birds, they made a nest there and over the years they, you know, they would flow out and flow in. And then each time they did that their feathers would touch this solid rock, and over the years, you know, how many years, made such a hole to admit sunlight. And he was very impressed and he was very touched, deeply touched.

Upon that he returned to his cave again to spend another three years. To that inspiration. They're even, they were tiny birds. Making nest in such a place, in solid rock. And, so he spent another three years in this cave. And still he had no vision of his teacher, no one came to see him. And he realized that his spiritual power was weak, not strong enough. He had sincerity of heart, but still he saw something was lacking in his spirituality.

So, he was about to leave the cave and as he was leaving something fell on his head. And then he looked up, it was dark in the cave. And that was, he realized, that was condensation in the ceiling of the cave. And then he looked down, there was, it's all rock, rock cave. There he saw a big dent, it's more like, what do you call it, spring down there. So over the years, you never know, hundreds of years, that this tiny condensation, you know, falling in the same spot and making such a dent and, you know, spring is pool, you know, water pool down there at his footstep.

So again, he decided to return and that was very inspiring, that gentle drop of condensation water drop. So he spent another three years. And still he had no vision, no one came to see him. So this time he made up his mind to go out into the world. So finally he came out of his cave where he spent [unclear] nine years. And he went down to village.

There he saw a man who was holding in one hand, he was holding, it's a big iron rod, big iron rod. And in another hand he had this cotton bale, cotton. And what he did was, he would wrap the iron rod, this big bulky iron, cast iron rod, and then he would, with this cotton, it's very soft and gentle, he would rub this big iron rod with cotton. And then eventually he would make a needle, ceaselessly he would rub. And then, you never how long it takes to make a needle, and then in the box there was a pile of needles there, tiny needles. Like, acupuncture or something like that. And again he was very impressed, so deeply touched. You know, how he can turn this big iron rod, you know, rubbing it with, you know, gentle cotton. And then turning it into needles, one by one.

So again he was very inspired and he returned to his cave once again, to spend three years. So in total he spent 12 years. So at the end of three years again, once again he was very disappointed. And yet he had no vision, no teacher came to see him, so he came out of the cave at the end of another three years and he went out into the world and he found himself in the marketplace. There he saw a dog, and this dog had an open wound, open sore. And apparently it's very painful, and there in the open sore he saw maggots, you know, whole bunch of maggots, you know, swarming there. And this dog was completely helpless. And so he wanted to help the dog so first he likes to clean his open sore and then first he has to, he realized, he has to remove these maggots. Then he realized maggots too are living beings, you see. So it occurred to him it would not do to hurt or harm maggots, even though they are, you know, tiny creatures, in order to help the dog suffering from this open sore.

So then he, he had only two possessions, one was begging bowl, the other one was this meditation mat. So he sold his begging bowl and meditation mat, and with the money he obtained from selling his begging bowl and mat he bought a knife and then cut a piece of his flesh from his side. And then he was in pain, and so he closed his eyes and then his hand reached for the maggots so that he wanted to move maggots into his flesh so that, to save both dog and the maggots.

So when he reached for the maggots, his hands, his hand could not touch, it was neither dog or maggots. When he opened his eyes, there, where the dog was, there was Maitreya shining like a bright light, was all light. So, deeply touched, he did prostrations and asked Maitreya, "All these years I have been waiting for you, my venerable teacher. I waited so patiently in the cave for 12 years but you didn't come. And now I was not able to meet you in person in the cave. Now out in the world, in this marketplace, I saw the dog and before I became aware of anything I just wanted to help. So I forgot all about myself and I just tried to reach out and, so I sold all I've got and cut out flesh from my body. Then you are here. And, what happened? And that, that you caused me this pain to finally appear in my presence?"

And Maitreya said, "I have been with you all along. I have never left you. And that I take this shape to appear in front of you is, I myself, I was deeply touched by your compassion, by your selflessness."

There are, of course, two vital messages. That each time he decided to leave the cave he was inspired, first by the tiny birds, and then the condensation water drops, and then an old man rubbing iron rod with cotton to produce tiny needles. It's, if you read Mahayana sutras, you know, the message you come across is all, it's, the message is all timeless and selfless. Timeless worldview and selfless worldview. Now, if this does not, if this message does not get across to you that, we can go back to the Buddha's teaching, the first sermon, the Middle Way, avoiding two extremes.

When Buddha, Shakyamuni Buddha, when he finally abandoned his ascetic practice and took bath in the Nairanjana river, and then accepted the rice porridge, milk porridge, from Sujata, and then he sat under the shade of bodhi tree, well before then he got, there was grass cutter and he accepted bundle of grass which he used as a seat. So that's, he sat on the grass. Without that grass bundle he might not have lasted very long. And then he sat under shade. Even today in India, if you go to India, there's this, they call it Tapas, it's ascetic practice. You see, this, what do they call, the followers of ascetic practice, standing under hot sun for days and days. Some die. That's Tapas. And apparently, Shakyamuni Buddha, he did that, but he abandoned that. So instead he sat under the shade of the tree, and he sat on the grass. That means, it's, that's also Middle Way. Neither too uncomfortable. Neither, it's not too comfortable nor not too uncomfortable. That's

the point of Middle Way, it's avoiding suffering. Avoiding extremes, two extremes. So that's the message of detachment. The path of freedom and path of purification. That's what happened.

So here, you're a little uncomfortable. If it is too uncomfortable you would not be doing it. And, so you get the message with detachment, even, you know, if not spiritual awakening, what is this all about? The path, detachment, non-attachment. Actually the name Asanga means non-attachment. No hindrance, non-attachment. Detachment, freedom, and path of purification. And later on it becomes, you know, selfless means we are all interrelated. I mean, you are related to maggots. Also related to dog. You're all interrelated. So we live in maggots, we live in dogs, we live in each other. Forever. That's the message of being selfless, being timeless. Or, the other way of saying is being peace, being happiness, being wisdom, being Buddha, being love. Just being love, being happiness. And then later on it becomes, you know, like, emptiness, they use the word emptiness.

Sunim Explains Yebul

Teacher: Samu Sunim
Date: Unknown
Location: Unknown
Event: Dharma Talk
Transcriber: Zack, Toronto
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It has been my intention to come up with a proper English translation for Yebul and also possibly come up with music that could go with it because Korean and English, they're two different languages. You know, I mean, the way we chant, the music that accompanies our Yebul would not go with English translations so somehow we have to come up with music that may go with a English translation. But I have been unable to come up with a translation and music. Perhaps when Chiwol comes to Korea on a pilgrimage and maybe she would be able to soak herself in Buddhist culture, listening to early morning bell chant, evening bell chant, and listening to all the sutras. She's a trained musician so maybe she would be able to help me and, to come up with some music.

Okay, so for now I will go over the Yebul with you and explain verbally the, it's called Yebul: Y-E-B-U-L, which literally means Homage to Buddhas. Now, this one, the first line has, like, Kye-hyang, Chong-hyang, Hye-hyang, Hyet'al-hyang, Hyet'al-ji-gyon-hyang. There are five words which all end in hyang. And hyang means incense and, by implication, it also means fragrance. So there are five hyangs. So, because of this, this Yebul is sometimes called [unclear]. Means five division hyangs. And, in other words, hyang of five divisions.

Now, the first three, Kye-hyang, Chong-hyang, Hye-hyang, … Well I, I attended this conference on vinaya which was held at the Greenwich Farm, part of the San Francisco Zen Center. And one scholar from Columbia University, he used to be monk himself, quite a well known scholar, he was invited to give a Dharma talk to the Greenwich congregation, was a kind of Sunday morning service. And, you know, he was, he is kind of a colourful figure, somewhat flamboyant, and the first thing he said, something, what was it, what did he say, he said, oh, do you know Three Jewels? I mean, that was, but only a few raised their hands and I didn't know what to make out of it. Obviously, you know, they, these people, they have been around practicing Zen and I'm sure they read some books and Three Jewels, either, you know, the question was, like, kind of, [unclear…] like schoolchildren so either they afraid to raise hands, and actually there's so many really didn't know what Three Jewels were about, you know. And, so maybe, … Have you heard of, like, Three Learnings or Three Great Learnings, have you ever heard of that? Three Learnings. Or maybe I put it this way. Sila, Samadhi, Prajna, have you heard of that? These are called Three Learnings or Three Path of Cultivation. It's very common to all Buddhist training. Like, we, like, we have Three Jewels, and Three Learnings, I mean, you have Three Poisons, and Three Refuges.

(What are Three Poisons?)

Three Poisons? Poisons are called, sometimes called Three Fires as well. Because they burn like fire. Greed, that's the first one. Second one is anger. [Unclear…]. And third one is ignorance or stupidity, foolishness. There's, those are the, the main sources of all passions. So all passions arise from these Three Poisons there [unclear].

Okay. So here, kye means Sila here. [unclear]. Sila, that's morality or discipline, precepts. And the second hyang is chong, is Samadhi, concentration and meditation [unclear]. And, so first you observe precepts, and then you focus your mind and maintain the cultivation method, and, to lead to developing wisdom. So hye is Prajna, wisdom. And then hyet'al-hyang is, hyet'al is liberation, or freedom or release from the cycle of birth and death. And then hyet-al-ji-gyon-hyang is knowledge that comes out of, you know, liberative knowledge. Knowledge that does not lead to creating passions or attachments, but knowledge that, you know, provides freedom and liberation for all beings. That's, like, social action, like, selflessly. Service.

So these five are called hyangs, hyang is, if you burn incense you get fragrance. It's like, fragrance that [unclear], that from these fumes [unclear] spread. Creating [unclear], [unclear], or Buddhafield. So those called hyang. Fragrance is incense but this means fragrance. Coming out of spiritual cultivation.

Now, Kwang-myong-un-dae Chu-byon-bob-gye, Kwang-myong-un-dae means, Kwang-myong means light. And un-dae means, literally terrace or clouds, means light out of clouds. Light, like sunlight coming out of, bursting out of clouds. Chu-byon-bob-gye means Dharma realms [unclear] made from light out of clouds pervade all the Dharma realms. And Kong-yang Si-bang means adorning, adorning immeasurable, you know these, Kong-yang Si-bang-mu-ryang, Bul-bop-song means Three Jewels. Bul for Buddha, bop for Dharma, song for Sangha. So mu-ryang means immeasurable, innumerable, you know, Buddhas, innumerable Dharmas, innumerable Sanghas. Means in ten directions. Si-bang means ten directions [unclear] universe. So adorning immeasurable, innumerable Buddha, Dharma, Sanghas in ten directions.

(What does it mean [unclear] si-bang…?)

Si-bang means ten directions. In the ten directions?

(Ten directions, okay.)

Do you understand ten directions? There's the four cardinal point, and four sub-cardinal points, and above, and below, ten directions. South, North, East, West, and then there is South-West, or North-West, and then there's the eighth direction, above and below. Ten directions means space, the universe. That's Buddhist way of saying the universe. We'll come to the [unclear].

And so this Kwang-myong-un-dae Chu-byon-bob-gye Kong-yang Si-bang-mu-ryang Bul-bop-sung is, first you light a candle, say candlelight. So that's reference to light, you offer light. First you offer light and then after you offer incense. [unclear] Hon-hyang chin-on means mantra of offering incense or incense offering. Om Pa-a-ra To-bi-ya Hum, Om Pa-a-ra To-bi-ya Hum, Om Pa-a-ra To-bi-ya Hum. It's, Om and Hum is, that's the first letter and the last letter in Sanskrit or in Prakrit, hybrid Sanskrit.

Okay now, so here we have, it's five counts here and then after Hon-hyang chin-on, you see, seven Chi-sim Kwi-myong-naes. You know, we do seven, we perform seven prostrations. And then at the end we have Yu-won mu-jin-sam-bo tae-ja-dae-bi su-a-jeong-nye myong-hun-ga-p'i-ryok won-gong-bob-gye-je-jung-saeng ja-ta-il-si-song-bul-do. The structure is, like, Kye-hyang Chong-hyang Hye-hyang, Hyet'al hyang Hyet'al hyang Hye-t'al-ji-gyon-hyang, this is the Dharma practice available to everyone all the time, or first time, like, like starting with Sila, and Samadhi, and Prajna, and then if you rely on these three then you reach, you will reach

liberation, Hyet'al-hyang. And then out of liberation unlimited actions or unlimited knowledge comes out to help all beings. That's Hye-t'al-ji-gyon-hyang. So this Dharma is available to everyone all the time. So this is kind of, you know, like, you see horizon, if you draw a horizon line and if you stand here, this point, and then on top of this horizon line if you draw vertical line, that's the Chi-sim Kwi-yong-nae [unclear].

And Chi-sim, Chi-sim is, like, wholehearted, with utmost mind-body. So what Kwi-myong-nae is hearted or will, wholehearted will, pay homage to, or we wholeheartedly, we wholeheartedly pay homage to or prostrate ourselves to or pay respect, … It's stronger than respect. It's, there have been some different, Kwi-myong means, it's a pretty strong word, it means, it's kind of total commitment. It's, kwi-myong means you, you offer your life to, so commit, so you really make commitment. So I wholeheartedly devote myself to, prostrate heartedly myself to. Sam-gye-do-sa sa-saeng-ja-bu si-a-bon-sa So-ga-mo-ni-bul. Sam-gye means, here Sam-gye means three realms. Do you know what three realms are? Three realms are Yoggye, Saekgye, Musakgye means realm of desire, that's our realm, realm of desire. And then realm of form. So it's like, we remain in the realm of desire and then when we liberate ourselves from the realm of desire through the practice of unattachment, non-attachment, or through the practice of emptiness, sunyata, then we move on to the next realm which is the realm of form. But you still maintain form [unclear]. And then after that you move onto Musakgye, the realm of formlessness. So those three. So the realm of formlessness is like, the realm of divinities. So, and do-sa means the teacher or guide. So that means Shakyamuni Buddha, Buddha is even a role, the divine one. I mean, we don't take divine word very seriously, Buddhists. They are not much better than human beings. So Sam-gye-do-sa means Buddha, the teacher or guide of the three lands. And sa-saeng-ja-bu, sa-saeng-ja-bu is compassionate [unclear] and over, over four forms of life. If you read the Diamond Sutra, there is four forms of life. Usually you refer that, like, egg-born, moisture-born, womb-born, miraculously born, right? So Buddha, like, womb-born, we are born from wombs, and some are from eggs, and some are from moistures like insects, and some are miraculously born, [unclear…]. So those are called four forms of life. So Buddha is a compassionate guide of four forms of life. That's sa-saeng-ja-bu. And si-a-bon-sa, he is our main teacher, Sogamonibul, Shakyamuni Buddha.

And then the, so, like, it's confirms, first we paid our homage to Shakyamuni Buddha, founder of Buddhism, so the main thing is that. And then second one, Chi-sim kwi-myong-nae: Si-bang-sam-se che-mang-ch'al hae, here, si-bang means, again, ten directions, space. Sam-se here means three worlds, this is past, present and future, or three worlds, three fields of time. So here when we say si-bang-sam-se means time and space, that's the Buddhist meaning of si-bang-sam-se, time and space. Che-mang-ch'al hae is, che-mang-ch'al is this Avatamsaka [unclear]. It's, it's like a network. It's, they, they are imminent, it said the word there imminent. They are present

throughout the world but not in isolation from each other, they are, like, mutually related, interrelated, this Dharma network, sometimes called Indra's network. And, like, they may be invisible [unclear…] in many different forms. So che-mang-ch'al hae is like Dharma network. They exist, they always, they dwell always everywhere. And pul-t'a-ya-jung means numerous, t'a-ya-jung means numerous Buddhas. Shakyamuni Buddha is historical Buddha, but here we are referring to non-historical Buddha or idealistic Buddhas. Like, again here we are talking about Mahayana Buddhism. There are a lot of non-historical Buddhas. Or, like, when one commits oneself to Dharma practice and through his or her deep commitment, things are transformed as a Buddhafields and beings that exist in these Buddhafields and they are no other than Buddhas, and there is also that sense too. So si-bang-sam-se che-mang-ch'al-hae sang-ju-il-ch'e pul-t'a-ya-jung, it's numerous Buddhas they're talking about. Numerous Buddhas. So in a sense this is another [unclear…] and see that as sentient beings. We are Buddhas [unclear…] future Buddhas. They, through their practice, through their vision, they alleviate, elevate the world. So it's like they take, in a sense, positive view. I mean, you can, you can always come down with a negative view, they are all sentient beings, they're hopeless, that attitude. But the other attitude, gnostic attitude, which is, you know, cause of transformation. Transforming force.

So the third one is Si-bang-sam-se che-mang-ch'al-hae sang-ju-il-ch'e Dal-ma-ya-jung, Dharmas, numerous Dharmas. Here again, you can see the main structure of this homage appearing amidst these Three Refuges. In every Buddhist service you first take Three Refuge. Like, Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, like you heard the Three Refuges chanted in the [unclear] footsteps of Buddha last night. Buddham saranam gachami. Dharmam saranam gachami. Sangham saranam gachami. And they repeat this three times actually. [unclear] that this year's practice is reciting Buddham saranam gachami, Dharmam saranam gachami, Sangham saranam gachami. I mean, [unclear] reciting that when it comes to temples [unclear…]. And it was, [unclear], for the second time I go to Buddha as my refuge and [unclear…], they repeat it three times.

And, but in Mahayana Buddhism we don't repeat it three times, but they have extended version of Three Refuges. So, for instance, if you follow that guideline you would have just three Chi-sim Kwi-myong-naes and why seven? So, for instance, we have Shakyamuni Buddha, the historical founder of Buddhism, and then the numerous Buddhas and numerous Dharmas, and at the end, the seventh one, Si-bang-sam-se che-mang-ch'al-hae sang-ju-il-ch'e Sang-ga-ya-jung, the numerous Sangha communities. So they, it's, so you can see this Yebul is based on Three Refuges. It's come from Three Refuges.

And now, what are the others, for instance, the fourth one. So kind of in order, first we show refuge, pay homage to Shakyamuni Buddha, Gautama Buddha, and secondly, we pay homage to numerous other Buddhas, okay? And then third one after Buddhas come Dharma, in the order of

Three Refuges, so we pay homage to numerous Dharmas. And then the fourth one is, interesting enough, usually it's [unclear] it's, again, Mahayana tradition, I mean, usually after Buddhas we, you know, you come to say arahants. That's the arahants. But in Mahayana tradition it's bodhisattvas. Bodhisattva featured above arahants, above ten great disciples of Buddha. So Chi-sim Kwi-myong-nae, and here there are numerous bodhisattvas that feature in Mahayana spirituals. But here there are four representative bodhisattvas cited here. Tae-ji-mun-su-sa-ri-bo-sal is one, second one is tae-haeng-bo-hyun-bo-sal, third one is tae-bi-gwan-se-um-bo-sal, and fourth one is tae-won-bon-jon-ji-jang-bo-sal, and then ma-ha-sal means, here ma-ha [unclear] it's the same ma-ha, ma-ha means great and sal is short for bo-sal, which means bodhisattva. So ma-ha-sal means, here ma-ha, actually this is short for mahasattvas. In scriptures you come across mahasattva. In Diamond Sutra it appears a lot. Mahasattva means great being, a simply great being.

Now, tae-ji-mun-su-sa-ri-bo-sal, it's mun-su, tae-ji is like adjective. How great, tae-ji can means great wisdom. That's, great wisdom is tae-ji. It's different from the, tae-ji [unclear] because, you know, it's kind of homonym with a different meanings. Mun-su-sa-ri is Manjusri, you know Manjusri Bodhisattva. Manjusri Bodhisattva, representing wisdom. Could you [unclear] when you see Manjusri Bodhisattva in [unclear] in either Manjusri Bodhisattva always rides lion or tiger. [Unclear…]. So tae-ji is like wisdom, great wisdom, Manjusri Bodhisattva. Bo-sal means bodhisattva. So wisdom bodhisattva. And then, also Manjusri features highly in Tantric Buddhism. In Japanese Zen monastery they just, in the seonbang, in the zendo, they call it [unclear]. And just [unclear] Manjusri. [unclear] so, so that no shadow of passions [unclear…].

And then tae-haeng-bo-hyun-bo-sal, that's Samantabhadra, Samantabhadra Bodhisattva. So if you visit Buddhist monasteries, Buddhist temples in Mahayana Buddhist countries Tibet, China, Japan or Taiwan, if you visit the main shrine of, say, Buddha Hall, you'll often see three figures, it's called the Triad. They are, if the main figure of their shrine hall is Shakyamuni Buddha, then according to the rule of Buddhist iconography there is always Manjusri Bodhisattva on the left and Samantabhadra on the right. This is called Shakya Triad. [Unclear], so, like, flanking on the left is Manjusri, flanking on the right is Samantabhadra. That's the Shakya Triad. And if the figure is Amitabha Buddha then the flanking bodhisattvas are Kwan Seum Bosal, Avalokitesvara, and then [Kṣitigarbha?] Bosal, [Mahāsthāmaprāpta?…]. But these are standard, but they don't always follow the rules. Sometimes they mix, sometimes you would see Shakyamuni Buddha as central figure and then you would see Kwan Seum Bosal and [unclear] Bosal flanking both sides. Now, so then this Samantabhadra Bodhisattva is known for these great deeds, it's called the Ten Vows of Samantabhadra Bodhisattva which featured in Avatamsaka Sutra as the Great Vows. So he is, this bodhisattva is known for these great deeds.

And then, so tae-bi-gwan-se-um-bo-sal is Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara known for his compassion, often comes in female form, and that's, tae-bi means great compassion. Tae-bi-gwan-se-um-bo-sal. And then tae-won-bon-jon-ji-jang-bo-sal, ji-jang-bo-sal is Kṣitigarbha first earth [unclear] bodhisattva. And it's, this bodhisattva is known for his great vows. He is responsible for making sure that all the hells remain empty, no one should fall into the hells. So that's his responsibility. And he guards at the entrance of the hell, so if anyone descended down to hell, you know, make sure he does not end up suffering the hell so send them back. That's, that was his vow. Tae-won-bon-jong-ji-jang-bo-sal, earth [unclear] bodhisattva, it's Jijang Bodhisattva. And the Japanese word for this, they call Jijang Bosal [Jizō] figures. And Jizō protector for children. It's, in Japan you would see roadside Jijang Bosal, roadside Jijang Bosal. And then ma-ha-sal, all great beings. [unclear] bodhisattva.

And you will see what comes after bodhisattvas. Chi-sim Kwi-myong-nae: Yong-san-dang, so after bodhisattvas come Buddhas disciples. [unclear…] Mahayana Buddhism. Yong-san-dang-si means, yong-sang means, [unclear…]. You can visit this one, pilgrimage, this pilgrim site in India. There's, I forgot present local names but it's kind of just, used to be on the outskirts of Madra kingdom, classical Shravasti [unclear]. And Buddha gave a lot of Dharma talks on top of this mountain, so this mountain features, like, for instance, Lotus Sutra, [unclear] Sutra, you know, they gave, apparently, talk, Dharma talks, gave on top of this mountain. So when you say yong-san-dang-si means it recalls Buddha's time when he had a Dharma assembly, giving Dharma talks. So it's kind of, we transcend time over here. It's, when Buddhists, even in music there is called, beautiful music called [unclear]. It's very famous music. It's kind of a musically, the scene of Buddha giving, you know, preaching in his Dharma assembly atop this mountain, it's recreated musically.

So yong-san-dang-si means, at the time of yong-san, it's, means, Vulture Peak means, it also means sacred mountain. And su-bul-bu-ch'ok, when Buddha transmitted his Dharma to ten, his Ten Great Disciples, sib-dae-je-ja means Ten Great Disciples. He transmitted his Dharma to Ten Great Disciples. And then sim-nyuk-song, sim-nyuk-song, and then Sixteen Arhans, and o-baek-song means Five Hundred Arhans, and tok-su-song means Pratyekabuddhas. You see shravakas and pratyekabuddhas is solitary Buddhas who are beings who came to enlightenment but never participated in salvation movement. They just kept enlightenment all to themselves. We regard them as inferior beings. They are enlightened, but enlightened for what? So they are, of course, well they are [unclear] for them. So dok-su-song, so they are not very highly regarded. That's pratyekabuddhas. And, ne-ji means and, and ch'on I-baek usually twelve hundred, exactly twelve hundred fifty. There were apparently, whenever Buddha gave a Dharma talk after his order was well established there were, it's, twelve hundred and fifty bhikhus and [unclear] were always

present. It's kind of a, [unclear…]. And then che-dae-arahan, and all other Arahans, and mu-ryang-song-jong, and innumerable sacred beings.

So you can see, at the time of yong-san, at the time of Vulture Peak, Buddha transmitted his Dharma to, first to Ten Great Disciples, and Sixteen Arhans, usually, sometimes Sixteen Arhans and sometimes Eighteen Arhans. If you visit the Chinese temple in Bejing, for instance, they have this Sixteen Arhans, Eighteen Arhans. You see that. And then sometimes you see Five Hundred Arhans. That's small peanuts. They are kind of [unclear]. You will see some Arhans, you know, scratching his back like this, and some Arhans kicking his teeth. Buddhism understands humour, I think that's…you see some Arhans trying with [unclear], holding [unclear]. Or maintaining [unclear]. And o-baek-song and then tok-su-song, pratyekabuddhas, and then Twelve Hundred Disciples, and Arhans, and innumerable sacred beings.

Now, sixth chi-sim kwi-myong-nae, so-gon-dong-jin, and then comes, after some, after the Arhans, [unclear] come [unclear…]. So-gon-dong-jin means the Dharma journey from West to East, because this is in Asia, this is not, in Korea, this tradition comes from Korea. So this, in here West means India. Buddhism originated in India and, having moved to, having moved Eastward to China, and to Korea, and to Japan, and, like, [unclear], so-gon-dong-jin, here dong-jin means, refers to Korea, so-gon-dong-jin, oh no, I'm sorry, move the, dong-jin, moving eastward and [unclear], hae-dong means, it's kind of literary name for Korea. And having finally reached, and this country, [unclear] in Korea, which is [unclear…].

Yok-tae-jon-dong, and yok-tae means successively or in succession. Having been transmitted, jon-dong means, actually, transmitting the lamp of light. Dharma is regarded as a lamp of light, light being transmitted from mind to mind. So lamp which transmits. Je-dae-jo-sa is, so all these patriarchs who have been transmitting the Dharma, and then ch'on-ha-jong-sa. And then patriarchs, and ch'on-ha-jong-sa means all the great masters in the world. And il-ch'e-m-jin-su, and all innumerable che-dae son-ji-sik, good Dharma friends. Son-ji-sik also means teachers, but they're good Dharma friends. Kalyanamitra, good Dharma friends are teachers.

And then the seventh one, I did that.

So you can, here you can see, this is, this Yebul, seven chi-sim kwi-myong-naes is combination of Three Refuges and kind of lineage in a very broad sense put together. So that's the Korean way, [unclear]. Sujata asking a question, you know, like, the, in Japanese Zen traditions they really, you know, it's big practice. They recite the whole lineage, you know. I mean, sometimes, you know, couple hundred names, they recite it. And in Korean tradition we don't seem to emphasize the lineage, maybe that one reason is Korean [unclear]. If you cling to the lineage, it's loyalty, but also can become sectarianism. So here, this is how Koreans relate to lineage in a very

broad sense. Like, Three Refuges and then the teachers, you know, broad terms, they just lump it together.

Okay. So if you, like, the, kye-hyang, chong-hyang hye-hyang, hyet'al-hyang, hyet'al-ji-gyon-hyang, so that's, kind of, [unclear…], and on top of that [unclear…], which is seven chi-sim kwi-myong-naes. Where these two lines meet, that's where you will stand. You know, so the teachings, kye-hyang, chong-hyang hye-hyang, hyet'al-hyang, hyet'al-ji-gyon-hyang available to us, but at the point of time when this chi-sim kwi-myong-naes we, you know, we feel grateful to these teachers, you know, who have ensured the tradition for us. So there's, these two come together and lineage gratitude and the Dharma practice.

And then finally, after having done that, you make a vow, always make vow [unclear], make vow. So yu-won mu-jin-sam-bo. My strong wish or my, … Yu-won means my vow is, mu-jin means [unclear], mu-jin means [unclear], mu-jin means, sam-bo means inexhaustible treasure, three treasures. Inexhaustible three treasures. Tae-ja-dae-bi, with great compassion. And [unclear…] great loving kindness. And su-a-jeong-nye, make, … It is my vow to make innumerable three jewels, with great compassion and loving kindness, accept my homage. And myong-hun-ga-p'i-ryok, and with my vow and protection provides the, by your presence, won-gong-bob-gye-je-jung-saeng, won-gong-bob-gye-je is, I strongly wish, it's my strong vow, all the beings in the Dharma, when you commit, you search hard for this. So, like, things are transformed. So it's, you are no longer, it's like, [unclear], they used to [unclear] Dharma realm. When you do Dharma practice, and the realm you are in is Dharma realm even though you live an ordinary everyday life. So through your vision, commitment is transformed.

All beings in the Dharma realm, you and I all together attain enlightenment. So, I mean, your own attaining enlightenment will not be good enough. Like if you alone are well-fed, well [unclear] while other people are hungry that would not be good so in [unclear…]. So that's why bodhisattva, they take vow [unclear…]. So at the same time we all attain, that's their Buddhist vow. [unclear] vow. So there's this vow. [Unclear…].

Okay. [unclear]. Yes.

(Could you give us some of the history of this chant? Is this a chant that goes back to, to Latin or [unclear]? Anything about it.)

I can only guess. [unclear…] two or three hundred years. Probably towards the end of Goryeo dynasty which was 14th century. May even go further back because [unclear], during the [unclear…], there is one scholar who has been specializing in the Buddhist rituals. He may be able to answer because he has been studying all these ancient spiritual texts. But I may be wrong, it may even go around maybe one thousand years, I don't know. But this one is typically Korean

so my guess is, if it has a Chinese origin it would go further back, but I think this is, this is Korean so maybe the end of the Goryeo dynasty or mid-Goryean. That's my [unclear].

(What precisely is the language?)

Hm?

(What is the language?)

This is classical Chinese which was used in Korean monastery. You can, sometimes the Japanese, Koreans, Chinese, they all used classical Chinese. As their writing system they wrote in Chinese and they read in Chinese, classical Chinese. But, of course, since they were not native Chinese their learning was a little bit different so you can, Korean Chinese and Japanese Chinese you see a little bit different from Chinese used in the mainland. So until recent times, these three countries under Confucian cultural influence or Confucian cultural sphere, they used the Chinese writing systems. Actually the Japanese alphabet originated from Chinese. Well, Korean was [unclear].

(And is, is this chant used in all Korean temples or are their versions, or…?)

Yes, it is. What they, sometimes they add, like, each temple has a tradition so what, sometimes the monastery, which is a very famous monastery, they add their own founder, the founder of the monastery, founder of monastery [unclear…]. So the seven, nine chi-sim kwi-myong-nae instead of seven.

(When we end a chant there's a shout or an exclamation, is that [unclear]?)

That's kind of my thing. Earlier there, like this, I mean, some of you here that used this, earlier on, say ten or fifteen years ago, it's, people found it difficult to follow all these things. So, it's, they would, you know, out of politeness or whatever they would follow and I thought if, since they are doing Zen, you know, shout. At least it would help them wake up. But in Korean monastery they don't.

[end of side A, side B begins]

Yes.

(In relation that, over the years the, both the tune that we sing this to has changed and also the tempo of the chant changes, sometimes faster, sometimes slower. I wonder if there's, if there's a correct way that all of the Koreans chant this or if it's just arbitrary?)

There is a standard way. Here, again, if you say there are, say [unclear], or [unclear], or [unclear] or my own [unclear] temple, [unclear], if you visit them it's, everything's the same but you notice a slight difference, you see. But they maintain their own tradition, if you [unclear], this is our tradition, they would say that, they would have no hesitation to say that. Because, I mean, perhaps centuries or at least two or three hundred years they have been doing the same thing. It's kind of slightly different, you can certainly identify. But standard thing is we have tapes, you know, that's a standard thing. Like, it's not Yebul, yes, they have Yebul too, right? Yeah, that's a standard thing. So certainly here it's, this is a, I mean, Korean monks [unclear] what, what are you doing here? So I would say, well, we are doing our own thing.

I mean, it's like, for instance, when you [unclear…], Korean monks, they always have leggings, you see. Even these traveling monks, you know, so they have leggings. But somehow, even, you know, when they stay at the temple, they have always leggings. And I did away with them and then we went there like this and then, well, they they made some remark, how come you don't have leggings? And [unclear] Sunim, when he, when I met him a few days ago, well, when he takes his students, I think almost year he takes his students, they go around real fast. Like, once I had this tour, say, one year he took, I think about thirty or maybe close to forty students. And they would travel in buses and like that, so they would pull up at this famous monastery and then they all kind of troop into the Buddha Hall and, you know, I mean, the first one, he already finished his own vows and coming out while the others are still going in, and then hurry in and then go back to, it was really fast like that. And, well we take about two months to really tracking mountain, going around on foot, says that, I think, you know, what you do is really nice, everything's nice, I heard good comments. But the only bad comments I heard is how come you don't have leggings?

Okay, should we go over to – yes.

(I just wanted to ask a quick question. I'm not sure if you mentioned it or not but what is the mantra for incense burning? What is the actual, it's om pa-a-ra to-bi-ya hum, what was that?)

Well, once I saw translation somewhere, but I forgot so, so I don't know. I'm sorry I cannot help you. At least it's just a [unclear]. It's, yes, well again, this story of Ananda. Ananda was a personal attendant to Buddha, he was very intelligent. So he had a very strong memory so he had, I mean, as a personal attendant he had most opportunity to hear Buddha's talks. And so he'd, like, like computer, like, he would remember all these things, keep it in his head. And then,

you know, after Buddha died, passed away, he brought it out, he recited all the Buddha's teachings at the first conclave. So he was very intelligent and had strong memory. But apparently his practice was not so deep. And he was very, very sweet, nice guy, and he was handsome, so, you know, like, you know, women liked him and, so, and he was, like, kind of families, I think the earliest Buddhist families. [unclear] and he [unclear] with the Buddha and then, you know, got the Buddha's permission to, you know, to permit women into the order so that they became the first nun's order in the world religious history.

And so, one day he went around, went out on begging round and then the daughter of a house, you know, she fell in love with him and, but he was monk and she, so, his mother who was a female [unclear] has to [unclear] him so, you know, he was about to break his precepts. So Buddha saw that and Buddha intervened and from a distance and to save him. And, so, and Buddha kind of recited a mantra and this his clear mind returned. So he was saved from the situation.

So from that, on this, became, you know, this is in Surangama Sutra so there's, like, Ananda intelligent, intelligence is not good enough. Being sweet and nice is not good enough. Maybe don't have a, practice is not strong enough. So from now on you have to learn to focus your mind. You have to learn concentration, Samadhi, so that you would remain in [unclear]. So, and he told this story, like, this is later on added to the sutra. There are, the Surangama Sutra is a sutra, but it begins with a mantra, it's a long mantra which is [unclear] recited. And this sutra belongs to [unclear] literature but the teachings are very Zen. Talks about, basically, it explains how one can reach Samadhi and then, it's basically the stories of 25 practitioners and it comes in two parts. The first part is about, you know, how one can reach Samadhi through focusing on one's mind, and the second part is the, the stories, the experience of the different practitioners, it could be bodhisattvas and Arhans. So it's highly, you know, treasured among Zen practitioners. So in the Zen monastery they first recite this mantra which is, really it's Tantric practice, but first, you know, it's, like two ways of reading sutras. One is, you just read sutras like you would do any other book. So, like, your reasoning and intellect is involved and you like to understand what is said in the sutra. And second one is you recite and chant sutra, like Heart Sutra. We chant and recite it all the time. [unclear] we recite Heart Sutra. And different people recite [unclear] sutras, you see.

And, so all these Mahayana sutras, actually they, they come in a shape of, to aid those who recite the sutras. So it comes, always comes and, like, when your recite sutra first you recite open verse. Now, if I digress slightly here, like, I do morning bell chant, right? And I always start with reciting the opening verse of a sutra. And ordinarily you think, oh that chant is not, that's not sutra. But in Buddhist practice, all these rituals, you treat them as a sutra. So it's, sutra has another dimension over here. It's practicing not just, you know, reading the words and

understanding the teacher, the teachings. So it's like, cultivation is, although you don't do meditation practice, you may think you are reading, you know, sutra, but this emphasis is cultivation and Dharma practice. So here, like, even bell chant, you treat it as if you are reciting a sutra. So that's, you start by reciting opening verse of a sutra. And Great Compassion Dharani is same thing, [unclear]. Well, I mean, the complete version, the longer version of Great Compassion Dharani is actually [Kwan Seum Sutra?], means Sutra of One Thousand Arms and One Thousand Eyes, that's Avalokitesvara, Bodhisattva of Great Compassion, reaching out in every direction to help and to hear the outcries of suffering humanity. So, but, and Heart Sutra too, as the, it's, the complete version, we recited the short version and the complete version has, like, opening chapter, opening chapter, and then the main text. And the one we recite is just the main text, without the opening part and the concluding part. So all the sutras, they usually come in three parts. That's called introductory section, it's called introductory [unclear]. Like forward. And, which usually has, you know, has three things. Once upon a time, Buddha, you know, there's seven requirements, that's, you know, which audience at time plays, you know, says that. And then the ending part is a, [unclear] people to [unclear] and recite and spread these Buddha's teachings in the missionary work. So the Heart Sutra we recite is just the main body without the prologue and epilogue. And the Surangama Sutra comes in the, it becomes mantra so that first you learn to recite a mantra so that you would cultivate yourself, you focus your mind, to learn to focus your mind, to have a clear mind while reciting sutra, the main task. You see, it talks about Samadhi.

Now, if I just dwell a little bit more on this, in some, you see, like, when you commit yourself to Dharma practice and then you run into problems, and then you begin to wonder whether your Dharma practice is helping yourself, helping, you know, your life, well, are you all, you know, I get this kind of question all the time. But in the Buddhist scripture, I think it was in the Surangama Sutra, it says, when you begin to make progress in your Dharma practice, problems arise. So it's nice when you [unclear], you see. So you should take it up, you know, it's, when you run into problems you, then you are at least making some progress, you know. Which great issues. But we think the other day, you know. I mean, you think, well, maybe my practice, I've got to make progress and everything should be resolved. And also, the Zen word is, as you go forward with your practice, you know, or the higher you rise in your meditation practice, also the stronger the obstructions, the hindrances become. I mean, they begin to assert themselves. [unclear] all your karmas, they put up resistance. They put up vigorous resistance. Sometimes when you sit in meditation, oh, you know, I mean, you know, temptation is maybe to actually just go and lie down. But it's sometimes challenge, right? You get challenged [unclear]. No!…Okay.

[Chanting Yebul Slow}

[end of recording]